

1027158

Registered provider: Unique Care Homes Support Limited

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is one of three children's homes run by a private organisation that also operates a school. The home provides accommodation for up to six children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection date: 29 September 2017

Judgement at last inspection: Requires improvement to be good

Date of last inspection: 17 May 2017

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has declined in effectiveness.

Six requirements and one recommendation were raised at the last inspection. The provider has failed to meet three of the requirements, and a further three requirements have been raised at this inspection.

The home has undergone three managerial changes in three months. Although two of the managers have tried to address overdue managerial tasks, the changes in management have caused delays in the previous shortfalls being met and prevented the home from improving. This has culminated in an overall decline in the quality of care provided.

The staffing picture is similar to the one at the full inspection. The staff team lacks

relevant experience and skills. There are four members of staff who are in their probationary period and four unqualified bank staff. A sample of the rota over two weekends shows that each shift has one qualified member of staff and two probationary or unqualified staff, some of whom are bank staff. Overall, there are eight unqualified staff and three who are qualified with relevant experience.

A review of incidents at the home showed links between two incidents and poor shift management and delegation of staff. A probationary member of staff who is inexperienced in residential childcare led two shifts. During one shift, the children locked the staff out of the house and then ran into the office and wrestled the shift leader to the floor, taking items belonging to the staff out of the office. Another incident occurred when similar staffing arrangements were in place. A child who had been admitted to the home two days earlier left the home with the other children and was unaccounted for until the early hours of the following morning. The staff involved have not demonstrated that they have the experience to be in charge of a shift and ensure that the children are safeguarded effectively. The organisation and management of these shifts do not demonstrate good leadership of the home.

The number of incidents of children leaving the home together continues to rise. In five incidents, children have been missing from the home for up to 12 hours. There has been one incident of children going missing from the home overnight. The staff have called the police to help search for the children. The police have found and returned the children to the home on several occasions. The staff have responded appropriately to ensure that the children return safely and have looked at ways to reduce these incidents. However, despite the police being called and concerns about children's safety, the manager has not notified Ofsted of the incidents. This prevents Ofsted from having a transparent picture of events at the home.

Trained staff have used physical intervention on five occasions since the last inspection. The incident debriefings and records do not include discussions about recorded injuries, or whether the manager has spoken to the child in every case. Two of the records of physical intervention do not fully account for marks on children, and staff have not challenged a handcuff mark left by a police officer on a child. There is a lack of scrutiny and recording to ensure that, on each occasion, the child has been spoken to and that the incident has been thoroughly reviewed. The failure to record discussions does not safeguard the children against injuries or inform future practice.

Following a more settled period, one new admission was made to the home. The child was prepared well for the admission and an external professional has commended this. However, the initial referral information is sparse. There is no detail of the level of self-harm, or details of when this last occurred. The admission date is incorrect, and the impact assessment states that the child will be a positive influence on the other children. The assessment states that there are 'no safeguarding concerns'. The impact assessment gives an overly positive view of the matching. This presents a potential risk to all of the children in respect of staff members' ability to manage incidents, children copying behaviours and incidents of going missing from the home. The child's safety plan is general and unclear, stating that, in the past, cuts have been superficial. This statement is contradicted in the placement plan, which says that the child had 'cut too deep'. This child has had two incidents of self-harm since living at the home. The first

incident, which occurred seven days before the inspection, had not been added to the child's safety plan. The safety plan does not include all current incidents and fails to guide staff on how to prevent future incidents. Although some behaviours may be new and unknown, the pre-admission planning shows a lack of professional curiosity. Additionally, there was no discussion between the staff at the home and the staff at the child's last placement. The lack of detail and clarity about the levels of risk make it difficult to target strategies that protect the child, and places the child at potential risk.

A requirement was raised at the last inspection relating to the lack of consideration of independent views of the quality of care at the home. This requirement was not addressed by the independent visitor in June or July 2017; however, they sought views from social workers in August 2017. The manager has undertaken a review of the quality of care for the last six-month period.

A shortfall relating to staff qualifications was raised at the last inspection. Although steps have been taken to ensure that all eligible staff are enrolled on an appropriate level 3 qualification, the requirement remains unmet at this stage and is, therefore, raised again.

One child has very good school attendance, and another child is at college and attending consistently. A newly admitted child has education provision in place. One child has reduced their attendance and engagement. The staff are working with the school staff and social workers to address this in a timely manner to try and ensure that the child's achievement and attainment are not affected.

A new manager has been appointed and is working hard to address the work generated by the absence of a registered manager. The manager works well with the responsible individual, who closely monitors the home. The manager is child centred and nurturing. She treats the children as individuals and supports them to make progress. Despite the judgment at this inspection, the manager and responsible individual demonstrate a willingness to address the concerns raised and improve the quality of care.

The manager has responded appropriately to an allegation against a staff member. The allegation has been investigated properly and found to be unsubstantiated.

The staff actively seek the children's views. The staff record the minutes of the children's meetings in a log with a child-friendly layout and colourful background records. The meetings include regular discussion about activities, menus and safety topics. The children participate enthusiastically and contribute sensibly.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/05/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good
23/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/11/2016	Full	Good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i))</p> <p>This is with particular regard to ensuring that impact referral assessments are detailed and realistic.</p>	30/11/2017
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that helps children to aspire to their full potential and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(c))</p>	30/11/2017
<p>The registered person must ensure that an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification, the level 3 diploma for residential childcare (England) ('the level 3 diploma'), or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the level 3 diploma, by the relevant date. (Regulation 32(4)(5))</p>	30/03/2018
<p>The registered person must ensure that within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person authorised to do so ('the authorised person') has spoken to the user about the measure and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the</p>	30/11/2017

measure. (Regulation 35(3)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which are kept up to date. (Regulation 36(1)(b)) This is with particular regard to ensuring that safety plans are updated when incidents occur.	27/10/2017
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(e))	27/10/2017

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1027158

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unique Care Homes Support Limited

Registered provider address: The Whitehouse, Wilderspool Business Park, Greenalls Avenue, Warrington WA4 6HL

Responsible individual: Joanne Murray

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, social care inspector

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