

1249326

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private provider operates this home. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children who have experienced childhood instability, resulting in trauma and associated complex behaviours.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
05/12/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25/07/2018	Full	Outstanding
14/03/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, three children and one young person were living at the home. A young person who has lived at the home for several years has now turned 18 years of age. They are living at the home until securing their own independent accommodation. This is in line with the home's statement of purpose aims and objectives.

Two children have left the home since the last inspection. This was sooner than expected for one child. The registered manager worked with the child's placing authority to ensure that moving on from the home was positive.

When children leave the home, managers and staff work with children's placing authorities to ensure that clear transition plans are in place. Children who are approaching adulthood receive support to develop practical life skills, such as budgeting, cooking and doing laundry. This means that children are prepared for independence. When children move into the home, they are provided with a copy of the home's children's guide. This document clearly provides children with information on what they can expect while living at the home.

Children are accessing education. Staff support children to engage with education. As a result, children are achieving and are making progress from their starting points.

Staff support children to attend health appointments. Staff encourage children to maintain healthy and active lifestyles. The instructions for dosage of one child's medication is not clear. For example, when a child had refused to take their morning medication, the manager sought advice from the child's general practitioner (GP). The GP advised that this needed to be administered by a certain time. If the medication was not taken by this time, the child should have an evening dose. This is not clearly recorded on the child's prescription labels or medication records.

Managers and staff advocate for children to ensure that their placing authority care plans consider and reflect children's views, wishes and feelings. This ensures that there is a coordinated response to finalising children's next steps.

Children develop positive relationships with staff. Children have access to a variety of activities outside of the home. They feel listened to and can approach staff if they have any worries. This helps children to feel safe and provides them with a sense of belonging.

The home is very well presented and maintained to a high standard. This means that children are living in homely environment.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Managers and staff understand the needs of children and how best to support them. Children's behaviour management plans and risk assessments are updated on a regular basis. This ensures that staff have the necessary information to keep children safe.

Staff provide children with clear and consistent boundaries. As a result, children know what is expected of them. Staff use de-escalation techniques effectively, and they implement the home's proactive approach to engage children. This helps children to understand and to manage their behaviours and emotions.

Staff use physical restraint as a last resort to maintain children's safety. When incidents occur, it is not always clear if children are spoken to, in line with the timescales set out in regulation. Furthermore, on occasions, when the registered manager has been involved in physical restraint, oversight of the incident has not always been completed by someone independent to the incident. This has the potential to mean that review of incidents within the home is objective.

Children know how to complain. When children do complain, this is taken seriously, and complaints are investigated by the manager. However, on one occasion, staff failed to share concerns about a member of staff's conduct with managers. This was a missed opportunity for managers to conduct necessary enquiries at the time of the initial concerns. Subsequently, a child made a complaint. Upon receipt of the child's complaint, the registered manager commenced an investigation. Following the outcome of the investigation, the organisation has undertaken their own review of learning. The organisation has implemented several strategies moving forward. For example, refresher training for staff on safeguarding and whistleblowing and a more robust approach to staff supervision.

Staff provide children with key-work session on topics identified within children's care plans. These key-work sessions allow children to express their wishes, views and feelings, which promote their safety and welfare.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed effectively by a suitably experienced, qualified and registered manager. The registered manager is passionate about providing children with child-focused and good-quality care. He has high expectations for children and wants them to achieve and succeed. This ethos is filtered down to the staff team and inspires them to deliver exceptional care. The registered manager is aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses. Managers and staff know the progress children are making. The registered manager and the staff work hard to provide good-quality care for children.

Managers and staff receive regular supervision and training. This means that managers and staff are receiving regular feedback on their practice and have the

opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills to support children better. New staff have been suitably vetted and receive an appropriate induction and essential training. This ensures that the workforce is experienced and skilled to meet the needs of children.

The manager has monitoring systems in place to evaluate and to assess the quality of care. However, the recent investigation undertaken into a member of staff's conduct highlights the need for the manager and the staff not to be complacent within their practice and to use their professional curiosity. For example, the registered manager will on occasions be working on shift. This provides the opportunity to oversee the quality of care afforded to children and ensure that the home continues to deliver care within the ethos and approach as detailed within the home's statement of purpose.

On occasions, the quality of recording has been variable. For example, staff are not capturing the child's voice within case records. This has the potential to impact upon the manager's monitoring of the service.

Partnership working and communication between the registered manager, children's families, social workers and other external agencies is good. Feedback from children's families, social workers and other professionals is positive. This enables children to receive coordinated support.

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—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to managers and staff ensuring that any concerns regarding conduct is shared appropriately as in line with organisational policy.</p>	29 October 2021
<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—</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(a))</p> <p>This relates to leaders and managers ensuring that staffing arrangements in the home provide continuity of care to children living in the home.</p>	29 October 2021
<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home.</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that—</p>	29 October 2021

medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b))

This specifically relates to managers and staff ensuring that medication is clearly recorded and that any changes to when medication should be administered is clearly detailed.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are aware of their right to advocacy and independent support to help them raise any issues about their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.16)
- The registered person should ensure that following the use of a physical restraint, children are provided with the opportunity to speak to someone who was not involved in the incident within five days. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of ensuring that the child's voice is carefully, objectively and clearly recorded. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 1249326

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: 2, Lymevale Court, Lyme Drive, Parklands, Stoke-On-Trent ST4 6NW

Responsible individual: Hilary Jones

Registered manager: Darren Edwards

Inspector

Sarah Junor-Fitzpatrick, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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