

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 for up to four children with social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties due to past trauma.

The home has not had a registered manager since November 2021. There is an interim manager in post who has submitted their application to register.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 May 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 18 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/08/2021	Full	Good
11/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
05/12/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25/07/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Three children are living in the home. The matching of some children who have left the home was poor and this had an adverse impact on all the children. The manager and senior leaders have taken some learning from this and have redesigned their matching process. Matching risk assessments now reflect the needs of children moving into the home and consider the needs of children already living at the home. In addition, they consider the skills and experience of staff and any further training required to ensure that the needs of children are met. Consequently, one child's transition into the home was positive and they have settled in well.

Staff have not fully embedded the home's therapeutic model of care in their practice. For example, they do not consistently reflect this approach when recording the actions taken to support children in their care. This impacts on the overall effectiveness of the home's aims and objectives.

The environment is homely and welcoming. The children's bedrooms are nicely decorated and personalised to reflect their interests. However, managers do not take action to ensure that repairs required to the home are completed in a timely manner. Consequently, some areas of the physical environment could pose a risk to the well-being of staff and children.

Staff promote children's health needs. Children are supported to attend all relevant health appointments. Furthermore, staff advocate for children when other previously unknown health needs are identified. This ensures that children's health needs are well met. However, the arrangements for the recording of administration of controlled medication are not consistently followed by all staff. This impacts on the effectiveness of the home's medication policy.

Staff value children's education. They promote children's education and any barriers to learning are explored. Staff ensure that appropriate alternatives, including home tutoring, are implemented for children struggling in their education. Concerns are escalated appropriately to ensure that plans are progressed. This ensures that children continue to make progress despite any challenges they may face.

The home now has structured routines and boundaries in place for children. This is resulting in a reduced number of incidents, because children and staff are clear about expectations. Children speak positively about the impact that this is having on the home. Consequently, children are having a more positive experience of living in the home.

Children engage in a wide range of activities. Staff support children to develop their existing interests and acquire new skills. Consequently, children are developing their confidence and self-esteem.

Children feel listened to, and they have developed trusted relationships with staff. Staff speak positively and with warmth about children. Interactions observed by the inspector were positive and children say that they enjoy living in the home. As a result, children feel valued and well cared for.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Staff do not take sufficient action when children go missing. For example, staff lacked the skills and professional curiosity to manage incidents of going missing in relation to children who have now left the home. This hindered children's safety.

Staff do not always take effective action when responding to safeguarding concerns. On one occasion, staff were made aware of potential child protection concerns in relation to a child not in their care, but staff did not follow safeguarding procedures by reporting the concerns to the local authority. On another occasion, staff did not take sufficient action when a child in their care disclosed potential harm that they had experienced in the community. This failure to act does not keep children safe from harm.

Staff's recording of incidents is inconsistent and lacks sufficient detail. Children's records do not always reflect their experiences or provide the full context of incidents that have happened in the home. In addition, the manager's oversight of incidents involving children who have now left the home required improvement. This poor practice hinders effective monitoring of children's experiences and incidents that occur in the home.

The quality of recording of physical restraints is inconsistent. Staff do not provide sufficient detail when describing the measure that they have used. On one occasion, staff used an unapproved hold, but the manager failed to identify this in their evaluation of the incident. Consequently, the manager is not assured that restraints are effective and proportionate.

Staff's management of risk to children has now improved. Shortfalls were found in their supervision of children who have now left the home and staff did not consistently follow their risk assessments. However, staff are now more vigilant in managing potential risks to children. For example, they were able to identify risks to a child through carrying out regular checks of their phone. Staff's action ensured that the child received appropriate intervention to help them understand the risks. This practice ensures that children are kept safe.

There are good systems in place to monitor the use of the internet. Staff help children to understand online risks and how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. As a result, children are developing the skills to identify potential risks online.

The manager and staff ensure that there is good communication with partner agencies to discuss emerging risks to children and how to manage them. This ensures that decisions about children's safety planning are collaborative and understood by all professionals working with the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The home's previous registered manager left in November 2021. The organisation has recruited interim managers during this time, however, none of these managers submitted an application to register with Ofsted. The changes in the home have had an impact on the overall experiences of children. The children have also experienced staff changes as some other adults working in the home have now left their posts. Consequently, children have experienced a period of inconsistency and instability. Positively, leaders have taken steps to recruit a suitably experienced manager who has now applied to register. Children are consulted and kept informed of changes in their home.

The independent visitor's report is not an effective external monitoring and reviewing system. It does not consistently include consultation from children, families and external professionals. Furthermore, the report lacks consistent evaluation and analysis. As a result, this is not an effective system that supports the manager to review the quality of care provided to children. Positively, the manager has identified this shortfall and changes have recently been implemented.

The statement of purpose lacks important details about the home. For example, it does not fully reflect the home's use of monitoring and surveillance systems or refer to the therapeutic model used to care for children.

Staff do not maintain an accurate record of visitors. Therefore, they are not able to keep track of who is coming in and out of the home. This omission hinders effective safeguarding systems, as well as effective fire evacuation procedures.

Staff acknowledge the challenges that the home has experienced and they are now positive about working in the home. They speak positively about the new manager and say that staff morale has improved. Staff also say that the outcomes for children are improving because the manager is implementing consistent boundaries and structures to the home. Consequently, children are looked after by staff who feel better supported in their role.

The manager's internal monitoring systems have improved. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home, and they are also transparent about the shortfalls and the learning taken from this. For example, the manager carries out learning reviews and reports when shortfalls in staff's practice are identified. This supports reflection, to help prevent future shortfalls.

The manager and staff now know the children well and they demonstrate a good understanding of their needs and risks. There is good communication with partner

agencies to escalate concerns about children not settling into the home. As a result, care planning for children is improving.

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>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;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies.</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(d))</p> <p>In particular, managers should ensure that staff take sufficient action when children go missing. In addition, that staff follow children's risk assessments.</p>	9 September 2022

<p>Managers should ensure that staff take action to safeguard all children, including those who do not live in the home.</p> <p>Managers should ensure that repairs to the premises are completed in a timely manner.</p>	
<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>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and 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;</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(e)(h))</p> <p>In particular, the registered persons should ensure that the manager and staff provide continuity of care to children.</p> <p>In addition, they should ensure that staff are supported to embed the home's therapeutic model in their care of children.</p> <p>Furthermore, the manager should ensure that external and internal monitoring systems continue to identify shortfalls and improve the quality of care provided to children.</p>	9 September 2022
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p>	9 December 2022

<p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a))</p> <p>In particular, the manager should consistently ensure that they fully consider the needs of all children before new children move into the home.</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>a description of the measure and its duration;</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used;</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and</p> <p>a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure;</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p>	<p>15 July 2022</p>

<p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>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 measure.</p> <p>(Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))</p> <p>In particular, the manager and staff should ensure that records of restraint are sufficiently detailed. In addition, the manager should ensure that there are effective monitoring systems in place to evaluate the effectiveness and proportionality of the measure.</p>	
<p>Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4;</p> <p>ensure that the records are kept up to date.</p> <p>(Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, the registered persons should ensure that the visitor record is kept up to date.</p>	<p>15 July 2022</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the statement of purpose is kept under review. In addition, they should ensure that this indicates how the home provides individualised care to meet the needs of children in their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of ensuring that children's records are clear, accurate and objective. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure staff maintain accurate records of the administration of children's controlled medication, in accordance with the home's policies and procedures. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that the independent visitor's report is sufficiently detailed and that this provides a rigorous assessment of the

arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

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: Vacant

Inspector

Mazviita Makiyi, Social Care Inspector

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