

1249326

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. The home provides care for four children who have experienced social and emotional difficulties.

There is a registered manager appointed to the home who is suitably experienced and qualified.

Inspection date: 5 January 2023

Date of last inspection: 25 May 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The care of children

Since the last inspection, one child has moved into the home. No children have moved out of the home.

Children have made vast progress in developing healthy routines. Children now have established routines for sleep, meals, school and leisure. There is a considerable reduction in the time children spend on game consoles. This has improved their physical and emotional well-being.

Most of the children attend school, and one child has a home tutor. The staff are actively involved in children's education. One child attends a homework club, and staff have purchased new reading books for him. As a result, children are making educational progress. Children know their own strengths and are aspirational for their future.

Children have trusted relationships with staff. When children share their personal needs and experiences, staff respond in a sensitive and supportive way. Children enjoy sharing their views through formal consultation, particularly staff feedback forms. As a result, children are confident in communicating with staff.

The home is very spacious and provides a comfortable environment. Children enjoy activities at the home and go out to leisure activities. Children are building friendships at the home and often enjoy shared activities. For example, all children enjoy car games at the home, and they go out to weekly football training together.

The safety of children

Children feel safe at the home. Staff know the risks for each child and understand how to keep children safe. Clear measures are in place to reduce and manage risks. This is individual to each child. Managers review these measures and modify them in line with the child's changing needs. For example, one child currently has enhanced levels of staff supervision.

The internet is a significant risk for some children at the home. There have been incidents of inappropriate internet use. Staff support children to understand the risks and consequences. Staff are confident in leading these discussions. The staff ensure that necessary safeguarding settings and restrictions are in place to reduce risks. As a result, children are developing their own understanding around online safety.

Children have clear guidance and boundaries. Children understand what is expected of them. Staff understand how to manage children's behaviour effectively. They often successfully de-escalate challenging behaviours. As a result, physical interventions at the home have been reduced. Incidents of physical intervention are well recorded and robustly reviewed. Learning from reviews informs children's plans.

As a planned part of managing risk, some children have surveillance through bedroom alarms. The surveillance is currently exceeding the assessed and agreed times. As a result, children's privacy is impinged.

Managers ensure that the home is free from hazards and that maintenance tasks are carried out promptly. This helps to keep children in the home safe. On the day of the inspection, the front door was unsecured, meaning that the home could be accessed without staff being aware.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The home benefits from a permanent registered manager, and she is assisted by a trainee manager. Management at the home provides a stable and consistent approach. As a result, the staff feel supported in their roles. The manager and staff team understand the ethos and models of care outlined in the statement of purpose.

Leaders and managers have taken clear action to address shortfalls identified at the last inspection. The requirements and recommendations made have all been met. A wide range of monitoring and audit activity takes place at the home. This includes external monitoring. This enables the management team to continually identify areas for development. Managers take decisive action to progress areas for development.

There is a permanent and stable staff team at the home. Due to one child having enhanced supervision, there is some use of agency workers. Agency workers are usually regular workers known to the children. The relevant recruitment checks are made to ensure that permanent and agency staff are safe to work with children.

All staff receive supervision. This is provided through a variety of formats, for example group supervision and single subject supervision. Staff receive training that equips them to meet children's needs and keep them safe.

Communication from management and staff with other professionals is excellent. One social worker said he receives a weekly written report and verbal updates as necessary. As a result, partnership working is strong.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
18/08/2021	Full	Good
11/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
05/12/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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 registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if—</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children;</p> <p>the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance;</p> <p>so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that surveillance is only carried out at the assessed and agreed times.</p>	17 February 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home is secure and that the staff are alert to visitors arriving at the home. The locking of external doors may be acceptable as a security precaution if applied within the normal routine of the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 50, paragraph 9.62)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1249326

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: Unity Residential Care Services Limited, 2 Lymevale Court, Lyme Drive, Parklands, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6NW

Responsible individual: Hilary Jones

Registered manager: Martika Evershed

Inspector

Alison Snell, Social Care Inspector

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