

# SC431228

Registered provider: Unique Care Homes Support Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This privately run home provides care for up to six children. The children may have had traumatic experiences that have left them vulnerable.

The manager registered in May 2021.

**Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2023**

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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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 | requires improvement to be good |
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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:** 25 January 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement            |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 25/01/2023      | Full            | Good                            |
| 08/06/2021      | Full            | Good                            |
| 29/01/2020      | Full            | Requires improvement to be good |
| 30/10/2018      | Full            | Good                            |

## Inspection judgements

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

Since the last inspection, two children have moved into the home. In the last nine months, two children have had their placements ended in a way that is not consistent with their original plans. A third child's placement is also about to end, having broken down. This child is currently residing in another provision. Additionally, children had to move out of the house for three weeks after witnessing and experiencing staff being unable to prevent a child from causing extensive damage in the home. This was unsettling for all children involved.

Leaders have completed a review of recent incidents. However, this review did not occur in a timely manner and was not led by the manager. Although learning outcomes have been identified, the timescales to implement these are four months after the incidents occurred. This means opportunities have been missed to begin to improve staff practice in a timelier manner.

The two children living at the home are thriving. One child attends a mainstream school, and another attends a local college. These children engage well with the nurturing staff team and have forged positive relationships with staff. One child, who has recently joined the home from another of the organisation's homes, has made considerable progress. He has become more independent, has improved his self-care and has joined a mixed martial arts club in the local community. This child has flourished since moving to the home.

Interactions between staff and children during the inspection were exceptionally positive. Staff demonstrated emotional warmth towards children and showed genuine interest in what children had to say.

Staff involve children in cultural nights, which provide them with learning about other countries and current affairs. Staff teach the children about Black History Month, Pride and men's health. Staff create quizzes for the children based on different cultures and prepare food that is unique to that country. This broadens children's understanding of the world and influences children to appreciate diversity.

Staff encourage children to develop independence skills when it is age and stage appropriate. Children are taught to cook, plan, budget and take increasingly more responsibility for themselves.

Staff use a variety of strategies to praise children for their achievements, however big or small. Rewards range from verbal praise to small gifts. These serve as positive reinforcers to encourage children to make positive decisions.

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

Some incidents have not been managed effectively by staff. On occasion, staff have failed to recognise that children require additional support or low-level input. Incident records do not consistently convey that staff have tried to de-escalate children in crisis. In one instance, this culminated in extensive damage in the home. This disrupted the children's experience of care and cost a significant amount of money to repair.

The manager ensures that safeguarding concerns are referred swiftly to the local authority designated officer. Appropriate actions are taken in response. For example, staff have completed further training, received more frequent supervision and reread policies when necessary.

Staff use meetings with the children to good effect. The meetings are regular and focus on matters important to children. Staff provide children with regular opportunities to discuss online safety and safeguarding topics. This informs children's understanding and helps keep them safe.

The organisation's therapy team provides good support and guidance to staff regarding child psychology and development. One social worker stated that the staff are capable and imaginative and have helped the child to build confidence.

Children rarely go missing from the home. When they do, staff manage these situations well. Staff adhere to children's missing-from-care protocols and liaise well with other professionals to encourage children to return safely.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

A suitably qualified and experienced manager leads the home. However, the manager has not received an appraisal in the last year. Therefore, during a particularly unsettled period for the staff and children, an opportunity to discuss the manager's practice, leadership and intentions to progress the home has been missed.

Leaders and managers have addressed the requirement and two of the recommendations made at the last inspection. However, one recommendation, relating to ensuring that children are supported to be consistently engaged in suitable structured activities, has not been met. One child was spending long periods in his bedroom, sleeping for most of the day and not eating healthily. Staff have not consistently provided this child with appropriate encouragement and guidance to improve his sleep hygiene. Additionally, staff have not ensured that the child eats a balanced diet, or that he is suitably occupied in the absence of attending school. This led to the child becoming withdrawn from staff.

Staff are suitably trained. Training includes areas that are relevant to the emerging and known needs of the children. Staff have recently completed training in harmful sexual behaviours, autism and global developmental delay. Such training helps staff to support the needs of children more effectively. However, one member of staff is outside the timescale to complete the required diploma.

Staff are exceptionally complimentary about the support they receive from the manager and deputy manager. Regular supervision is appreciated by the staff. Staff feel able to discuss matters in supervision that affect their care practices.

## 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, The 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 positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children.<br/>(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(xi))</p> | 24 November 2023 |
| <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</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;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p>  | 24 November 2023 |

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| <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</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)(c)(f)(h))</p>   |                         |
| <p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <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 arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iii))</p> | <p>24 November 2023</p> |
| <p>The health and well-being standard is that—</p> <p>the health and well-being needs of children are met;</p> <p>children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being and</p> <p>children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)( ))</p> <p>In particular, to ensure that children are encouraged to eat a healthy diet, maintain good sleep hygiene, and engage in meaningful activities in the absence of education.</p>   | <p>24 November 2023</p> |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(c))</p>   | <p>24 November 2023</p> |

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| <p>In particular, ensure that the manager has an annual appraisal.</p>  |                     |
| <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children’s home; or</p> <p>if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home,</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p> <p>the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or</p> <p>a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.</p> <p>The relevant date is—</p> <p>in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1 April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or</p> <p>in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1 April 2014, 1 April 2016.<br/>(Regulation 32 (2)(a)(b) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b))</p> | <p>1 April 2024</p> |



## **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:** SC431228

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Unique Care Homes Support Limited

**Registered provider address:** 2nd Floor Maybrook House, Queensway,  
Halesowen, Worcestershire B63 4AH

**Responsible individual:** Post vacant

**Registered manager:** Elizabeth Hutchison

## Inspector

Lianne Bradford, Social Care Inspector

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