

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. It provides care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

There is a suitably experienced manager at the home. An application to register with Ofsted has been made.

Inspection date: 9 January 2024

Date of last inspection: 18 July 2023

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspectors 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.

Three children were living at the home at the time of the inspection. Overall, staff provide care that gives children a good experience, with a focus on keeping them safe. However, managers made a poor decision to admit another child to the home. Managers and staff did not have sufficient understanding of her needs and did not plan her care effectively. As a result, the child did not settle and moved on after just one week.

The home is warm and welcoming. It is furnished and maintained to a very high standard. Children take great pride in their bedrooms, and they contribute to tidying and cleaning their rooms.

Staff are enthusiastic in building and sustaining relationships with children. As a result, children have trusted relationships with staff and enjoy spending time with them. Children are relaxed in the company of staff and the home is filled with laughter.

Leaders and managers are effective advocates for children. For example, for one child approaching adulthood, staff listened to their views about moving on from the home and advocated for them to be able to complete their college course, before moving away from the area.

Children have occasionally gone missing from the home. Staff are vigilant and take prompt action to respond in this event and to prevent reoccurrence. However, children's plans are not consistently clear about action staff should take, and return home interviews have not taken place.

Staff promote positive routines for all children at the home. As a result, children's needs are met, and they are making progress. Children are all developing their independence skills in a planned way that helps them to manage their individual risks, such as travelling independently and going out with friends.

Behavioural incidents are infrequent, and staff only physically intervene when necessary. While children are given rewards and consequences, their plans are not consistently clear about when these should be applied. This could reduce their effectiveness.

While there has been a complete change in the staff team, there is now a stable and experienced staff team at the home. The home has sufficient staff, and any shortfalls are covered by familiar staff from the provider's other local home.

Management at the home is strengthened by the trainee manager and a deputy manager. This aids the manager to balance her time effectively, as manager of two homes. The manager has met the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/07/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
18/08/2021	Full	Good
11/02/2020	Full	Outstanding

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 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 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>This specifically relates to ensuring that managers make a thorough and realistic assessment, before deciding that a child can move into the home.</p> <p>This also relates to ensuring that children's plans are sufficiently clear to achieve a consistent approach to rewards and consequences.</p>	31 March 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission. When a child returns to the home, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraphs 9.28 and 9.30)

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: Sarah Knapper

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Alison Snell, Social Care Inspector

Laura Norcop, Social Care Inspector

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