

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 company owns this home, which provides care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The permanent manager was recently registered with Ofsted and is suitably experienced and qualified.

At the time of the inspection, there were three children living at the home. All the children spent time with and spoke with the inspector.

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 July 2025

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: 8 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/10/2024	Full	Good
18/07/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
18/08/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The three children living at the home are very settled. They are having a good experience and are making clear progress. One other child moved to the home and did not settle well. Managers recognised that staff could not keep them safe, and this was disruptive for other children. Senior leaders and the manager took decisive action for them to move on.

Children are helped to spend time with those people who are important to them. Staff have helped to free one child from the caring responsibilities they held for their sibling when they both moved to the home. This has enabled their relationship to flourish.

Staff help children to break down any barriers to their learning. For example, one child struggles with homework, so staff take them for dedicated time at a coffee shop, to help them to focus and complete their work. Another child has been without education for a period; the manager has been proactive in escalating concerns about this. As a result, a suitable college placement has now been secured, and interim tuition arrangements are in place. The routines and activities that staff have embedded have prepared the child well for going to college.

Children are helped to access routine and specialist healthcare and support in line with their individual needs. For example, an occupational therapy assessment for one child has resulted in them being provided with specialist cutlery, which has enhanced their independence skills in eating.

Children enjoy a range of activities in line with their interests. For example, one child loves to visit charity shops frequently. As a result, they are now a popular customer in the local shops, and this social experience has helped the child to make vast progress with their social skills.

Staff help children to learn about their own culture and celebrate world events. They are skilled at engaging children in this through creative approaches based around fun and enjoyment. Children are helped to store their memories in positive comments books, photo albums and memory boxes for their keepsakes.

Children have access to a concerns and suggestions box and lots of opportunities to express their wishes and feelings. Staff and the manager are very responsive to children's requests and feedback. As a result, children feel listened to and valued.

The home is a pleasant space for children to live in. Managers take account of children's interests and requests for the home. Two children now have pets, there are new bird boxes in the garden and the home has a large new pool for children to enjoy. The home environment is maintained to a high standard, with ongoing maintenance and any damage being promptly repaired.

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

Staff prioritise the safety and well-being of children at the home. They think and plan carefully for the important topics to discuss with children to help them learn about keeping themselves safe. Staff confidently talk to children about sensitive topics to aid their learning. This includes helping children to reflect after incidents and addressing emerging risks.

Staff help children to manage their emotions effectively. Children have made vast progress in this and will now actively talk to staff about their feelings. Children are included in their own safety planning. For example, one child is asking to spend unsupervised time in the neighbouring town with friends. Staff are working with them to devise a plan that enables this to happen while their safety and well-being are monitored. As a result, children are helped to safely take age-appropriate risks.

Staff know what action to take in the event of an allegation. There has been one allegation at the home. This was taken seriously, and there was a full investigation and relevant action. However, following this incident, a child's plan was not updated to give staff clear guidance about what measures should be taken to reduce risks when travelling in the car. As a result, the risks were not managed consistently or effectively and there were further risk-taking behaviours in the car.

Staff are vigilant about children's whereabouts, and they help children to learn about the risks of being missing. For one child, while the risk of going missing was known, the extent of this was not fully understood prior to their move to the home. It was assessed that the home's location would mitigate the risk. Staff acted in line with the child's plans each time they went missing.

Staff embed clear and consistent boundaries for children. As a result, children understand what is expected of them. Overall, there have been a low number of behavioural incidents involving the children at the home and the use of physical intervention is rare. However, for one child who lived at the home for a short period, their incidents were significantly higher in frequency and in terms of risk. Through oversight and reflection, the manager identified that, at times, some staff lacked experience and were hesitant to intervene. There was also a heavy reliance on management support during behavioural incidents. Action has been taken to further upskill staff to increase confidence and competence in supporting children when they are in crisis.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There has been a change of registered manager and responsible individual. This has been a smooth and successful transition, aided by the manager already working at the home as a trainee manager. As a result, children and staff swiftly adapted to the change and this sustained the stability of the home.

The manager is very present and approachable; staff are confident that they can seek support or advice at any time. They are extremely positive about how well the home is

managed and they feel highly supported by the manager; this builds positive morale. There have been a number of staff changes at the home. However, a small core staff team has been sustained and, overall, this has provided consistency of care for children. The staff work collaboratively and exhibit a shared sense of responsibility for the care and progress of children.

There are some occasions when staffing levels are affected by shortfalls at the provider's other homes. Staff are sometimes called away from the home to work elsewhere. While this has not led to any safety concerns, this has at times reduced children's opportunities to go out, and on occasion delayed staff training and supervision.

Staff receive a broad range of training that helps to prepare and equip them for their roles. The staff reflect together and learn from each other. Staff receive supervision that promotes reflection and their well-being and development. The frequency of supervision varies, with some gaps for some staff. Many staff have not had an appraisal. This reduces the opportunity for staff development.

There is highly effective partnership working between the manager, staff and partner agencies. Managers sustain a high level of communication with other professionals. The manager has a forward-thinking approach to children's care planning, keeping a focus on preparing children for their next steps. For example, there is early consideration of one child's long-term care and support needs for when they become an adult.

The manager has diligent oversight at the home, setting high expectations, and is proactive in addressing any practice that is not in line with expectations. The manager constantly monitors the quality of care and strives to make continuous improvements. Staff and the manager are very proud of children's progress and are aspirational for their future achievements and experiences.

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff— 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This specifically relates to ensuring that children's plans are maintained, up to date and reflect all measures in place to reduce risks for children, and that staff follow these plans consistently.	1 October 2025
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that all staff have supervision at suitable intervals and an annual appraisal.	1 October 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that where positive relationships exist between children and staff these should be respected and maintained as far as possible when making any decisions to alter staffing arrangements. The registered person should respond to children's views about changes to staffing and be aware of the potential

impact this may have for children's stability and emotional well-being. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.12)

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: David Doorbar

Registered manager: Emma Highet

Inspector

Alison Snell, Social Care Inspector

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