

1249326

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Full 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 permanent registered manager, who is suitably experienced and qualified.

At the time of the inspection, there were four children living at the home. All children were present and spoke with the inspectors.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 October 2024

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: 18 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

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

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Overall, children at this home have good experiences and are making progress. A key focus of children's care is the development of their independence and social skills. Staff set targets for children and offer incentives, which motivates children effectively. For example, one child has developed their communication skills and has begun to wash themselves with greater independence. Staff measure children's progress and celebrate their achievements.

The home environment is of a very high standard, providing pleasant spaces for children. Children's bedrooms are exceptional; they are beautifully decorated and highly personalised. Children take pride in their rooms and keep them clean and tidy.

Staff consultation with children is very strong. They use creative approaches to help children share their wishes and feelings and make choices. The manager writes individual letters in response to children's feedback. Children say that staff listen to them; for example, if they ask to try an activity such as going to the water park, staff make this happen without delay. This makes children feel highly valued.

Staff embed clear routines for children at the home. As a result, children have good sleep patterns and structures for mealtimes, personal care and leisure. Staff help children to have good school attendance. For children who are new to the home and do not yet have a school place, managers are working with partner agencies to address this. In the meantime, children have a clear timetable of home-based education. This provides meaningful education that is tailored to the children's individual needs and interests. For example, one child visits local places such as shops and garden centres as part of their education.

Staff help children to learn about and celebrate different events, celebrations and cultures. This is done in creative and engaging ways and artfully captured in the home's cultural display book. These experiences also help children to learn about, share and engage with their own cultural identities. Children like spending time with staff and going out to places they choose. Staff help children pursue their hobbies, for example horse riding.

There have been several changes at the home, with some children moving in and some moving out of the home. Some children have moved on in planned ways as part of their care plans. Some children have had good outcomes, moving on to foster care or semi-independence. Staff prepared children well for these moves.

However, one child did not settle well at the home and therefore, moved on very quickly. Managers recognised that they could not keep him safe in the community. While planning did take place before this child moved to the home, the managers' assessment of the risks was weak. Furthermore, managers were not sufficiently curious

when introductory visits were cancelled. This reduced their understanding of the child's needs and risks.

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

Children say they feel safe living at the home. Staff provide consistent care to children in line with their plans. This includes very clear guidance and boundaries. As a result, children understand what is expected of them and respect the rules.

Staff only physically intervene in children's behaviours when necessary for safety. Staff are vigilant about reporting and recording children's incidents. Managers have good oversight of these, and they ensure that children's plans are updated accordingly, and any learning is shared with the wider team.

There are times when children do go missing. These are generally for short periods of time, and children remain local. Children nearly always, independently, choose to return to the safety of the home. Staff take prompt action to search for children and inform the relevant people. Staff show professional curiosity in helping children reflect on their experiences. Managers are vigilant in their oversight, and there is a genuine aspiration to reduce children's missing-from-home incidents.

There is a proactive approach at the home to managing risks relating to online safety. Children have individualised plans and agreements about technology use, in line with their age and risks. Staff talk to children about the risks and help them to learn about keeping themselves safe.

Allegations are taken seriously at the home, and managers take the necessary action. There has been one occasion when a staff member did not report an allegation in a timely way. Managers have acted to address this and arranged enhanced training.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a strong team of leaders at the home, who set clear expectations for the staff to provide high-quality care to children. Managers are aspirational for what children can achieve and are tenacious in breaking down any barriers to children's progress.

Managers have effective partnership working with children's professional networks. They are competent in sharing information, communicating and advocating for children. While there have been changes to the staffing at the home, there is now a consistent team in place, with no casual or agency staff working at the home. Staff are safely recruited, with appropriate checks being undertaken.

There is a strong culture at the home that promotes learning and development. Managers are highly motivated to develop the staff team's skills and knowledge. This is driven through supervision, team meetings and training. Managers design and deliver bespoke workshops for staff development. Recent topics have included the voice of the

child and adverse childhood experiences. These opportunities equip staff well for their roles.

Managers encourage children to share feedback about staff as part of their appraisals, valuing their input. Furthermore, managers take timely action to address any concerns where staff practice falls short of the expected standard.

Staff feel well supported by leaders and managers. Staff provide a wealth of positive feedback about their experiences of working at the home. One staff member stated it is a 'joy to work there' and another commented that the home has a 'positive atmosphere where we are treated with kindness and respect'.

Leaders and managers know the home's strengths and celebrate these. They are realistic about the areas for development. Managers are constantly seeking new initiatives and approaches to enhance children's experiences and progress at the home.

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 care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— 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)) This specifically relates to ensuring that managers make a thorough and realistic assessment before making decision for children to move to the home. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	30 January 2025

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 Lyme vale Court, Lyme Drive, Parklands, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6NW

Responsible individual: Sarah Knapper

Registered manager: Lisa Rafferty

Inspectors

Alison Snell, Social Care Inspector

John Tomlinson, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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