

2538285

Registered provider: Union House NW Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home. The home provides care and support for up to six children. The home's statement of purpose states that children living in this home may have a range of social and emotional difficulties.

The manager left her position in August 2022. The responsible individual has resigned from her role and has taken over as the acting manager. She is appropriately experienced and qualified to manage a children's home. She has submitted her application to Ofsted for registration.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 September 2022

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: 24 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/08/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Three children were living at the home at the time of the inspection. Children say they are happy and settled at the home. This is because of the positive and trusting relationships that they have developed with the staff team. Social workers and children's families told inspectors that they are very happy with the quality of care and the work staff do to support each child. This includes children's family time, which is promoted regularly. Staff work positively with children to help them rebuild and sustain positive relationships with their families.

Children make good progress while living in the home. They are supported to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Children's education is prioritised. The staff team work consistently with schools and education providers to help children work through any difficulties. Children are involved in extracurricular activities and additional tuition to support their learning. They are encouraged to aspire and plan for future careers. For example, one child has successfully obtained a place in the local cadets in support of him wanting to join the police force.

Children's routine health needs are monitored well. They are supported to access external mental health services and support. When children are reluctant to engage with other agencies or direct work, staff use creative approaches to support children's emotional well-being, such as engaging them in mindfulness activities.

Key-work sessions with children are purposeful. Staff take an honest and direct approach with children, and this is effective in engaging children in both planned or naturally occurring sessions. The work that staff complete with children is reflective and focuses on children's specific needs and risk-taking behaviour. In addition to this, children regularly access online training courses to develop their life skills.

Weekly children's meetings demonstrate that children are always listened to. They are provided with lots of opportunities to share their views about their experiences of living in the home and any improvements they would like to be made. The manager oversees all meetings and ensures that action is taken, when possible, in relation to children's requests.

Children engage well in independence life skills programmes. The programmes are structured, realistic and monitored closely so that children can be provided with additional support, to help keep them on track and minimise any risks. Children obtain part-time employment to develop their skills and sign up to housing projects to support them for future semi-independence living.

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

Children are helped to become increasingly safe. The members of the staff team respond effectively and consistently to children's behaviours. One parent said that when their child becomes upset, they receive the same level of care and nurture from staff that they would if they were at home with their parents. Discussions with children support them to reflect on incidents, understand their feelings and identify strategies that will help them in the future. Because of this, risks such as substance misuse and self-injurious behaviour have reduced.

Staff work with external professionals to ensure that there is a robust response to children's risk-taking behaviour. This includes working closely with the local police officers, who have developed positive relationships with the children. And because of this approach, children are not criminalised.

There has only been one restraint since the last inspection. It was used as a last resort, and it was proportionate to safeguard the child. However, the registered manager was involved in the restraint and has evaluated the incident herself. This means there is a lack of transparency and scrutiny of the record. Additionally, there is no record of a debrief with the manager or a clear follow up discussion with the child following the restraint.

Children feel that staff listen to them and take their concerns seriously. This is evidenced through both the formal complaints processes and informal discussions when children have raised concerns. However, children's feelings and safe words relating to bullying are written in other children's individual risk assessments. This means that they could be placed at further risk of bullying from their peers, should children choose to read their individual risk assessments.

One child has refused their prescribed medication for four months. This has been discussed with the child's general medical practitioner. However, staff have failed to record this as refused on the medication administration record or return it to the chemist. This is not in line with good practice or the safe disposal of medication.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There has been a smooth transition between the registered manager leaving her role and the responsible individual taking over as acting manager. She knows the children well and understands their progress. She has provided continuity of care and management oversight to the children and staff team. Staff are confident in the manager's leadership style, and staff morale remains positive.

Some staff have left their roles and new staff have joined the staff team in the last year. Senior managers have acted to recruit staff and bring the team back up to full capacity. The manager is working to sustain the current staff team to ensure that the team remains stable and provides continuity of care to children living in the home.

Staff are provided with regular formal supervisions to reflect on and discuss their practice. This includes the introduction of practical supervisions, to support staff to develop their skills in specific areas of their roles. Induction processes are thorough, ensuring that staff progress and development are carefully reviewed throughout their probationary period. However, not all staff have had their practice annually appraised in order to support continuous learning and development.

Staff meetings are well attended and take place monthly. They are child focused, address safeguarding issues and provide an opportunity to look at any identified lessons learned from incident management. The manager encourages staff to take on new roles and responsibilities to develop a multi-skilled team. Mandatory training is monitored well, to ensure that staff are kept up to date with refreshers courses. The members of the staff team are provided with additional training specific to the needs and risks of the children.

Some children's case records contain other children's personal details, which suggests that records have been duplicated. This means that records are not all individualised to each child or kept up to date. Additionally, children do not always sign key records. The manager has failed to address these shortfalls in her monitoring of records.

The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home. She completes weekly and monthly monitoring of the operation of the home. She makes recommendations relating to changes to staff practice that are required to improve the quality of care provided to children. The manager monitors patterns and trends relating to children's behaviour. This enables her to provide clear guidance to the staff team about how to care for and support the children.

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
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	20 October 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that records are kept of the administration of all medication, which includes occasions when prescribed medication is refused. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that children's feelings and safe words relating to bullying are not written in other children's individual risk assessments. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.16)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should ensure that children's case records do not contain other children's personal details. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

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: 2538285

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Union House NW Limited

Registered provider address: 82 Blackburn Road, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 1LL

Responsible individual: Margaret Hughes

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector

Amie Anders, Social Care Inspector

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