

2538285

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children or young people who have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The home was registered in November 2019 and has been operational since February 2020.

The home has not yet had a post-registration inspection due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions. However, the home received a monitoring visit in June 2020.

There is a registered manager in post.

Visit dates: 9 to 10 September 2020

Previous inspection date: Not previously inspected

Previous inspection judgement: Not previously inspected

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19, Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred

practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Staff understand the young people living in the home and as a result, young people have positive relationships with the staff team and each other. One young person said, 'I get on with staff here, there are staff I can talk to well. Staff listen to me and if I have a problem, they will help me sort it out.' The young people have a positive relationship with each other and enjoy engaging in activities together.

Both young people have made progress since being at Union House. A social worker reported of one young person, 'I have seen a boost in his self-esteem and self-confidence, he has more get up and go. Staff meet him half way, as he is seventeen years old and rather than just go and do something, he will have a conversation and make an agreement with staff.'

Young people have lots of opportunities to express their views and opinions, make choices and be involved in decisions about their lives. Staff undertake regular and effective key-work sessions with young people to help them manage their behaviour and reduce risks.

The young people are healthy. Staff have been proactive in accessing services to meet young people's specific health needs and educating them about the risks of drug use; because of this, one young person has significantly reduced his cannabis use since living at the home.

During COVID-19 government restrictions, young people's time with their families has been promoted using technology, and as restrictions relaxed, the home has facilitated face-to-face contact for young people and their families in outdoor areas, while maintaining safe social distancing.

The individual needs of young people have not been carefully considered as part of the matching process. Environmental factors that impact on young people's behavioural risks have equally not been considered throughout the matching and placement process. The manager accepted a placement for a young person with historical risks of boarding trains while missing from home, without risk assessing the impact of the local train station on the young person's safety.

Staff lock the kitchen door as part of a daily evening routine. Young people should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific risk factors identified in a risk assessment, which is regularly reviewed to ensure there is

minimal impact on other young people living there. There are currently no risks identified that would make this action permissible.

The safety of children

Young people told the inspector they feel safe, and this has been corroborated by social workers and parents. A social worker said, 'The staff are exceptional, and I am thankful they are there to help [Name].'

Risk assessments are more robust, have clearer strategies and are reviewed regularly. As a result of this, staff have demonstrated an improved understanding of risks for young people and have taken immediate action where young people have been at imminent risk.

Records demonstrate that staff follow and have a good understanding of missing from home protocols to keep children safe. However, return home interviews with children by an independent person are not always evidenced following a child having been missing from home.

External professionals have reported that the home is proactive in working with specialist agencies involved in young people's care to keep them safe. For example, the local child criminal exploitation team said that the home worked with their agency to deliver direct work to young people and educate them about specific risk-taking behaviour.

Some of the records for the use of restraint do not meet regulatory requirements. They do not include the time and duration of the restraint, or evidence debriefs with staff and young people who have been involved in the incident. The manager has failed to identify this in her oversight of the records. This was raised as a shortfall at the last monitoring visit and so has been raised again as a requirement.

Safeguarding procedures in relation to allegation management have not been followed, following an allegation made about a person working in the home by a young person. Senior management instigated an investigation and communicated with the young person's social worker. However, they did not notify the local authority designated officer.

The location risk assessment does not include potential environmental factors that may impact on children's behavioural risks and safety. For example, it does not identify the impact of a local train station on young people living in or admitted to the home who may be at risk of going missing from home.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager has a wealth of knowledge and uses learning opportunities to share this with the staff team to improve outcomes for young people. She works

positively with external professionals and will challenge local authorities when she feels decisions do not benefit the needs of young people.

Staff told the inspector that they feel supported by managers. New staff inducted to the home received a thorough induction process and completed shadow shifts prior to commencing shifts with young people. Staff have completed all mandatory training and access additional training specific to the needs of young people.

There are shortfalls in the frequency of staff supervisions in line with company policies and procedures. Some staff supervisions did not take place for approximately seven weeks and as a result, staff have not received regular practice-related support and guidance from managers.

The home has identified 'champions' within the staff team to research certain areas of risk that young people may engage in, such as child sexual exploitation and drugs misuse. This information is shared in team meetings to improve staff's knowledge, so staff can further educate young people about these areas.

The registered manager has failed to notify Ofsted of serious incidents involving young people, under Regulation 40. For example, notifications have not been made in relation to police involvement to deal with young people's serious behaviours or following an allegation made about a person working in the home.

The review of the quality of care report does not meet regulatory requirements. It does not evidence or consider feedback in relation to the quality of care young people are receiving in the home from local authorities, staff, parents and young people.

The manager's monitoring is not suitably robust. Improvements are required in relation to the manager's oversight of records, reviewing of systems and sharing evaluations through supervisions and team meetings to improve staff's knowledge and practice. However, senior management complete effective weekly audits and share any emerging trends directly with staff.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	08/10/2020

(Regulation 12 (1)) Specifically, when an allegation is made about a person working in the home by a young person, that the appropriate person notifies the local authority designated officer.	
In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (2)(f)(h)) Specifically, the managers monitoring of the home needs to be more robust; in relation to the managers oversight of records, review of systems and sharing evaluations through supervisions and team meetings to improve staff knowledge and practice.	22/10/2020
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)) Specifically, when admitting children to the home, that consideration is given to suitable matching of children, impact on other children living in the home, and environmental factors that may impact on children's behavioural risks.	22/10/2020

The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) Specifically, that staff receive regular monthly supervisions in line with the homes policies and procedures.	22/10/2020
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the date, time and location of the use of the measure; 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)(a)(iii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) Specifically, some restraint records are not completed in line with regulatory requirements, do not demonstrate clear debriefs with children or staff and do not have a thorough management analysis to be able to identify lessons learned.	22/10/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;	22/10/2020

there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e))	
In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (2)(b)(5)) Specifically, the regulation 45 report did not consider and include staff’s, children’s, parents and social workers feedback about the quality of care children are receiving in the home.	22/10/2020
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children’s home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in Regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46 (1)) Specifically, the location risk assessment does not include potential environmental factors that may impact on children’s behavioural risks and safety. For example, identifying the impact of a local train station on young people living in the home.	22/10/2020

Recommendations

- Just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Limits on privacy and access may only be put in place to safeguard each child in the home (Regulation 21(c)(i)). Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10.)
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30.)
Specifically, the home has not been able to evidence that return home interviews have taken place and or that any responses, views and feelings from children involved in the interview have been recorded.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2538285

Registered provider: Union House Nw Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Ciara Beckett

Registered manager: Rachel Bulcock

Inspector

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector

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