

2538285

Registered provider: Union House (NW) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

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

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 9 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit and on 18 March 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The reports are published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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Not previously inspected		
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Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Some of the manager's decision-making in relation to placing children together effectively has not been robust. Consequently, three children's experiences of moving out of the home has not been planned and some ended on an emergency basis. This fails to demonstrate that the care provided has met the needs of these children.

However, children currently living in the home are settled and happy. They feel cared about, listened to by staff and involved in decisions about their care. Children spend quality time with staff and engage in enjoyable activities. This has contributed to the positive relationships they have developed with staff.

Children's social workers and parents are happy with the progress children are making. Children's self-esteem has improved, which has helped them to feel confident to apply for part-time jobs and to progress in education. Children are encouraged to have educational aspirations and they have secured college placements.

Children's routine health appointments are up to date. The staff team works closely with children's mental health professionals and therapists and supports children to attend regular sessions to improve their emotional well-being. Children are also encouraged to access additional health services to educate them about the risks of smoking and substance misuse.

Promoting family time for children is a priority in the home. Children spend positive time with their family, which is safely risk assessed and at a pace that is in line with their wishes.

Staff help children to develop their independence skills, to prepare them for planned transitions to semi-independence accommodation. All children are encouraged to engage in daily independence tasks on admission and develop their skills as they progress in placement.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Impact and matching risk assessments do not provide clear guidance of how risks are to be reduced. Consequently, some matching has been poor and has impacted on the safety of children, including some children already in placement. Incidents of missing from home and risk-taking behaviour have increased, including substance misuse and the risk of exploitation.

In the external grounds of the home, an outhouse requires immediate attention to make it safe and free from hazards to children. The manager has taken no steps to make the area immediately safe while there has been a delay in construction.

However, children say that they feel safe living at the home, and this is confirmed by social workers. One child said that they are calmer since living in the home and therefore they do not resort to physical aggression as often. Children feel at ease with each other. Bullying is not an issue in the home, according to children.

Missing-from-home records evidence that staff use preventative measures to try to reduce incidents. The manager works proactively with other agencies and attends professionals' meetings to agree action plans to safeguard children. This includes working with the child criminal and sexual exploitation team, the missing-from-home and contextual safeguarding team.

The quality of behaviour management risk assessments for children currently living in the home has improved. Staff are provided with clear strategies to manage children's risk-taking behaviours. The safe area assessment now includes relevant risks for the local area, and it is updated as new information arises from key professionals.

Direct work is detailed and educates children about key issues which are relevant to their risk-taking behaviours. Staff promote honest and transparent conversations with children so that they can take any action required to safeguard them effectively. For example, children are encouraged to be open with staff about their use of social media or any concerns associated with online safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The manager has failed to provide staff with suitable guidance to manage potential allegations while lone working. Closed-circuit television in the staff office should not be agreed as an emergency safeguard if there is a risk of a child making an allegation. One child's risk assessment requires amending to reflect alternative safeguarding strategies, when dealing with allegation management and staff are lone working.

Under the direction of the manager, communal areas of the home are locked every evening before staff retire to bed. Children currently living in the home have no specific risks that require internal doors to be secured. Children should be able to access all communal areas of their home unless there is a risk assessment that details any concerns that require a door to be locked.

The independent visitor rarely obtains children's feedback about their care. The manager should support the independent visitor to regularly obtain feedback from everyone involved in the children's care, including staff, children's families, and social workers. This will ensure that the independent visitor is able to provide full scrutiny of the service provided in the home.

The manager challenges local authorities and other professionals where she feels a decision may not be in the best interests of a child. She is passionate about supporting children to achieve the best outcomes and promotes a positive and nurturing environment.

Staff feel supported by the manager and are involved in decisions about children's care. Staff now receive regular practice-related supervision. Team meetings are reflective and review any lessons learned. They focus on key safeguarding issues for children and provide staff with up-to-date information about children's current circumstances.

The manager's monitoring and oversight of records are more effective. She evaluates records and identifies areas of development to improve incident management. Her weekly oversight of the home, with a senior manager, means that action plans address any significant issues and give staff clear direction about tasks that require completing.

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. 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; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished, and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(d))	24 September 2021
The care planning standard is that children— 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, asset out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(b) (2)(a))	24 September 2021
The registered person must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and	24 September 2021

any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(d))	24 September 2021
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives, and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (2)(a))	24 September 2021

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: Ciara Beckett

Registered manager: Rachel Bulcock

Inspector

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector

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