

2538285

Registered provider: Union House (NW) Limited

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care for up to six children who have faced adverse childhood experiences.

The home has a registered manager, who registered with Ofsted in 2019. She is appropriately experienced.

Inspection date: 24 March 2022

Date of last inspection: 11 August 2021

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection.

At this interim inspection, Ofsted judged that it has improved effectiveness.

Four children were living at the home at the time of this inspection. No children have moved on from the home since the last inspection, and two children have moved in.

At the last inspection, five requirements were raised to address shortfalls identified. Managers have taken steps to address all of these requirements.

Care planning has improved. Children move into the home after careful consideration of their needs, including how staff can meet them. Thorough impact risk assessments show that managers also consider how new children will live alongside those already living there. Children benefit from visiting the home before they move in; this helps to allay any anxieties that they may have. The two children who have moved into the home recently have settled well.

Communal areas of the home are no longer routinely locked at night. Locks have been removed from most doors downstairs. Staff sometimes lock the kitchen door at night for safety reasons. This is risk-assessed and kept under regular review. Similarly, closed-circuit television is only used on external doors for security reasons and after careful consideration.

The back garden area has been made safe, including an outbuilding. However, more can be done to improve the garden space and make it inviting for children to spend time in. The manager has plans to do this work, but these plans have yet to be implemented. Indoors, the children enjoy spending time in a comfortable lounge and games room, as well as in their own bedrooms. Some areas of the home would benefit from redecoration and a clinical-looking staircase detracts from an otherwise homely environment for children.

An independent person visits the home each month. She speaks to children and seeks the views of parents and professionals to inform her views about children's welfare, progress and safety.

The four children get along well together and enjoy living in a stable and nurturing environment. Two children like playing computer games together and playing board games is also a favourite pastime on some evenings, with one child keen to maintain his title as the 'Monopoly champion'. Children receive good support to spend time with their family and friends, which helps to maintain positive relationships with people who are important to them.

Without exception, children are positive about their experience of living at the home. They develop lovely relationships with staff who are committed, caring and highly supportive. One child described the home as 'a good place to be', while another said, 'Any worries, the staff sort it out or if they can't sort it, they put me in touch with someone that can.'

With support from staff, children learn valuable independence skills in line with their age and stage of development. They know how to cook and learn how to shop on a budget, arrange appointments and travel independently. Children are very well prepared for their next steps. One child has a job, while another is being supported to gain employment after successfully completing a Prince's Trust course. Children make good progress with their education and learning because staff understand their needs well and provide them with appropriate support.

When children go missing from home, staff respond effectively to ensure their safe return. Missing-from-home incidents have reduced significantly for one child. A safeguarding professional praised staff's efforts to keep this child safe. She said that the child has made great progress, because 'Staff listen and the child feels heard and respected. [The child] now listens to [staff's] advice, takes things on board and is safer as a result.'

Children have the opportunity to speak to someone independent when they return home after being missing. However, it is not clear how information from these interviews is shared with managers and staff and how it is used to inform risk management strategies.

Children receive highly individualised care from a stable staff team. Direct work with children on a range of topics is a key strength of this home. One child has received help to understand a condition that they have that affects their behaviour. This has helped to positively change how the child feels about themselves and increased their confidence, and they now have strategies to use to manage their feelings and behaviour.

Leadership and management at this home are strong. The registered manager and responsible individual work well together and maintain effective oversight of the running of the home. They drive improvement and are aspirational for children. The staff team is well led and staff deliver good-quality care to children, which supports children's good progress and promotes their welfare and safety.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/08/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home provides a nurturing, supportive and homely environment that meets the needs of the children. In particular, ensure that the garden area is improved, that some areas of the home are decorated where needed, and a review is conducted of how the staircase can look less institutionalised. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that they take account of information provided by return home interviews when assessing risk and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. Specifically, the registered person should liaise with the child's placing authority to review its reluctance to share this information with staff at the home and for a record of any relevant information arising from such an interview to be kept. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full 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

Jackie Line, Social Care Inspector

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