

2561970

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private organisation and is registered to care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The registered manager has been in post since January 2020.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 October 2023

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: 7 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/03/2023	Full	Good
08/02/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Three children have moved into the home since the last inspection and two have moved out. On the day of the inspection, three children were living in the home.

Children can build positive relationships with staff. Staff spend time learning about and participating in children's individual interests and hobbies, which provides children with assurance that their wishes and feelings are important. One child spoke to the inspector about staff taking them to their favourite ice-cream parlour and said that staff are kind.

Children moving into the home are routinely absent from school for sustained periods. At the time of the inspection, two children did not have a school place. One child, after moving into the home, had a delay of four months before starting to attend school. When children are not in school, leaders and managers and staff fail to ensure that routines are in place to help children be prepared to return to education. This means children miss out on learning with their peers and the opportunity to develop their social skills.

Children retain a sense of identity through planned and child-focused family time arrangements. Staff understand the benefits of children maintaining family connections and work in partnership with professionals to facilitate this.

Staff take practical steps to support children to celebrate their cultural identity, such as encouraging children to purchase ingredients and helping them cook food in line with their culture.

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

Children can identify a trusted adult that they can speak to with whom they can share their worries and concerns. However, some risk management plans lack clarity. Strategies to reduce harm to children are not fully explored when considering children's known risks. Plans do not document a clear plan for staff to follow should children go missing from the home. This prevents staff working consistently to support children to return safely to the home without delay.

Leaders and managers and staff do not demonstrate a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children. They do not take effective action when there is concern about children's welfare and safety. Furthermore, they do not assess the emerging risks to children and put in place measures to manage these. For example, staff were aware that children know how to bypass hallway sensors when leaving the home. Despite knowing this information action has not been taken to address this, which means children can leave the home without staff being aware.

Safeguarding notifications sent to Ofsted are not consistent with staff accounts of incidents that occur in the home. One notification reported that children were seen leaving the home before they went missing. However, staff were unaware when the children left the house.

Leaders and managers adhere to safer recruitment guidance. All checks are verified to ensure that staff are safe to be around children.

Positive behaviour is actively encouraged using praise and rewards. Financial incentives promote structure and routine and children receive certificates to acknowledge their good work. However, to avoid conflict staff do not consistently challenge inappropriate behaviour. This means children are not supported to learn acceptable societal behaviours.

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

The home is managed by a registered manager who is experienced and suitably qualified. Staff say they have confidence in the manager and feel supported. The home has a consistent staff team whose members know the children well. This contributes to children feeling safe and secure at the home.

Leaders and staff have established positive working relationships with partners, such as social workers and the fire service, to help them meet the needs of children in their care.

Supervision takes place regularly and staff well-being is frequently discussed. However, leaders and managers do not use supervision to exercise professional curiosity around staff practice and their conduct. For example, there is no evidence that the manager has explored with staff incidents in the home and how staff could have managed these incidents differently. This means there is potential for children to be subjected to further harmful situations and their safety compromised.

Staff have completed mandatory training. In addition, the manager has sourced child-led training to inform staff practice. Team meetings provide another forum for learning. However, managers miss opportunities to use these meetings to explore failings in staff practice and how improvements can be made.

Monitoring and review systems are poor. Local authority care plans are out of date and the home's individual placement plans do not provide a detailed account of the children's needs. This means children are not receiving effective care.

Leaders and managers do not use systems in place effectively to monitor the day-to-day running of the home. Daily handover forms are rarely completed by staff and the manager. For example, the form requires staff to log when incidents such as physical restraints occur, but there is no evidence of these being recorded. In

addition, the manager does not review and evaluate the handover daily, despite the form being designed to include this information.

Leaders and managers have not planned children's moves into the home effectively. They have not fully considered children's individual needs and the ability of staff to care effectively for children. Consequently, children move on from the home prematurely, which means they do not experience stability and security.

In accordance with legislation, leaders and managers have not provided Ofsted with an updated statement of purpose which reflects the current staffing arrangements.

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(vi)(viii)) Leaders and managers must devise a plan of home learning for children who they know are moving into the home.	14 December 2023
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— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; 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)(v)(vi)(d))	14 December 2023

Specifically, this relates to leaders and managers ensuring that all known and emerging risks are regularly assessed and reviewed, and measures are put in place to reduce the risk of harm to children. Furthermore, that children's risk management plans provide staff with clear guidance on the action to take when an incident occurs, particularly when children go missing from home.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a) (2)(a)(h)) Specifically, this relates to leaders and managers ensuring that handover documents are used for their designed purpose. Leaders and managers must demonstrate professional curiosity when considering incidents involving children and staff. Furthermore, they must ensure that there is a process of learning and reflection around incidents when they occur.	14 December 2023

The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)) Leaders and managers must thoroughly review documents related to children provided by the placing authority and speak to partner agencies to ensure that they can meet the needs of the child moving into the home and continue to safely meet the needs of children already living there. The registered manager must ensure that the child and staff have access to updated local authority plans for children.	14 December 2023
The registered person must— notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. This relates to leaders and managers keeping HMCI up to date on changes to staffing arrangements. (Regulation 16 (3)(b))	14 December 2023
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(b)) Leaders and managers must ensure that the internal plans for children accurately reflect their current needs and living arrangements.	14 December 2023

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: 2561970

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: 2 Lymevale Court, Lyme Drive, Parklands, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6NW

Responsible individual: Sarah Knapper

Registered manager: Emma Shea

Inspector

Chibuzo Otache, Social Care Inspector

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