

2561970

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately operated home provides care for up to three children. The provider states in its statement of purpose that care is provided for children who have experienced complex or developmental trauma and who display social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered in January 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 6 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
Not previously inspected		

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is a child-focused home where children's individual needs are met to a good standard through nurturing care which is based on a therapeutic model of parenting. As a result, children make good progress and have positive experiences that enhance their life chances. Children benefit from the longevity of their time living in the home; two children have lived here for over 18 months. The manager and staff are committed to working with the children through challenging times and, as a result, children feel cared for, supported and can see that adults have not given up on them.

Children live in a very welcoming and homely environment that is well maintained, clean and furnished to a high standard. This helps them to develop a sense of their worth. When furniture is damaged, it is quickly replaced.

Children have positive relationships with the people who care for them. This is evident to see in the daily interactions and in the way that children are spoken about. Staff talk with pride about children's achievements.

The voice of the child is strong and routinely acknowledged. There are regular individual meetings to ascertain children's wishes and feelings. The manager always responds individually to these meetings with a child-friendly written response. This shows children that their voices are being heard and that they are being listened to. It is also evident that children feel free to voice their wishes directly to staff or the manager at any time. Children have made a small number of complaints. These have been responded to promptly and to the satisfaction of the complainants.

Children are encouraged to take part in activities that interest them. For example, one child loves fishing and does this regularly with staff. Other children like going to the gym, going to the cinema, and having their nails done. They also take part in group activities, such as a holiday in London, a holiday by the sea, enjoyable days out and having a cake sale for a charity. This helps them to develop their social skills and confidence, and encourages them to be part of a community.

Children have made good progress during their time at this home. In the main, this has been progress with their emotional well-being. Children who did not initially interact with anyone, and children who had numerous incidents, are now much calmer, settled and engaging positively with staff and professionals from other services. They have been able to access therapeutic services, and their engagement has been very beneficial.

Education has been a difficult area. The manager has worked hard to source appropriate provision, alongside children's social care. One child, who had not been in school for over two years, is now attending, albeit on a reduced timetable. This is a big achievement. Another child is engaging with home tuition. The manager

continues to ensure that children are offered their entitlements and are provided with the necessary support to make the most of those opportunities.

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

Children are supported to be safe in this home. Staff have all been trained in understanding safeguarding, and they implement their learning in practice. Allegations have been investigated and reported in line with processes and expectations, and the manager is fully aware of her responsibilities in this regard.

When children have been at risk of self-harm, staff have acted promptly to secure appropriate support and interventions. For example, waking night staff have been used, sensor alarms have been activated and safety plans devised. These have been short-term measures which are now no longer required as children are much safer.

Children occasionally go missing from home, although this is not a regular occurrence. Staff follow the guidance to make sure that children are located as soon as possible. All children have had a return home interview when they have been missing, and any learning from these interviews is recorded to try and prevent it happening again.

Behaviour is well managed. There are clear and detailed individual support plans that are used to guide staff's practice and help them recognise triggers and the actions to take. Staff use a therapeutic approach. As a result, there have been no physical interventions for over 18 months, and there are very few negative measures. Children are rewarded regularly for positive behaviour and these rewards far outweigh any negative action. Staff also use restorative justice when they can, for example mediation, apologies, and repairs of damaged items. This helps children to understand that they can put things right when they have behaved in a way that has not been acceptable.

There have been a small number of occasions when some staff have not followed the home's nurturing approach, for example by giving a sanction that was unspecific and not time limited, or by choosing to pursue a course of conduct that was not beneficial. Some staff require refresher training so that they are all clear about the ethos of the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led and managed by a registered manager who has been in post since the home opened. She is experienced and appropriately qualified, and she provides very positive leadership by example. The manager knows the children well and is a tireless advocate for them to ensure that they receive their entitlements.

Staff speak highly of the manager's support and availability. Supervision is regular and offers staff the opportunity to reflect on their development needs, any issues and to talk about the children. Staff are all up to date with their mandatory training, and they also access additional training to meet the specific needs of individual

children. Team meetings are used as a further source of training, as additional workshops provide information about areas of relevance and interest.

Communication is a real strength of this home. Stakeholders are very positive about the communication and the partnership working. One social worker said, 'Communication is second to none.' Another social worker said, 'The home is fabulous, staff really step up to the plate. They think outside the box and multi-agency working is great.' Parents are also very happy that they are kept informed about their children's progress. One parent said, 'I can't fault the home, it's been brilliant.'

There is a systematic approach to monitoring progress. Key working is planned and targeted, there are monthly reports on progress, and managerial audits ensure that progress is monitored.

The quality of care review report is detailed but it currently does not identify actions to improve the quality of care. The manager does not have a system for obtaining feedback specifically for the purpose of this review, although there are feedback systems. This would strengthen the review and make it more likely to lead to planned improvements.

Staffing is an area of vulnerability. There has been a high turnover of staff, for a variety of reasons. Only two members of the current staff team are qualified, and some staff are quite new. The manager is aware of this weakness and the company is working hard to recruit more experienced 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 registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. 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 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (5))	31 August 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff have the skills, experience and understanding of the home's nurturing approach to appropriately respond to each child's individual behaviour. Where necessary, they should manage conflict, maintain constructive dialogues and react appropriately if challenged by a child in their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.14)

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: Hilary Jones

Registered manager: Emma Shea

Inspector

Rosemary Chapman, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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