

2565231

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 children's home provides care for up to three children.

The registered manager left the home in November 2023. Another manager was appointed but left before they were registered. A new manager has now been appointed and has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 June 2024

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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 19 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/12/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/03/2023	Full	Good
02/11/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of inspection, three children were living at the home. These children have all moved into the home since the last inspection. The children are settled and have developed trusting and positive relationships with the staff who care for them.

All children are attending and engaging in education. Staff advocate for children to ensure that they are attending suitable provisions and have the correct support. Education professionals say that communication with staff is good.

Staff want children to have fun. Children engage in a range of activities, and staff support children to develop their hobbies and interests. Children attend drama groups and sea cadets, and there are plans for summer holidays and fishing trips.

Children's care needs are well understood by the manager and staff. Children's internal care plans record their set targets and how staff should meet them. However, plans fail to reflect that children have had the opportunity to read and understand them. In addition, in one instance, a child's plan did not explain how their cultural needs should be met. The manager acknowledged this shortfall and plans to make improvements in this area.

Staff carry out good-quality planning for children to move to the home. Children are provided with the opportunity to meet staff and ask questions about what it is like to live in the home. Since the last inspection, two children have left the home sooner than planned, as managers felt that they could no longer meet their needs. The rationale for this and how this had been explained to children is unclear. In addition, there was no reflection with staff to understand why children needed to leave the home and to identify any learning.

The home is welcoming and decorated to a high standard. All children have personalised bedrooms which suit their individual tastes. Children are relaxed in the home. They enjoy playing on games consoles and sitting down with staff and peers to eat evening meals. The manager and staff have plans to create a sensory play area in the garden.

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

Staff have a good understanding of children's risks. There are written risk assessments in place which inform staff of children's emerging risks and strategies to manage them.

Children know how to make a complaint. The manager has held a reflective discussion with children to increase their understanding of this and how to share their views. However, children have not made any complaints. The manager has introduced weekly meetings where children have the opportunity to influence their day-to-day care.

Children are supported to choose meals and activities. Staff give children praise and messages of encouragement.

Incidents of physical restraint are rare and restraint is only used to keep children safe. After incidents, staff reassure the children and seek their views. The manager ensures that the staff are provided with a one-to-one reflection session and together they review children's behaviours and alternative strategies. This practice improves the manager's oversight and encourages learning.

Motion sensors are used in the home at night and notify staff if children leave their rooms. There is no assessment of children's individual needs to support the requirement of this measure. In addition, there is no evidence of consultation with children to seek their views on this monitoring. As a result, there is a possibility that surveillance is being used unnecessarily.

When children go missing from home, staff take prompt and appropriate action. Staff look for children and seek support from local authorities and the police. However, when children return to the home, staff have failed to adequately support them to reflect. Staff are not always curious about how the children spend their time when away from the home or who they were with. This is a missed opportunity to understand and respond to the risks that children may be exposed to.

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

The manager has high aspirations for children and staff and has taken action to review the day-to-day monitoring of the home to drive improvement.

There have been two concerns raised by a child that required a child protection enquiry. The manager has no record of the outcome of this enquiry or any actions identified to improve safety planning for the child. In addition, managers failed to ensure that staff had spoken to the child to explore the concerns and provide the required support. Managers had not identified this shortfall. The new manager has subsequently provided assurances that this practice will be reviewed and any learning identified will be implemented.

Staff complete a variety of training. However, the manager has not ensured that staff have completed all required training to ensure staff have the skills to meet children's needs. Staff have not completed missing-from-care or substance misuse training.

Staff are positive about the support provided by managers. Staff receive regular supervision sessions, and these are used to reflect on practice and children's needs. The manager has plans to improve the support systems for staff, to drive improvement. The manager has recently introduced reflection workshops for staff in their induction period and is using direct sessions to discuss staff's well-being and service development. This helps to support consistency of care and stability for children.

External professionals spoke about good communication with the staff and the positive progress children make in the home. One professional said that the care children receive is 'fantastic'.

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 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; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(b)) In particular, ensure: that when children return home from an incident of going missing, steps are taken to understand the child's experience and that staff respond to the information provided by the child; that recommendations arising from investigations are actioned by staff and children's written documents evidence discussions that have been held with professionals; that children understand the steps managers take to respond to the concerns that they have raised, and the outcome of these steps.	5 August 2024
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; and promotes their welfare.	5 August 2024

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)) In particular, ensure that staff receive training specific to children’s needs.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)) In particular, that the manager reviews any learning if children need to leave the home sooner than planned and that children understand the reasons why they need to leave the home.	5 August 2024
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)) In particular, ensure that motion sensors are only used as set out in a child’s agreed risk assessment and that children’s wishes are considered.	5 August 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home’s policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information should be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child and take into account any relevant plans. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2565231

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: Susan Weston

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Sophie Hills, Social Care Inspector
Joanne Hawkins, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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