

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 home is owned by a private company and provides care for up to three children.

Children living at the home may have a variety of complex needs due to developmental trauma and adverse childhood experiences.

The home has a manager who is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 December 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: 21 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

On 26 September 2023, an assurance inspection was carried out at the home.

Inspectors found serious and widespread concerns in relation to the quality of care and the leadership and management of the home. Compliance notices under

Regulations 6 and 13 were issued. Ofsted also issued a notice restricting the accommodation of the home.

On 16 November 2023, a monitoring visit was carried out to monitor the progress made. Inspectors found improvements had been made and the compliance notices under Regulations 6 and 13 were met. The notice restricting the accommodation of the home remained in place but has now been lifted after this inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/03/2023	Full	Good
02/11/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home. Since the last visit, no children have moved into the home and one child has moved out of the home. The child successfully returned to their family. Staff supported them to access education and helped to improve their confidence and their relationship with their family.

Since the last visit, some staff have left and new staff have come to the home. These changes have had some impact on the children, who are having to form new relationships with those caring for them. This has contributed to the children being more unsettled and not being as invested in their home as they once were.

The children have staff who they prefer. However, strong relationships have not yet been developed. This means that the children do not always feel confident to talk to staff about their worries, thoughts and feelings. Arrangements are in place for other professionals to support the children if they do not yet feel able to talk to staff.

Staff have developed plans for the children, which aim to help staff understand how to support children's progress. However, these plans do not clearly tell staff how to support children, and staff do not regularly review the plans. As a result, the children are making limited progress.

The children are not in any form of education, despite having been previously. One child is being supported to do activities, which supports their learning, and another is being helped to apply for work. However, the children do not have a daily structure. This lack of structure could mean that they may struggle to return to formal learning or the expectations of work.

Staff have not considered how they will help one child maintain links with their family culture. This has the potential for the child to lose their sense of identity and their connection to things that are important to them.

Relationships with professionals and families are positive. All were complimentary about the support given and the communication between the home and themselves.

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

Staff have developed risk management plans for the children. However, staff do not review and update these promptly with new or emerging risks. Some staff were able to talk about some of the risks, but staff were not able to talk about all the risks or

all the strategies required to keep children safe. This has the potential for staff to not manage risks effectively or consistently.

The children do, on occasions, go missing from home. Staff have plans that detail how they should respond when children go missing from the home. However, these plans are not kept up to date with all the relevant information needed. This could mean that staff who are unfamiliar with the children are not taking the correct action.

On occasions, the children are at risk when they are not at the home or with staff. For example, they have drunk alcohol and associated themselves with others who may be using drugs. Staff talk to the children to help them understand the risks of alcohol and drugs, but these discussions are not as frequent as they could be to ensure they are effective. This could mean that the children are exposing themselves to risks without fully understanding the potential consequences.

Staff use physical intervention to keep the children safe. They make appropriate records of any restraints used, and there is appropriate management oversight of these records. Physical intervention is only used when necessary.

When the children raise concerns about staff practice, managers take this seriously. The manager has reported any concerns to all who need to know and has investigated appropriately. When one child made false allegations, the manager liaised with the placing authority to discuss how these could be managed appropriately so that any concerns were not missed or assumed to be false. As a result, the children feel listened to and valued.

Managers have ensured that they have followed safer recruitment processes when employing new staff for the home. This reduces the risk of unsuitable adults being employed.

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

The manager is relatively new to the home. He has, in the short time he has been there, made changes to monitoring systems in the home. There are improvements to the recording systems, and he has supported the upskilling of staff. As a result, staff are clear about the expectations of the role and tasks they need to undertake.

The manager's oversight of the home is improving. However, the monitoring systems have not been fully embedded into practice. The manager has plans to make further improvements and is beginning to address the shortfalls identified.

The manager has formed positive links with other professionals and is strengthening multi-agency working. He liaises with placing authorities when concerns arise and is involved in meetings to discuss plans going forward. On occasions, the manager has not chased the placing authority promptly or challenged them when required. For

example, ensuring that one child's pathway plan was clear about their transition to adulthood and another child was able to visit a sibling.

A staff rota is in place. However, this rota does not always show which staff are working each day. On one occasion, the agreed staffing ratio for one child was not in place. On some days, the manager is the extra person. This can mean that the children are not getting the level of care agreed if the manager is busy or needs to leave the home in an emergency.

Staff receive a wide variety of training, which is improving their skills and knowledge. The manager tests out staff knowledge and understanding in team meetings using quizzes. This assures the manager that staff have the skills and knowledge they need to care for the children.

The manager is carrying out staff supervision frequently. Records are more detailed and show learning and reflective practice.

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— 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to ensuring that risk management plans are promptly updated along with strategies for staff to help keep children safe.	16 February 2024
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background;	16 February 2024

help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iv)(vi)) This specifically relates to ensuring that children's plans are consistent, and having details of plans to help children progress.	
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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2) (d)(f)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the manager is proactive in chasing placing authorities for information and decisions; ensuring plans that help staff to give children structure and routine are in place; that the manager challenges staff when they make comments that are not helpful or nurturing; that children have opportunities to explore their culture; that the staffing rota clearly shows staff who are on duty, and that there are sufficient staff working to meet the expected agreed staffing ratio.	16 February 2024

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

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

Mark Dickinson, Social Care Inspector

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