

# 2565231

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

A private provider operates this home. The home provides care for up to three children who have experienced complex or developmental trauma with social and emotional difficulties.

The home was registered with Ofsted in March 2020, and the current manager was registered in June 2022.

**Inspection date: 26 September 2023**

**Date of last inspection:** 21 March 2023

**Judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspectors evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

## **Outcome from the inspection**

We identified widespread concerns in relation to the care and protection of children at this assurance inspection.

## **Findings from the inspection**

This visit took place in response to Ofsted being made aware of a serious allegation that has occurred at the setting, which is under investigation by appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Since the previous inspection, no children have moved out of the home, and no children have moved in. There are currently three children living in the home. Children told the inspectors that they were happy living at the home.

Since becoming aware of the nature of the allegation, leaders, managers and staff have failed to provide good care and support to a child living in the home. In addition, leaders and managers have not reviewed practice within the home. As a result, they have not been able to reassure themselves about the quality of care provided to children and have not identified shortfalls in practice or the action they should take to improve children's experiences and their safety.

Children are not always consulted or updated after making serious allegations. This leaves children uncertain that adults in their lives have acted appropriately to safeguard them.

The registered manager told the inspectors that they had been informed by another agency that they were not able to talk to the child about the significant incidents that had happened to them. The registered manager was unable to provide evidence of this advice. In addition, the registered manager has not challenged professionals when she believes the direction given is not in the child's best interests. Consequently, staff are not provided with clear plans on how to support children who may be struggling with their feelings and emotions.

Leaders, managers and staff have failed to consider the emotional and psychological impact of the trauma experienced by a child. When the child approached managers and staff for support to discuss their feelings, managers' and staff's responses were poor, dismissive and uncaring and stopped the child from communicating their concerns and emotions. As a result, children do not receive care that is responsive to their needs.

Leaders and managers have not provided support for the child to help them to understand what has happened to them and how they are feeling. Leaders and managers told inspectors that they were unable to provide further therapy as this

had not been funded by the child's local authority. As a result, the child has sourced their own therapy without the support of staff. The failure to provide children with professional support and guidance does not provide for their needs and does not promote their welfare.

The failure to provide the adequate support has meant the child's main source of support is from an adult outside of the home. The registered manager does not have a system in place to gain feedback from outside professionals to inform the child's care in the home. This approach hinders managers and staff from being able to provide children with effective care and support.

Staff are not knowledgeable enough about how to support one child and minimise any potential risk. Risk management plans do not contain all the relevant information to help staff support the child. Consequently, one child continues to be at risk while missing from the home, with minimal support from staff when they return.

The registered manager had not ensured that an effective on-call system was in place for staff to follow in serious situations. The on-call procedure focused on staff feelings and not potential risks to children. In addition, staff did not follow the procedure, which resulted in a delay in sharing serious information about a child's welfare with managers.

Following the serious event that has occurred, leaders and managers have not taken action to reassure themselves and partner agencies that staff have the understanding, skills and ability to undertake their roles and responsibilities to safeguard children.

The registered manager does not have a clear understanding of the door alarm system in use at the home. No review of how this system can be monitored has occurred since the significant event, and the manager relied on a member of staff to show inspectors how this was overseen. This lack of understanding highlights a shortfall in the manager's oversight of systems in place to safeguard children.

Leaders' and managers' oversight of staff practice is inadequate. Poor practice has not been robustly challenged, and poor professional boundaries have not been addressed effectively. This includes the language used by staff when speaking about children and when writing records. For example, one member of staff referred to disclosures from children as 'word vomit'; in records, staff described a child as 'flirty'; and in a team meeting, staff responded to an allegation by questioning if they were going to be next. Such practices stigmatise children and undermine their experiences.

Leaders and managers lack an understanding of the training and development needs of the staff team. Not all staff have the training or skills to meet one child's needs. Managers have not identified this or taken action to address the shortfall.

Supervision practice in the home is poor and does not provide staff with guidance and direction to support children effectively. Similar concerns were identified in the registered manager's recording of team meetings. Collectively, these shortfalls do not provide reassurance that staff have the knowledge, skills, ability and guidance to safeguard children.

As a result of these concerns, Ofsted has issued a notice restricting the accommodation of the home and issued compliance notices in relation to Regulation 13, the leadership and management standard, and Regulation 6, the quality and purpose of care standard.

## Recent inspection history

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

## 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         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <p>* The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>protect and promote each child's welfare;</p> <p>treat each child with dignity and respect;</p> <p>provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background;</p> <p>help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect.<br/>(Regulation 6 (1) (a)(b) (2) (a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v))</p> | 12 November 2023 |
| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 12 November 2023 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare.<br/>(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(vi))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                         |
| <p>* The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.<br/>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(h))</p> | <p>12 November 2023</p> |

\*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

## 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:** Claire Lumsden

## Inspectors

Mark Dickinson, Social Care Inspector  
Sophie Hills, Social Care Inspector

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