

2590342

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 and operated by a private provider. It is registered to provide care for up to three children with social and emotional difficulties. Two children are currently living in this home.

The registered manager has been in post and registered with Ofsted since 16 September 2022.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 December 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 6 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2024	Full	Good

05/12/2022	Full	Good
08/12/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Since the last inspection, one child has moved out of this home to another of the organisation's homes. Two children who remain in the home are settled and have both lived at the home for over 18 months.

Children make exceptional progress from their starting points because of the bespoke packages of care, education and therapy that they receive from the manager and staff. This supports them to feel confident, happy, safe and well supported, which contributes to the progress they make in their social, emotional and behavioural development. Children benefit from clear and consistent boundaries, which further supports their progress.

One of the most positive features of this home is staff's warm and nurturing approach, which contributes to strong relationships between the children, the manager and staff. These relationships have played an important part in supporting children through some difficult and challenging periods. As a result of these strong relationships, children have learned to trust and respect the adults who care for them.

Both children have appropriate school placements that reflect their educational needs. The staff work with children to ensure that they know the importance of education and to help them overcome challenges to their learning. Education has been difficult for some children who have missed large parts of their education, but with the support and tenacity of the manager they now attend school regularly. This gives the children the best possible chance to achieve their future goals.

Staff give priority to children's physical, emotional and mental health. Children are appropriately registered with health services. The manager has built strong links with the organisation's therapists to understand the impact of the trauma children have experienced and how this affects the way that children respond. She has embedded this way of thinking in the team's practice and staff receive monthly sessions with the therapists to support them to develop strategies that improve the emotional well-being of children.

Children are fully involved in their care planning and reflect on and review their progress with staff. Clear records reflect each child's daily lived experience and show their journey throughout their time spent living at the home.

Staff help children to see family members and other people who are important to them. The staff are flexible in facilitating arrangements and provide transport for children who are living a long distance from their home area. Staff have an in-depth understanding of the significance of these relationships and how these impact on children's well-being. When family time has not been possible, children's sense of loss is understood and

responded to empathically by the staff, who help children to develop skills to talk about their feelings rather than expressing them through their behaviour.

Staff ensure that children benefit from a wide range of social, educational and recreational activities. Each child is encouraged and supported to pursue their own interests. All children can participate in community clubs and groups, such as a drumming club or joining the local gym, which provides opportunities for widening their social networks. Furthermore, children go on holidays, either in groups or individually. This allows staff to provide children with individualised experiences that are tailored to their interests. Such trips broaden children's experiences and build their self-esteem.

Children have an active voice, and their impact can be seen at all levels of the home. Staff are committed to listening to children and ensuring that the home is an empowering place for them to grow up in. As a result, staff know the children extremely well and understand what is important in each child's life.

The home is beautifully decorated, providing children with the homely environment that they deserve. Pictures of children are on show in each room, displaying their joyful experiences during recent holidays and days out.

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

Safeguarding is a standing agenda item in team meetings and is also discussed in staff's individual supervision sessions. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children. Managers and staff maintain highly effective relationships with the local police and safeguarding agencies. This well-established professional network means that children receive a high level of support in line with their needs and vulnerabilities.

Children said they feel safe living in the home. They are confident that staff will support them to explore past experiences that are often very difficult for them. The quality of relationships between the children and the staff is very evident. This enables children to address previous concerning behaviours and to work towards more positive outcomes. Open and honest communication is promoted so that children feel able to discuss any worries or concerns.

When children go missing from the home, staff respond quickly. Staff follow the local authority's joint protocol for reporting children missing from care. Staff thoroughly search for children, working with police and professionals to ensure that children are promptly found. Children are provided with an independent person to speak to on their return home and have the support of a therapist. This provides an opportunity to explore the reasons for children going missing and for staff to take action to minimise this in the future.

Since the last inspection, the use of physical intervention has reduced. Behaviours of concern have also considerably reduced. This is because of the highly skilled staff taking prompt action to support children to manage their emotions in a constructive manner.

Consequently, children are better equipped to manage overwhelming feelings in safer and healthier ways.

The organisation's therapeutic team provides staff with regular input related to research-informed practice. As a result, staff have an excellent understanding of trauma and attachment difficulties. This helps staff to develop remarkably strong bonds with children.

Children are supported to take age-appropriate risks as part of their development and preparation for independence. For example, one child who has historically required increased levels of supervision while out in the community, now enjoys the freedom to spend time independently with their friends. This is because of staff's approach to managing risk, which is thoughtful, measured and highly effective.

Each child's risks associated with internet access are understood. Children are given guidance and support to help them to understand how to stay safe online and appropriate websites they can access. Individualised plans are in place to monitor children's internet use to reduce the risks associated with online activity.

The home adheres to safer recruitment practice to ensure that people appointed to work in the home are suitable to be employed and do not pose a risk to children.

Health and safety checks are regularly carried out. Records show that children and staff regularly practice evacuation of the building, so that they know how to respond in an emergency. The home has established systems and structures in place for maintaining safe practices and meeting health and safety requirements.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led and managed effectively by a committed, experienced and knowledgeable registered manager. She demonstrates a high degree of enthusiasm and aspiration to improve the lives of the children at the home. Staff are complimentary about the support that they receive from the manager. They feel that the manager is approachable and committed to meeting the children's needs.

The staff team receives high-quality training to continually develop and enhance their practice. Bespoke training is arranged so that the staff can respond effectively to and support the individual needs of children in their care. The staff spoke of the benefits that training brings to their skills and understanding of children's needs so that they can positively influence progress and outcomes.

The staff and the manager have established excellent working relationships with a range of agencies and professionals who are involved in children's care. Feedback from professionals indicates that the manager consistently has the children's needs at the forefront of her decision-making. For example, when one child's needs exceeded what the staff could adequately support, the manager and the staff did not give up on the

child. They continued to provide support and care with boundaries. Consequently, the child was able to remain at the home and has made significant progress.

Staff have opportunities for continuous learning. Most members of staff are qualified at diploma level 4 and have opportunities to further their careers through internal promotion. Leaders and managers use team meetings to disseminate further learning and research, which provides an additional layer of understanding in meeting children's individual needs.

The manager is not complacent. Research-informed practice continues to develop from a strong and confident base, which is making a difference to the lives and experiences of the children. For example, the manager has researched lifestyle medicine to further support the needs of the children living in the home.

Managers understand the home's strengths and areas for development. The manager monitors staff practice and the children's progress. She carries out daily and weekly checks to ensure that any practice issues are promptly addressed. The staff complete detailed daily records, which include the individual progress made by children.

No requirements or recommendations have been made at this inspection.

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: 2590342

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:

Registered manager: Emmaline Scoular

Inspectors

Dave Carrigan, Social Care Inspector
Hayley Smith, Social Care Inspector

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