

2590342

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this service

The home provides medium- and long-term care for three children. The provider's statement of purpose states that the staff care for children with emotional and social difficulties, and children who have suffered complex or developmental trauma.

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 (SCIIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCIIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 1 December 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website. This is the home's first full inspection.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 December 2021

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: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Not previously inspected

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the monitoring visit in December 2020, children have moved out and the home has welcomed new residents. Admissions and discharge plans are a mixture of planned and abrupt endings. The home is currently in a settled period with three children living in the home.

Generally, children make good progress. The home is decorated to a very high standard and provides a clean and nurturing environment for children to thrive. Children build positive and trusting relationships with staff. Overall, the experiences and progress of children are positive. Children have the freedom to express their individual identity without judgement. One child loves to knit and bake. Children have a 'positive comments' book and a photo album that captures happy memories for children.

Requests from children to engage in activities to enhance social, emotional, physical and mental health require a proactive approach from the manager so that wishes and feelings are acted on. For example, one child would like to learn the guitar. A child has asked for a mini gym in the disused garage and actively helped to clean the space.

Children are encouraged to engage in education. A shortfall in education plans for children's education has led to drift and delay in some children starting school. Early identification of education provision with the placing authority would help to ensure that a suitable education provider is sourced at the point of referral. A requirement is made to address this matter.

Children who engage in online tutoring report feeling 'bored' with their education, and the online tutor said that one child has reached the point of 'stalemate' as this child needs to be in school. Tutors that live some distance away are reluctant to travel to the home. Therefore, children would benefit from local teachers to ensure that as much face-to-face interaction takes place for children. Children who are home tutored for long periods miss the social and emotional interaction with their peers.

Children receive specialist support and health assessments when required. Some children lack therapeutic intervention to help manage difficult feelings linked to their early childhood trauma. Delays occur due to financial disagreements between the home and the placing authority. Contracts would be better agreed at the point of referral to avoid drift and delay for children.

Key-work sessions are detailed, and staff take the time to engage children in meaningful discussions. When possible, children move in and out of the home in a positive way. Children do not have a detailed understanding of their care plans. A requirement is made to address this matter.

Family time is encouraged to ensure that family links are strengthened. When possible, family members are encouraged to visit the home to engage in fun and positive experiences with children.

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

Children are safeguarded effectively, and risk management plans are clear and detailed. Documents are lengthy and would benefit from being streamlined into one document, as this would make the risk assessments easier and quicker to access for staff.

Missing from home episodes are currently not a feature for the home. However, missing episodes escalated for one child who had lived at the home for a long period of time. Staff were proactive in searching for the child and the manager liaised with the police and placing authority. When risks became too great for the staff to manage, the manager identified a more suitable placement within the company to help manage the risks.

Physical restraints are not routinely used in the home, only as an absolute last resort. Physical interventions are proportionate to the event. Detailed recordings of incidents, and debriefs with staff and children, are always completed. The home has seen a recent decline in incidents since the implementation of firm boundaries and consistency among the staff team. Routine and structures due to school attendance have also contributed to a decline in incidents for one child.

Children's meetings are completed and focus on meal planning. Staff miss the opportunity to use the meetings for constructive discussions, such as addressing tolerance and diversity to ensure a collective understanding among all children and staff. A further example is playing football in the garden, so that all children abide by house rules and learn to play respectfully with one another.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager of this home demonstrates strong leadership and management. She has high expectations for herself, her staff and for the children in her care. The manager is aspiring, and staff speak highly of her management support and guidance.

The manager is not afraid to challenge partner agencies to ensure the best outcomes for children. The quality of relationships with key stakeholders is good. However, this requires strengthening to ensure that relationships with local authority social workers remain positive.

The location of the home borders between two counties. This can pose a problem with the co-ordination of missing incidents between different police authorities. The manager should take steps to improve communication between the home and the police.

Staff training and development is good. The company offers a good example of aspiring managers to ensure professional and personal development to help achieve professional outcomes. Training is up to date and refresher training is offered to all staff to ensure a wider understanding of safeguarding for children. The registered manager has low confidence in using electronic devices for online safety and social media applications.

Staff recruitment is ongoing. Staff will cover additional shifts if necessary. The manager attempts to use the same agency staff to ensure continuity for children.

External monitoring of the home is completed by an independent visitor, who provides a good overview of the home with clear recommendations. Internal monitoring is completed by the manager, and senior managers complete internal monthly audits to track the progress of children.

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 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— 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)(f)). This specifically relates to education care plans and impact risk assessments.	28 February 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's views, wishes, and feelings are acted on to help their social, emotional, physical and mental well-being. ('Children's home regulations, including the standards', page 21, paragraph 4.5)
- The registered person should ensure that in establishing whether the care meets the child's needs, the child will be appropriately supported throughout the care and given opportunities to discuss the impact of the care, or any changes they feel they might need to it. ('Children's home regulations, including the standards', page 18, paragraph 3.31)
- The registered person should ensure that the capacity and competence of staff to build constructive, warm relationships with children that actively promote positive behaviour, provides the foundations for managing any negative behaviour. Staff should have the skills to 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. ('Children's home regulations, including the standards', page 39, paragraph 8.14)

- The registered person should ensure that children are in full-time education while they are of compulsory school age, unless their personal education plan contained within the care plan or other relevant plan states otherwise. The home must aim to support full-time attendance at school unless the child's relevant plan indicates this is not in their best interests. ('Children's home regulations, including the standards', page 28, paragraph 5.14)

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: 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: Hilary Jones

Registered manager: Kimberley Craig

Inspector

Kamal Bhamra, Social Care Inspector

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