

2711614

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run home provides care for up to four children with social and emotional difficulties.

There has been no registered manager since October 2023. A manager has been appointed but has not yet applied to register with Ofsted.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living at the home.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 July 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded. The care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 5 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/12/2023	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The safety and well-being of the child have been severely compromised because of significant and widespread failings in safeguarding. Managers have failed to work with multi-agency partners in order to implement effective and appropriate boundaries so that risks reduce. In response to the findings, Ofsted has served compliance notices in respect of the protection of children and leadership and management.

The child's safety and well-being have deteriorated since living in the home. The child has been increasingly drawn in to offending, including violent offences and drug taking, and associating with adults has placed them at risk of further harm. Managers and staff have been unable to prevent the child from going missing and being exposed to risk. They have not been able to provide a safe home environment so that the child can progress and experience stability.

The child has not been helped to understand their culture, childhood history or identity and this has increased their vulnerability to exploitation. Managers have not focused enough on the child's lived experiences. They did not escalate their concerns when the corporate parent for the child was not advocating for them strongly enough.

Staff are committed to providing a warm, nurturing environment for children. The home is well presented and clean, with homely decor. Staff have built warm relationships with the child, which is confirmed by the child. However, the impact of practice is superficial, as staff are unable to challenge the child's behavioural presentations and to put boundaries in place authoritatively and confidently. The home is not secure and uninvited individuals known to the child were able to access the bedrooms.

Key-work sessions do not help the child to understand their lived experiences or enhance their well-being so they can progress socially. There is no education provision in place for the child, and no access to online tuition. The child has been affected negatively by the lack of education. Their additional needs have not been met and they have not made progress.

Staff are not carrying out room searches regularly enough, and managers and staff are not doing enough to act on issues arising from room searches to improve the living environment and reduce risks.

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

The child's lifestyle is continuing to cause significant concern. Although regular multi-agency meetings, including strategy meetings, are held, these have been ineffective in creating a safer environment in which child protection procedures are implemented and risks reduced. The child has had repeated and lengthy periods of going missing. Staff have kept in touch with the child but their whereabouts, activities and associations have

not been known. This has led to the child being vulnerable to exploitation and further caught up in criminality. This has negatively affected their own experiences. Return home interviews are carried out but these are superficial and are not followed up with key-work sessions to fully understand what is happening for the child when they are missing.

Managers have not done enough to advocate for the child and challenge the local authority when it has been necessary to do so. This has weakened care planning for the child and created uncertainty and insecurity about their future living arrangements.

The child has been able to intimidate staff and threaten them with violence. As a result, staff are tentative in their engagement with the child. The ethos of the home is to de-escalate high conflict situations. However, this is not always possible, and insufficient restraint training and a lack of confidence when restraint might be needed mean that the child has been living without effective adult authority in place.

Poor security has meant that the child has been able to bring people into the home without staff being aware, putting themselves and others at risk. This has reinforced the culture in the home of the child not having adequate adult supervision.

Risk assessments lack up-to-date information and detail, and they are over-optimistic, so that multi-agency and local authority engagement do not assist the home to take protective measures to reduce risk. Risk assessments are not informed by strategy meetings and the actions necessary to make the environment safer and to help the child to make progress.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Since the last inspection, the effectiveness of leaders and managers has deteriorated. There have been widespread failures in the leadership and direction of the home and in the operational management of the care provided to children.

The statement of purpose was updated in July 2024; however, it contains significant inaccuracies and does not set out the standards of care to be provided. It does not therefore help staff to understand their role and responsibilities, particularly in relation to safeguarding and whistle-blowing procedures.

The independent visitor has not consistently provided their reports with the regularity required. This is in breach of regulation. The independent visitor has raised concerns that children who have lived in the home were not effectively safeguarded, and their well-being was not promoted. Leaders have not responded robustly to these issues. The quality assurance of the home does not lead to effective action to improve the care children receive, so they do not progress.

Serious incidents, although recorded well, are not always notified to Ofsted, so that independent oversight of the provision of care has not been in place.

Staff recruitment is not sufficiently thorough. Proper pre-employment checks and risk assessments are not completed consistently. This leaves children and staff potentially vulnerable to unsuitable adults working in the home.

While the manager has tried to implement a new case recording system, this has created confusion, as there are now two recording systems in place and the records are incomplete. It is not clear which system is the primary database for record-keeping.

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
If the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c))	27 August 2024
*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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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;	27 August 2024

(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(b))	
*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— 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; 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(f)(h)) This requirement is restated.	27 August 2024
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b))	27 August 2024
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16 (1))	27 August 2024
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that—	27 August 2024

full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d))	
The registered person must ensure that the following items, which may be kept in electronic form, are kept in an accessible manner— children’s case records. (Regulation 38 (i)). In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that children’s records are stored safely. This requirement is restated.	27 August 2024
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. A notification made under this regulation— must include details of— the matter; the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter;	27 August 2024

must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))	
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI; upon request, the local authority for the area in which the home is located; the placing authorities of children; the registered provider and, if applicable, the registered manager; and	27 August 2024

the responsible individual (if one is nominated). (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5) (7)(a)(b)(c)(d))	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report"). The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))	27 August 2024
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46 (1))	27 August 2024

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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: 2711614

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Unity Residential Care Ltd, 30 Chadwell Avenue,
Romford RM6 4QH

Responsible individual: Nasae Evanson

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Naintara Khosla, Social Care Inspector

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