

SC447645

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 privately operated and provides care for up to four children who have experienced childhood instability that has resulted in trauma and associated complex behaviours.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since December 2021 and is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 November 2024

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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2024	Full	Good
04/01/2023	Full	Good
30/11/2021	Full	Good
29/10/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Four children were living in the home and were present for part of the inspection. They all shared their experiences of living in the home.

Children are registered with universal health services and are up to date with routine health appointments. One child no longer requires support from a specialist as they have made significant progress towards meeting their development milestones since moving into the home. On one occasion, staff did not store a child's medication in line with the manufacturer's guidance. This meant the child had to restart their course of treatment.

Staff promote the importance of learning. Three children attend local schools, and their attendance is excellent. One child is waiting to start a new school. When there are barriers to a child's learning, the registered manager advocates for children's educational needs to be assessed and works well with external professionals to ensure that children have access to a school that can meet their individual needs.

The registered manager shares information with children's social workers to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to support children to keep in touch with people who are important to them.

The home is decorated and furnished well. Children's bedrooms are personalised and provide relaxing spaces for them to spend time in. The communal areas of the home have been adapted to ensure they reflect the children's different interests. There is an area to encourage children to role play, enjoy messy play or read a book. There are other areas where children spend time gaming.

Since the last inspection, three children have moved out of the home. The registered manager does not consult with staff or children before deciding to care for new children. This practice does not help children who already live in the home prepare for change and does not fully take into account the skills of staff to meet the needs of any new children moving into the home.

The registered manager does not always communicate her rationale for decisions she makes. As a result, one child does not feel treated fairly. This view is shared by some staff who work in the home.

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

When there are concerns about a child being at risk of exploitation, the registered manager works well with relevant professionals. Assessments are completed to determine the level of risk and interventions required by professionals who support the child. As a result, risks from exploitation have reduced for two children.

Children benefit from being cared for by staff who they know well. They understand how to raise concerns. This contributes to children feeling safe.

Staff help children to identify behaviours and risks that may be harmful. Children develop skills that help them to regulate their emotions. This means risks reduce from children's starting points. One child is now able to manage their feelings of anger and frustration without hurting themselves.

Occasionally, physical intervention is used by staff to keep children safe. The registered manager ensures that, after any such incidents, children and staff can speak about what happened. This practice provides children with the opportunity to raise a concern and helps staff to identify effective ways to support children who are distressed.

Staff receive conflicting information about managing incidents when children are missing from the home or not where they are expected to be. The registered manager does not always ensure that there are sufficient staff available to implement children's plans when they are missing. For example, on one occasion, a staff member was not able to follow a child to encourage them to return home, as another child was in the home at the time. As a result, the child was reported to police as missing. Despite reviewing the record, the registered manager did not act on information the child shared on their return. This is a missed opportunity to understand the child's relationships with people who they spend time with when missing.

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

The registered manager has changed her approach to leading and managing the home. As a result, communication is not always effective. Despite team meetings taking place regularly, some staff do not feel their views are considered when making decisions about children and the day-to-day arrangements in the home.

Areas for improvement identified through monitoring systems do not always inform future practice. Despite the registered manager identifying gaps in staff receiving supervision sessions, staff are still not provided with supervision sessions that allow them opportunities to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children who live in the home.

New staff do not have their performance reviewed in line with the organisation's expectations and some staff have not had their performance appraised.

The staff rota does not show when the registered manager is working in the home. There has been limited oversight from senior leaders. Since the recent appointment of the new responsible individual, this appears to be improving.

An independent visitor visits the home monthly. On most occasions, these visits take place when children are at school. The independent visitor does not always speak with staff who work in the home or explore the views of people who are important to

children. This practice does not evaluate effectively children's experiences of living in the home and limits opportunities to improve practice.

Most staff hold a relevant qualification or are working towards achieving this. Staff views on training are mixed. They have access to a range of online training. However, they say that they benefit more from face-to-face learning as this provides opportunities to reflect and learn from experiences.

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 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; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; 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)(b)(c)(d)(g)(ii)(h)) In particular, decisions to admit children must take into account the views of children who already live in the home. The registered manager must ensure that children living in the home are prepared well when new children move in.	3 January 2025

In addition, the registered manager must consider the skills and experience of staff who work in the home and ensure that training specific to children's needs is identified and arranged without delay. The independent visitor should visit the home when children are likely to be available to give feedback on the care they receive. Elements of this regulation are repeated from the last inspection.	
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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; 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; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(b))	3 January 2025
The registered person must— ensure that each permanent appointment of an employee is subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation. The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development;	3 January 2025

receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (1)(b) (4)(a)(b)(c))	
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date; and retain the records for at least 15 years from the date of the last entry. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered manager must ensure that the staff rota shows when she is working in the home and actual hours worked.	3 January 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they make suitable arrangements to manage and administer any medication. In particular, medication administered to children should be stored by staff as stated in manufacturer's directions. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

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: SC447645

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: 2 Lymevalle Court, Lyme Drive, Parklands, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6NW

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Helen Thay

Inspector

Helen Dunn, Social Care Inspector

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