

SC469761

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 operated by a private company and provides care for up to 3 children with social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2024 and has the required qualifications.

Two children were living in the home at the time of the inspection, and one child spoke to the inspector.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 February 2026

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: 1 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/10/2024	Full	Good
06/02/2024	Full	Good
24/10/2023	Full	Inadequate
30/11/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff provide children with highly individualised care that reflects their lived experiences and specific needs. Tailored plans are developed collaboratively with children, ensuring their views meaningfully influence the support they receive. Because staff know the children well, their support leads to measurable progress, including fewer incidents, increased skills and confidence to manage aspects of their lives independently, and improved engagement and progress in education. Children report feeling well supported to achieve their goals. This personalised approach helps children feel valued and fully involved in the decision-making that affects their daily lives and future.

Feedback from external professionals about the care children receive is consistently positive. They describe children as 'happy, thriving, cared for, understood, valued, respected and listened to in this home'. This reflects the strong, nurturing relationships that staff build with children and the child-centred culture embedded across the whole team.

Children receive consistent support and encouragement to attend education. Both children attend full-time provision and have clear aspirations for their futures. Staff have developed positive working relationships with education professionals, which promotes effective communication and shared expectations. This ensures consistency in responses and enables teachers to remain aware of the children's changing needs.

Children are offered a wide range of enriching experiences and activities that reflect their individual interests. One child was supported to write to the Prime Minister, which resulted in a visit to the UK Parliament. This provided a meaningful opportunity for children to broaden their understanding of democracy, decision-making and the wider world. Experiences such as this enrich children's learning and help them to develop confidence, curiosity and a sense of their place in society.

When children move into or out of the home, their individual needs are thoughtfully assessed in partnership with the wider professional network. This coordinated approach ensures that staff are well prepared to support each child and to maintain stability within the home. However, on one occasion there was a delay in challenging an assessment for a child. As a result, the child remained living in the home longer than planned while an appropriate alternative placement was identified.

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

Managers and staff know children's vulnerabilities extremely well. They use this understanding to provide sensitive, personalised support that helps children feel understood, safe, protected and appropriately guided. As a result, safeguarding incidents are rare, and when they do occur, they are managed effectively. This consistent and

informed approach has helped reduce incidents for children who have previously struggled to understand and manage their emotions.

Appropriate safeguarding measures are in place to protect children. Concerns about children accessing harmful content online are taken seriously. Staff take a measured approach to keeping children safe while also educating them about risks, ensuring that their freedoms are not unnecessarily restricted. The manager works closely with external professionals to secure the right interventions for children and has undertaken bespoke courses to strengthen her knowledge and confidence in navigating this complex area of safeguarding. Drawing on the knowledge gained from research and training, the manager's assessment of risk takes into account the emotional and psychological factors that influence children's choices. This ensures that safeguarding practice is well informed, proportionate and responsive.

When children express worrying ideologies, staff work with them to explore the reasons behind these views and provide appropriate learning and guidance. Children are reassured so they do not experience shame. This supportive approach enables them to safely explore their thoughts while helping them to understand societal norms, respect and acceptance.

Behaviour management strategies are effective. Staff are conscious not to be punitive, and they ensure that any consequences are proportionate. They consistently praise children and identify what motivates them to demonstrate positive behaviours. This helps children feel encouraged and supported to manage their behaviour well.

Physical restraint of children is infrequent. When used, measures are proportionate and necessary. Staff work with children after incidents to help them understand what led to the use of restraint. There is robust management oversight of incidents, viewed through a therapeutic lens. This approach helps children feel respected, listened to and cared for, even during moments of crisis.

When children raise concerns, they are given clear opportunities to share their views. The manager responds promptly and takes appropriate action to find and implement a resolution. Children receive feedback about the outcomes of their concerns, which helps them feel respected, heard and reassured that their views are taken seriously.

Appropriate systems are in place for the management and storage of medication. Learning has been taken from the one error that occurred, and action has been implemented to reduce the risk of reoccurrence. The manager carries out robust monitoring of medication practices to ensure that no further shortfalls occur.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a permanent registered manager, who is ambitious for children and has high expectations of herself and the staff team. The manager has an excellent understanding of the home and its operations. She is highly aspirational for both the team and the children, consistently striving to secure positive outcomes for those living

in the home. She has a planned period of absence, and the arrangements for this have been fully considered to minimise disruption. The manager is supported by an equally skilled deputy manager, and together they have created a culture of reflective practice in the home, where staff use their skills and knowledge creatively to deliver effective care to children.

The manager has robust oversight of all aspects of the home. Her presence is evident both through her direct engagement in the home and through her oversight of decision-making for children. All incidents, assessments, care plans and day-to-day events are reviewed by the management team. This oversight is thorough and informed by the home's therapeutic model of care, and it ensures that any practice shortfalls are identified and addressed swiftly.

Managers have a strong understanding of each child's starting point and the progress they have made since moving into the home. They actively listen to children's views about their goals and achievements, ensuring that children remain central to all aspects of the home's practice and development. Managers proactively advocate on behalf of children to ensure that any concerns are addressed without delay. As a result, interventions are timely, and children are consistently safeguarded.

There is a full and stable staff team, whose members describe a positive working environment. Consequently, children experience stability and continuity of care from staff who enjoy their roles and are invested in the children's wellbeing and progress.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should work with the placing authority to ensure that each child's transition is planned and that any challenges to assessments and care plans are done in a timely way to avoid delay. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.9)

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: SC469761

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Emma Shea

Registered manager: Jessica Skelton

Inspector

Tonia Dubidat, Social Care Inspector

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