

2595128

Registered provider: Unique Care Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to four children of either gender aged 11 to 18 years. Children living at the home have learning difficulties or an autism spectrum disorder.

The organisation's school, which some children attend, is on the same site. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision on this site.

The registered manager has recently stepped down from her role. A new manager has started work at the home. She is yet to apply to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2022

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: 24 August 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/08/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children living at this home are cared for by a committed staff team who are child-centred and solution-focused. As a result, children who previously were not progressing as well as they could have been are now thriving and making excellent progress.

Staff know the children extremely well and they are passionate about providing the best possible care they can. Staff are creative and innovative to make sure children have positive experiences. For example, some children have not had their hair cut for years. Staff found a supportive local hairdresser who over time developed a positive trusting relationship with children. This has resulted in children enjoying going to the hairdressers and having their hair cut and styled.

The nurturing and supportive approach of staff helps children to grow and develop. Staff have supported a child who was very underweight and taking food supplements to gain a significant amount of weight in the last 10 months. The child is now eating well and no longer relies on supplements. Another child has been supported to explore their identity, which has included staff giving make-up tutorials and supporting their clothing choices. As a result, children's mental well-being and overall health have improved, along with them gaining confidence and self-esteem.

Children are helped by staff to be as independent as possible. Staff promote independence by not seeing any challenges as a barrier and by finding solutions. For example, they provided a single cup kettle to support a child to make their own drinks. In addition, they help children to learn to prepare and cook meals, despite the struggles they have with coordination. Consequently, children are better prepared for the next stages of their lives.

Staff help children to enjoy a variety of social opportunities in the home and in the community. Staff do not see barriers but focus on how they can adapt things so that children have the same opportunities as any other child. For example, even though a child has significant medical needs, they can still go to the trampoline park and go swimming, with the right support. Children have also helped in the local community and cut the grass at the local church. As a result, children feel part of their community and have lots of fun.

Children are helped to develop their communication skills by staff who are competent in the use of Makaton and symbols. As a result, children can communicate their needs, wishes and feelings. For one child, this has also helped to develop their speech and they are now able to use several words effectively, which they could not do before.

Staff understand the importance of education and promote the benefits of attending regularly. Staff work well with education professionals to develop bespoke timetables. This has meant that children who had previously been reluctant to attend now have excellent attendance records, are progressing well and enjoying school. One child who did not want to socialise with others is now engaging with their peers at school and has a part in the school musical.

Staff understand the importance of children maintaining contact with their families. Staff take children to see their families, no matter how far the distance they have to travel or the support needed. Staff make sure children are well prepared for visits, so that they know what will happen. This has reduced children's anxiety and those who previously struggled with visits are now able to have quality time with their families.

Parents and professionals are complimentary about the care given to children. One professional said, 'This has been the year of his life.' One parent said staff treated their child as a 17-year-old, even though they function at a much lower age. Others said the care was 'fantastic' and 'second to none'.

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

Staff know children extremely well and follow robust plans which keep children safe. Staff use key-work sessions and use consequences effectively to help children understand their behaviours and develop strategies to manage their own behaviours. Staff have helped children learn how to develop positive relationships and how to keep themselves safe. As a result, the number of incidents at the home, including those needing physical intervention, has reduced. For one child, this has meant that staff have not needed to use physical intervention for over two months; this is significant progress for this child.

Staff's knowledge of children means that they can identify the subtle cues that children may be becoming more anxious. They use that knowledge to defuse potential incidents. For example, one child who struggles with extreme anxiety and will significantly self-harm, now has fewer incidents and is less reliant on the use of their own personal protective equipment.

Children are cared for with high staffing ratios. This has resulted in children feeling safe and secure. Children do not go missing from the home. The staffing ratio also means, in the case of one child who has drop seizures, staff are on hand to prevent serious falls. As a result, admissions to hospital due to falls for this child has decreased.

Managers have responded appropriately to concerns raised by children. They have also taken action when concerns have been in relation to a previous setting or education establishment. All have been fully investigated, with managers making sure children are kept safe until investigations have been concluded. Consequently, children feel safe and listened to.

Managers follow safer recruitment for all new staff and agency staff. This reduces the risk of those who should not work with children working at the home.

Children's plans are regularly reviewed. However, staff have not fully considered the health implications for one child when developing their risk management plan to cover the unlikely event that physical intervention is needed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager has stepped down to deputy manager and a new manager has been recruited. This manager was already working at the home and knows the children well. Consequently, the changes in leadership have not had a detrimental effect on children, staff or the running of the home.

Managers are aspirational, dedicated and committed to ensuring that children get the best possible care. They are forward thinking and have plans for how the home can be further improved. Managers are not afraid to seek advice and guidance from other professionals. As a result, children receive excellent care and are making exceptional progress.

Managers undertake research, looking for new ideas and ways of working. For example, they research children's health conditions to find new ways to support them and to have a better understanding of how that condition impacts on the child. In addition, they research the best way to help older children to use the toilet successfully. As a result, staff are more knowledgeable and use this information to further develop the care and support children receive.

When managers feel other professionals are not acting quickly enough in carrying out assessments needed for children, managers have arranged to get assessments done privately. As a result, information is presented to those who need it much more quickly and children receive the help they need.

Managers have challenged placing authorities when children have not had education healthcare plans (EHC plan). For one child, managers sought help and support from the Children's Commissioner. As a result, an EHC plan is now being drawn up.

Staff spoken to say they feel well supported by the managers, and that they are encouraged to learn and to develop new skills and use those skills. Consequently, staff give the best possible care to children.

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

- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Specifically, that managers consider the risks of using physical intervention with a child who has epilepsy or other health conditions and when the use of physical intervention may impact adversely on those health conditions. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

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: 2595128

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unique Care Group Limited

Responsible individual: Louise Tolley

Registered manager: Sadie Paterson

Inspector

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

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