

2748091

Registered provider: Utopia Supported Housing

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home is registered to provide care for up to 6 children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Two children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

There has been no registered manager in post since April 2024.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 December 2025

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: 11 September 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/09/2025	Full	Inadequate
02/01/2025	Full	Good
22/04/2024	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children like living in the home and they are well cared for. They are making positive progress in all areas of their lives.

Improvements have been made to the home environment since the last inspection. Children are receiving the support that they need to maintain their personal spaces and they have been involved in selecting items for the home. There is a plan in place for ongoing improvements, which is being monitored by senior leaders to ensure that it is implemented in suitable timescales.

Children make good progress in education. There has been appropriate liaison with children's families, social workers and the virtual school to ensure children's educational needs are met. Staff have one-to-one discussions with children to help them to understand and manage any planned changes to their education arrangements. As a result, children are attending regularly and making good progress.

Children are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles. They are supported to engage in activities which encourage healthy habits, including sporting activities, exercise and attending the gym. Staff have used one-to-one discussions to explore substance misuse and healthy choices. Alongside clear and consistent boundaries, this support has enabled one child to reduce behaviours which may negatively impact their health.

Children are supported to maintain lifelong connections. Staff take children to visit their families and to attend significant occasions. One family member said input and support from staff have enabled them to improve their relationship with their child.

Children are not receiving well-planned care when they move on from the home; suitable plans are not in place to help them to prepare for when they leave. When local authorities have made unexpected decisions to move children, managers have not advocated for the child to be informed and involved, or to ensure that plans are adequately updated. As a result, one child has not received support to emotionally prepare for their planned move from the home.

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

Safer recruitment practices are effective. Staff working in the home are checked and vetted to assess that they are suitable to work with children.

There have been improvements to the risk management guidance for staff. Staff are aware of the support that the children need to keep safe. Each child has a range of risk management and support plans to guide staff intervention. Educational and well-informed one-to-one sessions are used to explore areas of vulnerability with children.

These sessions help them to understand risks and how to keep themselves and others safe.

There has been no use of physical restraint since the last inspection. Staff use a range of de-escalation strategies to avoid the use of physical intervention. Following incidents, children are supported to explore the implications of their behaviour. One-to-one discussions help children to recognise and understand their own emotions and to consider strategies to manage their feelings and behaviours. As a result, the number of incidents in the home is reducing.

Allegations are recognised by staff and escalated to managers. On one occasion when this did not happen, the manager took appropriate action to follow up with the staff involved and enrol them on additional training. Information is shared with the local authority designated officer and social worker in a timely way. There is an improved understanding of the process for managing allegations raised by children, and timely investigations are being carried out.

There have been few incidents of children going missing from the home. When children do go missing, staff make contact with them and liaise with police to identify where children are. Children are warmly welcomed back to the home following incidents of going missing. However, on one occasion, a child was identified as being in a location of concern but the staff did not take appropriate action to visit the location or support the child to return home.

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

An interim manager is in post and has submitted their application to register with Ofsted. The manager is caring and child focused and is accessible to the staff and the children. Leaders and managers have made improvements to the areas identified at the last inspection. There are clear plans in place to continue to develop the home and the staff team.

Staff feel valued by leaders and managers. Supervisions and team meetings take place on a regular basis; they are child focused and create a consistent response to children's presenting needs. Although topics such as safeguarding and recent training are discussed, managers are not using these opportunities to evaluate and reflect on what has been learned and then feed this into further developing the home. Supervision and team meetings are not effective in supporting managers to maintain oversight of practice and the quality of care and support.

A range of training courses is available to staff. Since the last inspection, managers have provided training to staff on managing allegations, administering medication, safeguarding and first aid. There is a clear induction plan in place, enabling newer members of staff to undertake the same learning. However, this does not appear to be used meaningfully. Shadowing and other activities which are listed to take place over several days are signed off in much shorter timescales.

Managers review incidents in a timely manner and ensure that the relevant professionals are informed. However, when reviewing incidents and carrying out investigations, there has not been consistent evaluation of the effectiveness of staff actions. Managers have not implemented monitoring and review systems that enable them to understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child. As a result, their reviews are not encouraging a culture of reflective practice to promote continuous improvements in the quality of care and staff interventions.

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 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— have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(iii)(vi)(vii)(e))	28 January 2026
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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	28 January 2026

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h))	
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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(ii)(iii))	28 January 2026

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: 2748091

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Utopia Supported Housing

Registered provider address: English Room, Old Free School, Watford, Hertfordshire
WD18 0BX

Responsible individual: Lauren Mercurius-Mascoll

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Georgia Carty, Social Care Inspector
Gemma Bullen, Social Care Inspector

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