

SC426318

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private company. It provides care for up to 2 children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The post for a registered manager is vacant. A manager has been identified and is awaiting her interview to be registered with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 June 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 26 August 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/08/2025	Full	Good
21/10/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
23/10/2023	Full	Good
11/01/2023	Full	Good

Summary of findings

At the time of this inspection, one child was living in the home, while another had recently moved out. For most of the inspection period, the home has generally been settled, with oversight provided by an experienced manager. However, this stability was undermined by recent changes in the home. As a result, children's experiences and progress are variable. While there are examples of positive aspects of care, these are not consistent, and there remain areas that require improvement to ensure that all children receive a good standard of care.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children's moves into and out of the home are not consistently well planned or managed effectively, which negatively impacts their experiences and stability. There is a lack of clarity and consistency in the assessment, planning and rationale provided by managers and leaders regarding decisions about children moving into and out of the home. Staff's skills and experience have not been carefully considered when determining whether children's needs can be met. This has had a detrimental impact on the functioning of the home and the quality of care provided.

Children are actively supported and encouraged to express their views, thoughts and feelings. They are given opportunities to have their voices heard and are empowered to make requests and share their preferences, knowing they will be listened to and respected. Children report that they have enjoyable experiences and that they like living in the home. This approach strengthens children's sense of self-worth and promotes independence and self-determination.

Staff speak about children with compassion, warmth and empathy. Despite challenges, some staff members remain committed to building and maintaining relationships with children. They understand that children may sometimes reject support or connection due to their previous experiences. This nurturing approach helps children to gradually develop trust and feel valued and safe.

Children's educational needs are actively promoted, supported and encouraged. When children do not attend education, effective plans are in place to ensure that learning continues. This reflects a proactive and child-centred approach to education.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Limited experience in the staff team in managing complex behaviours has had a negative impact on practice. Although physical restraint is used only when necessary to mitigate risk, some incidents could have been avoided through more confident practice and a

coordinated, planned response to children's risks and behaviours. Furthermore, staffing ratios have caused a child to feel unsafe in their home. Leaders have not considered the impact of staff gender ratios on each shift in relation to children's individual needs. This has increased anxiety for children and limited their opportunities to form trusting relationships. This highlights shortfalls in both individual staff practice and strategic management.

Staff responses to challenging behaviour do not always align with the home's therapeutic model of care. On occasion, staff have threatened to involve the police as a means of managing behaviour. This approach risks criminalising children and may have a detrimental impact on their emotional wellbeing and sense of safety.

The administration of medication has not always been robust. Two medication errors have occurred within a short period. In response, staff have received additional training and undertaken competency assessments to support safer practice going forward.

When safeguarding concerns arise, staff respond promptly. Where there are concerns relating to radicalisation or exploitation, there is a coordinated response with external professionals to ensure that risks are managed strategically. Staff also draw on the expertise of clinical professionals and psychotherapists to develop their understanding of children's needs and respond accordingly. This has contributed to a reduction in certain risk-taking behaviours demonstrated by children.

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

There have been changes to the leadership and management of the home since the last inspection. A new manager is now in post and has acknowledged that the operation of the home is currently under strain and does not provide the child with an adequate standard of care.

The service lacks a core staff team and relies heavily on agency staff. Recent decisions to implement changes to both the leadership of the home and the children residing there have contributed to a period of disruption and poor staff morale. This has adversely affected continuity of care and the overall functioning of the home. The manager has been working beyond her contracted hours, including covering shifts, which inevitably reduces her capacity to fulfil core managerial responsibilities and provide effective strategic leadership. The manager is actively working with senior leaders to re-establish stability in the home. This includes making further changes to the staff structure, with a focus on recruiting more experienced staff. This is intended to improve the quality and consistency of care that children receive.

An independent visitor visits the home as required; however, they do not routinely obtain feedback from external professionals involved in children's care. This limits the effectiveness of quality assurance and the manager's monitoring of the home and reduces the ability to evaluate the impact of care provided.

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 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)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children receive care that is coordinated in a way that reduces risk, so that incidents and the use of restraint are less likely to occur. This includes ensuring that staff do not contact the police to manage behaviour when alternate strategies can be used.	31 July 2026
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— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; 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	31 July 2026

arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children's moves into and out of the home are accurately assessed and managed. This includes ensuring that staff have the appropriate skills and experience to meet children's needs.	
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; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the home is sufficiently staffed by individuals who have the skills and experience required to meet children's needs, so that continuity of care is maintained. Careful consideration should be given to staff gender ratios on each shift.	31 July 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring to drive continuous improvement. This includes ensuring that the independent visitor obtains external feedback and that reports are submitted to Ofsted within the required time

frames. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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: SC426318

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Unity Residential Care Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Emmaline Scoular

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Tonia Dubidat, Social Care Inspector

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