

# SC488961

Registered provider: United Childrens Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private organisation. It provides care for up to 5 children with emotional and social difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2025.

One child has moved into the home.

At the time of the inspection, 4 children were living at the home. The inspector spoke to 2 children and observed 1 child. One child was not in the home at the time of inspection as they were spending time with family.

The inspector was aware during this inspection that serious child protection allegations were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegations were considered, where appropriate, alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform the inspector's judgements.

### Inspection dates: 5 and 6 May 2026

|                                                                                           |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b> | <b>good</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                                             |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | good |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|

|                                           |      |
|-------------------------------------------|------|
| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | good |
|-------------------------------------------|------|

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 13 May 2025

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement            |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 13/05/2025      | Full            | Good                            |
| 20/06/2024      | Full            | Good                            |
| 16/08/2023      | Full            | Requires improvement to be good |
| 29/11/2022      | Full            | Good                            |

## Summary of findings

Staff demonstrate strong commitment to the children and deliver good care, supported by a manager who provides clear guidance and development opportunities to build staff's skills and knowledge. A key strength is the positive relationships that staff and the manager build with professionals, families and children. Staff safeguard children. However, responses when children go missing from home and accuracy of records and information within plans requires development. The manager has systems in place to monitor the care of children. These require further strengthening to ensure timely reporting to relevant authorities and robust safe recruitment of staff.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The home is large which gives children lots of space. This includes a dedicated area for a home cinema which staff and children use for movie nights. Staff have supported children to personalise their bedrooms. However, some areas of the home need attention to ensure that it remains well maintained and clean. Children's belongings are not always stored with care. For example, bikes and fishing equipment are kept alongside and under rubbish that is waiting to be disposed of.

Staff have successfully helped a child move into the home. They arranged a visit beforehand so that the child could meet the other children and staff. Staff encouraged the child to think about how they wanted their bedroom to look in preparation for the move. Staff also spoke with the children already living in the home to prepare them for welcoming someone new. The manager had good communication with people who know the child well, to make sure the child's needs were understood. The manager used this information to provide staff with training tailored to the child's specific needs.

Staff prioritise children's education. When children are not attending school, teachers and tutors are welcomed into the home to ensure that education continues. If staff have concerns about a child's educational progress, they work collaboratively with education providers to make sure the right support is in place. Staff enjoy celebrating children's educational achievements. Staff attended a child's music event at their education placement, where the child received an award. Staff embraced the opportunity to celebrate this success with the child and made sure the child knew how proud they were. Staff understand the importance of preparing children for adulthood. Staff encourage children to keep their rooms clean and tidy. All children are supported to do their own laundry. Children are also encouraged to cook meals and bake. For one child, staff are planning work around how to budget money.

The manager and staff actively advocate for children to maintain relationships and have time with friends and family. Wherever possible, the manager and staff take a flexible approach to planning this time and regularly support last minute changes to ensure that children can see those who matter to them. The flexible approach includes providing

transport for children, which at times is significant, as well as ensuring staff are present when support is required. Staff have access to a caravan they use to take children on holiday. The manager has offered this resource to a family to further support a child to spend quality time with people who matter to them.

Staff support children to maintain good health by ensuring that they can access both universal and specialist health services. They also promote physical activity, such as football and boxing. Staff recognise the importance of supporting children's emotional wellbeing. They encourage children to access the therapeutic support. The manager provides staff access to therapeutic consultation. This helps them understand children's behaviour and build positive trusting relationships with them.

Staff take every opportunity to capture children's wishes and feelings through informal everyday conversations, as well as more formal methods such as weekly meetings and monthly feedback. This ensures that children's voices are woven throughout all aspects of their care. A child suggested renaming the weekly meeting to 'Big Discussions, Bright Futures'. This new name has now been adopted not only in this home but across other children's homes in the organisation.

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

#### **Staff speak to children**

Staff speak to children regularly about their feelings and do so with understanding and kindness. Their approach promotes positive behaviour which includes verbal praise and rewards, such as gift vouchers. The manager has recently introduced 'caught in the act of kindness'. This is where children are recognised and rewarded by staff for being kind. When children display unwanted behaviours, staff use a curious and reflective approach to understand the reasons behind it. They focus on learning and moving forward rather than blame. This approach has meant there has been only one occasion where a child needed to be held by staff to keep themselves and others safe.

Staff work hard to build positive and trusting relationships with children. Children are able to identify staff they can talk to about their worries and know how to complain. The strong and trusting relationships staff have built with children play a key role in keeping children safe. For a child who is at risk of exploitation a professional said the child needed 'to feel wanted' and the best thing about the staff is 'they give the child that'. Staff know what to do if a child makes an allegation. They support the child to feel heard and listened to, whilst escalating concerns to the manager. The manager takes effective action to keep everyone involved safe and work closely with safeguarding agencies to ensure that appropriate steps are taken.

Staff look for children when they go missing from the home and make efforts to retain contact with the child. They liaise with professionals, such as social workers and police, working collaboratively to locate the child and return them home safely. However, staff do not always continue these actions when children are missing overnight. Nor do they consistently contact people known to the child who may have information about their whereabouts. When children return home, staff offer care and attention to ensure that

they are safe and well. The manager arranges for the child to be spoken to by an independent person but does not seek what information was gathered when the child was spoken to. Therefore, there is a missed opportunity to use this information to improve staff practise and reduce the likelihood of children going missing.

Staff understand the risks associated with children using the internet. When concerns arise, they work directly with the child to help them learn how to use the internet safely. While this work is taking place, staff put additional measures in place to keep the child safe until they are confident the child can safely manage this independently. Staff take a similar approach when supporting children who use substances. Children are educated about the impact of substance use and are offered access to specialist services to help them make safe and more informed choices.

Staff create plans to help keep children safe and record significant events involving children, detailing the actions staff have taken. However, these plans do not always include all relevant information. Records produced do not accurately reflect when actions have been taken to support the child and promote their safety. When there is a serious incident, the manager notifies the relevant authorities but not always within expected timescales.

Staff have secured fire extinguishers in a room where staff sleep in response to a child's behaviour. Although the child no longer displays this behaviour, the fire extinguishers have remained locked away. This means that in the event of a fire, staff would not have immediate access to this essential safety equipment.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Over the past year, the manager has prioritised building a supportive and welcoming culture within the home with a focus on providing therapeutic care to children. Staff have said they enjoy working in the home, take pride in caring for the children and feel fully supported by the manager. This approach has helped retain staff ensuring continuity of care and stability for the children. Although there are some vacancies within the staff team, staff work additional hours to ensure that children are cared for by familiar and trusted adults. When recruiting new staff, the manager follows safer recruiting principles. However, they do not consistently explore and record gaps in employment.

The manager builds strong positive working relationships with professionals. The manager actively challenges professionals and holds them to account when they believe obligations are not being met. An example of this is when the manager challenged 3 different police forces when there was disagreement who was to take responsibility for taking action when a child went missing from the home.

The manager provides staff with regular, good quality reflective supervision that focuses on the needs of both staff and children. Staff said they find supervision useful and that it supports their development. The manager extends this approach to team meetings, using them as an opportunity for learning. For example, a recent team meeting explored professional curiosity and its role in safeguarding children. A therapist attends team

meetings to offer consultation. The involvement of the therapist allows opportunity to develop staffs understanding of children's needs and helps them consider therapeutic approaches to their practise. The manager ensures that staff have access to regular training. As well as completing mandatory training, staff have completed training to meet children's specific needs.

The manager has developed systems to monitor the care provided to children. They regularly audit children's records and take action in response to children's expressed wishes and feelings. The manager also spends regular time with the children, often sharing an evening meal which creates opportunity for the manager to hear children's views about the care they received.

The manager has recognised challenges in gathering feedback from families and professionals and has introduced a new approach to address this. The manager is able to evaluate the care provided to children and use this to identify and implement improvements. The manager also completes regular reviews of care. However, they do not always submit these to the relevant authority within timescales.

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

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

| Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Due date      |
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| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health; and</p> <p>that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1) (2) (a)(i)(v)(vi)(vii))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that fire extinguishers remain easily accessible at all times in the event of a fire.</p> | 7 August 2026 |

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| <p>Ensure that staff follow plans when children go missing and that plans are in place detailing staff responsibilities and actions when children are missing from home overnight.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                      |
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.<br/>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that quality of care reviews are completed and submitted to the relevant authority within identified timescales.</p> <p>Ensure that children's plans and records contain all relevant information including accurate dates of when staff have taken action in response to children's needs.</p> <p>Ensure that information gathered from children return home interviews after being missing from home is used to inform and develop care provided to children.</p> | <p>7 August 2026</p> |
| <p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>7 August 2026</p> |

understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;

ensure that staff—

protect and promote each child's welfare;

treat each child with dignity and respect;

ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—

meet the needs of each child; and  
(Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(ii)(iii)(c)(i))

In particular, ensure that children's belongings are stored appropriately to prevent damage and are not kept alongside rubbish or waste materials.

Ensure that children's living environment is maintained to a good standard to promote children's welfare.

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure there is a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the relevant safeguarding agencies. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- The registered person should ensure, as set out in regulations 31-33, that good employment practice is maintained. This includes a record of full employment history, together with a satisfactory explanation of any gaps in employment, in writing. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

## 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:** SC488961

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** United Childrens Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** Unit J The Quays, Burton Waters, Lincoln LN1 2XG

**Responsible individual:** Beth Morrish

**Registered manager:** Selina Mcindoe

## Inspectors

Laura Copus, social care inspector

Ruth Alexander, social care inspector

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