

SC489036

Registered provider: United Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and provides care for up to six children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager is experienced and is registered with Ofsted.

Two children were living at the home at the time of the inspection. Both children were spoken to during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 April 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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 14 May 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/05/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/04/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/06/2022	Full	Good
07/03/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, one child has moved into the home and one child has moved out of the home. At the time of the inspection, two children were living at the home.

Staff have positive relationships with children. They speak about the children in a warm and nurturing way and can describe the children's interests thoroughly. One child said that they have good relationships with the staff.

Both children have education places. One child is working towards their mock exams. Another child was not in education before they moved to the home. Staff helped prepare the child for school. The child had online tuition and a gradual introduction to school. Staff understand the barriers to learning and manage them sensitively. Children are making good progress with education.

Children are encouraged to spend time with people who are important to them. Both children see their family regularly. One child has worked towards overnight stays with their boyfriend. Another child has had family for dinner at the home.

Children take part in activities. These include day trips, horse riding and visits to the zoo. One child is planning a holiday. Children benefit from fun and enriching experiences.

Both children have therapy. One child said her therapist is lovely and has really helped her. Children have a safe space to work through difficult life experiences.

Children are encouraged with independence work that is age appropriate. The manager has created an interactive key-work pack. The pack includes important information about what children are entitled to when they move out of the home. The work helps children develop skills to manage living independently. One child has a cat, which is promoting a sense of responsibility ready for when the child moves out.

The home is spacious, welcoming and well decorated. The children benefit from various communal areas. Children's bedrooms are personalised. However some of the carpets are stained or frayed, which detracts from an otherwise well-kept environment.

Children have access to vapes in the home. One child had a vape in their bedroom and another child was vaping in the home during the inspection which was not challenged. Although children have completed key-work sessions around the impact of vapes, allowing vaping does not encourage positive role modelling for children. Vaping could impact children's health.

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

The manager and staff have acted to help keep children safe. Despite this, some situations which have been out of the staff's control have meant that, at times, one child

has been exposed to risky situations. The staff are confident and well equipped to manage safeguarding incidents.

There has been a number of missing-from-home incidents. On one occasion, agency staff did not initially manage the incident to the manager's expectations. The manager ensured that this was addressed appropriately. There have been no concerns with how staff manage the incidents since. Staff implement children's protocols around missing from home. Children receive independent return home interviews.

The manager has regular multi-agency meetings. Professionals address significant safeguarding concerns for one child. Working collaboratively helps to reduce the risks to children.

One child, who is at risk of exploitation, has a specialist police exploitation worker that they engage with well. The staff have also completed important key-work sessions around the dangers of being missing from home, grooming and online safety.

Holding children is used minimally. When children are held, this is proportionate and used appropriately. Children are spoken to about the incidents. However, on one occasion the manager has not debriefed staff and opportunities for learning could be missed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has appropriate experience and is working towards her level 5 qualification. She is supported by an experienced operations manager.

Staff feel fully supported by the manager. They said that she is approachable and open to ideas. One member of staff said, 'She is wonderful.' The staff receive regular supervision and are happy and fulfilled in their roles.

One social worker said their child has made good progress, and that communication is generally good. Despite the changes in staffing, the child has said that they would not want to live anywhere else.

The manager understands the importance of reviewing children's care needs. She has identified, for reasons beyond her control, that the child's needs can no longer be met at the home. The manager is working with the child's social worker to ensure appropriate planning. Reviewing the child's care means that the child will get the specialist care they now need.

One child's move was planned and managed sensitively. Staff took the child for a meal before they moved. The manager and staff went with the child to help them settle. The manager and staff have since visited the child and taken them to watch football.

The manager has worked hard to recruit permanent staff. At the time of the inspection, the use of agency staff has been used for a short period in response to a specific need. The reliance on agency staff is reducing, and some agency staff are due to start working

permanently at the home. Regular agency staff have been used to help with consistency. However, two regular agency staff have not had supervision from the manager. Not supervising regular agency staff reduces the manager's ability to monitor the quality of care that children receive.

The manager completes a six-monthly report. The report gives a good overview of children's progress. However, the report lacks feedback and evaluation from others. Without gathering this additional information, opportunities for making continuous improvements could be reduced.

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 health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that vapes or vaping is not allowed in the home and that children are encouraged to access smoke cessation.	17 May 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing environment that meets the needs of the children. In particular, ensure that bathrooms are clean and well maintained. Ensure that the internal walls are clean, any flaking paint is addressed, and exterior walls are suitably maintained. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. In particular, ensure that staff are always debriefed following the use of a physical intervention and all staff, including agency staff, have appropriate supervisions. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring to inform the regulation 45 report. The report should include appropriate evaluation of the home to ensure continuous improvement. ('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: SC489036

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: United Children's Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Beth Morrish

Registered manager: Geraldine Gemmell

Inspector

Amy Miles, Social Care Inspector

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