

SC489970

Registered provider: United Children's 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 4 children with emotional and social difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2024.

At the time of the inspection, 4 children were living at the home and were all spoken to.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 April 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: 8 April 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Following the last full inspection in April 2025, an assurance inspection took place on 23 September 2025. This assurance inspection judged that there were serious and/or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children.

Ofsted issued compliance notices under regulation 11, the positive relationships standard, regulation 13, the leadership and management standard, and regulation 14,

the care planning standard. A further monitoring inspection was completed on 04 November 2025. Despite two compliance notices not being met, significant progress had been made. No further compliance notices were set, and a requirement about care planning was made.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/04/2025	Full	Good
25/06/2024	Full	Good
21/11/2023	Full	Good
29/06/2022	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Although staff speak positively about children and know them well, processes to care for and keep children safe are not robust. Leaders and managers demonstrate a lack of professional curiosity regarding risks, which impacts the identification and understanding of effective measures to keep children safe. There are inconsistencies in the holistic care provided to children. Although improvements have been made since the last inspection, the condition of the home requires continued attention and while shortfalls are beginning to be identified by leaders and managers, actions to address these are not yet fully understood or embedded.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall, the experience and progress of children requires improvement due to shortfalls in the protection of children and the leadership and management of the home.

Although some improvements have been made since the last inspection, staff have not consistently maintained a safe, clean, and nurturing environment for children. Areas of the home are poorly maintained, and there is insufficient oversight to ensure that acceptable standards are upheld. Staff have not effectively supported children to develop the necessary skills to keep their bedrooms clean and hygienic. This is evidenced by one child's bedroom floor being sticky and a fan heavily coated in dust, despite the manager stating that weekly deep cleans are undertaken. The therapy room that is used on occasion is cold and uninviting, limiting children's ability to feel safe and comfortable when expressing their thoughts and emotions in this space. Similarly, the education room is not suitably arranged to support learning, reducing opportunities for children to engage positively in education.

The progress of children is varied, with 3 children making good progress. Support to help prepare children for future independence is limited. One child was supported to complete an independence assessment; however, staff have been unable to motivate this child to engage. A professional working with this child feels the progress for this child has 'stalled' and is worried the child may not be prepared for independence at 18 in the coming months.

Staff support children to access education, they attend meetings and arrange educational activities to support children's education. For children who are not attending an education provision, there are clear structures and routines in place. Education professionals say that staff's communication is a real strength and fundamental to children's progress in education.

No children have moved in or out of the home since the last monitoring inspection. When staff have moved on from the home, endings have not been consistently managed

to support children's needs. Leaders and managers have not fully recognised or responded to the impact of loss and change for children, which may negatively affect their emotional wellbeing, sense of stability, and ability to form trusting relationships.

Children are supported by staff to spend time with their family, and people who are important to them. Staff speak positively about the children and appear to know them well. Staff support children to engage in a range of activities, both in and out of the home, which promotes their social and emotional wellbeing.

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

Leaders and managers do not appear to have a robust understanding of risk. There is a lack of professional curiosity regarding how risks could present. This has meant a significant safeguarding incident has gone unnoticed until a child raised it. Whilst safety plans and staffing levels have been implemented to reduce risk, these plans have not been consistently followed.

Documents to keep children safe, and to promote the care of children, are unclear. Whilst plans are individualised, they are not consistently updated to reflect current risks or actions staff need to take.

Staff do not take a consistent approach to behaviour management. There is a lack of shared understanding between staff and the registered manager regarding the use of consequences, which results in inconsistent responses to children's behaviour. Staff are not consistently recording the use of consequences, which limits oversight and prevents effective monitoring by leaders and managers. This means patterns of behaviour and responses cannot be fully understood or evaluated. In addition, consequences used within the home are not always in line with the home's stated ethos.

Staff are trained to use physical interventions, and these are used rarely. When physical interventions are used, children are not spoken to about the measure of restraint. Staff do not always follow the suggested support outlined for children, causing one child to experience heightened distress. This resulted in the child requiring physical intervention from staff, which may have been avoidable if support plans had been followed.

Children have shared feeling bullied by their peers. There is some evidence that staff are talking to children about bullying, however there is limited management oversight to ensure progress is being made to help children feel safer.

There are clear plans in place to support staff to know what to do when children go missing. Staff follow these plans well.

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

Leaders and managers do not consistently or effectively monitor the quality of care provided to children, and the responsible individual has not maintained sufficient oversight of the registered manager's direct practice. This lack of scrutiny weakens accountability and limits the identification of shortfalls. Monitoring systems are not robust and have failed to identify gaps in care, including delays in recognising that a child was not receiving internet safety checks in line with their care plan. As a result, children may be exposed to unmanaged risks, and opportunities to improve the quality and consistency of care are missed, impacting their safety and overall wellbeing.

A newly recruited staff team has led to some improvement in the culture of the home. However, leaders have not ensured that staff have the necessary experience, knowledge, and skills to meet the complex needs of children. While these vulnerabilities are recognised by leaders, there are no clear or robust plans in place to mitigate risk as staff develop their competence. Although staff have completed mandatory training, they have not been provided with training tailored to the specific needs of the children in their care. As a result, staff are not consistently equipped to respond effectively to children's behaviours and risks, which has led to variability in the quality of care provided and may compromise children's safety, stability, and overall

Staff have not always been safely recruited. One staff member has had access to children's records, and may have had access to children, prior to DBS checks being completed. Another staff member's employment history was not verified in line with required checks. This has the potential to leave children at risk of harm.

The care afforded to children has varied, dependent on the child's legal status. Managers and staff have limited understanding of how to implement boundaries and consequences for children when the local authority does not share parental responsibility. The manager has not been proactive in identifying ways to ensure that actions are taken to promote the welfare and safety of children in this circumstance.

Serious incidents are not always notified to Ofsted in line with regulations. This impacts the regulator's ability to monitor and evaluate how well children are safeguarded. The homes statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the monitoring and surveillance in place within the home, or the homes approach to restraint.

Staff receive regular supervision and access regular team meetings. These provide opportunity to consider children's needs, safeguarding and staff well-being. Staff find the support they receive from leaders and managers helpful, and feel they can be open and honest about any concerns. Leaders and managers have developed good working relationships with professionals in the children's network.

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 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(v)(b)) In particular, ensure that safety plans are followed by staff. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	12 June 2026
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home.	12 June 2026

The registered person must ensure that—

within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—

the name of the child;

details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure;

the date, time and location of the use of the measure;

a description of the measure and its duration;

details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;

the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used;

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and

a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure;

within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")

has spoken to the user about the measure; and

has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and

within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure.

(Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(i)(ii) (c))

In particular, ensure the use of proportionate consequences, and recording of these consequences.

In particular, ensure that children are spoken to about any use of measure.

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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h))	12 June 2026
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. The registered person must take reasonable steps to ensure that any individual who is working at the home and who does not fall within paragraph (2)(a) and (b) is appropriately supervised while carrying out the individual's duties. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(d) (8))	12 June 2026
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;	12 June 2026

use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—

ensure that staff—

protect and promote each child's welfare;

treat each child with dignity and respect;

help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult;

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

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

In particular, ensure that the home environment is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and that the home is decorated to support the therapeutic ethos of the home.

In particular, ensure that children are supported to manage endings when staff employment ends.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all serious events are notified within 24 hours, regardless of a weekend or public holiday. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- The registered person must within the Statement of Purpose include a description of all monitoring and surveillance of children and the homes approach to restraint of children, including how staff are trained and their competency assessed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)

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: SC489970

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: Sarah-Louise Foster

Inspectors

Laura Copus, Social Care Inspector

Siobhan Holmes, Social Care Inspector

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