

1212117

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned home that provides short-, medium- and long-term care for up to three children with emotional needs and challenging behaviour.

Visit dates: 3 to 4 November 2020

Previous inspection date: 14 May 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

The home currently cares for two children; one who has lived at the home for several months and one who moved to the home very recently. Children like spending time with staff and they do activities together, such as shopping and watching films. The home is a positive and welcoming environment.

Unfortunately, there has been a high turnover of staff within the home and children have not always had the opportunity to have meaningful goodbyes when staff have left. Consequently, children have experienced some disrupted relationships. Staffing issues are now resolved and a full staff team is in place.

Staff and managers have endeavoured to support children's education plans, to motivate children and to advocate for additional support from the local authority. However, despite appropriate action being taken, arrangements have broken down for one child and they have now been out of formal education for several months.

Staff have communicated well with wider professionals throughout the pandemic and have appropriately challenged when services have been delayed for children. One child does not agree with their care plan or the plans for their school placement. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that fewer professionals have been able to visit in person to discuss decision-making processes directly with children. Staff have supported children to use their advocate. Children understand the risks associated with COVID-19 and the restrictions this puts on them. They understand why they need to wear face masks outside.

The home environment is well maintained, and children freely ask for snacks and drinks. There are incentives in place to encourage positive behaviour and children know what goals they are working towards. However, staff do not always recognise how a child's untidiness can correlate to their emotional health and wellbeing, and when a different, more therapeutic approach is required.

The safety of children

Restraint practice is used within the home, however, this is only used as a last resort. Wherever possible, staff use a therapeutic approach to de-escalate children's behaviour before it becomes unsafe. Debriefs are formally completed with both children and staff.

Following any significant incidents in the home, children and staff are encouraged to reflect and show empathy. For the children currently accommodated, there have been no incidents of them going missing from the home.

All risk assessments are thorough and are routinely updated. Staff understand the needs of the children but struggle at times to get the necessary support services in place for them, particularly therapeutic support. This is despite the best efforts of

the acting manager in requesting support. Staff are trained to address needs arising from trauma and self-harm.

Admission processes have not always identified how well children's needs can be met. This particularly relates to placement planning and identifying whether the services children need will be in place. Managers have not always had the resources in-house to meet children's needs.

Concerns have been raised previously about the conduct of some staff members, in relation to maintaining consistent rules and professional boundaries. When concerns have been raised regarding the conduct of staff members, disciplinary processes have been completed appropriately by senior managers. These matters are now resolved.

Leaders and managers

Earlier in the year, the home experienced significant instability. Previous staffing levels were not sufficient and staff morale was low. Poor staffing levels impacted on the care that was provided to the children. This was compounded by some poor placement decisions which failed to fully consider the likely impact on children already living in the home. As a result, there were not enough well-trained and resilient staff to meet the needs of all the children in the home.

Senior managers were slow to recognise these shortfalls but have since taken robust action to address them. The previous registered manager resigned, and more effective management arrangements were put in place. An acting manager was then appointed, and he intends to apply for the role of registered manager. A full staff team has been established, with new staff subject to robust recruitment processes and a thorough induction. All staff now receive regular supervision. Staff morale is much improved, and staff are expressing confidence in the new management arrangements. Managers are also focusing much more on ensuring suitable staff retention.

A hold is put on new admissions while the home stabilises, and proper consideration and planning was made for the child who very recently joined the home. Managers have offered further reassurance that no more children will be admitted until the home is more settled and they can be confident that children's needs can be accommodated alongside those of the existing children.

Managers and staff now present as being fully focused on meeting children's needs. Because of these changes in staffing and practice, the care being provided is improving.

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, 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
Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)(d)) This specifically relates to the need for stronger advocacy and challenge when children's needs are not met, for example in education, health or care planning. Leaders and managers are required to work effectively alongside other professionals to ensure that children's needs are met without undue delay.	1 January 2021
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.	1 January 2021

(Regulation 8 (1))	
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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)) This specifically relates to suitable staff retention, improved placement matching and improving the outcomes for the children in their care.	1 January 2021
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 children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if— the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(e)(i))	1 January 2021

This relates to ensuring that children receive effectively planned care from point of placement through to when they leave the home. Additionally, to review relevant plans to ensure that staff can meet the needs of the children at the point of placement.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1212117

Registered provider: Pathway Care Solutions Limited 04004053

Registered provider address: 1 Merchant's Place, River Road, Bolton, Lancashire BL2 1BX

Responsible individual: Donna Carlin

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Andi Lilley-Tams, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020