

1241897

Registered provider: Pathways Care Group Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to five children with social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. At the time of the visit, three children were living at the home.

The registered manager left in June 2025. An interim manager was appointed in January 2025.

Inspection date: 19 August 2025

Date of last inspection: 24 June 2025

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection:

- There are significant shortfalls in the safety and protection of children, and the children's welfare is not being promoted.
- Leaders and managers have failed to make effective arrangements to safeguard children.

Since the last inspection, one child has moved into the home. Two children were spoken with during the inspection.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that staffing ratios are adequate to meet the needs of the children. Children have been left alone and restricted to one side of the house. Staff cannot meet the children's needs or supervise them safely.

Children's plans advise that they need structure and a routine. As children have been unable to use parts of the home, activities have been restricted. The children are bored and unstimulated.

Leaders and managers have used an environmental restraint to manage a child's behaviour. This has not had the appropriate assessment or legal consent. These restrictions have prevented children from accessing the kitchen. One child has been distressed by this. Following an incident when staff refused a child access to the kitchen, an incident followed, and the child required hospital treatment.

Safeguarding concerns are not always reported. When incidents have been reported to the local authority designated officer (LADO), the actions set by the LADO have not been followed through. Leaders and managers have failed to take necessary actions following staff using unrecognised physical interventions. Staff have remained working with children following allegations. This has exposed children to potential harm and gives them the message that their concerns are not valid.

The house is next to a busy road. The front gate has a large gap between the gate and the fence that the child climbs up. There has been no attempt to minimise this risk by adapting the gate. The gate is guarded by staff when the child spends time in the garden. This issue has not been identified as a significant concern by leaders and managers.

Police have raised concerns about the home. They said that the communication with the home has reduced. The staff do not always report incidents as required. Staff said that the managers advised them not to report incidents to the police. This means that the staff and children have not accessed necessary support when it was required.

There is a divide between staff and senior leaders. Staff do not feel supported or have the appropriate guidance to keep children safe. The turnover of staff is high. Staff are working long hours, often without a break. There is a high use of agency staff. Agency staff have walked out on night shifts as they were not happy with the running of the shift.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that there is effective oversight regarding staff practice and incidents at the home. While the manager was on leave, there was no management oversight at the home. Important records, such as records of physical intervention and allegations, were not reviewed.

The requirements from the previous inspection were not reviewed at this visit. Therefore, these will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/06/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
04/06/2024	Full	Good
03/04/2023	Full	Good
05/05/2022	Full	Good

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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; 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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and 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; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv)(v)(vi)(b)(d))	22 Sep 2025
*The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—	22 Sep 2025

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; 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(ii)(h))	
*Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing— injury to any person (including the child); serious damage to the property of any person (including the child); restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (2))	22 Sep 2025

The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— The measures of control, discipline and restraint may be used in relation to children in the home 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 date, time and location of the use of the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; 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)(b) (3)(a)(iii)(vi)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	22 Sep 2025
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; and there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)(e))	25 Sep 2025
The registered person must give notice in writing to HMCI, as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so, if any of the following events take place or are expected by the registered person to take place— a person other than the registered person carries on or manages the children's home;	25 Sep 2025

a person ceases to carry on or manage the home. (Regulation 49 (a)(b))	
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*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of the children. It should be homely. In particular, the registered person should prevent doors from slamming shut and ensure repairs to the home are completed promptly. Plans to revamp the home to continue at an appropriate pace. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1241897

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pathways Care Group Limited

Registered provider address: Pathways Care Group, Minton Place, Victoria Street, Windsor SL4 1EG

Responsible individual: Benjamin Harper

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sarah Cooper, Social Care Inspector

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