

1277045

Registered provider: Pathway Care Solutions Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a large, national organisation. It provides care for up to four children who may have learning difficulties and experience social and/or emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, two children were living at the home.

The manager has been in post since August 2023. She has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 10 July 2024

Date of last inspection: 1 May 2024

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspectors evaluated:

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

Inspectors have 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:

- Leaders and managers have failed to ensure robust oversight of practice. They do not accurately understand the impact of staff's work to ensure that children receive good-quality care and make progress.
- Significant concerns have been identified regarding the staffing of the home. Staff do not consistently have the training, skills or understanding to meet children's complex needs.
- Several staff members have been subject to recent disciplinary action; this includes the acting manager and the deputy manager. Substantiated concerns centre around poor and harmful practice towards children.
- Arrangements to monitor staff subject to performance issues are inadequate. Agency staff are working on an individual basis with staff who are not currently allowed to lone work.
- Leaders and managers have failed to fully explore agency staff's experience, knowledge and skills before they work directly with children.
- Leadership and management of the home are not effective. Insufficient action has been taken to address the requirements and recommendations made at the full inspection on 1 and 2 May 2024.

Leaders and managers do not have effective oversight of the practice in this home. Staff consistently lack knowledge of how to meet children's needs. There is no unified approach among the staff team in meeting children's basic personal care needs. Specific healthcare needs for one child, who has now left the home, were not well known to staff. Staff lack the skills and access to specific training to meet children's complex needs.

Agency staff have worked directly with the children, including providing intimate care. Leaders and managers have not ensured that the agency staff have the experience to support children in this respect. Concerns about agency recruitment were raised at the last inspection, with safer recruitment processes not being in place regarding temporary staff.

The physical environment continues to be unwelcoming. Televisions are housed in clear plastic boxes, there are few personal possessions, and stains and scuff marks make the home appear uncared for. No attempts have been made to improve the home environment since the last inspection, and this is now restated as a requirement.

High numbers of incidents of restraint and allegations of harm to children have been reported. At the last inspection, requirements were made for systems to be in place to monitor these incidents so that changes can be made. Patterns and trends are not identified and monitored. This means that there are gaps in the management oversight of these incidents.

Allegations against staff have been reported appropriately. Internal investigations have identified poor practice, lack of management oversight, and training needs. However, the same members of staff continue to work with children. At times, agency staff are counted in staff ratios when members of staff are not allowed to lone work due to substantiated concerns around their practice.

There has been a high turnover in staff, with seven vacancies at the time of this inspection. Agency staff have been needed regularly, meaning that children experience care from inconsistent adults. An action plan has been put in place to provide additional support from experienced managers and staff to model good practice and oversight over the next four weeks. Longer-term plans need confirmation.

Limited action has been taken by leaders and managers to address the requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/05/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/08/2023	Full	Good
21/09/2022	Full	Good
12/10/2021	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 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— 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 have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of 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; 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)(c)(e)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that there are suitable systems in place to monitor and review care in the home, particularly incidents of restraint. The registered person should ensure that any learning identified is shared with the staff team and that any changes required in response are made in a timely way. In addition, they should ensure that a stable and skilled staff team provides	2 August 2024

consistent support to children to enable them to make progress in line with the home's statement of purpose.	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(xi)) In particular, ensure that staff have the skills and support to help children manage their relationships with each other positively, and that, where necessary, they can intervene to stop others being harmed.	2 August 2024
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.	2 August 2024

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)) In particular, ensure that there are clear plans for one child’s support needs with toileting and that these are well understood by staff.	
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— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d)) In particular, ensure that the necessary information required under Schedule 2 is obtained for all staff who work in the home.	2 August 2024
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; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.	2 August 2024

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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 enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii))	
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*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's plans clearly outline how to promote and support their communication, including the tools or resources that are required. Those tools should be available around the home to support children to express themselves. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.6)
- The registered person should ensure that conversations with children after incidents reflect on what has happened and are considered by the manager for the learning identified. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.6)
- The registered person should ensure that they speak with staff after incidents of restraint in the home to reflect on practice and identify any training needs. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.56)
- The registered person should ensure that children's memory books are kept up to date so that the details of events and outings are not lost. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1277045

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pathway Care Solutions Limited

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Alison Blyth-Bishop

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Nickie Doney, Social Care Inspector

Polly Soper, Regional Improvement Manager

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