

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	09/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC029504
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Pathway Care Solutions Limited
Registered provider address	1 Merchant's Place, River Road, Bolton, Lancashire BL2 1BX

Responsible individual	Andrew Smith
Registered manager	Katherine Sydenham
Inspector	Judith Longden

Inspection date	09/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC029504

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff create an extremely caring and nurturing environment that provides a solid foundation for positive and trusting relationships between them and the young people. One young person commented, 'Compared to other homes this is way up there, and out there, the best.'
- Young people fully engage in their care and with the day-to-day running of the home. They also participate in the operation of the wider organisation, taking part in the recruitment of new staff.
- There continues to be a dramatic reduction in all risk-taking behaviour, such as going missing, self-harm and aggression. Staff are thoroughly trained in all aspects of safeguarding and protecting young people.
- Staff implement very detailed risk assessments, ensuring that young people enjoy a range of activities, and enjoy being a teenager, while keeping as safe as possible.
- Staff benefit from a good range of training opportunities. These are reviewed and evaluated, ensuring that training is relevant to the needs of the young people.
- Two requirements and four recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to provision and monitoring of education, evaluation and review of progress, record-keeping and staffing arrangements.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets 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
8: The education standard (1) The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; (iii) understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child overcome any such barriers; (v) promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; (vi) maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement; (vii) raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority.	01/11/2016
13: The leadership and management standard (1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home.	01/11/2016

(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (f) 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.	
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Progress in education can be measured and evidenced in various ways, including but not limited to: success in academic, vocational and other awards and qualifications; other formal attainment tests that are part of national assessment arrangements; and teacher's ongoing assessments. Measurements of progress should include qualitative information such as how well the child is being prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment, and quantitative data where available. Other metrics can also be taken into account such as rewards and recognition of achievements, improvements in attendance and, where appropriate, reduction in behavioural incidents including exclusion. The child's personal circumstances, individual needs and educational history are relevant in considering what might constitute progress; but should not limit aspirations for them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 26, paragraph 5.2)
- The registered person must demonstrate every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 51, paragraph 10.1)
- Any staff member in a deputy or supervisory role such as 'shift leader' should have substantial relevant experience of working in a children's home and have successfully completed their induction for the home in which they are employed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.21)
- All children's case records must be kept up to date and stored securely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and is registered to care for four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
02/12/2015	Full	Good
12/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/12/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people live in a home environment that exudes warmth, nurture and care. Staff encourage young people to sit and eat together and the kitchen is the real heartbeat of the home. 'Total acceptance of young people. It is a key principle', said one member of staff. In practice, this principle helps young people to build trusting relationships with staff, and to develop and improve their confidence and self-esteem. One professional said, 'There is a genuine feeling that staff like the residents and there is a homely feeling in the house.' Participation and involvement of young people are important strengths. Engagement in house meetings, attendance at reviews and regular key-work sessions enable young people to express their views and share any concerns. They describe how their involvement has improved the operation of the home. One young person had requested gardening tools, which were provided, enabling him to pursue his interest in gardening and improve the environment. Another young person has recently been involved in the selection and recruitment of new staff, thereby developing their own skills and experience of the recruitment process. Care planning is good. Managers review any proposed referrals to ensure that the staff have the skills and abilities to meet the young person's needs. Careful matching processes ensure that young people new to the home are made welcome and promote positive relationships. Care plans provide staff with information about goals for each placement and how best to care for the young people. Detail in these plans is generally good. However, some medical history is missing from one young person's record, which may hinder his progress in keeping physically healthy. A recommendation is made in respect to keeping all care records up to date. Young people move on successfully from the home and staff maintain contact, as do young people who have formed friendships with those who have left. This helps foster positive relationships and supports young people who may feel socially isolated after leaving the home. Young people know how to complain and have access to staff, managers, Ofsted and the independent visitor who comes to the home monthly. Young people make real progress in improving their mental health and emotional well-being. Incidents of self-harm have substantially decreased in recent months. Staff work closely with health professionals and therapists to ensure that	

appropriate support is available to meet young people's needs, and good-quality training helps staff deal with concerns around management of self-harming behaviours. The therapy team that supports young people also assists staff by giving them support and helping to build their emotional resilience. Some young people take responsibility for their own health, making medical appointments and joining weight reduction groups to improve their general health and well-being. Staff provide excellent support for young people in understanding their sexuality and gender. This is underpinned by very good training opportunities broadening staff knowledge in areas such as gender, equality and sexuality.

Staff work hard to ensure that transition to independence is a positive experience. Young people learn a variety of social and independence skills including budgeting, cooking and sustaining positive social networks. They enjoy a range of activities in groups and on their own. One young person enjoys attending cadets where he has already achieved a 'cadet of the month' award and enjoyed camping trips. This provides important opportunities for socialising and making friends outside the home. A member of staff commented, 'Just because they are kids in care does not mean they are different. All go through same rites of passage, same experiences, same growing up.'

Educational attainment and progression for some young people are below expectations. Although young people have aspirations and plans for future education and careers, these are not always supported by the education providers, nor are they always actively and persistently pursued by care staff. Education plans prepared with the placing authorities lack detail, have non-specific or untimed targets and do not provide for review. This means that care staff do not fully understand how best to support young people to achieve their educational potential. There is little or no review of progress in the form of reports from education providers. This is compounded by poor recording by care staff of progress in both formal and informal learning in the home. There is some challenge from staff to providers about the poor-quality service for young people, but this challenge is not consistent or sufficiently robust. Despite these concerns, some young people achieve qualifications – for example, one recently completed an online course in forensic science, achieving a distinction grade.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
'I feel really safe here, much better than in other homes', said one young person during the inspection. Others agree, stating in surveys and meetings that staff 'really look out for me and they always ring when we are out to check we are safe'	

and well'. Young people report that they feel increasingly safe both in and out of the home, in part because of the excellent range of training staff receive on a range of safeguarding and behaviour management topics. These include understanding radicalisation, sexual exploitation, child protection and medication practice. Staff review the quality and relevance of training to ensure that it is helpful in improving practice. This ensures that staff fully understand how to keep young people safe.

Excellent detailed risk assessments provide clear action for staff to follow to keep young people safe while allowing them the freedom to be teenagers. Regular review, alongside other professionals and with the young people, ensures that the assessments are kept up to date and relevant, and encourage young people to keep themselves safe.

Any concerns regarding sexual exploitation are addressed swiftly and thoroughly. The registered manager is proactive in arranging multi-agency meetings to assess and manage any risk, in order to keep young people safe from exploitation. She is tenacious in her dealings with placing authorities and health professionals, challenging them when necessary and ensuring that young people are protected by an all-encompassing multi-agency approach to risk management.

Incidents of being missing or absent from the home have significantly reduced, despite some young people having significant histories of running away. Very clear protocols ensure that staff understand what to do in the event of an incident. These protocols and processes are reviewed following any incident and discussed with other professionals, such as the police, to ensure that they remain relevant and protect young people.

Staff work extremely hard in supporting young people who display very varied and complex behaviours, and in helping them to make significant progress. One member of staff said, 'They have turned their lives around since being here.' Young people find that the home's warm and nurturing environment, and the staff who understand them, help them to calm down and behave more positively. The use of physical intervention is very rare and, when it has been used, it has been low-level guiding of young people away from situations. Intervention and incident reports provide good detail of any incident and action taken, and debriefs with staff and young people help to identify learning from incidents, thereby continually improving behaviour. A recent review of the use of sanctions means that these are used less frequently as the staff find other ways to support young people to understand the consequences of their actions.

No allegations or concerns have been raised with regard to safeguarding or child protection issues, although staff and young people clearly understand what to do if they are concerned. Bullying is not an issue in the home. Staff and young people know how to manage incidents if they do occur, and strong, positive relationships ensure that any concerns are 'nipped in the bud'.

The home is well maintained, clean, and kept safe and appropriately secure. Regular fire, maintenance, and health and safety checks ensure that it remains so. Regular fire drills ensure that young people and staff know what to do in the event of a fire. Recruitment practice is robust, ensuring that safe and appropriate adults are employed. Young people actively participate in the recruitment process, ensuring that the right people are appointed to care for them.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager is very experienced, well qualified and currently undertaking the level 5 diploma for leadership. She is ably assisted by a very competent assistant manager providing a strong leadership team. The home is part of a larger organisation, and staff report that they feel empowered by the company and valued because there is investment in training. This training covers a vast array of topics: both mandatory courses, such as safeguarding and medication practice, and additional courses relevant to the individual needs of each young person the staff care for. Regular supervision and annual appraisals enable staff to reflect on their work and raise any concerns, as well as highlighting the progress they make as individuals. Team meetings provide a forum for open and honest discussion, and encourage group learning. Staff are either qualified to the appropriate level, or are on the relevant course, ensuring that all are appropriately qualified within required timescales. Staffing levels are sufficient, although sometimes the registered manager has to borrow staff from other local homes in the organisation. Likewise, staff from this home often support others to ensure that staffing levels are maintained without having to rely on agency staff. However, this still means some inconsistency for young people who say that they do not like staff moving around the different homes, and that they often go to their rooms and withdraw from the home when there are staff they do not know well. On one occasion, a member of staff near completion of her probationary period was staffing the home with a member of staff from another home. Although very experienced and well trained, this member of staff did not usually work in this home. No adverse outcomes resulted. However, a record of the decision-making and assessment of the abilities of both staff would provide a clear audit of the management of risk when arranging staff cover. External monitoring by the independent visitor provides a robust monthly review of the quality of care, welfare and progress of the young people. Young people	

engage fully with this process, ensuring that their views and opinions are heard.

Internal monitoring is less robust: the home's development plan, while having clear goals and targets, lacks a detailed review of the progress made towards those targets. It is unclear, therefore, how the home can continue to improve. Similarly, young people's progress is not regularly reviewed or evaluated and, although some evidence of activities and achievements are noted, there is little in the way of target review.

The statement of purpose provides a good overview of the service, its ethos and its practice. The young people's guide is in brochure format, providing them with a clear understanding of how the home operates.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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