

SC029504

Registered provider: Pathway Care Solutions Ltd 04004053

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for four children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 9 to 10 August 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 3 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Young people make excellent progress given their starting points and complex needs.
- Young people fully engage in their care and with the day-to-day running of the home. They contribute through group discussions, attending review meetings, and reviewing their plans and assessments.
- Staff create an extremely caring and nurturing environment, providing the warmth and care that help build strong and trusting relationships.
- A continued reduction in risk-taking behaviour, such as going missing and self-harming, is attributable to excellent staff training, work in partnership and involvement of young people in understanding their own behaviour and safety.
- Staff work exceptionally well as a team, supported by a manager and a deputy manager who are motivated, passionate, and very experienced.
- No shortfalls have been identified and no recommendations or requirements have been made.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/08/2016	Full	Good
10/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
02/12/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The progress young people make while living here may not, at first, appear outstanding. However, given their absolute complexity of need, their progress is truly remarkable.

Staff create an extremely caring and nurturing environment where young people with wide-ranging needs, including those relating to gender identity, mental health, and self-harm, feel supported and develop an understanding of their own needs and acceptance of their individuality. One health professional stated: 'The home provides a very therapeutic and professional approach, it is excellent. Really good relationships benefit young people.'

Staff and young people understand the need for routines and structure, but this does not deter from the family feel of the home. Every effort is made to ensure that the building and the culture of the home are not institutional. The home is extremely well decorated and furnished, with young people making a significant contribution in terms of choice of design and decor. Their bedrooms often appear untidy, in common with other teenagers, but they regularly clean and tidy their rooms as part of their contribution to the upkeep of the home. Some young people keep pets, and a range of animals, including guinea pigs and rats, are well looked after by them. These animals often help to calm young people and provide them with a clear sense of responsibility for their care. Young people and staff are encouraged to eat meals together around the table, especially on a Sunday, and those who are learning independence skills prepare at least one meal a week for the whole group. Activities are also shared, for example a film night. This helps build positive relationships within the group and with staff and continues to create a sense of togetherness among the young people who live in the home.

Young people who have extremely complex mental health needs increasingly engage with a range of mental health services. This, combined with excellent support from staff, enables them to come to terms with their needs and seek ways to understand more fully their emotional health and well-being. For some who have an historic predisposition to self-harm, this has resulted in a significant reduction in this risk-taking behaviour. In addition, they begin to talk to staff about their self-harming, which in itself is a huge step forwards.

Staff sensitively encourage healthier lifestyles, recognising that, for some young people, talking about health can be a trigger for other behaviours. One young person with previously limited choices in food and a lack of understanding of the variety available, is being encouraged to eat healthier options. Staff support young people to engage in healthy activities such as bike riding, spa breaks, dog walking, mucking out stables and dancing. Young people enjoy celebrating a number of cultural events and occasions, often looking at different aspects of the event. For example, on Valentine's Day, instead of celebrating the usual aspects of relationships and love, they spent time looking at attachments from a mental health perspective using a range of resources from a mental

health charity. This was a young person's idea, using information from the charity where she volunteers.

Staff are very experienced in working with young people who identify as transgender, helping them to understand their identity and signposting them to the relevant agencies and organisations for immediate and ongoing support.

Educational progress exceeds expectations. One young person has taken a GCSE science examination a year early and is studying this subject at a much higher level than anticipated. Another has completed GCSEs in mathematics and English as well as obtaining foundation-level qualifications. This is way beyond the level expected, and is an outstanding achievement when considered alongside their ongoing and complex needs. This boosts young people's confidence in their abilities and they are rightly proud of their achievements. Some young people have secured further education placements, others actively pursue employment opportunities. An education manager commented in a report: 'Our journey with the young person has been both challenging and rewarding, but overall she has done us all proud.'

Preparation for independence is excellent and highly individualised. Staff and young people have devised a semi-independence pack, providing a programme for learning vital life skills and preparing them to move on from the home. Young people have also been involved in designing the independence tracker, so that they can clearly see the progress they make in this area.

Increased contact with family members enables young people to further explore their cultural identity and background. Staff support contact arrangements, maintaining excellent communication with families. Family members readily acknowledge the excellent work that staff do and the impact this has on their children's progress. One said: 'I can sum up her outcomes and care in one word – fabulous. She loves it here. She has developed so much. Staff give her all the support she needs.'

Care planning is of a high quality; managers review any proposed referrals to ensure that staff have the skills and abilities to meet the young person's needs. Visits to current placements by staff, and visits to this home by the young person, help establish relationships from an early stage. Moves are planned, with full consideration given to ensuring not only that staff can meet young people's needs, but also that this can be achieved without detriment to the rest of the group. Group dynamics are also analysed, helping to prevent any potential bullying. One young person has recently moved into the home, and has settled extremely quickly, maintaining 100% education attendance despite these significant changes in his life.

Excellent care plans provide staff with information about the goals for the placement and how best to care for the young people. Young people are intrinsically involved in their care planning, attending statutory reviews, and developing and reviewing their care plans with staff.

Some young people have moved on from the home since the last inspection. Where staff

and leaders believe this has been handled poorly by other organisations, they have challenged vigorously, advocating on behalf of the young person.

Young people share their views in numerous ways, moving away from the more institutionalised feeling of resident meetings and notice boards towards a more informal process of group and individual discussions. When young people meet as a group, one young person often takes notes and this ensures any action points or suggestions are taken forward. Young people know how to complain and have access to staff, managers, Ofsted, an advocate and the independent visitor who comes to the home monthly.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Young people are increasingly safe because they live here, and for some that is perhaps the biggest achievement of all. Incidents of going missing, sexualised behaviours and self-harm have dramatically reduced or stopped altogether.

Incidents of young people being missing have substantially decreased. Any incidents that do occur are recorded in detail and return interviews with young people, combined with thorough debriefs with staff, reduce the risk of a repeat of the incident.

Where sexualised behaviours have ceased to be an issue for young people, this has resulted in increased free time, access to a mobile phone and the internet, and being able to attend residential activities with other groups. This helps build confidence and self-esteem, and enables young people to form wider social networks.

Young people feel enabled to talk more openly about their risk-taking behaviours, including self-harm. This is because staff have an excellent understanding of such issues, underpinned by first-rate training and support from other agencies and organisations.

Training is also provided in a range of other safeguarding matters, such as sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Online training is combined with face-to-face training, which is provided both externally and internally through staff disseminating their knowledge and expertise. A range of resources, including books and signposts to relevant television programmes, provide additional information for staff learning.

The quality of behavioural risk assessments is outstanding. Each risk is assessed individually; triggers are identified and detailed strategies for managing and reducing risks are provided for staff. Clearly detailed action for staff to follow keeps young people safe while allowing them the freedom to be teenagers. Regular review, which takes place with the young people, ensures that the assessments remain up to date and relevant, and encourages young people to keep themselves safe. Activity risk assessments are similarly detailed and young people sometimes write these assessments themselves. This helps build their confidence, in addition to their knowledge, around safety.

Staff and managers understand the role of the designated officer and have excellent links with safeguarding professionals. They regularly attend meetings to discuss

safeguarding matters and share information, which means that they remain up to date on current research and issues, and are able to keep young people safe.

Physical intervention is rarely used. When it is, the incident is recorded in very good detail, with excellent review undertaken by the manager so that the reasons for the intervention can be understood. Incidents are discussed with staff and young people's views are actively sought to identify learning. The quality of reports sent to Ofsted following incidents is excellent, providing a clear summary of the events and thorough analysis. This helps everyone to understand more fully the incident and respond accordingly.

Consequences for negative behaviour often involve reparation for any damage caused and letters of apology to those involved. Some young people support their peers in writing these letters, helping them to understand the impact of their actions on everyone in the home.

Staff have recently changed the medication files, which now contain a photograph of the young person and their medication. The recording format is also clearer. This improves medication practice and makes it safer.

The home is well maintained, and is kept safe. Regular fire, maintenance, and health and safety inspections ensure that this remains so. One young person assists in these by regularly carrying out the fire safety checks alongside staff. Regular fire drills and the opportunity to undertake fire safety training mean that young people know what to do in the event of a fire.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is highly qualified, very experienced and, importantly, passionate about the young people she and her team care for. The deputy manager and whole staff team replicate her drive and her enthusiasm for continuously improving the home.

The continuous improvement plan is excellent and is an effective tool for channelling this enthusiasm. Target setting across six specified areas is constantly evaluated, and achievements are clearly documented using a wealth of evidence. Staff and young people contribute to recording this progress and young people are fully involved in evaluating and recording their own individual achievements. This helps them recognise the huge progress they make.

Monitoring is highly effective. The manager responds to any recommendations made within the reports of the independent visitor and challenges where she feels they have not understood or have failed to recognise progress. She also undertakes her own internal monitoring, ensuring that young people and staff contribute. She seeks and acts upon feedback from others. This includes feedback from young people, other professionals, and staff. For example, regular feedback from mental health professionals helps staff to develop appropriate strategies for improving interventions.

Staff work extremely well together. New staff bring a wealth of differing skills and strengths to the team, and bond well with the experienced staff. Staff are either qualified to the appropriate level, or are on the relevant course, ensuring that all staff are appropriately qualified within the required timescales.

Regular supervision, both formal and informal, and annual appraisals not only enable staff to reflect on their work and raise any concerns, but also highlight the progress they make as individuals. Team meetings provide a forum for open and honest discussion and encourage group learning, with a range of professionals from other agencies speaking on varied topics such as missing from care and gender identity. Training and development is a continual theme, helping forge an exceptionally knowledgeable and skilled team.

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

Excellent work in partnership, for example with missing-from-care coordinators, sexual exploitation teams, safeguarding professionals, education personnel and mental health teams, provides holistic care and continues to keep young people as safe as possible.

No shortfalls have been identified during this inspection and no requirements or recommendations have been made.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

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: SC029504

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pathway Care Solutions Ltd 04004053

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

Responsible individual: Andrew Smith

Registered manager: Katherine Sydenham

Inspector

Judith Longden: social care inspector

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