

SC391594

Registered provider: Pathway Care Solutions II Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private company. It provides care and accommodation for up to three children who have emotional and/or behavioural and/or learning difficulties.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 July 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: 13 February 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 receive exceptionally good-quality care from a highly committed and motivated staff team. Staff understand the young people well and have developed strong attachments. Young people can speak openly to staff about their anxieties and accept advice and support.
- Young people receive personalised and individualised care that is tailored to their learning needs in an environment that is warm, nurturing and responsive.
- The extremely complex needs of the young people are clearly understood by the manager and the staff team.
- The manager and staff are very creative in their consultation with young people. This ensures that they have a voice in all decisions made about their care.
- The manager has high aspirations for the young people and the staff team. She is a confident and able leader with considerable experience and compassion.
- The safety and well-being of the young people is paramount. Transitions both into and out of the home are planned well and respond to the individualised needs of the young person.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/08/2016	Full	Outstanding
19/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/10/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people who live at this home have a range of diverse and complex health and learning needs. Vigorous and thorough processes are in place to assess prospective placements and young people are consulted. The recent admission of one young person has been managed exceptionally well and has resulted in minimal disruption. Young people experience highly responsive support from staff who are attuned to their needs.

Young people have developed extremely close and trusting relationships with the manager and the staff. The home radiates warmth, love and a sense of belonging. The young people have grown up with the same staff team throughout their placement; for one young person, this has been for over five years. Another young person, who is struggling with a number of changes, said: 'It is fantastic living here and it's my home. Sometimes, I have lots of thoughts going round and round in my head, staff are always willing to talk about my worries, and I wouldn't change anything.'

Positive relationships have been established with health and social care professionals who work with the young people. This co-ordinated and well-managed approach within a culture of openness ensures that the young people's complex needs are being met. Placement plans are exceptionally child centred, and the involvement of the young people in all aspects of their care has seen sustained progress in all areas of their lives. An independent reviewing officer commented: 'The placement provides X (young person) with clear structure and boundaries. It delivers a consistent approach to the support and care provided and is able to manage her complex emotional needs. X (young person) is very settled at present after a substantial amount of time being unsettled in various placements.'

Education has been, and remains, a priority for the staff and young people. Two young people, who have successfully completed their formal education, have made exceptional progress and completed examinations beyond expectations. Staff, in consultation with one young person, have researched and identified a course in animal care, liaising directly with the education provider in securing a place. The young person has independently attended an induction day, stating: 'I would never have been able to do this without the support and encouragement from my key worker. He has real faith in me.'

Activities, days out and holidays are innovative and tailored to the individual and diverse needs and choices of the young people. Young people have been on holidays, both abroad and in this country, they enjoy trips to the cinema, and art and craft activities are in abundance at the home. For one young person, going to Disneyland Paris was a once-in-a-lifetime experience; a memory that will stay with him now that he has successfully transitioned into adult services. Opportunities to learn about different cultures and current affairs are comprehensive and versatile. Young people recently completed a project on Ramadan and, earlier this year, had their own elections, an interactive and fun way to learn about the political parties and the democratic process.

Consultation with the young people is impressive and staff go above and beyond to involve the young people in day-to-day decisions, in planning activities and working towards their independence. Young people contribute to the monthly newsletter that documents all their news, progress and achievements. The home successfully organised their annual 'big lunch', inviting the local neighbourhood and raising money for a local hospice. Young people's independence plans are visual and focused on a 'small steps approach'. As part of one young person's transition to college, she proudly stated: 'I have researched the bus I need to take when I go to college.'

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

Keeping the young people safe is a priority. The manager and staff have created an extremely open and honest safeguarding culture in the home. Any risk-taking behaviours are discussed with the young person concerned, and key-work sessions focus well on presenting concerns or issues. Staff are skilled and adept in what they do and can predict changes in mood and behaviour; they respond sensitively while taking measures to minimise incidents of, for example, self-harm. Staff are confident in their ability to defuse situations and look at alternative strategies, such as distraction techniques and using different words and phrases. For one young person, the risk of child sexual exploitation has been reduced from high to medium. Her engagement in key work sessions has seen a better understanding of the difference between good and bad relationships.

Behaviour management plans and risk assessments are robust and regularly reviewed. The young person's input helps them to understand why certain measures are put in place. Staff understand the additional vulnerabilities young people with learning difficulties have when using social media and the internet. This understanding is balanced against the importance of helping the young person to use social media in a safe way. As one young person stated: 'I am allowed to use my tablet on my own, but I always check before I send a message to friends.'

Staff support young people to express themselves and articulate their feelings. This approach encourages openness, with one member of staff saying: 'I can tell when X (young person) has something on her mind, I can see it in her body language and behaviour. She will seek me out and come to me for a chat.' Interactions between the manager, staff and the young people are relaxed with plenty of laughter, hugs and banter. When specialist help is required, staff actively encourage young people to engage, and will work together to improve emotional well-being and resilience.

The employment of staff is exceptionally robust, with safe recruitment practices in place. Thorough vetting procedures and a structured induction period give staff a positive message about their roles and responsibilities. Staff supervision is regular and, where appropriate, risk assessments are completed that protect both staff and the young person.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is suitably qualified and experienced and holds a level five qualification in leadership and management. She leads by example and is an inspirational role model.

The staff team is fully supported, which enables staff to feel confident in their role. This, in turn, helps staff to focus on the needs of the young people. As one member of staff quoted: 'I love working here, it has such a family atmosphere. We are fortunate to have an extremely supportive manager.'

The manager adopts a very robust monitoring and auditing process that underpins the high-quality recording activity, providing an excellent account of the lives of the young people. Reading the files and looking through the home's 'family album' provides a wealth of insight on the progress and achievements made by the young people. Their personalities and characteristics really shine through with an array of photos, pictures and anecdotal snippets of information.

The manager is very clear on her roles and responsibilities in respect of the young people in her care and her staff. She ensures that all relevant individuals are kept informed of any serious events and consults regularly with all professionals, family members and relevant organisations on the health and well-being of the young people. Family members have been welcomed at the home when this has deemed to be in the best interests of the young person. A professional stated: 'I could see that X (young person) had settled well, she was a lot happier and calmer and was interacting well with staff. I am pleased with her progress. Staff are keeping me informed through emails and telephone calls and they are communicating with parents.'

The manager and staff are conscious of the impact that admissions and discharges to the home can have on young people. The process and transitional arrangements are highly individualised, and young people in placement are prepared in advance in order to minimise any disruption. For one young person who has recently moved into supported lodgings within adult services, the manager continues to attend his review meetings and the young people remain in contact. As one young person said: 'We have grown up together for the last two years and he is like a brother to me.'

The staff team is exposed to a wide range of training opportunities and the manager puts great emphasis on continuous professional development. Each member of staff has recently undergone an annual appraisal that identifies areas of development and learning to be achieved over the next twelve months. Staff feel extremely supported by the manager, endorsed by a staff comment: 'I get really good support and supervision, every thinking was new to me, file work and jargon, and the team is so supportive. We all know each other's strengths and weaknesses.'

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: SC391594

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pathway Care Solutions II Limited

Registered provider address: Acorn Care and Education Ltd, 1 Merchants Place, River Street, Bolton BL2 1BX

Responsible individual: Zoey Lees

Registered manager: Stephanie Skinner

Inspector

Cath Sikakana, social care inspector

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