

SC417031

Registered provider: Pathways Care Group Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private provider. It is registered to provide care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The home registered with Ofsted in December 2010. There has been no registered manager in post since 15 April 2024.

At the time of the inspection, two children were living at the home.

Inspection date: 13 August 2024

Date of last inspection: 29 April 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

The assurance inspection was brought forward in order to address specific concerns or allegations received by Ofsted.

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

- Staff are not proactive in safeguarding children. The manager and staff are not professionally curious when children are at risk of exploitation.
- The children are cared for by a high number of non-permanent staff. The manager could not provide assurances that temporary staff had the necessary skills, qualifications, and experience to care for children.
- There is no registered manager. The interim manager and responsible individual regularly complete residential shifts at the home, due to the staff shortages. This has an impact on the completion of their management tasks and despite working at the home, leaders and managers have not identified the significant safeguarding concerns for children.

There are significant shortfalls in the staff team's care of the children and their safeguarding practices due to the ineffective leadership and management arrangements in the home.

There is a heavy reliance on the daily use of agency and temporary staff because there are insufficient permanent staff to care for children. The children receive inconsistent care from adults that they do not know well. This means that children are unable to form relationships with staff.

Additionally, the frequent use of non-permanent staff means that children are cared for by staff that do not know the children's individual physical, emotional and social needs. The manager could not provide reassurances that the staff have received the relevant training to care for the children. Furthermore, agency staff do not receive an induction to the home. The manager and senior leaders do not record the agency staff members' full details or receive confirmation that they are safe to care for children, for example that they have a satisfactory DBS check. This poor recruitment practice has seen an increase in safeguarding incidents and allegations that involve agency staff.

Children do not have accurate risk assessments, as they contain conflicting information. These risk assessments do not provide staff with up-to-date information about how they can keep children safer. However, even when children have safety plans, staff do not consistently follow these. As a result, children suffer harm during their time in the community.

Not all the children have behaviour support plans for staff to follow. Consequently, children are held regularly to manage their behaviour and critical information about their medical needs is not considered when they are held. Managers are not reviewing the times that children are physically restrained by staff. The children and staff are not always given the opportunity to reflect on the incident. This means that the manager cannot be reassured that the child's voice is heard and that they understand why they were held. Additionally, staff are not helped to explore triggers and strategies to reduce future incidents.

Staff's poor safeguarding practice means that children experience physical and sexual harm from other children at the home. As a result, children experience unplanned moves out of the home as staff are unable to safely manage the relationships between the children.

Children's welfare and progress are not consistently promoted. One child's attendance at school and health appointments has decreased since living at the home.

The managers do not have sufficient oversight of medication administration and do not take appropriate action when errors occur. This includes the staff involved not having their competence re-tested. Staff that are not trained to administer medication are completing this task. Children are not always given their correct medication, which compromises their health. Additionally, an allegation was made that one child was taken to a sunbed shop by a member of staff. This increases their risk of poor health.

The manager and senior leaders do not ensure that children's records include all their statutory documents, for example their care and placement plans. This includes there being no delegated authority for one child who requires daily medication. The manager and senior leaders have not escalated requests to the child's placing authority. This means that the manager cannot be reassured that staff are following the children's current care plans or have the authority to meet their needs. Furthermore, documents are not always stored in a safe and accessible manner. This means that children who choose to view their records would not be able to do so.

The provider does not ensure that the home environment is a nurturing and safe home for the children. Examples include unclean and unhygienic areas of the kitchen, damp in the bathroom and loose plaster on the walls. Additional health and safety hazards create a risk of harm to children. This includes fire doors that need repair and do not close fully. This increases the risk to children in the event of a fire. The provider has an action plan of the renovations needed. However, these repairs and work identified have not been actioned or escalated.

There is no registered manager. The interim manager and responsible individual regularly complete residential shifts at the home, due to the staff shortages. This takes them away from their managerial tasks, such as their review and oversight of

staff practice. Staff do not receive regular, practice-related supervision, which further compromises the quality of care that children receive.

The children attend activities of their choice, for example football and boxing. The core members of staff have worked hard to develop positive relationships with the children.

The manager has not improved the quality of care that the children receive in the home. In addition to the shortfalls identified at this inspection, the manager has not met the requirements that were issued at the last full inspection on 29 and 30 April 2024.

As a result of the shortfalls identified, a case review was held on 14 August 2024 and a decision was made to suspend the registration of the home. A further case review took place on 16 August 2024 and a decision made to issue a compliance notice under regulation 13. Furthermore, all the requirements and two recommendations made at the full inspection in April 24 have been restated.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/04/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
03/07/2023	Full	Good
21/06/2022	Full	Good
10/01/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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 has sufficient staff to provide care for 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; 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)(b)(c)(d)(f)(h)) This has been restated.	6 October 2024
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—	6 October 2024

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(b)) This has been restated.	
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 name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; 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 (3)(a)(i)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	6 October 2024
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration, and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that—	6 October 2024

medicines kept in the home are stored in a secure place so as to prevent any child from having unsupervised access to them; medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child; and a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))	
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— meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans; 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; 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; strive to gain each child’s respect and trust; understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;	6 October 2024

are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; and de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi)) This has been restated.	
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. 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)) This has been restated.	6 October 2024
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children’s home; provide adequate means of escape from the home in the event of fire; and ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(a)(b)(d))	6 October 2024

The registered person must— ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (1)(a) (4)(a)(c)) This has been restated.	6 October 2024
The registered person must ensure that the following items, which may be kept in electronic form, are kept in an accessible manner— children’s case records (see regulation 36); and other records (see regulation 37). (Regulation 38 (i)(j)) This has been restated.	6 October 2024
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(c)(e))	6 October 2024
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; and are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))	6 October 2024

In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child’s placing authority effectively in the child’s care, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child’s needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans; (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c))	6 October 2024
The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children’s home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. The registered person must ensure that— at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification; any person who works as a nurse at the home is a registered nurse. (Regulation 31 (1)(2)(a)(b))	6 October 2024
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— the individual is of integrity and good character;	6 October 2024

the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification, and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and 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)(a)(b)(c)(d))	
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*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff play a role in supporting children to understand their own history and identity, for example through memory books, life-story work, or other direct work. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 16, paragraph 3.14)
- The registered person should ensure that when a child is not attending their identified education provision, the child should be supported to regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable and structured activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 28, paragraph 5.15)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC417031

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: Kian Tracey

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Cat Makel, Social Care Inspector
Joanne Wallis, Social Care Inspector

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