

SC417031

Registered provider: Pathways Care Group Limited

Full 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 offers care for up to four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living at the home. The inspector spoke to the three children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2025.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 May 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 29 April 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

An assurance inspection was carried out on 13 August 2024 due to an increase in safeguarding notifications and an anonymous complaint. Inspectors identified several regulatory breaches that were impacting on children's safety and welfare. Ofsted issued a notice to suspend the home's registration. In addition, Ofsted issued a compliance notice under Regulation 13 (the leadership and management standard).

A monitoring visit was carried out on 8 October 2024 to monitor the provider's response to the suspension notice and to look at the action taken to meet the steps in the compliance notice. Inspectors identified that four of the five steps had been met. Therefore, one step around safer recruitment was restated.

A monitoring visit was carried out on 26 November 2024 to look at the action taken to meet the restated step in the compliance notice. The suspension lapsed on 5 November 2024. A case review was held on 29 November 2024, where it was agreed that the remaining step in the compliance notice had been met.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

On one occasion, short falls in the manager's assessment of children's suitability to live together impacted on the safety and experiences of the children living in the home for a short period of time. The dynamics in the home changed and incidents increased due to the fractious relationship between one child and the other children. Furthermore, staff have not always responded effectively to manage conflict. Staff used strategies to de-escalate situations that were not part of a child's support plan. In addition, the child faced criminal charges after an incident. The child moved out of the home a few weeks after arriving.

Children's progress in education is variable. One child's attendance at school has decreased over recent months. Staff are unable to help the child manage their anxiety about attending school. The child has a disorganised routine, sleeping during the day and staying awake during the night. This means that they are not prepared for the school day, hindering the child's progress. For some children, school attendance has increased. This helps children to learn and develop social skills.

Children's health progress is mixed. Children do not always receive the specialist support that they need when they need it. For example, one child has not received the therapeutic service from the in-house therapist that is described in the home's statement of purpose. In addition, staff do not always have effective strategies to help children attend health appointments.

Most of the home environment is welcoming. Soft furnishings and colourful beanbags help the snug area to be a comfortable and inviting space for children to spend time together. Children's artwork is displayed in the home and helps to create a sense of belonging. However, some areas, such as bathrooms and children's bedrooms, require more regular and deep cleaning to maintain hygiene standards.

Children's memory books contain photos of special events and activities the children have enjoyed with staff. This helps children to understand that staff are invested in them and that their experiences are valued.

When children are not able to visit the home before moving in, staff visit them and provide essential information about what life will be like at the home. This helps to prepare the child and reduce some of the worry that moving home can bring. Staff develop strong relationships with the children. Some children respond well to the help from staff. They begin to understand that staff want them to feel safe in the home.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children have not always been safe together living in the home. For a period, staff were unable to prevent incidents of physical and emotional harm occurring between children, leading to a child moving from the home. This does not help children to have a safe and stable home where they can flourish. Other children say that they can identify adults who they trust and seek support from. This will help children to recover from their experiences.

Children have individualised plans and risk assessments. However, some risk assessments do not include relevant information to keep children safe. For example, one child's risk assessment did not include what action staff should take when the child is in the community, despite what is known about the child's vulnerabilities. This does not help staff to respond to children's needs to keep them safe.

Staff complete direct work with children to help them understand risks when incidents occur, for example substance misuse or online safety. Most key work is completed in response to events and there is less preventative intervention planned in relation to the children's needs. This limits the positive impact staff can have on children.

Allegations of harm are responded to appropriately. The manager follows safeguarding procedures and shares information with safeguarding professionals. Additionally, safer recruitment procedures are followed. This helps to ensure that safe adults are caring for the children.

Staff understand the importance of helping children to understand their identity and life story. Staff treat children with dignity and respect. Staff source youth groups that children can attend to receive support and explore their identity.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The newly registered manager is settling into the role. The manager has reflected on her care planning decisions made that resulted in poor experiences for children. She has taken action to minimise the risk of this happening in the future so that children's needs are fully considered. This shows that the manager is open to improving her own practice.

The monitoring and review of the home are not always effective. Delegated authority forms do not accurately reflect children's legal status, for example when children are voluntarily accommodated. Additionally, delegated authority forms are not signed by those with parental responsibility. This means the manager and staff cannot be assured they are providing care that they are authorised to.

The manager completes a quality of care review every six months. The review does not evaluate the impact of care and progress of children. For example, the review does not consider the feedback and opinions of children about the home and its facilities and their views on the quality of care they receive. This is a missed opportunity to identify actions to make continuous improvement and better outcomes for children.

Staff feel supported by the manager and leaders, who they find approachable and visible in the home. Team meetings are used as learning opportunities and to test staff's knowledge about children's plans. This is helping staff to develop consistency in their practice. Staff receive regular supervision to explore their learning and development. However, it is not practice-related because supervisions do not discuss children and their needs. This is a missed opportunity to improve staff's practice, and the care children receive.

A recruitment drive has ensured that the home is staffed by permanent members of staff. The manager knows the children well and is held in high regard by external professionals. Family and significant people to children say that the manager is available and supportive.

The manager is supported by senior leaders who contribute to monitoring and quality assurance of the home. The manager responds well to external scrutiny, for example meeting the recommendations set by the independent visitor. The manager welcomes scrutiny as a learning opportunity and strives to make improvements. She is motivated to make improvements to the home. The provider is committed to ensuring that the manager is supported to implement learning and change.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— 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 staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice. (Regulation 6 (1)(b) (2)(b)(i)(ii)(iv)(ix))	30 June 2025
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—	30 June 2025

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; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone 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)(iv)(x)(xi)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
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— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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)(a)(i)(iv)(b)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	30 June 2025

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; 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)(a)(c)(f)(h)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	30 June 2025
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(a)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that an assessment of children's compatibility includes all known risks between children and how these will be managed.	30 June 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all areas of the home, including children's bedrooms and bathrooms, are clean and regularly maintained to provide a homely and nurturing environment. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that there are systems in place so that all staff receive supervision of their practice, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are undertaking planned direct work with the children to help them to develop and make progress. In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff plan to speak to children about risks to help them learn how to stay safe. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 16, paragraph 3.14)
- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. In particular, the children's plans should clearly identify the difference between a trigger and action staff should take. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 42, paragraph 9.5)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 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:

Registered manager: Collette Devlin-Smith

Inspector

Cat Makel, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025