

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. The home can 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 since 15 April 2024.

At the time of the inspection, two children were living at the home. The inspector briefly met both children.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 April 2024

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: 3 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/07/2023	Full	Good
21/06/2022	Full	Good
10/01/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
14/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

There has been changes in the staffing arrangements since the last inspection. Additionally, there is now a reliance on agency staff to meet the children's needs. Staff do not consistently adopt a therapeutic approach when responding to the children. This is particularly evident in incidents where the staff member's response has not helped to de-escalate a situation. This does not help children to understand and manage their own feelings or learn different strategies. Furthermore, this hinders children's ability to build positive relationships with staff.

The experiences and progress of children living at this home varies. One child has lived at the home for over four years which demonstrates a sense of belonging and stability. However, two children have recently moved out of the home in an unplanned way.

Children's educational attainment also varies. Some children attend school or college regularly, this has helped two children progress to further education. However, when a child refuses to attend education, staff do not show persistence in supporting the child to reintegrate back into school life. Staff do not consistently provide educational opportunities to help the child understand the value of education. One child's placing authority has seen this as being instrumental in seeking an alternative home for them.

Children who move into the home are provided with a children's guide. This helps children to have knowledge of the home and expectations. However, the guide does not include all information about how to complain, for example, to the Children's Commissioner. This limits the rights of children to use this service if required.

The home is large and spacious. Some areas would benefit from more regular cleaning and maintenance. Children's bedrooms contain personal items; however, the bedrooms are cluttered and unkempt. This means that children's personal items are not well cared for as they are piled in the bottom of wardrobes. This does not help children to understand their items are important and valued.

Children are offered a range of activities for enjoyment and to build on their social skills. They can engage in activities together that they are interested in, or when children prefer more individual time the staff and other children respect this decision. However, staff do not capture important memories or events that contribute to each child's life story. This limits opportunities to show the children that their experiences at the home are important.

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

There have been several incidents in the home that have undermined children's safety. Staff do not follow a child's behaviour support plan to effectively manage situations. There have been high levels of conflict between two children and staff use police to manage situations when children are in crisis. Furthermore, on occasions staff have locked themselves in the staff office when they have been fearful of a child's behaviour. This practice compromises the safety of the children and the other staff members who continued to deal with the situation.

Children's risk assessments do not include all known risks and do not correlate with children's behaviour support plans. This does not help staff to recognise and respond to a child's presentation. Furthermore, one child's placing authority raised concerns that staff were not following the child's individual care plan to help the child.

Staff did not have adequate training to meet the needs of one child who came to live at the home for a brief period. The manager and senior leaders were aware of the child's diagnosis prior to the child moving into the home. This contributed to staff not being able to understand and manage the child's behaviours, which led to the child moving out.

One child has expressed their feelings through writing derogatory comments on their bedroom walls and on the outside of their bedroom door. The wording is offensive to others. Staff have not cleaned this promptly which reinforces to the child that it is acceptable. This also does not help children to understand pro-social behaviour.

Staff speak to children following incidents in the home. However, staff do not routinely have planned discussions with children to help educate them about risks, such as from smoking and vaping. This is a missed opportunity to complete preventative work with the children and for children to see that staff care about their welfare.

Allegations against staff members are taken seriously. The manager and senior leaders follow safeguarding procedures and liaise with relevant professionals. This helps to ensure that adults caring for children are safe.

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

The home does not have a registered manager. This is a very recent change, and the deputy manager has stepped up to act as the interim manager. This means that the interim manager already knows the children and staff. The interim manager is making efforts to improve the poor monitoring and oversight; however, this is not yet effective.

Decisions made by management and senior leaders to admit a child into the home has negatively affected the other children living there. The manager and senior leaders did not give due diligence and curiosity to fully assess the child's needs before they moved in. Consequently, staff did not have the skills or knowledge to meet the child's needs.

This resulted in the child moving out after a brief period in the home and created instability for the other children and increased risks in the home.

Staff do not regularly receive supervision in line with the statement of purpose. When supervision takes place, staff do not talk about the children living at the home, so this prevents staff from improving their practice and the care they give to the children. The interim manager and senior leaders were unable to verify whether some staff had received supervision during a 6-month period.

Children's records are not always stored in an accessible format. During the inspection, the inspector was unable to view one child's transition out of the home. This means that children who choose to view their records either now or in the future would not be able to do so.

The statement of purpose contains misleading information about the psychological services that the home can provide to a child. This is confusing to placing authorities when considering whether the home is appropriate for a child. Additionally, the most up-to-date version has not been forwarded to Ofsted following changes in the staff structure. This limits the regulator's knowledge of important changes.

The manager and senior leaders are aware of the shortfalls raised and have identified an action plan. This includes support from other managers and senior leaders. There is an active recruitment drive for staff and a manager. The interim manager and senior leaders have also learnt lessons following the unplanned ending for one child due to their failure to fully assess the child's needs prior to them moving in. This gives reassurances that the provider is being proactive in improving the care provided to children.

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 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 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))	1 July 2024
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	1 July 2024

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))	
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))	1 July 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). (Regulation 38 (j))	1 July 2024
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(c))	1 July 2024
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.	1 July 2024

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;

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))

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 children understand their rights as a looked-after child, or child living in a children's home. Children must be informed of how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner for advice and assistance about their rights and entitlements ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.19)

- 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)

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: Kian Tracey

Registered manager: Sandra Brown

Inspector

Cat Makel, Social Care Inspector

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