

SC461846

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 run by a private organisation and provides care for up to 6 children who have experienced trauma that has left them vulnerable.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2023.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 February 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/11/2024	Full	Good
20/11/2023	Full	Good
05/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/02/2022	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, 2 children have moved into the home, and 2 children have moved out. At the time of this inspection, 5 children were living at the home. Three children spoke to the inspectors.

There is a strong sense of family at the home. Staff and children sit together for meals, which supports the development of positive relationships. Interactions between staff and children are warm and respectful, demonstrating the trusting relationships that have been established. Children also engage positively with each other and have been helped to build respectful peer relationships. One child said they are happy living at the home and feel listened to. They said they would not like to live anywhere else.

Children have access to a wide range of enjoyable and meaningful activities. These include individual interests and shared experiences, such as horse riding, trips to the beach, shared holidays and playing games together. Children are encouraged to participate in activities that develop practical life skills, including a bicycle training programme and learning about beach safety. One child spoke positively about playing games with other children. These opportunities help children develop new skills, build confidence and enjoy their time at the home.

Children are actively involved in decision-making at the home. They contribute to weekly food shopping by writing lists, helping to manage budgets and choosing meals for the weekly menu. Children participate in cooking, which helps them develop practical life skills. One child spoke positively about planning a themed evening and choosing the food they wanted to prepare, which staff took note of. This approach helps children feel heard and supports them in developing skills for independence.

Children benefit from strong educational support. Staff implement effective routines that promote regular school attendance and engagement in learning. As a result, children have achieved 100% school attendance. One child has shown improved behaviour in school, with a reduction in detentions and no suspensions. All children are in education, including one child who attends on a reduced timetable. Staff support this child with additional home learning. Staff use creativity and the child's interests to engage them in learning, which supports motivation and progress. This helps children experience stability in their education and make consistent progress.

Children have made meaningful progress. One child was supported to overcome long-standing barriers to education and is now preparing to sit their GCSEs. Another child made improvements in personal hygiene through a calm, child-led approach that supports recovery from previous trauma. One child developed independence skills and successfully moved on to semi-independent living. As a result, children develop confidence and resilience, as well as the skills they need to move forward positively.

One child left the home in an unplanned way following a significant incident. Leaders and managers carried out a detailed placement review. Learning was taken from this review, and actions were identified to improve future practice. However, the child has not had contact with staff since leaving the home. As a result, the child has not had the opportunity to receive reassurances or repair relationships with staff, which may have supported a more positive transition to their new home.

The home provides a welcoming and comfortable environment for children. Children's bedrooms are personalised to reflect their individual tastes and choices. Bathrooms throughout the home appear clinical and show signs of wear and tear. This detracts slightly from the overall presentation of the home.

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

Staff demonstrate professional curiosity when children's behaviour or presentation changes. They take time to explore what may be underlying these changes. This approach has supported the identification of safeguarding concerns for one child, enabling timely support to be put in place to keep them safe. Staff also encourage children to talk about their daily experiences and how they are feeling, which helps them share their worries and seek support when needed. One child said they can share anything with staff. As a result, potential risks are identified early, and children receive appropriate support.

Staff use key-work sessions effectively to support children following incidents. These sessions help children reflect on what has happened and consider how they can make positive choices in the future. Staff have thoughtful and purposeful conversations with children. They use age-appropriate analogies to support children's understanding during difficult discussions. As a result, children develop greater insight into their behaviour and how to keep themselves safe.

Staff manage incidents effectively. They follow children's individual plans to reduce and de-escalate risk. Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of children's needs and how to best support them. This was observed in practice during the inspection. As a result, significant incidents have reduced over time.

Incidents of children going missing from the home are rare. When they occur, staff respond promptly and follow children's individual plans. There is effective communication in the staff team and with relevant external professionals. This coordinated approach helps keep children safe and enables them to be located as quickly as possible. Children are welcomed back warmly and offered reassurance, care and support.

Physical restraint is used only as a last resort and when necessary to keep children safe. Staff are appropriately trained, and incidents are recorded clearly. Debriefs take place with staff and children to reflect on what has happened and explore how similar situations may be avoided in the future. This ensures that restraint is used proportionately and that learning is taken forward to support safer practice.

Children's plans and risk assessments are detailed, and they consider all known risks. They provide clear guidance for staff on how risks should be managed. However, in one child's risk assessment, information relating to when a door should be locked was not sufficiently clear. This lack of clarity could lead to some confusion for staff and the unnecessary restriction of areas of the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

A long-standing, experienced and qualified manager leads the team confidently. They are well supported by a skilled deputy manager and responsible individual. The management team works cohesively, providing consistency and stability in the home. All are committed and ambitious. They have high aspirations for children to succeed.

Leaders and managers provide strong, value-led leadership that is fully embedded across the home. The home's ethos places a strong emphasis on family, nurture and care, is consistently modelled by leaders and reinforced through staff practice. This creates a stable and emotionally warm environment where children feel a sense of belonging. Leaders work closely with the wider organisation to ensure continuity of care for children, including carefully planned transitions between sister homes. This enables children to maintain relationships with familiar staff, supports their emotional security and helps them settle more quickly in new environments.

Leaders and managers have established highly effective working relationships with partner agencies and schools to ensure that children receive the best possible care and support. Professionals consistently report excellent communication with the home and describe relationships as 'open', 'collaborative' and 'solution focused'. One professional said that the strength of their working relationship with the home enables barriers to be addressed and additional support to be accessed more readily for children. Leaders and managers communicate clearly and proactively, which supports professionals' understanding of children's needs and helps drive timely and coordinated responses. Professionals' commitment to visit the home in person to provide feedback further reflects the strength and value of these partnerships.

Leaders and managers are ambitious advocates for children and are confident in challenging external professionals when it is in children's best interests. They do not accept delay or drift and consistently push for improved outcomes. This has led to tangible improvements in children's experiences. One professional reported that a child's education, health and care plan progressed more quickly than would typically be expected as a direct result of proactive and persistent advocacy. This ensured that the child accessed appropriate support in a timely way, improving their educational experience.

Leaders and managers make highly effective use of organisational resources to strengthen support for children and staff. Specialist expertise is drawn on to meet children's individual needs, including the use of an expert with experience to support a child at risk of exploitation. Leaders also ensure that therapeutic support is embedded in practice through access to an in-house therapist, which is used flexibly to provide

therapeutic input to children and clinical supervision to staff. This ensures that staff are emotionally supported and equipped to deliver consistent, trauma-informed care, which benefits children's day-to-day experiences.

Leaders and managers create a culture of high aspiration, positivity and creativity. They have high expectations of staff and are ambitious about improving children's futures. This is reflected in innovative initiatives, such as 'Life Skills Week', which engages children in learning practical skills for adulthood in meaningful and enjoyable ways. Activities include independent travel planning, learning about careers through visiting professionals, and age-appropriate discussions about sexual health and consent. Leaders also promote social responsibility and community involvement, as exemplified by a summer fête organised by children that raised money for charity. The home celebrates national events and seasonal occasions in creative and playful ways, fostering joy, connections and positive shared experiences. Leaders have also developed a comprehensive research and resources folder, informed by strong links with the police, to support staff practice and children's understanding of risk and safety.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing, supportive and welcoming environment that meets children's needs. In particular, ensure that the bathrooms are well maintained. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. In particular, ensure that all records are clear and that the information is detailed in a concise and factual way. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that support is provided to each child leaving the home in the period immediately before their departure. The registered person should work with the placing authority to ensure that each child's transition is planned and help each child to prepare for leaving both practically and emotionally. In the event children must leave the home in an emergency, they should receive follow-up contact to provide them with emotional closure. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.19)

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: SC461846

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pathways Care Group Limited

Registered provider address: Minton Place, Victoria Street, Windsor SL4 1EG

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Sally Gorham

Inspectors

Emilja Myers, Social Care Inspector

Abby Lynch, Social Care Inspector

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