

1230725

Registered provider: Pathways Care Group Limited

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run home is one of five owned by a national organisation. The home provides care and accommodation for up to six children aged between 10 and 18 who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection date: 19 February 2018

Judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 22 August 2017

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection.

At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has declined in effectiveness.

At the last inspection, two requirements and five recommendations were raised. Two requirements and two of the recommendations have not been met. There has been a failure to manage and report an allegation made by a child and to provide adequate safeguards. Two further requirements have been identified. Collectively, these shortfalls signify a decline in the standards of care provided.

A complaint from a child was brought to the manager's attention after the school day. The registered manager and the area manager spoke to the child but failed to pass the information on to the child's social worker or to the designated officer (DO). The manager failed to take any action prior to being alerted by the social worker and the DO. A managerial investigation followed and a subsequent referral to the DO was made. The manager's delay in reporting these concerns meant that the child was not suitably

protected and that the manager had failed to follow the home's safeguarding policy in regard to managing allegations. The investigation undertaken by the manager upheld the child's concerns.

Staff supervision is irregular. Several staff, including the manager, have only had two supervisions within a six-month period. Specific concerns about staff members' practice were not discussed with the staff concerned in their supervisions. These staff had no supervision in November and December 2017, despite the concerns being known. Failure to provide regular supervision was identified as a shortfall at the full inspection and this shortfall continues. As a result, there are not enough opportunities for the staff to meet with the manager to reflect on their conduct and practice. This does not fully support the staff in their roles or provide opportunities to address concerns about practice.

The manager has previously failed to notify Ofsted of a significant event. During the period between August 2017 and February 2018, there have been two complaints about members of staff that have not been notified to Ofsted in a timely manner. One incident was notified some time after the event and one incident was not notified at all. This prevents Ofsted from having a clear and current picture of events at the home, and it removes the extra safeguard that is intended by timely notifications.

The safeguarding policy has several inaccuracies. These include the named registered individual, the contact number for Ofsted and the name of the home. The policy refers to outdated safeguarding guidance. The policy fails to identify the DO but describes the protocol for managing allegations about adults in the home. The manager was unclear about the policy and her duty to externally refer allegations without delay. This failure to understand and implement the safeguarding policy reduces the safeguards for the children at the home and leaves the children vulnerable.

Environmental concerns continue. The rear hardcourt area that surrounds the side of the home remains unsightly, unkempt and in need of maintenance. This is despite it being raised at the last inspection. There is rubbish, debris, broken planters and plastic lying around. There are two buckets full of cigarette ends and a bucket of broken tiles holding a gate shut. The render is in need of repair and the hardcourt has uneven, unfinished surfaces. The home has been open for two years with plans to improve the outdoor area. This has not been completed and fails to provide a pleasant outdoor space or demonstrate to the children how to maintain and care for a home.

Evidence that the children and the staff smoke is abundant. This was raised at the first full inspection. Some of the staff have been trained in smoking cessation. Despite this, there is no positive impact on the education of children about related health issues. 50% of the staff and the children smoke. Two smoking areas are frequently used. An incident report refers to the staff flicking lighters on their way to have a cigarette break. Another incident report details that a child became extremely frustrated after asking a member of staff for a cigarette. These incidents show that the children are aware of the staff smoking. There is a culture and acceptance of smoking at the home. The staff fail to provide healthy role models or support the children in smoking cessation when they are obviously smoking themselves. Despite identifying that the children smoke, health action plans and key-worker records do not address this issue.

A previous recommendation in regard to checking and verifying new applicant's references and the reasons for leaving their last employment has not been met. Two

files sampled show that the manager has not discussed or recorded this information. The records do not evidence comprehensive or explorative pre-employment checks.

The manager's review of care provides a summary of the period and includes views from external professionals, children and the staff. There are plans to make changes and improve the quality of care. These plans include a review of the home's records. The records are legible and provide a clear account of facts. The quality of records has improved since the last inspection.

External monitoring is carried out each month. The visitor spends time at the home making the record checks and speaking to the staff and the children. These monitoring systems provide checks to ensure that the quality of care includes the required safeguards.

Despite the identified shortfalls, two of the children are established and settled. They have made good progress since being at the home. There are relatively few incidents. There has been a significant reduction in the incidents of children going missing from home, minimal use of physical intervention and no current concerns about child sexual exploitation. Risk assessments for introducing new children to the home and detailing strategies to reduce risky behaviours are in place and working well. There has been a reduction in risk-taking behaviour for two of the children placed.

Three children have an established education placement that they attend and one child has an admission interview for a potential school. The home supports the children to attend their education placements and helps them to develop the appropriate levels of independence in terms of travel. This builds the children's self-confidence. The children learn to cook and undertake domestic chores with good support from the staff, building valuable life skills.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/08/2017	Full	Good
08/11/2016	Full	Requires improvement

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, 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
<p>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 and use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that the premises used for the purpose of the home are designed and furnished so as to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(i))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to the standard of the outdoor area.</p>	25/05/2018
<p>The health and well-being standard is that the health and well-being needs of children are met. (Regulation 10(1)(a))</p> <p>In particular, provide smoking cessation support and incorporate in the children's records the home's approach to children who smoke.</p>	30/03/2018
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(a)(b))</p>	30/03/2018
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 34(1)(a)(b))</p>	28/02/2018
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(e))</p>	28/02/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

This is with particular regard to ensuring that checks relating to the reasons for staff ceasing prior employment are explored effectively and that references are verified.

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 differences 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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: 1230725

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pathways Care Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Lisa Deane

Registered manager: Julie Woraker

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, social care inspector

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