

1230725

Registered provider: Pathways Care Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to six children aged between 8 and 17 years who may have experienced neglect and/or emotional abuse or had a traumatic experience that has left them vulnerable and who may find it difficult to manage in society.

The manager has been registered since 2016.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 July 2018

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: 19 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/02/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(v)(vii))</p>	10/08/2018
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(d))</p> <p>This particularly refers to the hazards in the rear garden and the maintenance of the electronic security system.</p>	10/08/2018
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p>	28/09/2018

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(h))</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p>	28/09/2018

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.

Inspection judgements

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

The children's experiences are mixed, with variable outcomes. A high number of incidents reflect a recently unsettled period. Additionally, several of the shortfalls identified have been raised previously.

Five children live at the home; three are making good progress. One child is new to the home. Another child has left the home in an unplanned way. A high number of incidents have exhausted the staff and disrupted the home. These incidents include threats from young people in the community and an assault on one child, which have left some children feeling insecure and intimidated despite their staff giving assurances of safety.

The manager has not responded to concerns about the security of the home. She has faced organisational delays in getting the concerns addressed. This was despite the children voicing their worries about others potentially gaining access to the home.

Although there are improvements to the garden, there are a number of hazards evident. These include building materials lying around and a shed that is in sections propped up against the fence, awaiting construction. A gate preventing access to a high metal fire escape swings open, and one boundary fence panel has come away from the post. These issues all pose potential hazards to the children. The monitoring of the environment is poor.

The staff work well with local schools and the virtual school headteacher. One child who is unable to attend school has daily tutorial provision after this was pursued by the staff. The child engages with the tutor well. Two children have been reintegrated into mainstream school in line with their preferences. Two children have finished school; one has secured a college place and one attended her school prom and is waiting for her exam results. Overall, there is a culture of attendance and engagement at school.

The children openly share their views and any concerns. Communication is good. The children choose items for the house and annual holiday destinations. Four children spoke positively of the warm, parental approach of the staff.

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

The staff, aware of the risks to the children, are responsive to incidents and work in partnership with other agencies to manage risks. Risks are categorised clearly. However, risk management plans have not been updated for up to three months and fail to reflect significant incidents. Additionally, the individual fire risk assessments for children fail to include incidents during which children have smoked in their bedrooms. This fails to provide the staff team with relevant safety information.

The staff are reflective in hindsight, but have failed to follow the safeguarding procedure. Despite two staff having concerns about a previous member of staff, these concerns have not been reported or followed up properly. This does not comply with the home's safeguarding policy or fully protect the children.

The staff respond well to the children leaving the home without agreement. One child has left the home daily and stayed out overnight on a number of occasions. The staff are resourceful and tenacious in returning the children to the home. Although the responses are good, the staff's actions have not reduced the number of incidents.

The checking and verification of references for new staff is poor. For one member of staff, two written references were provided but only one was verified and this was not from the last employer. The reference that was verified was from a family friend who also had managed this person. The lack of depth and exploration does not provide a comprehensive checking system for new employees.

Children's behaviour in the home is generally good. Strong relationships between the children and the staff contribute to a respectful atmosphere and a positive environment.

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

The home is managed by an experienced and qualified manager. There is either a senior or a deputy manager on shift, and the manager works some evenings. Handovers between staff are detailed and informative.

Despite vacancies in the team, the levels of supervision are good. The existing staff team shows resilience. The buoyancy of the team helps the children feel a sense of stability and belonging at the home.

The managerial monitoring tasks are long overdue. Children's files are muddled and require updating and organising. Several of the identified shortfalls have been raised at previous inspections. The capacity to improve the systems and monitoring at the home is poor.

Staff support and supervision has been identified as a shortfall at the last three inspections. There are a number of established staff and new staff who have long gaps between supervision. This does not provide regular support to staff in their care roles.

The staff actively challenge other professionals, working on behalf of children to ensure that they are provided with good education provision, health support and regular visits from social workers. Feedback from professionals and family members is positive. They cite the progress made by children and the difference that living at the home has made.

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.

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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