

1212117

Registered provider: Pathway Care Solutions Ltd 04004053

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to care for three children who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is owned and managed by a private organisation.

There has been no registered manager of this home since September 2020. From this time, there have been numerous changes in management. The interim manager is currently absent.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020. We last visited this setting on 3 November 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

In September 2021, two children from another home that had closed moved into the home.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 2021

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children are not protected. The care and experiences of children are poor, and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 14 May 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: n/a

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/05/2019	Full	Good
17/07/2018	Full	Good
03/08/2017	Full	Good
20/12/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Excessive turnover of staff is denying children the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with adults they can trust and disrupting the care they receive. Ten members of staff have left the small staff team since November 2020. Children are not given the opportunity to say goodbye to staff before they leave.

Consistency of care is further weakened by high levels of staff absence. Although minimum staffing levels have been maintained by allocating staff from other children's homes to cover shifts, children are unsettled by the inconsistent care arrangements. Children report that they hear staff swapping shifts in front of them. This gives the home an institutional feel. One child described the home as being like a 'contact centre' and another child told their social worker that they wanted to move to a different home.

Many of the staff who care for children are inexperienced and unqualified. Their lack of experience means that children are not confident about their care arrangements. In some cases, staff have been unable to set or enforce boundaries for children. This has meant that children have not felt safe and secure. Some staff are anxious about challenging the behaviour of children in case they retaliate. The lack of adult control has resulted in a living environment that lacks stability and order.

One child had started to make some progress in their education. However, this has now stopped, and the child is now refusing to attend school. Similarly, the second child was excelling in their education in their previous placement. However, since moving to this home there has been a clear deterioration in their overall progress and motivation. Ineffective morning routines have resulted in a pattern of children being late for school. Routines designed to promote school attendance are not being maintained. For example, one child is sometimes allowed to play on their games console during the daytime, even though they are not attending school.

Children's sleep patterns are poor because their behaviour deteriorates when they should be preparing for bed. Sometimes, children are not going to sleep until the early hours of the morning.

In recent weeks, children's diets have become healthier. Recent team meeting minutes document that one child had 14 takeaway meals in one month. This is indicative of poor-quality care and inadequate supervision.

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

Children are not safe in the home because behaviour management strategies are largely ineffective. Staff are unable to set or enforce safe boundaries. As a result, children are placed in potentially dangerous situations. For example, staff have been

unable to prevent children from drinking harmful substances. On a number of occasions, staff have not prevented children going into an office area, taking money and accessing confidential paperwork. The home has not provided a safe, stable or secure environment for children.

Children have also witnessed violence in the home. Some behaviours have resulted in injuries to staff, with some significant enough to require emergency medical treatment.

Strategies to minimise self-harming behaviour have not been effective because staff have not prevented children breaking glass objects and retaining shards of glass. Children have also had access to dangerous items such as a ligature cutter.

Staff have not intervened effectively to prevent children collecting cigarette ends in the local area with the intention of lighting them on the home's toaster. Similarly, hair straighteners have been used to try and light cigarettes and melt door handles. Although staff have made attempts to reduce fire risks by turning off the electricity, these strategies have not ensured the longer-term safety of children.

Behavioural incidents escalate quickly until both children and staff are unsafe. The police have been required on several occasions to manage children's behaviours. Since the children have lived together, dangerous incidents have increased. Despite this, one child's risk assessment has not been updated since moving into the home.

Safeguarding arrangements for children are poor. Because the staff focus is on responding to urgent issues, necessary safeguarding records are not completed in a timely manner or to an adequate standard. There is no evidence of children or staff reflecting on their actions after incidents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Management arrangements are unstable and inconsistent. Managers have not ensured that there are enough skilled, experienced staff before allowing children to move into the home. Although there have been some short periods of improvement, the overall standard of management has been poor. This has resulted in a decline in the quality of care provided to children.

Managers have not ensured that children establish healthy routines. This affects children's abilities to make good choices. Although one child is a member of a local football club, children are not generally involved in extra-curricular activities.

Staff are not provided with a supportive environment. Some staff do not feel safe caring for children. Managers have not been able to effectively protect staff who have been targeted because of their ethnicity.

Staff supervision and appraisals do not take place regularly. The high level of incidents that take place in the home has taken managers' attention away from staff development needed to improve the service. Staff are not provided with the

opportunity to learn from experienced staff because there are so few experienced staff working at the home.

The failure of senior managers to take effective action to improve the home and provide safe care has meant that children have had to move to alternative placements. However, the organisation has not addressed the problems at the home quickly enough. Effective action was not taken to improve the home. This has disrupted children's lives and is likely to have a detrimental effect on their well-being and progress.

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>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs;</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and</p> <p>seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)(d))</p> <p>This particularly relates to information-sharing with placing local authorities. Managers must be transparent with the local authority at the earliest opportunity if they are unable to meet the needs of children and keep them safe. This is necessary to avoid unplanned placement endings for children.</p>	18 November 2021
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. (Regulation 8 (1))	18 November 2021
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p>	18 November 2021

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—

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;

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;

help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful;

help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship;

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;

<p>de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;</p> <p>understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and</p> <p>have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others;</p> <p>that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others.</p> <p>(Reg 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to staff being qualified, experienced, and able to understand and safely manage children's behaviour. Staff must be able to defuse children's escalating behaviour effectively.</p>	
<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 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>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>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;</p>	<p>18 November 2021</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; and</p> <p>that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Reg 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(b)(d)(e))</p> <p>This specifically relates to staff being able to care for children safely. When children's behaviours are escalating and they are putting themselves and staff at risk, interventions must take place to ensure the safety of everyone. Children should only live together if it is safe for them do so. Risks for children and staff should be regularly reviewed.</p>	
<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</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f))</p>	<p>18 November 2021</p>
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p>	<p>18 November 2021</p>

<p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>that the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if—</p> <p>the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(e)(i))</p>	
<p>35: Behaviour management policies and records</p> <p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out—</p> <p>how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and</p> <p>the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b))</p>	<p>18 November 2021</p>
<p>40: Notification of a serious event</p> <p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))</p>	<p>18 November 2021</p>

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: 1212117

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pathway Care Solutions Ltd 04004053

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Donna Carlin

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Andi Lilley-Tams, Social Care Inspector

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