

SC033817

Registered provider: Direct Care Ltd

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned home, providing care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection date: 7 March 2018

Judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 25 April 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.

This home has been through an unsettled period since the last inspection. Young people have not been kept safe. There have been numerous incidents of young people going missing from the home. During these incidents, some young people have been subject to child sexual exploitation. Despite the efforts of staff in trying to prevent young people from going missing, this has been largely ineffective. At times, staff have appeared powerless to prevent such incidents. There has been an increase in frequency of the police attending the home. The registered manager and staff have failed to manage young people's access to social media. Young people have been in communication with adults of concern via social media sites, and have been exposed to child sexual exploitation. The situation has improved in recent months, as some of the young people have moved on to new care placements. However, this does not detract from the fact that at times young people have not been safe.

Management arrangements have been unstable since the last inspection. The registered manager resigned from the organisation following a period of suspension and sickness absence. The suspension followed concerns about management practice and the inability to take decisive action in response to young people's use of mobile phones and access to social media. Instability in leadership and management left staff without direction and support at a time when they were managing safeguarding incidents and concerns. A new manager has been appointed and she has started to implement her plans for the home. She will register with Ofsted in due course.

The registered manager failed to plan effectively when a new young person moved to the home. The young person had experienced considerable disruption and presented with significant risk factors. The impact risk assessment completed prior to this young person's admission was of poor quality. Insufficient consideration was given to the impact on other young people living at the home should this young person move in, and the assessment was unrealistically positive. Managing risk, such as the use of mobile phones and access to social media, was not fully considered and there was no contingency plan for when things went wrong. The impact risk assessment lacked analysis and there was no information from the young person's previous placement. This would have been helpful in understanding the young person's needs, risks and vulnerabilities and would have informed the decision about whether staff could meet those needs.

The home and one young person's placing authority disagreed about the young person's access to a mobile phone. This difference of opinion was not resolved in a timely way, and strategies to manage this were not agreed. This young person was placed at risk while the decision-making drifted. This is unacceptable. Protocols for managing mobile devices, such as computers and phones, need agreement prior to the start of a placement so that staff and young people have clarity.

Young people's educational progress varies. One young person is attending school. Her attendance and punctuality has improved. She has made friends at school and is beginning to feel more settled. Another young person has refused to attend any form of educational provision. The acting manager and the staff are trying to devise innovative solutions to promote her education. They recognise the importance of education for the young person's future.

Young people's health needs continue to be well met, with annual health assessments taking place, along with routine dental appointments and sight tests. Staff have no concerns that young people are smoking or are using drugs or alcohol. When young people have experimented with cigarettes, alcohol or drugs, staff have intervened to support young people to live healthy lifestyles.

The acting manager values the views, opinions and ideas of young people. She has developed an improved consultation process to gather the views of young people. The acting manager recognises that central to moving this home forward will be the views of young people and getting them fully involved with moving the home forward in a positive manner.

The staff team is now more stable. Recent staff recruitment has seen vacant posts filled. Induction processes for new staff are good and provide staff with the knowledge and skills they need to provide good care. The acting manager has now put in place better arrangements for the regular professional supervision of staff. She ensures that team meetings are taking place regularly. Staff attend these meetings and there is good communication and coordination across the staff team. This benefits young people, for example in arranging recreational and sporting activities.

The house is homely, comfortable and well maintained. It does not present as institutional and is made more homely with photographs of young people and staff in the home. Young people have their own belongings and can safely store valuable possessions in a personal safe, should they wish. Young people contribute to the comfortable environment and quickly make this home their own.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/04/2017	Full	Good
12/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/05/2016	Full	Requires improvement
15/12/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a))	04/04/2018

This requirement is made in relation to disagreements with placing local authorities, particularly regarding the management of young people's mobile phones and other internet-enabled devices.	
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 staff— 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; and 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 (2)(a)(i)(b)) This requirement relates directly to the inability of managers and staff, at times, to keep young people safe.	04/04/2018
The care planning standard is that children- receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— 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. (Regulation 14 ((1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) This requirement is made in response to a very poor impact risk assessment being completed prior to a young person moving to the home. The assessment did not consider the impact on other young people at the home. It did not consider the ability of staff to provide good and effective care to all the young people living at the home.	04/04/2018

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: SC033817

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Direct Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Goldwyns, Rutland House 90 92, Southend on Sea SS2 6HZ

Responsible individual: Rebecca Ouellani

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Phillip Morris, social care inspector

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