

Children's homes – interim inspection

Inspection date	12/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC033817
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Direct Care Ltd
Registered provider address	Goldwyns, Rutland House 90– 92 Baxter Avenue, Southend- on-Sea, SS2 6HZ

Responsible individual	Rebecca Ouellani
Registered manager	Martin Harris
Inspector	Corrinne Barker

Inspection date	12/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Requires improvement
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 requires improvement at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has improved effectiveness. Since the last inspection, young people have benefited from a period of stability in the home. The home is now fully staffed following successful recruitment activity over the last year. This has significantly reduced the reliance on agency staff and has, in turn, improved the consistency of care. Young people are able to develop positive, trusting relationships with staff who are familiar and dependable. The inspector was aware, during the inspection, that an allegation which related to child protection was being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegation were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform the inspector's judgements. At the last inspection, three requirements were made. Two of these related to recruitment of staff. There are improved procedures in place for the recruitment and employment of permanent staff and for the use of agency staff. Managers have received training in safe recruitment. More robust pre-employment checks are now undertaken before workers come into the home. Details of any agency staff who work in the home are kept on file, and checks are made to verify their employment history. This reduces the risk of unsuitable people working in the home. The third requirement was made in reference to the way in which complaints from young people are recorded and responded to. This has been addressed. Young people know how to make a complaint and have opportunities to informally raise issues and have their say. Key-work sessions are also used effectively to communicate important messages to young people and establish open communication. Responses to complaints are given in a timely and sensitive manner. Young people have a voice in the home. There is evidence of regular consultation and a culture of listening to what young people have to say. Young people's meetings are taking place regularly, and young people and staff are fully committed to these meetings. Staff use the meetings to share information and drive improvements based on young people's views and experiences. A recommendation to improve staff supervision arrangements was also made at	

the last inspection. The manager acknowledges that supervision of new staff had not been as frequent as it should have been. The manager and senior team have since received supervision training and now there is more robust management oversight of supervision and appraisal processes.

A strength of the home is the inclusion of young people in care planning and in devising and reviewing their risk assessments. This inclusion encourages young people to invest in their plans and gives them an element of control in making decisions. Plans reflect young people's wishes and feelings. This results in care that is more personalised.

Young people are making steady educational progress, although there have been some delays in identifying appropriate educational placements. This has sometimes been beyond the control of staff. Social workers have spoken positively about young people's educational progress. One social worker noted the commitment of staff with regard to liaising with education providers and attending all relevant meetings. Young people have positive attitudes towards learning. Their positivity is supported by the fact that the staff have high aspirations for young people.

For most young people risk has reduced. Staff manage incidents of missing from care effectively, and they have developed positive professional relationships with the police and other safeguarding agencies. Records of missing-from-care incidents are maintained well, but on occasion managers have not recorded their oversight or evaluation of the incident.

Professionals speak very positively about the communication from staff and value the weekly summaries that they are sent. These are described as 'excellent'. Staff are able to recognise when they are unable to meet a young person's needs and will liaise closely with placing authorities to consider next steps. Overall, transitions from the home have been very positive. Young people preparing to leave care develop appropriate skills. Preparation for independence is planned effectively through a well-defined series of goals and rewards. Young people can review their own progress and celebrate their achievements.

The accommodation itself is welcoming and homely. At the request of the young people, improvements are being made to the lounge. The home has had new bathrooms fitted and is in a good state of repair throughout.

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned home that provides care and accommodation for up to four young people aged 10 to 18 years old who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/05/2016	Full	Requires improvement
15/12/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
22/07/2015	Full	Good
10/12/2014	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation:

Evaluation of missing-from-care incidents should be undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff, or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. This evaluation should inform the review of the quality of care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.31)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who 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.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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