

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	22/07/2015
Unique reference number	SC033817
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Direct Care Limited
Registered person address	Rutland House, 90-92 Baxter Avenue, SOUTHEND-ON-SEA, SS2 6HZ

Responsible individual	Rebecca Ouellani
Registered manager	Duncan MacKenzie
Inspector	Joanne Vyas

Inspection date	22/07/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Declined effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	One compliance notice was issued on 18 December 2014. A monitoring visit took place on 15 January 2015 and the compliance notice had been fully complied with.
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC033817

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- A fully qualified and experienced registered manager provides strong leadership and good support to a committed and caring staff team. He understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and takes prompt action to address shortfalls.
- Staff work closely with placing authorities and other agencies such as the police, drugs workers and the youth offending service. This means young people have access to the services they require.
- Staff promote the health of young people by encouraging them to stay fit and active. Young people benefit from positive contact with family and friends.
- Staff fully support young people with their education. They are quick to find an appropriate education placement and attend all meetings, including parents' evenings.
- Staff are sensitive to the needs of young people. They have a positive approach while instilling consistent rules and boundaries. This helps young people to feel safe and secure.
- A number of experienced staff have left recently. The organisation is recruiting but this means some staff have not received all the mandatory training.
- The organisation has been slow to respond to requests made by the registered manager and the police to make the environment safer by erecting gates to the driveway.
- Some areas of the home are not maintained to a good standard.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development. This specifically refers to ensuring all mandatory training such as safeguarding, medication and food hygiene are kept up to date. (Regulation 33(4)(a))	28 Aug 2015
Ensure, when conducting the location review, the registered person takes into account the views of each relevant person. This specifically refers to acting quickly to minimise identified risks such as erecting gates to the driveway. (Regulation 46(2))	28 Aug 2015

Recommendations

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

- Provide a home that is homely and domestic and does not give an institutional impression. This specifically relates to delays in carrying out the replacement of a heavily stained carpet and ensuring decorating is to a good standard. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and is registered to provide residential placements for up to four children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/12/2014	CH - Interim	Declined Effectiveness
23/07/2014	CH - Full	Good
25/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
28/11/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Staff foster good relationships with young people. They have good skills and are sensitive to young people's needs. A social worker said, 'The home is child-centred and flexible to the needs of the young person with clear and appropriate responses to any potential safeguarding concerns.' Staff have a good understanding of why young people may be difficult to engage; for example, one young person is currently only in the home on a temporary basis until a foster placement is found. He, therefore, has no vested interest in building trusted and secure relationships with staff. However, the young person said, 'I don't like talking to staff but know I can if I want to.' Furthermore, his social worker said, 'Recent behaviours have been well managed due to good relationships with staff.' Despite the lack of engagement with staff, the young person is usually very polite and always keeps in contact when he has not returned to the home on time. Staff encourage young people to fulfil their potential and stay fit and healthy. A social worker said, 'The staff team support the young person in positive outcomes in all areas of his development – education, health and social development.' Young people attend all healthcare appointments and have good skills with regards to personal hygiene and grooming, cooking and cleaning. Staff were complimentary about a young man keeping his bedroom in pristine condition. The education of young people is important to staff so they ensure prompt action is taken to secure an appropriate education placement and fully support young people in their placement. An education professional said, 'Senior staff are aware of the local authority's school admissions procedures and take immediate steps to ensure education is pursued as soon after the placement planning meeting has taken place', and, 'The staff consistently support the education of the residents in their care.' For example, staff attend education planning meetings, parents' evenings, performances and celebration events for young people. Staff will also accompany young people to interviews, viewings of educational establishments or training opportunities. They will also engage in actual support of young people at their education provision and provide transport to ensure their attendance. Staff are ambitious for young people so instil a good attitude to learning. Young people enjoy school and have had good attendance up until the summer break. Young people who are excluded are quickly found alternative education provision. Young people benefit from regular and positive contact with family and friends.	

Staff facilitate and support this important contact which helps young people to forge appropriate relationships with peers in the local community as well as maintain important links with family.

Young people access good recreational activities in their free time. They have enjoyed activities such as learning how to play snooker, go-karting and quad biking. They also enjoy meeting up with friends in the local area.

Young people are supported to actively participate in decisions about their care and the day-to-day running of the home. For example, they actively engage in statutory reviews and agree their free-time plans. They also meet weekly to discuss the menu, activities and any concerns they may have.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Practice to promote the safety of young people has improved significantly since the last inspection. Young people say they feel safe. Staff are competent in their knowledge of the home's safeguarding procedures and implement these well. An external professional said, 'At meetings the staff are knowledgeable regarding the subject of the meeting and act in a very professional manner, having due regard to confidentiality and the safeguarding of young people.' Staff follow good procedures when young people go missing. Missing from care events have reduced dramatically, although currently a young person is pushing the boundaries with his free time. Staff continue to discuss this with him and agree free time. When young people return from a missing from care event, the local authority visit to complete a return interview. A professional who completes return interviews said, 'Staff are always helpful and will be available for the interview if they are needed. They always get back to me. There is always good feedback about the young people who go missing.' Staff also work closely with the placing authority when young people continue to put themselves at risk by running away from the home, developing joint proactive strategies to prevent and manage missing events. Young people who misuse drugs such as cannabis receive help and support from an external drug service. Staff also discuss incidents of cannabis use with young people and the way it affects their mood and behaviour. Staff have a positive approach to young people and use effective strategies when they are angry or frustrated. They work closely as a team and use consistent firm boundaries to support young people. Staff rarely use physical intervention but	

know how to do this safely should they need to use it. However, staff prefer to talk to young people about what it is that is causing them to be upset. Staff have positive relationships with young people which enables them to use talking and humour effectively in most situations. Staff have required the police on a few occasions when serious incidents have occurred. These have resulted in a young person being arrested and charged and is now working with the youth offending team in reparation. Staff work closely with the youth offending team to support the young person through this difficult time.

A number of new staff have been recruited recently. Vetting systems help to ensure unsuitable adults do not have access to young people.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The registered manager is qualified to Diploma Level 5 and is very experienced. He provides strong leadership and good support to his staff team. However, the registered manager has given notice and will be leaving at the end of his notice period. The organisation is currently recruiting a new manager. The home has recently lost a number of long-term, experienced staff, therefore staffing has been depleted in number. After employing three new staff, there are still three vacancies. However, the registered manager has restricted the number of young people in the home and will only accept those that he knows his staff team have the skills and knowledge to care for effectively. The current young person says he is bored and would like more young people to be living in the home. All staff, other than those who are on their probation, are appropriately qualified. Some mandatory training for a few staff is out of date, such as food hygiene and medication. This means that when staff lone work, they may not have the necessary skills or knowledge required to keep young people safe. Additionally, new staff have not yet received any training on safeguarding young people. However, staff, including new staff, demonstrated a good knowledge of how to keep young people safe, therefore any risk to young people is very low. The organisation is very slow to act on any risks identified to young people by local partner agencies. For example, the police have identified that gates should be erected at the entrance to the driveway to prevent young people running onto the road. Senior managers have failed to implement this recommendation despite it being part of the registered manager's review of the location seven months ago. However, the registered manager has not admitted any young people who put	

themselves at risk by running into the road.

The décor in some parts of the home is to a poor standard and maintenance is slow. A heavily stained carpet covers the hallway, stairs and landing. The carpet has been in this state since December last year. Despite the registered manager's requests for a new carpet, this has yet to be bought or fitted. The décor upstairs has been finished to a poor standard, giving this area an unkempt look. Additionally, a young person has asked for a new sofa, as the current one is uncomfortable. Again, the organisation has been slow to respond to the registered manager's requests for this. This means the home is not homely and may give an institutional impression that may affect the way young people feel about the home.

The registered manager and staff work closely with partner agencies such as placing authorities. A social worker said, 'Communication with placement is excellent and partnership working is the focus.'

The registered manager received three requirements at the last inspection, one of which was a compliance notice. A monitoring visit was conducted in January and all requirements, including the compliance notice, were met in full. During this inspection, some shortfalls were identified which were addressed immediately. The registered manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and takes prompt action to address shortfalls.

The statement of purpose clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the home. The document is regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to be up to date and an accurate reflection of the home.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 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 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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