

SC033817

Registered provider: Direct Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

Inspection dates: 25 to 26 April 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because

- Young people make good progress from their starting points. All young people are engaged in education tailored to their individual needs. Staff support young people to achieve their potential.

- Young people are supported to form positive and trusting relationships with staff. These relationships underpin effective behaviour management and contribute to keeping young people safe.
- Young people are supported to have positive contact with their families, where appropriate. Staff work in partnership with families.
- Young people are supported to develop the skills and confidence to manage their lives as adults. Preparation for independence is planned effectively, with young people being encouraged to take small steps towards acquiring new, age-appropriate skills.
- Staff safeguard young people well, and respond effectively when incidents occur. In the majority of cases, risk to young people is reduced.
- Staff manage behaviour skilfully and support young people to develop strategies to regulate their own behaviour.
- The manager provides good leadership in the home, and has developed a positive and confident staff team.
- Staff work in partnership with professionals to achieve the best outcomes for young people, advocating on behalf of young people when necessary.
- The home provides a safe and welcoming environment.

The children's home's areas for development

- A recommendation is made with regard to the recording of prescribed medication.
- A recommendation is made regarding communication and the need for staff to let professionals and parents know about incidents of concern in a timely manner.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/05/2016	Full	Requires improvement
15/12/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
22/07/2015	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Medicines must be administered in line with a medically approved protocol. Records must be kept of the administration of all medication, which includes occasions when prescribed medication is refused. Regulation 23 requires the registered person to ensure that they make suitable arrangements to manage, administer and dispose of any medication. These are fundamentally the same sorts of arrangements as a good parent would make but are subject to additional safeguards. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.15)
- Registered persons have a key role in seeking to develop the home's effective working relationships with each child's placing authority and with other relevant persons which may include services, individuals (including parents), agencies, organisations and establishments that work with children in the local community, e.g. police, schools, health and youth offending teams (regulation 5 – engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met). These working relationships will also be key to success in delivering the care planning standard (regulation 14). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 51, paragraph 10.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home has experienced a period of stability since the last inspection. Young people receive good quality, individualised care which is responsive to their needs. Care is provided by consistent staff who are appropriately skilled and experienced. This supports young people to develop secure, trusting relationships with them. Overall, young people are making good progress from their starting points.

All young people are engaged in education or training, tailored to their individual needs. Staff are ambitious for young people and support their educational progress and attainment. A strength of the home is how staff support young people to be central to their own plans. They are encouraged to be aspirational, then supported through taking small steps to achieve their goals.

One parent commented that she was really pleased with the progress her daughter is making after a number of placement moves before coming to this home. She added, 'Staff communicate well with me. They tell me about my daughter's progress, not just the problems.'

Staff use incentives to support progress across a number of areas, such as keeping bedrooms tidy, maintaining school attendance and getting involved in tasks in the home to promote independent living skills. They are also used to keep young people safe and help them make safer choices. Incentive planning is completely individualised and provides a mechanism for staff and young people to agree goals and areas to work on.

The home has a well-established preparation for independence pathway, working with young people to achieve greater independence and help them acquire basic skills ready to leave care. Young people's emotional readiness and realistic awareness of the skills needed is harder to work with. One parent expressed concern that her daughter would not be well enough prepared for leaving care and as a consequence she might struggle to live independently. Staff work with young people at their own pace, but recognise when a more proactive approach is needed.

A very positive aspect of the care provided is the increase in young people's self-esteem and confidence, and the capacity of young people to regulate their emotions. This increased confidence has supported young people in volunteering and getting part-time work, and being able to maintain positive relationships.

A parent commented on her daughter having made good progress in the home, saying: 'She has matured an awful lot and I can really see this lately. She has a very good rapport with staff.'

Parents and placing authorities speak very positively about staff working in partnership with parents and supporting contact arrangements where appropriate. Staff send parents weekly updates, sharing achievements as well as any issues for the young person. Some professionals and parents have noted that some information needs to be shared contemporaneously rather than as a weekly summary. A recommendation to improve information sharing so that it is timely has been made.

Staff respect and value family relationships and understand the significance of these for young people. Staff work with young people and families to support positive contact and to improve difficult relationships where possible. Staff speak warmly and positively about young people and demonstrate skill and experience in meeting their needs.

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

Young people invariably come to the home deemed to be at high risk of harm or having suffered significant harm. For the majority of young people, within a short period of time the risk posed to them is reduced. The home provides a physically and emotionally safe environment for young people.

The home has a location risk assessment which details any risks specific to the home's location, including the physical environment, access to transport links and any known risks in the community.

Staff help and protect young people through the implementation of risk and behaviour management plans. They try to gather as much information as possible about potential risk and vulnerabilities prior to a young person's admission and continue to work with placing authorities to review and amend risk assessments on a regular basis. Young people's files are well maintained, with staff taking steps to ensure that all necessary information is present. Having full and detailed information facilitates a better understanding of the young person's risks, vulnerabilities and strengths.

Young people feel safe in the home. Regular consultation with young people, parents and professionals provides the opportunity for senior staff to review progress. Young people meet on a weekly basis to talk about the home and any issues they may have.

Bullying is not an issue in the home currently. Young people have been carefully matched to reduce the impact on each other. Matching has been problematic in the past, but staff have worked effectively with young people to help them manage their own behaviour. Staff have access to clinical support through consultation with an in-house clinician. This enables staff to improve their understanding of the emotions being expressed through behaviour and employ different strategies to support young people.

The home employs a positive behaviour management strategy, using incentives to reward positive behaviour. Staff have not used physical intervention to manage behaviour for several months. They are skilled in using a range of de-escalation techniques to manage challenging behaviour and this is working well. Staff are usually able to recognise triggers for challenging behaviour. The incentive system is sometimes used in working with young people and agreeing strategies to keep safe. A strength of the home is acknowledging that young people will sometimes make unsafe decisions, but this is a point of learning for young people and staff that these decisions do not need

to escalate into a cycle of negative behaviour.

Risk to young people is understood. Young people have free time and access to the internet, but these activities are risk assessed and managed accordingly. Staff are realistic about young people becoming increasingly independent. They try to support safe internet use for example, rather than prohibiting it, but acknowledge that sometimes prohibiting activities completely is necessary to safeguard young people. This is another area where staff need to consider sharing information with placing authorities and parents sooner. Staff keep a clear log of all safeguarding concerns, accidents and incidents.

Incidents of going missing from care are managed well, with staff following multi-agency guidance to support the young person's safe return. Staff understand the importance of young people having the opportunity to speak to someone independent of the home upon their return. Independent return interviews are generally well documented, although young people often decline the opportunity.

Investigations into allegations of harm are managed appropriately, involving the appropriate agencies.

Agency staff are sometimes used to cover staff absence or leave. A robust procedure is now in place to ensure that unsuitable adults do not work with young people. Recruitment processes are robust, with all pre-employment checks being completed in full before staff commence their work in the home. Staff supervision takes place regularly and is well documented.

Medication practices are appropriate, but a minor error was found in the recording template used. A recommendation has been made to address this.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is appropriately skilled and experienced. He is working towards the requisite management qualification. Staffing has largely been stable since the last full inspection, providing young people with consistent and dependable care. Staff receive regular, good quality supervision. This is recorded well and provides the opportunity for reflective and task-orientated discussion. Appraisal processes are effective, with staff receiving appropriate support and challenge.

Staff have access to a broad range of training opportunities, some delivered online and others delivered via more traditional group events. Informal opportunities for staff development also take place during team meetings. This enables managers to identify areas for development and training which might sit outside prescribed mandatory

training and refresher courses. There is good evidence of staff appraisal and training. Managers are confident that staff have appropriate awareness of safeguarding procedures.

The registered manager has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses within the home. He shows a great deal of understanding regarding the skills within the staff team and the ethos he is trying to create. Young people are at the centre of the work and staff value and respect young people as individuals. The registered manager utilises a range of processes to monitor the quality of care provided. This includes responding constructively to any recommendations made through external monitoring of the home, as well as having robust internal monitoring systems.

Senior staff each have an area of responsibility and report to the manager. This enables the registered manager to measure the progress and experience of young people.

Consultation takes place regularly and concerns all stakeholders, including staff. The registered manager is beginning to evaluate this information so that it can shape how the home develops.

Evidencing the progress that young people make is an area of development for the team, but the staff have a very clear view that positive progress comes from young people being able to visualise what they want and 'buying in' to their plans. Case records and plans reflect this to a degree.

Staff work effectively with placing authorities and other professionals. On occasion, the registered manager has challenged other professionals, for example in care planning decisions, or when the required documentation has not been forwarded to the home. The registered manager and team also welcome, and are open to professional challenge in order to review the care they provide.

The home is in a good state of repair and presents as a welcoming, child-centred home. There are no obvious signs of wear and tear, and the ground floor in particular looks well presented. Young people have good-sized bedrooms which they decorate to their taste, reflecting their individual style.

The statement of purpose clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the home, and provides an accurate description of the service provided.

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 difference 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: SC033817

Provision sub-type: 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, social care inspector

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