

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	27/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC028174
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	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	Carly Playle
Inspector	Michael Mulvaney

Inspection date	27/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
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	
<p>This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness.</p> <p>The manager has updated the procedure for recording restraints in line with the recommendations made at the previous inspection. The records now contain better-quality body maps and information regarding the techniques used. There have been seven incidents where trained staff have used physical intervention techniques to prevent children from harming themselves or others. The manager has reviewed these events carefully to assure herself that the practice was required and recorded in line with the regulations.</p> <p>There has been a significant incident at the home. This involved staff not suitably monitoring the children, and not ensuring the security of the premises and equipment. Consequently, the children were briefly at risk. The manager has made immediate changes to practice to minimise the likelihood of a further occurrence. The manager has spoken to staff about their role in this incident and the staff remain part of the ongoing investigation. The manager is still investigating this matter and has liaised appropriately with the police and other agencies to gather information to assist in the investigation. Since this incident, the manager has taken swift and effective action to robustly review the security and safe-care practices employed by staff.</p> <p>Children who had arrived at this home with a considerable history of absconding and placing themselves at risk from sexual exploitation have been able to settle. Some of the children have not run away since their arrival. When children do go missing, staff act quickly. They alert the police and other agencies to ensure that children return safely. When the children return, they have the opportunity to discuss the reasons why they have been missing with independent people or with their social workers. This helps to promote their safety, as it provides a route to raise any concerns about their care. This process has improved following a recommendation raised at the last previous inspection. Staff have completed training to raise their awareness of the risks in the community, particularly for this group of children. Consequently, their risk of exploitation has reduced. Placing social workers are pleased by the outcomes for the children. One commented, 'Prior to coming to this home, this child was absconding and placing herself at risk. Since living in this home, these reduced to zero and, consequently, the risk of childhood sexual exploitation has diminished. They have been able to reflect on their risk-taking behaviour and make positive changes. They have a good</p>	

relationship with staff, who they are able to talk to and have fun with.'

There have been two complaints about the conduct of members of staff. The manager has reported the incidents to the designated officer for safeguarding in the local authority and followed their advice. A thorough investigation is ongoing. The designated officer confirms that they are satisfied with the progress of the complaints in their communication with the manager.

The manager has completed impact risk assessments ahead of any new placements made. These assessments cross-reference to behaviour management plans, which effectively inform the practice of the staff. Because of these assessments, staff have the most relevant information to meet the needs of the children. Children, whose previous assessments highlighted a high risk of exploitation, now complete direct work with the staff and external agencies to reduce their risk-taking behaviour. Some of the children are in the early stages of this work and staff are alert to respond to the children's emotional responses to it. Children say that they are safe and speak highly of the staff. One commented, 'This home has helped and supported me to manage my behaviour when I first arrived. They helped me to understand the issues and make better decisions.'

Children are making progress in their education. Some children had a high level of anxiety about attending school, but this has reduced through positive joint work between the school and the home. Consequently, they have built their confidence and self-esteem. Some children have completed coursework for GCSE examinations and are on target to achieve grades that will help them to progress towards further education. Some of the older children are gaining independent living skills such as cooking and budgeting, and developing their confidence in the home ahead of the move into the community.

Some children smoke. Staff try to help young people to end this habit through key work sessions. However, some children have started smoking since their arrival in the home, while others are finding cessation a challenge. The manager is seeking support from external agencies to strengthen this aspect of the staff's work with the children.

The staff use their positive relationships with the children to promote and support contact with families and friends. These sessions maintain important relationships and community links. Because of the work of the staff to prepare and manage these events, contact has improved, with some children having direct contact for the first time.

Information about this children's home

This home run is by a private organisation. It offers care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home particularly specialises in caring for children and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/09/2016	Full	Good
06/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
18/08/2015	Full	Good
24/03/2015	Interim	Sustained 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:

- Ensure that all staff encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day-to-day health and their well-being. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10). In particular, ensure that there is ongoing and robust support in place to enable the children to reduce or stop their use of tobacco.

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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