

SC028174

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 run home which is part of an organisation. The home offers care and accommodation for up to four children and young people, aged between 10 and 18 years old, who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 28 to 29 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 27 March 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 are making good progress in many aspects of their lives.
- Relationships between staff and young people are very positive and young people feel safe.
- The home is welcoming and provides a homely environment.
- Risk to young people is managed well. Staff implement comprehensive risk and behaviour management plans in response to risks associated with going missing from care. Young people become safer as a result of living in the home.
- Effective partnership working is evident between staff and other professionals. There is a collaborative response to supporting young people.
- Young people are supported to be involved in their care planning and to share their wishes and feelings.
- The staff team has stabilised over recent months. The acting manager and the deputy manager are the driving force in ensuring that there are good outcomes for young people in their care.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Ensure that young people are supported to maintain their bedrooms to a standard that is healthy and safe (specifically in relation to storage of hair straighteners).
- Ensure that the home has a central log of the return interviews that have been offered and completed.
- Ensure that supervision takes place regularly and is recorded.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
14/09/2016	Full	Good
06/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
18/08/2015	Full	Good

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.

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food, hygiene etc.); however in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9).

This is in particular reference to children's bedrooms and the safe use and storage of electrical equipment.

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30).
- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people are making good progress in many aspects of their lives. A nurturing ethos is embedded within the staff's practice. A drug and alcohol worker said: 'The home is a nurturing environment, with positive responses and support from staff.'

Staff support young people to develop positive, trusting relationships. From this secure base, young people make very good progress, particularly considering their starting points. All stakeholders have commented on the significant progress made by young people.

One social worker said: 'The young person has made significant progress since being here.'

Significant progress is being made regarding young people's emotional health and well-being. Young people are supported to reduce risk-taking behaviour. This has been evidenced by a significant decrease in incidents such as missing-from-care episodes and self-harm. The risk of child sexual exploitation is reduced.

Staff utilise existing professional relationships well and secure early intervention from agencies. Most young people work with the organisation's psychotherapist and Addaction (an external drug and alcohol service). One young person commented: 'I see the psychologist now and he makes me feel like he is the right person to talk to. I am now thinking about talking to CAMHS [child and adolescent mental health services] too.'

Educationally, young people are making excellent progress from their starting points. All young people are attending educational provision and have personal educational plans. Staff work hard to support young people's educational progress. One young person's educational attendance has improved from 20% to 70% in the short period that she has been here. She is also on target to achieve GCSEs, and now has aspirations for the future. Staff confirmed that there are positive discussions and key-working sessions which focus on achieving aspirational goals. One headteacher stated: 'This home is doing a good job and I have no concerns. We work well together.'

Young people have a say in the running of the home. There are weekly consultation meetings and there is evidence of regular feedback from young people, in which they express their views, wishes and feelings. Young people report that they feel listened to. Staff support young people to be prepared for looked after reviews and encourage them to express themselves.

Where appropriate, staff work with young people, and their parents and relatives, to promote regular, good-quality contact. Staff support contact by providing transport for young people and, where necessary, will supervise contact.

Staff support young people to understand their journeys through care. Young people report being much happier at this home than they have been before. Young people who have experienced a number of placement changes prior to being accommodated at this home generally have a more settled period here. One young person said: 'Staff are happy and love to make me part of the home.'

Young people are being helped by staff to understand future transitions. A number of young people have been supported to move on from the home recently. Staff spoke warmly about the progress that young people had made. One young person was supported to attain a college place. Her involvement with the youth offending services ended and the positive contact with her father increased. She is now living semi-independently, and is doing well. The deputy manager said: 'This young person still refers to here as her home.'

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

Young people are safe in the home and over time become increasingly safe as they stabilise and settle into the routine of the home. One young person said: 'I am very safe here.'

Despite the fact that some young people have a significant history of going missing from care and have been assessed as being at risk of child sexual exploitation, incidents of going missing from care have reduced and have become rare. The positive relationships that staff have with young people, combined with the staff's understanding of individual risks and triggers, have been extremely effective in preventing young people from going missing from care. There was a period earlier in the year when missing episodes were at a peak at this home. Staff worked hard to reduce this and took all of the necessary action. The police missing-from-care coordinator shared that the home had worked well with them during this period, and that communication was good. The home does not have a central log of the missing-from-care interviews that have been offered and completed. This would be helpful in analysing missing-from-care incidents and understanding risk. A recommendation has been made to address this.

Staff follow comprehensive risk management plans, and keep these under regular review. These plans ensure that young people are as safe as possible. Staff are very responsive to young people's needs, and can ably implement strategies that provide effective safeguarding.

Staff use positive behaviour management strategies. The empathetic and positive relationship-based approach underpins strategies for supporting young people to make safe choices. Challenging or aggressive behaviour reduces because staff are skilled in using de-escalation techniques.

The management team has had to make difficult decisions about placement matching. Impact risk assessments are completed when admissions are being considered. Despite this, difficult peer dynamics developed and this led to increased risks. The acting manager and the relevant local authority took the decision to move one young person out of the home, with a view to improving their safety and well-being and that of the other children in the home. This young person's relative wrote to the home, thanking them for the input and support that had been offered to them.

Managers and staff understand safeguarding policies and procedures. There is a detailed locality risk assessment. The acting manager liaises with the police and with the missing-from-care coordinator on a regular basis to promote effective partnership working.

The acting manager is able to evidence safe recruitment processes. She ensures that adults who work with young people in the home are subject to appropriate pre-employment checks and ongoing supervision and appraisal.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The acting manager is new in post, and is in the process of becoming a registered manager. She is suitably qualified, skilled and experienced, with extensive experience of working in residential care. She has joined an experienced deputy manager, who played a significant role in supporting the home while the new manager was appointed. The management team is now strong, and is demonstrating an ability to drive positive outcomes for young people.

The acting manager and deputy manager promote a strong ethos for the home, in which young people are central to everything that staff do. Staff share this vision and are committed to providing person-centred and nurturing care. The acting manager has plans to review the home's development plan and introduce outcomes that are linked to the children's homes regulations and quality standards.

The home is a welcoming and homely environment. The home is well presented. One young person said: 'The home is much nicer now. The manager is a hard worker.' Young people's bedrooms are decorated to reflect their individual preferences. Both young people's bedrooms were untidy and required attention to ensure that they were safe. Of particular concern was a heated hair straightener left on the floor. This was addressed immediately by the acting manager. She discussed the implementation of a new incentive scheme to encourage young people to take pride in, and care for, their personal spaces. A recommendation is made in respect of this.

The acting manager and the deputy manager demonstrate a clear understanding of the progress that young people have made and the plans that are being implemented. Consistency of approach is demonstrated by the whole of the staff team, and is reinforced/strengthened/maintained through regular staff supervision and team meetings. Supervision usually takes place regularly, but there was a period in the summer when supervision frequency was not good enough. A recommendation is made in respect of this.

Staff are well trained. Excellent tracking systems are in place to ensure that training takes place. A new staff member confirmed that he had received a robust and thorough induction programme. This member of staff stated: 'It just feels like being part of another family here and everyone is really supportive.'

Most staff are suitably qualified and other staff are working towards the required qualification within the appropriate timescales. All staff complete mandatory training. In addition, staff take part in specialist training to learn about issues such as self-harm, attachment theory, and physical intervention.

Staff put young people at the forefront of practice. They strive to support young people to achieve good outcomes, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. Staff present as a strong and cohesive team whose members offer good support to each other. Team support is a strength at this home.

Case records and required documentation are maintained to a high standard, and are easily accessible. Files include relevant local authority plans and provide a comprehensive picture of the care provided for young people.

Managers and staff demonstrate consistently positive relationships with key stakeholders. Feedback from other professionals reflects the hard work of staff with regard to securing positive outcomes for children in this home. A youth offending case worker said: 'The staff are always on the ball.'

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.

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: SC028174

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: Post vacant

Inspector

Bev Allison: social care inspector

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