

SC009651

Registered provider: Keys Childcare Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children and young people. The children and young people may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, including attachment problems.

Inspection dates: 8, 9 and 15 August 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 29 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- This home specialises in creating a warm, homely and nurturing environment for very young people who have experienced an unhappy and unsettled start to their life.
- Young people benefit from long-term placements, where they are cared for by a stable staff team which provides structure, boundaries and consistency, enabling young people to feel safe and secure.
- Staff have high aspirations for young people and they advocate strongly on their behalf to ensure that their rights are preserved and their outcomes maximised.
- Damaged and sometimes traumatised young people regain their childhood and adopt lifestyles in which they re-engage with their education and learn how to socialise through new experiences and activities. This allows them to develop their own social network.
- A long-serving, dedicated, child-focused manager is well supported by the members of the staff team who have all contributed to the ethos, culture and working practices that have developed in the home over the years.
- The search for continued improvement is ongoing, with staff prepared to critically analyse working practices to ensure that they meet the ever-changing needs of young people living in the home.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Constant reflection and evaluation of working practices, to ensure that the home continues to move forward and progress, should continue. For example, continue to review how evidence that reflects the high standards of care within the home can be retained and presented.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/12/2016	Full	Good
16/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25/08/2015	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- Plan and implement a rolling programme of refurbishment to meet the short- and longer-term needs of the home to create a more welcoming environment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

A stable, long-serving, knowledgeable and well-trained staff group provides a high, consistent standard of care. This creates a home for children and young people in its truest sense. Young people arrive in the home having had many bad experiences involving adults. Over time, they build strong bonds, lasting relationships and high elements of trust with staff. A staff member commented, when discussing the levels of care provided, 'We treat these children as though they were our own.'

Other professionals who work with and have regular contact with the home agree. For example, a social worker told the inspector, 'When you visit, it feels like a proper home, more than a children's home.' Another social worker states, 'It was with a heavy heart that he was placed in residential care after several foster placement breakdowns, and I had several reservations initially. I am happy to say that the staff at Cherry House have been amazing in settling him into the placement. They have showed empathy and a good understanding of his needs and, as a consequence of this, he has settled in quickly and is confident and happy in his surroundings.'

Young people make steady and consistent progress in all areas of their lives. When measured against their starting points following admission to the home, it's outstanding. For example, one young person when admitted was described as being completely out of control. He was violent towards his mother and other family members. He had not attended school for seven months and was regularly going missing and putting himself in danger. After a successful rehabilitation and period of transition, this young person was recently discharged into his mother's care, with a support package in place that also covers education. This was achieved by careful planning, excellent inter-agency cooperation and with the home having the ability to transform the young person's attitude. Staff worked hard and flexibly to ensure that contact was maintained, which helped to repair the relationships between the young person and his family.

A young person currently in the home was, on admission, described as being feral with no boundaries. He is now a warm and loving person who enjoys the company of others. A third young person who suffered from serious and sometimes violent outbursts, has not had any form of physical intervention since the previous inspection. These are only

some examples of the significant progress young people are achieving.

Young people generally make outstanding progress, because they develop strong, caring and trusting relationships with a staff team which provides stability and consistency. The progress that young people make can be tracked and evidenced in the comprehensive planning documentation, coping strategies, assessments of individual risk and reports that are prepared monthly for social workers and families. More detailed reports are prepared for reviews. All of these are of a high quality. In addition, planning documents and risk assessments are reviewed and updated regularly, which ensures that they provide up-to-date information about the young people.

The home has an excellent record in re-engaging young people with their education. Each one is in full-time education within the locality. Attendance levels are exceptional, with only genuine illness contributing to absence. The continuous progress that they make can be tracked in various educational reports provided by schools, and in the reports that the home prepares for reviews.

The arrangements that are made to promote young people's health are excellent. Their everyday health needs are addressed appropriately through community-based services that are well established and work well with the home. More specialist support services, such as mental health, paediatric and diabetic services, are sourced as and when required. Young people and staff are also supported by a range of specialist services provided by the organisation which operates the home. For example, clinical psychologists make regular visits to the home and contribute regularly to staff meetings and staff training. Currently, all young people are receiving a therapeutic package linked to attachment disorder, which is conducted away from the home.

The home has access to and the ability to provide specialist training for staff as and when training needs are identified. For example, due to issues affecting a number of young people, all staff received specialist training in separation and loss in May 2017. This prompt action ensures that the skills of staff are enhanced and refreshed constantly. As a result, they are able to meet the ever-changing needs of the young people in their care.

Staff promote fitness and good health with young people and this is linked to the weekly activities young people plan with staff. As well as promoting fitness, activities are devised to meet young people's individual needs, with generous staffing levels to achieve these plans. For example, one young person has just taken up horse-riding, another trains and plays weekly for a local football team and one enjoys musical theatre. All young people enjoy swimming and visiting the profusion of trampoline parks that have sprung up locally. Exercise is underpinned by healthy diet, with young people demonstrating in conversation that they have a good understanding of, and the benefits of, healthy eating.

The strong relationships between staff and young people enhance the high levels of communication and consultation between young people and staff. This is an area of strength for the home. Formal meetings are scheduled weekly and provide a forum

where choices can be made, such as choice of food and activities. However, throughout the inspection young people were also observed in constant discussions with staff. Young people are at ease when approaching staff, which contributes greatly to the happy and relaxed atmosphere that prevailed in the home throughout the inspection.

Contact arrangements are complex due to the need to protect young people. However, staff work flexibly to ensure that contact arrangements are maintained. For example, staff travel long distances to facilitate contact arrangements. They also support young people's families to visit the home by helping with transport arrangements to ensure that arrangements for contact go ahead. The home also makes additional payments for the services of an independent advocate who visits monthly. This ensures that young people with limited outside contact have someone independent of the home to speak to on a regular basis, other than staff or their social worker.

A written guide to the home is available and is often provided to young people, usually at the referral stage. Although long, it is bright and child-friendly. However, the home has just created a video that can be viewed on a phone or other devices, which is made accessible to social workers, families and any young person who is being referred to the home for a placement. The video supplements the written information well and is one of a number of examples of how the home has reviewed its practice and taken practical steps to improve it.

Developing independence skills starts early, with young people given tasks and responsibilities around the home that provide them with useful skills, such as keeping their bedrooms tidy, helping with shopping and developing skills in the kitchen.

This improves their independence and gives them a sense of responsibility. As they progress, they participate in a programme designed to monitor and develop skills that will serve them well as they approach greater independence. They also take on more responsibility for managing themselves. For example, one young person has started to have some time out to be with friends and is sent on various errands. This improves self-confidence and self-esteem as young people move towards living a more independent lifestyle.

Young people live in a house that is indistinguishable from others around it, providing a warm, cosy, homely and child-friendly environment. There is space for them to play, or be on their own if they wish. Single occupancy bedrooms are personalised to suite the taste and the needs of the occupant. The overall state of repair, quality of decor, furnishings, fixtures and equipment is good. However, parts of the home are looking tired and a little outdated. For example, there are only a limited number of times that wallpaper can be repainted.

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

The home has excellent systems in place to promote the safety of the young people and staff. For example, detailed risk assessments that identify risks, both around the home and in the local community, are in place. They are reviewed and updated regularly,

which keeps them current. Appropriate service contracts are in place to ensure that safety equipment is well maintained, which adds to the levels of safety in the home.

Vulnerable young people are kept safe at all times, and confirm that they feel safe in the home. They are well supported and managed within the local community, which adds to their feeling of safety. Although safeguarding procedures have not been instigated since the last inspection, appropriate procedures are in place and staff understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping young people safe. Safeguarding training is refreshed regularly.

The management of young people's behaviour is outstanding. Challenging, disruptive and sometimes aggressive behaviour is well managed by a confident and professional staff team, which remains supportive rather than being punitive. For example, records show that rewards for good behaviour far outweigh any negative consequences that are imposed. Staff have a full understanding of why each young person behaves in a certain way and can equate the behaviour of young people against the training and advice received, based on theoretical input. This has been an area of significant improvement since the last full inspection took place.

Behavioural incidents that have required physical intervention are managed effectively. Incidents are monitored and evaluated by senior staff. Debriefing sessions with young people and staff provide opportunities to explore each incident to see if lessons can be learned and if it could have been handled differently. Apart from two minor incidents when a young person went out of sight for a short period, young people make no effort to abscond or run away. This reflects how safe young people feel and is testament to the strong relationships that exist between them and staff.

Staff retention is excellent, with young people benefiting from the longevity of the staff group and the consistency of care received. No new staff have been recruited since the previous inspection and any staff shortage, for example through sickness, is covered by the existing staff group, or others who young people know well. All longer-serving staff are being rechecked every three years, which is recognised as excellent practice.

Young people settle well and thrive in a structured environment with clearly defined boundaries. This provides them with a sense of security. As a result, young people live in a home that is warm, nurturing and that provides them with appropriate affection. When talking with the inspector, a social worker supported this view when saying, 'Staff are easy-going and very friendly, although there are appropriate boundaries in place for the children.' Another social worker reported, 'During the period he has been with (X) House he has made some significant improvements in terms of his behaviour, stability and engagement.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is very well managed by an experienced and fully committed manager who leads by example. Her aspirations for young people are high and her expectations for staff are the same, with high standards demanded. This has earned the full respect of

the staff team and goes some way to explaining the home's high staff retention rate.

The whole organisation and management of the home is totally child-focused. This is achieved by the willingness of staff to work flexibly and with a team-centred approach. They all buy into the ethos, culture and working practices that they have helped to create in the home over the years. Young people's needs are put first and staff are prepared to work hard so that those needs can be met. For example, during a recent transition period for a young person, staff travelled to and from the area the young person was going to live in once he left the home. The purpose of this was to help to prepare him, his family and others for his return to this area. This took up considerable time and resources, but is something that is common to this home.

Staff feel well supported by senior staff. The formal programme of supervision and appraisal takes place consistently. Staff appraisal is another area where young people are consulted, giving them a voice and some input into the way the home operates. Communication levels between staff are high, which aids the general organisation of the home and the excellent way staff deploy themselves around the home so that young people receive individual attention. Staff morale is high, and visitors immediately experience the happiness and warmth that abounds throughout the home, which creates a happy and positive environment for young people.

The core staff training programme is closely monitored by senior staff who are aware of any shortfall. Weekly meetings are pre-planned and well organised. For example, one week there may be a full staff meeting, another week a relevant training element, or attendance by the visiting psychologist who provides advice and support. Aligning theoretical models alongside the current practical needs of young people is an area of improvement, giving staff greater insight into why they work in a certain way.

The monitoring of the home, both internally and externally is of a consistently high standard. Records are monitored regularly by senior staff, who inject meaningful evaluation and comment. The manager is adept at taking on these external observations, linking them with her own critical analysis and then translating them into development plans. These plans identify strengths and areas for improvement at the home.

The home has an excellent record of compliance. The report from the previous inspection did not contain any requirements or recommendations. However, the manager has critically reviewed various areas of practice since then and has made a number of significant improvements. They include working proactively to replace a senior staff member due to go on sick leave, successfully incorporating research-informed practice into everyday working practice, reflecting this in young people's placement plans, creating a video about the home that can be viewed by young people who may come to the home and improvements to staff training.

This is a home in its truest sense. Staff are child-focused and fully committed to improving the lives of the young people they look after. Young people who have had unhappy experiences can regain their childhood and adopt a more fulfilling lifestyle. A

young person summed this up simply when telling the inspector, 'I am happy here and I like the staff who look after me and keep me safe.'

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 who 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: SC009651

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Keys Childcare Ltd

Registered provider address: Hurstwood Court, New Hall Hey Road, Rossendale BB4 6HR

Responsible individual: Julie Hamilton

Registered manager: Sarah Haworth

Inspector

Graham Robinson, social care inspector

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