

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC063997
Inspector	Philip Cass
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	BetterCare Keys Limited
Registered person address	Laganwood House 44 Newforge Lane Belfast BT9 5NW
Responsible individual	Heather Ann Laffin
Registered manager	Amanda Jayne Williams
Date of last inspection	27/02/2014

Inspection date	04/06/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	inadequate
Outcomes for children and young people	inadequate
Quality of care	inadequate
Keeping children and young people safe	inadequate
Leadership and management	inadequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	inadequate
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This service does not adequately protect young people. Risk taking behaviour is poorly managed. As a result young people are vulnerable to injury. The safety and welfare of young people is also weakened by poor vetting of staff working in the home, failure to adhere to risk assessments, and inadequate medication systems.

The home is not effective in addressing the highly challenging behaviours displayed by some young people. As a result, these young people do not make sufficient progress towards improved social skills or socially acceptable behaviours. Managers have been too slow to recognise the impact that challenging behaviours have had on other vulnerable residents. Consequently, young people have regressed into damaging patterns of behaviour that had previously been eradicated.

Although education attendance has improved in recent weeks, some young people have not attended education, employment or training throughout their placement at the home. Consequently, they are not able to gain qualifications or experience that might lead to employment. The health needs of young people are not met and managers do not robustly challenge unnecessary delays in health assessments. Health outcomes are further limited because some young people start to smoke during their time at the home.

The home is required to improve its medication systems and its management of risk taking and challenging behaviours. It is also required to ensure that all adults working in the home are carefully vetted, and that staff adhere to all risk assessments. It is recommended that the manager take more assertive steps to challenge unnecessary delay in health assessment and transition planning. It is also recommended that the home better supports young people to make constructive use of their time.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides accommodation for three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The provider organisation operates nationally, providing a range of care services for children and young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/02/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
07/08/2013	Full	good
13/02/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
16/10/2012	Full	good

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
32 (2001)	ensure that the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 are complied with in respect of the home. This is with particular reference to ensuring that young people smoke only in the designated smoking area, and that risks relating to the fire setting behaviours of young people are robustly addressed. (Regulation 32 (1A)(b))	04/06/2014
23 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health and safety	04/07/2014

	(Regulation 23 (a))	
26 (2001)	ensure that the registered person does not allow a person to work at the children's home without ensuring that he is fit to work at a children's home. (Regulation 26 (1)(b), (3), (5)(b), Schedule 2)	04/07/2014
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there. This is with particular reference to the management of challenging behaviours, and minimising the impact of such behaviours on other residents (Regulation 11 (1)(a))	04/07/2014
21 (2001)	ensure that suitable arrangements are made for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21(1))	04/07/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home contacts placing authorities if a change in a young person's care plan is needed (NMS 25.5)
- ensure that young people pursue individual interests and hobbies and can take part in leisure activities and trips. (NMS 7.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **inadequate**

Outcomes are poor for most young people. This is often because unruly behaviour continues, and increases, following admission to the home. The failure to develop improved social skills and adopt socially acceptable behaviours significantly limits the life chances of young people. Young people have been charged with offences of violence and property damage in the home. Managers acknowledge that poor behaviour management contributes to the arrest and prosecution of young people in the home. This means that the risk of further criminalisation is high.

Some young people continue to achieve well at school and are expected to achieve very strong results in examinations taken this year. This means that they have a realistic prospect of moving successfully into further and higher education. However, despite the recent provision of a home tutor, other young people make very limited educational progress. In some cases young people are not in education, employment or training throughout their time in the home. As a result their outcomes are poor.

Although there are systems in place to support young people to make a successful transition to independence and adult life, these are not used effectively. A failure to recognise the needs of young people who are approaching adulthood means that most residents have little realistic understanding of the skills that they will need to be successful. Where transition planning undertaken by the placing authority is inadequate, there has not been sufficient challenge by the home. Poor transition planning means that some young people move from the home in crisis and others face uncertain futures.

Quality of care **inadequate**

Some young people behave well and form positive relationships with staff. They report that the 'staff are lovely people' who help them to do well. Although they are praised and rewarded for their positive behaviour, the home does not afford them the opportunity to grow and develop in a consistently calm and nurturing household because the behaviours of other young people are not well managed.

Young people admitted to the home often have established patterns of placement breakdown, refusal to attend education, and failure to make constructive use of time. Care planning processes are weak because they do not recognise or adequately address these challenges and vulnerabilities. The scale of challenging and damaging behaviours is a reflection of the failure of the home to make proper provision for the care of its residents. Care planning also fails to recognise and address vulnerabilities relating to learning difficulties and associated health conditions. Avoidable delays in

arranging health and education assessments mean that there is not a clear understanding of health and developmental needs. Consequently, care plan objectives are not achieved.

The home environment is well maintained and furnished to a good standard. Despite this, the majority of young people do not make a positive contribution to their home or the wider community. The home has been unable to support some young people to make constructive use of their time, take part in structured activity, develop hobbies and interests, or take part in community activities. The routines of the home are not conducive to good quality care. Some young people regularly refuse to get out of bed until the afternoon, and consistently refuse to settle at an age appropriate bedtime.

Very weak medication procedures have the potential to compromise the safety of young people. There are medicines in the home's secure medication cabinet that are not labelled properly, and not recorded appropriately. This means that the home does not know who they belong to or if they have been administered.

Keeping children and young people safe inadequate

Some staff do not have the confidence, experience or skills to protect young people who place themselves or others at risk of harm. Although they do offer advice and guidance to residents, they lack sufficient authority to consistently enforce expectations of safe behaviour. For example, some young people set fires in the home and do not comprehend fire risk. Staff have failed to remove lighters from them, even following incidents of attempted arson. Immediate action was taken to minimise the risk of arson during the inspection. Staff do not address issues arising out of the fact that young people smoke in their bedrooms despite the obvious smell and the presence of cigarette butts on bedroom floors. Smoking in the home significantly increases the risk of fire.

The admission of young people with particularly challenging behaviours has a negative impact on existing residents. The inability of staff to prevent existing residents mirroring the dangerous behaviours of new admissions limits the safety and wellbeing of young people. For example, a particularly vulnerable young person is reported to have 'regressed', started to smoke, and increased missing from home episodes when exposed to the influence of another young person. When the Registered Manager identifies that the behaviour of young people makes themselves and others unsafe, the home does not work effectively with placing authorities to identify more suitable placements. This exposes young people to unnecessary risk.

The home has clear and appropriate safeguarding procedures. Staff understand these procedures and receive training in safeguarding. This means that they can recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know what to do if they suspect a child is being abused. The organisation is diligent in ensuring that all directly

employed staff are vetted prior to commencing employment in the home. Because the employment history, references and criminal record of new starters are carefully checked, the risk of abuse is reduced. However, managers do not ensure that all agency staff working in the home have sufficient qualifications, experience or integrity to safely care for children. This has meant that adults who are deemed to be unsuitable by the Registered Manager have worked in the home. Weak vetting of agency staff has the potential to place young people at risk of harm.

The home has some good quality health and safety systems. For example it has recently been assessed as having excellent food hygiene systems. The home also has a range of well-written risk assessments. However, risk assessments are not always adhered to. As a result, a young person was able to access a power drill and threaten staff with it. The failure to comply with risk assessments and safely store hazardous equipment demonstrates that the home does not adequately promote the safety of young people.

Leadership and management

inadequate

The Registered Manager has been in post for 18 months. She is working towards the completion of the required manager's qualification within agreed timescales. She has sufficient experience to undertake her role. She demonstrates great dedication and commitment to the young people. However, she has not been able to tackle weaknesses in the care planning, behaviour management or risk assessment processes. Despite this, she has demonstrated an understanding of identified weakness and has clear plans in place to address shortfalls. This means that the home has the capacity to make swift improvements. For example, although the manager has not ensured that health and safety standards are high, she has taken prompt action to ensure that shortfalls are robustly addressed. In addition, following the failure of the home to prevent young people accessing and destroying confidential files, immediate steps were taken to improve the storage of records.

Two requirements and a recommendation were set at the previous inspection. The manager was asked to ensure that greater care was taken so that admissions to the home were appropriate. Since then she has developed a clear protocol that ensures that future referrals will only be admitted if there is a realistic prospect that their needs can be met. It is envisioned that this will significantly improve outcomes for young people. Although the home has not yet promoted good educational outcomes for all young people, they have responded to the identified lack of education provision. The provision of a home tutor is likely to improve educational outcomes. This is good evidence that the home is committed to improvement.

Staff receive regular, formal, supervision. They report that they find supervision useful because it provides a forum for them to develop strategies to support young people. Staff meetings are also used to tackle identified weaknesses. For example a recent staff meeting was used to promote more effective behaviour management

techniques. Because staff have been given clear messages in staff meetings, managers demonstrate that they promote improvement.

Recent improvements to training systems mean that staff receive training in a range of areas including safeguarding, restraint, and first aid, as well as specific training tailored to the needs of young people placed at the home. Additional training in behaviour management has been arranged to address identified shortfalls. New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards before undertaking a suitable qualification in residential care. This ensures that staff are adequately trained to undertake their role.

The manager has established strong links with a range of external agencies. Safeguarding professionals value the way that she shares information so that concerns or complaints can be addressed promptly. Social workers report that the manager is 'very supportive' and value her level of commitment to the young people. However, when social care, education, and health agencies fail to meet their obligations to young people, the manager has not always advocated strongly for an improved service. Consequently, there are significant weaknesses in health assessments, education assessments, and transition planning that limit outcomes for young people.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.