

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	04/06/2014

Inspection date	16/07/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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This is the home's second full inspection this year. It follows a previous inspection in June 2014 where significant concerns were identified. The home has responded effectively to address these shortfalls. Consequently, improvement has taken place. All requirements and recommendations following the inadequate inspection have been met. Leaders and managers are eager for the home to progress. They have built a solid foundation from where further improvements can be made. They are aware of their strengths and continue to strive to address ongoing areas of weakness.

Actions taken by the Registered Manager mean that all young people now have a better opportunity to achieve positive outcomes. Social workers are positive about the home and can identify improvements in practice driven by the manager. A social worker commented that he is 'really impressed with the home. The manager is always chasing me for updated plans and documents'. Work with other agencies is thus proactive with an aim of improving the standards of care young people receive.

Since the last inspection behaviour management plans and risk assessments have been updated. Challenging behaviour is now more effectively managed by staff. This has resulted in the home being a safer, calmer and more nurturing environment for

young people to live. However, whilst determined efforts have been made to address the potential impact of risk taking behaviour, young people continue to display potentially dangerous behaviours.

One recommendation is made as a result of this inspection. The home is asked to ensure that all staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques and only use the homes agreed techniques.

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
04/06/2014	Full	inadequate
27/02/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
07/08/2013	Full	good
13/02/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress

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

Recommendations

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

- Where children's homes use restraint, staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques and only use the home's agreed techniques. Training is regularly refreshed. (NMS 3.15)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Since the last inspection the potential for young people to have positive outcomes is improved. This is because all young people have an individualised day to day care plan which is implemented by a core team of staff. All young people speak positively about permanent members of staff and feel safe whilst in their care. Having trusting relationships with key carers increases young people's ability to form and sustain attachments. This is likely to impact positively on their social and emotional development.

All young people now engage in tailored packages of education despite no longer being of a statutory school age. Some continue to make strong educational progress but others make limited progress. Engaging in education enhances young people's sense of achievement. Their life chances in adulthood are likely to increase through successful engagement and achievement in education.

Young people are physically healthy. This is enhanced by attending routine health appointments. Some young people benefit from engaging in therapeutic programmes which has resulted in a reduction in risk-taking behaviour. Other young people are now engaging in assessments with CAMHS so that a better understanding of their functioning and needs can be established. The outcome of such assessments should provide valuable advice to the home and an opportunity for packages of care and support to be more individually tailored to specific need both now and in the future. This provides young people with a better opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential from this point forward.

Contact arrangements between young people and their family members have progressed since the last inspection. One young person said that having more contact with family is 'the best thing that has happened'. All young people now regularly have staying contact with important people in their lives. Staff are supporting and facilitating this. Maintaining significant links with family is likely to benefit young people in the longer term in respect of their sense of identity. It also potentially provides young people with support networks in adulthood.

Efforts have been made by the manager over the last six weeks to seek clarity in respect of transition plans for young people in the home. This provides the potential for improved outcomes for young people in terms of smooth and successful transitions into adulthood. However such improved efforts are not yet wholly effective as up to date transition plans remain absent from young people's files.

Quality of care **adequate**

Young people speak positively about some members of staff. They feel well looked after. The good relationships young people have with some staff enable them to have a secure base from where they can start to address their difficulties. These relationships are a protective factor for young people during a period of staff shortages and unstable staffing arrangements.

All young people have an individualised care plan, behaviour plan and risk assessments in place. Files are generally kept in good order. Permanent members of staff have an understanding of, and follow these plans. Small gaps in files, such as contact plans not being updated, have the potential to impact on young people. New or agency staff are likely to struggle to meet young people's contact needs without such up to date information being available. This has been minimised by the knowledge held by senior members of staff on duty.

A core group of staff provide some consistency of care for young people. This and the revised systems in place have improved behaviour in the home. However, the staff team is currently depleted by a number of permanent posts. This, the use of agency staff and inconsistency relating to the experience and skills of staff has on occasion led to differing responses to challenging behaviours. This shortfall prevents entirely consistent care being provided to young people and could impact on their sense of stability and security in the home.

A core group of staff are very committed to the young people. Staff respect diversity and have demonstrated that they value young people as individuals. They encourage them to develop interests, to develop their unique sense of identity and to feel proud of whom they are. This has a positive impact on young people's sense of identity and self-esteem.

There have been improvements in the home environment. In particular an educational room is now in place. This gives young people a well-equipped area for private study or home tutoring. This improved environment, alongside consistent routines and encouragement to engage in education provide young people with better opportunities to achieve academically.

Staff support young people to engage in therapeutic processes. One social worker wrote, 'staff have been fully supportive and accommodating of therapeutic work'. Such support from staff enhances young people's emotional and social development. It provides an opportunity for them to develop the emotional skills required to move successfully into adulthood.

Young people know how to make a complaint. They feel consulted about the day to day running of the home. Consultation is done on an individual basis because young people choose not to attend weekly house meetings. Young people confirm that they are given choices in respect of activities they would like to participate in. Details of community activities taking place during the summer school holidays are accessible to young people. This gives them an opportunity to socialise in their local community.

Free time away from the home is particularly valued by young people who have established social networks. This assists them to develop their social skills and their sense of independence.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Good safeguarding policies are in place. They provide a foundation to ensure young people are safe. These include preventative measures regarding missing from home. Safeguarding training has been undertaken by all staff. They demonstrate an understanding of how to respond should a young person disclose any form of abuse to them. This impacts positively on the safety of young people. It reduces the risk of abuse in the home. It also ensures that allegations or concerns of abuse are investigated promptly.

The physical environment is adequately maintained. Fire drills and checks are regularly undertaken. Good quality health and safety systems remain in place. For example, the home has maintained its 'Excellent' rating following a recent local authority environmental health inspection. This means that young people benefit from living in a protective environment. Risk assessments are clear and proportionate. This means that activities are safe and stimulating.

Significant improvements have been made in the way that staff respond to risk taking and potentially harmful behaviours. Risk assessments are now clear, understood, and fully adhered to by all staff. However, despite the increased vigilance of staff, such behaviours continue. For example, young people who do not fully comprehend fire safety issues continue to smoke in their bedrooms.

Restraint is used by staff infrequently in response to damaging and violent behaviours. Although all staff involved in restraint receive training, not all have been trained in the technique recognised by the home. This has the potential to result in inappropriate restraint. However, the impact of this shortfall has been minimal to date.

There is a robust recruitment procedure in place. All staff employed directly by the home are vetted effectively. When agency staff are used, more detailed scrutiny of their suitability to work in the home now takes place. Lessons have been learnt as a result of shortfalls in this area previously. Improved recruitment processes reduce the risk of unsafe appointments being made.

Medication administration and storage procedures are improved since the last inspection. Medication is stored securely. Accurate records of administration, receipt and disposal are kept. The medication cupboard is kept clean and tidy. Risk assessments for self-administration are in place and there is appropriate monitoring of self-administration of medication. Staff are trained in medication and first aid.

These improvements have reduced the risk of mistakes being made in the administration of medication.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager has been in post for 20 months. She is suitably knowledgeable and experienced to undertake the role. She is working towards the completion of the required manager's qualification within agreed timescales.

The Registered Manager has a clear grasp of the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. Action to meet all of the requirements and recommendations set at that inspection has been taken. The Registered Manager has a clear action plan for implementing improvements. The foundations of this are now embedded. For example, improved monitoring, review and implementation of safeguarding practices mean that young people are better protected from abuse and from risk-taking behaviours. Staff say that they can already see improvements in how the home operates. One staff member said she now has a better understanding of 'what is necessary to make us a good or outstanding children's home'.

Staff feel supported by their manager and continue to receive regular, formal supervision. They say that supervision and weekly team meetings are useful forums to explore ways to improve practice. Senior members of staff have recently undertaken training in staff supervision, safer recruitment and medication administration. Consequently, they present as knowledgeable. The manager motivates her staff team well so that they are prepared to undertake additional tasks which improve the management of the home.

Since the appointment of a new external visitor, substantial improvements have been observed in quality assurance processes. Recent reports provide a clear focus on the causes of underlying instability in the home. They recognise underlying causes of weaknesses. This supports the manager to develop realistic improvement strategies. For example, current recruitment strategies have the capacity to reduce staff turnover. Newly devised internal quality assurance processes have the potential to drive further improvements. However these have not yet been used in the home. Despite this, the current high levels of management monitoring ensure that shortfalls are identified and that improvement is promoted.

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.