

SC064500

Registered provider: Keys Childcare Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 29 to 30 August 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: 20 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 good because:

- Young people benefit from long-term placements and are cared for by a stable staff team which provides structure, boundaries and consistency, enabling young people to feel safe and secure.

- Based on their starting point when first entering the home, young people make significant progress in all areas of their lives.
- Staff have high aspirations for young people and will advocate strongly on their behalf to ensure that their rights are preserved and their outcomes maximised.
- Young people who have had poor life experiences prior to living at the home, are encouraged to adopt lifestyles through which they re-engage with their education and learn how to socialise through new experiences and activities.
- An experienced, child-focused manager is well supported by a staff team which uses a team-centred approach to childcare and has contributed positively to the ethos, culture and working practices 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:

- Consideration should be given to reorganising the office space, reviewing and refreshing filing systems, to make it look less cluttered and more professional.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/12/2016	Full	Good
15/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/01/2016	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, section 3.7)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The young people currently living in the home have done so for some time. They have all benefited from the experience of living in a stable home that allows them to grow, develop and mature. During this process and over a period of time, young people develop strong relationships with a staff group that has experienced few changes in recent times. The stability and longevity of the staff group provides young people with a consistency of care that many have never experienced before. This has resulted in young people making significant progress in all areas of their lives.

This view is supported by young people and other professionals who deal with the home regularly. For example, a young person told the inspector that, 'Staff are great.' A social worker reported, 'The home has provided one of the most stable periods in his life.' Another said, 'The home has boundaries and staff have established good relationships with him. Overall they are doing a good job with him and I am pleased with the care given to him.'

Planning documents, assessments of risk and the strategies used to manage behaviour are evidence of the progress that young people make as they grow up while living at this home. In addition to these documents, which are reviewed and updated regularly to keep them current, there is also a range of documentation that captures the progress that young people make, such as reports for young people's reviews.

The home has an excellent record in re-engaging young people with their education, with each child attending full-time education. Attendance levels for the last academic year were excellent, with young people's educational progress reflected in young people's end-of-year school report. For young people of school age, their educational arrangements remain in place for the next academic year. Full-time further education is planned for those of school leaving age.

Good arrangements are in place to support and promote young people's health. Everyday health needs are addressed effectively through community-based facilities. If required, more specialist services can be accessed through the strong links the home has with the local looked after nurse, who is a regular visitor to the home. Young people and

staff are also supported by a range of specialist services provided by the organisation operating the home. For example, clinical psychologists make regular visits and contribute to staff training and meetings. Currently, all young people are receiving a therapeutic package linked to attachment, which is conducted away from the home.

Fitness and good health are promoted with young people and are areas that are constantly reviewed. For example, staff and young people consult regularly about healthy eating and nutrition. Ensuring that young people have sufficient exercise is reflected in their weekly activity planner and high staff ratios allow for individual activities and interests to be followed. For example, one young person plays for a local football team, another swims regularly and is active through his local scout group.

Young people's meetings take place weekly, but significant consultation is not always achieved because of the group dynamics and immaturity. However, consultation levels are high throughout the home because of the strength of the relationships and the high levels of communication that exist between young people and staff. Throughout the inspection, young people were observed in regular discussions with staff in planning, arranging and negotiating what they were going to do that day.

Contact arrangements for young people are complex. Staff are willing and prepared to work flexibly to allow young people to sustain appropriate contact with those who are important to them. For example, staff are prepared to travel long distances or support family member visits by helping with transport. The home also buys in, the services of an independent advocate who visits monthly. This ensures that young people with limited outside contact have someone to speak to on a regular basis, other than staff or their social worker.

Developing independence skills is part of daily life in the home. For example, young people are encouraged to take on some responsibility, such as keeping bedrooms tidy. They also develop new skills that will serve them well in the future, such as cooking. This improves their independence skills and gives them a sense of responsibility.

Young people live in a home that blends well into the local community. Each young person has their own spacious bedroom that is personalised to reflect their interests. Since the previous inspection, the main bathroom has been completely refurbished to a high standard and some decoration around the home has taken place. As the inspection progressed, new carpets were being laid on the ground floor. The overall state of repair and quality of decor, furnishings, fixtures and equipment are good. However, parts of the home continue to look tired and a little outdated.

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

The home has good systems in place linked to keeping everyone safe. For example, detailed assessments that identify risks both around the home and in the local community are in place. Following a recent visit from a fire officer, the fire risk assessment has been revised and updated. The aim to have new internal fire doors fitted in the required areas of the home has now been achieved. Appropriate service contracts

are in place to ensure that safety equipment is well maintained, which adds to the levels of safety in the home.

The home retains good contact and has strong professional relationships with those external agencies charged with keeping young people safe. A professional who deals regularly with the home told the inspector, 'I have always found the staff are responsive to advice and are prepared to act on that advice to improve outcomes for young people.'

Staff are familiar with and understand the safeguarding procedures in place, recognising their own roles and responsibilities in keeping young people safe. All staff have received training in this field, which is refreshed regularly.

Young people pose their own challenges linked to behaviour management. For example, staff have supported a young person through a very disruptive settling-in period, in which, at times, they themselves were at some risk. Currently, the home has a more settled feel about it, with young people progressing well. The work and support given by staff is acknowledged by external professionals. For example, a social worker reported, 'The staff have proved to be very resilient and have dealt very well with the challenges posed.'

Serious behaviour management events still occur, but overall there has been a reduction in the frequency and intensity of these events. Incidents that require physical intervention are being managed, monitored and evaluated effectively by senior staff. Debriefing sessions with young people and staff provide opportunities to explore each incident to see whether lessons can be learned and whether any incident could have been handled differently.

Incidents of reporting young people as missing have been minimal and those that do occur relate to the late return to the home of one young person who is exploring his independence. Young people are not unhappy and do not go missing from this home. There are strong links with services who deal with and monitor young people who do go missing from home and there are agreed plans and protocols in place to show staff how to manage and reduce these episodes.

Bullying in the home has been an issue in the past with this current group of young people. Staff have worked diligently with them to change this behaviour. High staffing levels allow staff to monitor the behaviours of young people, thus limiting the opportunities for bullying to occur. A young person told the inspector, 'Things are better now than when I last spoke to you. I have not got any problems.'

Staff retention is high, which means that young people are being looked after by staff whom they know and trust. The recruitment and clearance procedures for new staff are thorough and meet with regulatory requirements and current guidance. Longer-serving staff are being rechecked regularly, which is deemed to be good practice. This ensures that young people are only being looked after by staff who have been suitably checked and recruited.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is well managed by an experienced and fully committed manager who leads by example. For example, in order to provide the correct staffing levels over a recent weekend, the manager covered staff sickness himself. This was to avoid bringing in staff who are unfamiliar to young people. The manager has high aspirations for the young people in his care and he and his staff will advocate strongly on their behalf, such as in challenging some of the recent decisions and actions taken by one of the home's placing authorities.

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 buy into the ethos, culture and working practices that they have helped to create over the years. Young people's needs are put first and staff are prepared to work extra time or flexibly so that those needs can be met. For example, the home raised the staffing ratio to work with one young person to ensure that everyone in the home is kept safe. This has put considerable pressure on staffing resources, but they have risen to the challenge. As a result, there has been no need to bring in extra staff who are unknown to young people to cover.

The formal programme of supervision and appraisal takes place consistently. In addition, informal support forms part of the culture developed in the home. Communication levels between staff are high, which aids the general organisation and the excellent way staff deploy themselves around the home, so that young people receive individual attention. Staff say that they feel well supported.

The core staff training programme provides initial and refresher training in the expected and required areas. This is designed to keep the skills-base of staff high. In addition to this, the manager has arranged some alternative online training to be provided by an external training company. This has added to the training portfolio available for staff. Aligning theoretical models alongside the current practical needs of young people is an area that has improved, giving staff greater insight into why they work in a certain way. Overall, staff training needs are well met.

The overall monitoring of the home, both internally and externally, takes place consistently. The home's records are reviewed and evaluated by senior staff, with any weaknesses identified so that they can be quickly addressed. The manager is able to link his own critical analysis with the external observations and translate them into the home's own development and workforce planning.

The home has a very good record of compliance. The report from the previous inspection contained only one recommendation and this has been addressed. This has resulted in the main bathroom used by young people being completely upgraded and refurbished. A number of other improvements and developments have been introduced, notably with the creation and introduction of an electronic system that charts the history

and progress made by young people as they grow up at the home. This is an improvement on the previous paper version.

The home is having to deal with a number of challenges presented by young people at the moment, but staff do this supportively, with some compassion and good humour. They work collectively and consistently so that young people can maximise their potential and improve their outcomes.

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: SC064500

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: Oliver Birtwistle

Inspector

Graham Robinson, social care inspector

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