

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC066469
Inspector	Monica Hargreaves
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	Joanne Louise Simpson
Date of last inspection	31/01/2014

Inspection date	24/07/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action.

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people receive a very good standard of care from staff that is tailored to meet their specific needs. As a result they make good progress in all areas of their lives from their starting point on admission to the home. They are able to develop and sustain positive relationships with staff. They grow in confidence and their behaviour improves over time. Their health needs are identified and they are supported to have a healthy lifestyle. They engage well with education, prepare for independence and have aspirations for future employment.

Young people are safe and feel safe. Staff have a good understanding of young people's vulnerabilities and they manage risks effectively in order to ensure that young people are protected.

The home is well managed. The manager is committed to ensuring continuous improvement. She regularly monitors the quality of care and the progress young people make, taking action to address any shortfall. The views of young people, their relatives and professionals involved with the home are regularly sought as part of the monitoring process. The feedback from this consultation is used to drive improvements. The manager provides strong leadership to staff and there is effective team working which ensures that the care given to young people is

consistent.

Two recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to pathway plans and the maintenance of part of the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This service is a young people's home run by a company. It provides three medium to long-term placements for young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/01/2014	Interim	good progress
07/11/2013	Full	good
12/11/2012	Interim	satisfactory progress
30/04/2012	Full	good

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):

- ensure that each 'eligible' young person has a pathway plan in place (NMS 12)
- ensure that all areas of the home are well maintained and decorated. (NMS 1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make good progress in all areas of their lives from their starting point on admission to the home. They are able to make and sustain positive relationships with staff which helps them to feel safe and secure. Consequently, they grow in confidence, develop emotional resilience and over time, develop coping mechanisms that help them to manage difficulties in their lives. One young person said 'Things have got better for me since I came here. I used to get into trouble, but I'm much better now'. The progress young people make is recognised by professionals outside the home. For example, one professional said '(Name) has really moved on in this placement' and another said '(Name) has made very good progress. (Name) is maturing and is more confident'.

All young people have an identified education placement and they attend very regularly. This is a significant improvement for some young people who before they came to live in the home, had only attended school intermittently. This regular attendance supports young people's learning and helps them to achieve. Some young people have taken examinations and are currently awaiting results. Their achievements are recognised and praised. All young people have plans in place for further education and employment. This improves their chances in later life.

Young people learn the practical skills they will need to live independently. For example, they keep their own rooms clean and tidy, do their laundry and help to choose and cook meals. As they grow older, young people work through a specific independence training programme with staff. This helps them to assess the practical, social and emotional skills they have and those they need to develop further. Although these systems are in place to support young people to become independent, not all 'eligible' young people have a pathway plan that identifies the arrangements that will be put in place when they leave care.

Overall, young people enjoy good health. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are supported to have a healthy diet and to exercise. Young people do not use substances and some young people have stopped smoking since they came to live in the home. This has a positive impact on their general health. Young people attend routine and specialist health appointments and have access to additional resources they need, such as support from the child and adolescent mental health service. This ensures that their general health and emotional well-being are monitored.

Young people have a good understanding of their history and background. The contact they maintain with relatives helps to sustain their sense of identity.

Young people are fully involved in all the decisions that are made about their own

lives. They understand their care plans and contribute to their reviews. They have regular key work sessions to discuss their needs and progress. They also attend regular house meetings where they can participate in discussions about the running of the home. Young people know how to complain and report that their concerns are taken seriously and acted on. This helps to develop their sense of self-worth.

Quality of care

good

Young people are well cared for by staff who have a very good understanding of their individual needs. Young people say that they can talk to staff and that they feel staff are interested in their welfare and want them to do well. One young person said 'Staff are the best thing about this home'.

Staff develop comprehensive care plans in consultation with young people. These identify specific goals and objectives and record how staff will help young people to achieve them. Clear plans, together with very good communication and close team working, promote consistency in the way staff work with young people. In turn, this helps young people to achieve positive outcomes.

Staff help young people to learn how to behave in socially acceptable ways. They manage potentially difficult situations effectively. As a result of the way staff work with them, young people learn how to manage conflict in their own lives. Young people generally behave well towards one another and staff. This promotes a positive atmosphere in the home and contributes to young people's progress.

The home has robust systems in place for managing medication. Staff are trained in the safe delivery of medicines. Medication is stored securely and clear records of medicines delivered are kept. These arrangements protect young people and ensure they have medicines when they need them to support their good health.

Staff work very effectively with other agencies such as placing authorities, substance misuse and youth offending teams, the looked after children's nurse and the children's psychology services. These positive working relationships support consistent care and ensure that young people have prompt access to resources they need.

Staff encourage young people to engage in activities outside the home, helping them to identify things that they are interested in. Some young people have enjoyed a range of leisure pursuits, which include gymnastics, youth club, horse riding and working with animals at a local city farm. Other young people choose to spend most of their leisure time with friends. Young people also go out on activities with staff, for example to the cinema, to theme parks and local country parks. Staff have taken young people on short holidays. These opportunities broaden young people's experiences and support their general development.

Young people benefit from living in a home that is suitably located in a residential area within easy reach of schools, shops and local leisure facilities. Good transport links enable young people to travel independently on public transport. The home is generally well maintained. However, the carpet on the first floor is stained and two of the doors need to be repainted. This detracts from the overall presentation of the home. Young people say that they like their home. They have a key to their bedroom which enables them to keep their possessions safe. They are encouraged to personalise their rooms to reflect their tastes; some young people have chosen to paint and decorate their rooms. This helps to develop their independence skills and also encourages them to take a pride in their environment.

Keeping children and young people safe good

The home's safeguarding arrangements are effective and protect young people. Young people themselves say they feel safe in the home and professionals confirm they have no safeguarding concerns. Staff are all trained in child protection issues and safe care practices and they have a good understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures. Consequently, they understand how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know how to manage and report concerns in order to protect young people. Detailed individual risk assessment and management plans clearly identify potential risks that may affect young people and record their vulnerabilities. Plans detail how risks are to be minimised in order to protect young people.

Young people rarely go missing from the home. If they do, staff follow their individual risk management plan and the home's protocol for reporting and managing incidents. They have developed very good links with local police and other relevant agencies and share information about young appropriately. This helps to ensure that young people are protected if they are missing from the home. Professionals confirm that there is very good partnership working with the manager and staff in the home. One professional reported that the risk taking behaviour that some young people exhibited before they came to live in the home has greatly reduced because of the way they are looked after; as a result they are 'much more confident and much safer'.

Staff are trained to respond positively to challenging behaviour and they manage incidents well. They engage well with young people and they defuse difficult situations effectively to avoid the need for physical intervention. Consequently, restraint has hardly ever been used in the home. This contributes to young people's sense of safety and well-being.

The home's recruitment processes are robust, ensuring that all staff are thoroughly vetted and assessed as suitable before they start work in the home. The manager also makes sure that checks have been done for any agency staff who they employ. All visitors to the home are checked before they are allowed in. These arrangements

support the protection of young people by ensuring that unsuitable individuals are not able to gain access to the home.

The home is kept safe for young people, staff and visitors. This is achieved through a system of robust risk assessments and health and safety checks on all equipment and the environment. Regular fire drills ensure that young people understand how to leave the home safely in an emergency.

Leadership and management

good

The home is well managed. The Registered Manager is very experienced in working with children and young people in residential care, both as a care worker and manager. She has managed this home for a number of years. In addition to other relevant qualifications, she has gained National Vocational Qualifications at Level 4 in working with children and young people and also in leadership and management. The manager keeps herself up to date with changes in legislation and ensures that information is disseminated to staff to maintain their knowledge.

The home is suitably staffed at all times. This ensures that young people are well cared for and supported to get to their appointments and to take part in activities. Young people report that they know all the staff who work in the home. This enables them to develop a sense of trust in the staff who care for them. The manager provides good leadership to the staff team. Staff have regular supervision meetings where they are able to discuss their care of young people and their own training and development needs. Staff confirm that they have an annual appraisal of their performance where development targets for the next year are agreed. Staff report that the manager is available to give them guidance and support outside these formal meetings and that there is always a manager on call in the evenings and weekends. Consequently, staff feel that they are well supported.

Staff are either qualified or are working to gain a relevant qualification. They have access to a good programme of training to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need for their work. The manager ensures that additional training is made available to staff in order to enable them to understand and meet the specific needs of young people. For example, staff are currently completing training on mental health issues, self-harm and sexually harmful behaviours.

The progress of young people is routinely monitored by the manager and a person who is independent of the home. Reports of this monitoring activity are submitted to Ofsted within the required timescales. The manager takes prompt action to address any shortfall that is identified as a result of the monitoring in order to improve the service that is given to young people. The manager also takes action on issues raised during inspections. The recommendation made at the last inspection is met. Staff have completed additional training to enhance their understanding of mental health issues and therefore enable them to better support young people.

The home's Statement of Purpose is detailed and accurately sets out the services that the home provides and how young people are looked after. The young person's guide to the home is a colourful document that is presented in a format that is appropriate for young people. It gives young people good information about the routines of the home and their rights in care.

The manager works hard to ensure that relationships with neighbours remain positive. This contributes to young people's sense of safety in their local community.

Young people's records are well maintained and stored securely. The information that is kept in the home contributes to young people's understanding of their history and time in the placement. Young people are encouraged to read and comment on their records so they know what is written about them and their views are incorporated into their documents.

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.