

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC370910
Inspector	Rachel Griffiths
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	Maxine Janet Rayner
Date of last inspection	29/01/2014

Inspection date	05/11/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	None

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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Young people achieve good, and in some cases, exceptional outcomes while living in this home. They are provided with exceedingly high quality individualised care from committed and supportive staff who aspire for young people to thrive and reach their full potential.

A key strength of this home is the consultation and engagement of young people in all aspects of the care provided to them. Young people are central to the running of the home. They are fully consulted during the preparation and review of their own risk assessments and placement plans. Young people consistently report feeling listened to and highly respected by staff. They express extremely positive views regarding the quality of care provided to them by a consistent staff team. They trust staff and hold their relationships with them in extremely high regard. Young people feel valued and this assists them to develop substantially in terms of their self-confidence and overall well-being.

Young people feel safe and are kept safe by dedicated managers and staff. Staff work extremely closely with the police and a variety of other specialist support services to ensure that young people's safety is enhanced and their holistic needs are consistently met to a high standard. This, and excellent individualised care and behaviour management plans which are implemented by staff, further enhance

young people's sense of safety and emotional well-being.

The home is extremely well managed. The management team is very reflective in its approach. The team demonstrates a detailed awareness and understanding of the strengths of the home and an excellent capacity to learn from experiences in practice. The home's development plan demonstrates how the manager intends to improve further and maintain an outstanding service for young people. No requirements or recommendations are made as a result of this inspection.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home, owned by a private company, is registered for three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, aged between 11 and 17 years.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/01/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
26/06/2013	Full	outstanding
20/12/2012	Interim	good progress
17/05/2012	Full	good

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make good, and in some respects exceptional progress from their starting points. One young person commented: 'I feel I have achieved a lot while living here. I am going horse riding, I am going swimming, I am doing work experience and I am doing very well at school. I do not think I would have achieved so much in another placement.' Young people grow in confidence. They learn new skills and develop essential life and social skills. As a result, their life chances are significantly improved.

Young people's risk-taking behaviours significantly reduce or stop altogether while living in this home. For example, young people who previously associated with dangerous adults and used illicit drugs no longer do so. A social worker said in respect of a young person: 'From her starting point, risk has reduced massively in terms of her previous lifestyle.' Extensive and targeted key work undertaken with young people regarding their previous patterns of behaviour helps them to think about the impact and consequences for themselves and others as a result of those behaviours. This helps them develop insight, self-protection skills, empathy and more socially acceptable behaviour.

Young people who have either not engaged in education for a significant period of time or who have previously been excluded from school re-enter into education while living in this home. Some young people have excellent attendance at school and they are achieving exceptionally well. Other young people struggle to consistently attend school and make less substantial progress as a result. None the less, they make significant improvement from their starting point. As a result of young people re-engaging in education, they start to enjoy a sense of achievement and their opportunities and choices in later life are greatly improved.

Young people enjoy greatly improved health as a result of living in this home. Their physical and emotional health is enhanced by attending routine health appointments, eating a healthy balanced diet, engaging in physical activity and from having structure and routines in their lives. One young person said: 'Since living here I have gained weight and started eating properly. My energy levels have improved a lot.' Young people start to feel good about themselves; they take pride in their physical appearance and they develop self-care skills. This assists young people with the development of personal relationships and helps raise their self-esteem.

Young people benefit both physically and emotionally from engaging in a wide range of leisure activities within the local community. For example, young people participate in activities such as horse riding, swimming, ice-skating and boxing. Some young people do voluntary work within the local community and all young people get involved in community events and raise money for charity. In respect of the

opportunities available for young people in this home, an independent reviewing officer commented: 'I am very impressed with what the home has done so far. The key strengths to date are good education provision and the range of activities the young person is already engaging in.' As a result of these opportunities, young people have fun, they make friends, they develop a sense of achievement and they are making a positive contribution to their community.

Young people's relationships with their families develop and improve while living in this home. Young people are assisted to explore their feelings about their family relationships and understand the difficulties that have affected their families. One young person said: 'My relationship with my family has become stronger since living here. Before I never wanted to attend contact but staff encouraged me and now I get on better with my family. I now choose who I want to see.' Young people benefit greatly from these improved relationships. It helps them to understand their heritage and helps to improve their sense of identity. It also provides an opportunity for young people to have an improved family support network in the longer term.

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people have excellent relationships with staff. A social worker commented: 'Staff are really supportive and excellent at maintaining a positive relationship with the young person. They constantly reassure her that she is cared for.' The extremely positive relationships young people form with a consistent team of committed staff and the emotionally warm and welcoming environment created by them, provide a secure emotional base from where young people can develop.

High standards of care are maintained for young people because staff have an excellent insight and understanding of young people's individual needs. One young person said: 'Staff understand me. They know when I am upset and when to either give me space or give me support. They just know.' In addition, staff provide young people with structure to their days and very clear and consistent boundaries. A social worker commented: 'There are very clear and consistent strategies in place.' The very consistent and supportive approach of the staff helps to enhance young people's sense of stability and security. It also helps them to make excellent progress behaviourally and emotionally.

The managers and staff have extremely positive relationships with partner agencies. One professional said: 'The team are very proactive at arranging specialist support services for young people, for example, in relation to drug use or the risk of child sexual exploitation'. Another professional from a partner agency commented: 'The staff are proactive in sharing information when things change or deteriorate. I am impressed by how they think and reflect on situations and seek advice and guidance rather than making knee jerk reactions to situations.' The positive working relationships with partner agencies provide young people with the best opportunities to access appropriate support, address their difficulties, and reach their full potential.

While managers and staff have extremely positive working relationships with a wide range of professionals, they are not afraid to challenge if this is deemed in the best interests of young people. Staff are strong advocates for young people. For example, one young person who is extremely unhappy with her current contact arrangements is being supported to make representations to her social worker. The young person said: 'The staff have pushed for me to have more contact with my family. If I want something and they think it is reasonable, they will push for things for me.' Such support and advocacy helps to ensure that young people's care plans continue to be reviewed in line with young people's wishes, taking into account their needs and the positive progress they are making in their placement.

Young people are fully respected and valued in this home. Their views are continually sought in respect of the day-to-day running of the home through weekly young people's meetings, through regular key working sessions and through young people having an opportunity to attend a section of staff meetings to share their views. Young people feel strongly that their views are listened to. They are fully involved in their own care planning. Their needs, views and preferences are fully incorporated into these plans. Consequently, young people's individual and diverse needs are extremely well met. Young people feel listened to and this helps raise their self-esteem and confidence.

The home is maintained to a high standard. Young people's bedrooms are personalised, decorated and furnished according to their individual choices. Young people are consulted about the decoration of the communal areas of the home. One young person said: 'Staff have listened to what we want and now the house is more homely.' This helps them to feel valued and further improves their self-esteem.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

Young people consistently state that they feel safe living in this home and they are able to identify staff who they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. A young person said: 'This is a very safe and secure place to live. I know I can rely on staff and they are always here for me. I can talk to my key worker about anything.' In addition, young people report no instances of bullying in the home. This indicates that the home's policies in respect of bullying are robustly implemented. The emotionally and physically safe environment provides young people with a strong sense of safety and well-being.

Staff are very well trained in respect of safeguarding practices. They work in accordance with the home's safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to respond should a young person disclose any form of abuse to them or should they have any concerns about the practice of other staff. This reduces the risk of abuse in the home.

Consultation between the management team and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is excellent. Allegations or concerns which come to the attention of the Registered Manager are dealt with very robustly and in consultation with the LADO. For example, when a young person made an allegation regarding a member of staff, the manager swiftly followed the home's procedure in respect of this. Immediate action was taken to eliminate any potential risk of harm while the allegation was investigated. Following a strategy meeting and consultation with the LADO, a thorough internal investigation was undertaken without delay. The issue was resolved to the satisfaction of the young person and the LADO. The swift actions of the Registered Manager and her excellent understanding and oversight of safeguarding practices reduces the risk of harm to young people.

Young people are protected as a result of comprehensive and individualised risk management plans which are implemented by staff. For example, in respect of young people who have been assessed as being at risk of going missing and at risk of child sexual exploitation, staff know the procedures to minimise the risk of this happening and what to do if it happens. Excellent staff knowledge, good staffing levels and extremely close working relationships between the staff and the police have offered young people a high level of protection. On occasions when young people have gone missing, they have been swiftly found and welcomed back into the home. Comprehensive work undertaken with young people by staff and a specialist voluntary organisation that support young people who are at risk of or have been subjects of child sexual exploitation has helped to significantly reduce risk in this area. A professional from this organisation said: 'The levels of risk of sexual exploitation reduce significantly for young people living in this home. From a safety point of view, I cannot see that there is anything else staff in the home could do to improve the safety of young people in respect of going missing from care.'

Young people's behaviour is extremely well managed in this home. Young people are motivated by positive incentives which are offered in return for positive behaviour. Staff discuss with young people what de-escalation strategies are most effective for them at times when they are feeling challenged. These strategies are agreed and implemented into each young person's behaviour management plans and risk assessments. Consequently, young people are more likely to work within the guidelines of their risk assessments and behaviour management plans and towards the goals of their future care plans. The home's embedded ethos of proactive behaviour management is extremely effective. There are high numbers of positive consequences and far fewer negative ones. The use of physical intervention is extremely rare and is only used as a last resort when a young person is assessed as at immediate risk of danger. Regular reviews and excellent management oversight of behaviour management ensure that plans remain effective and that practice in this area remains of an optimum standard.

The home is a physically safe and secure environment. All health and safety issues are addressed thoroughly. Young people confirm that fire drills take place regularly and were able to advise me what to do in the event of a fire. Equipment in the home,

including electrical equipment and the home's vehicles are checked and serviced at regular intervals. This contributes to young people's safety and well-being.

Leadership and management

outstanding

The Registered Manager is very experienced and has been in post as the manager of this home for a number of years. She is working towards the completion of the required management qualification within agreed timescales.

The management team is inspirational and dynamic. Their enthusiasm and energy filters down to the staff team. Staff are extremely child-focused and motivated and share their manager's vision that the welfare of young people is paramount and that young people need and deserve exceptional standards of care. One member of staff said: 'The manager is great, very professional, she knows the policies inside out and is very experienced with difficult young people. I highly respect her.' Staff morale is high and an extremely cohesive staff team ensure that young people are extremely well supported.

All staff are exceptionally well trained. The requirement set at the last inspection in respect of training has been met. All staff are trained and remain fully up to date in key areas such as safeguarding, first aid, fire safety and behaviour management. In addition to this, specific training has been accessed in respect of a wide variety of issues which affect young people living in this home, for example, joint training with the police regarding missing from care and child sexual exploitation, self-injurious behaviour, sexually harmful behaviour, autistic spectrum disorders and drug abuse. Staff participate in regular consultation sessions with the home's psychotherapist to discuss specific aspects of young people's behaviour to gain further insight and advice regarding their specific needs. As a result, staff are extremely well equipped to meet the needs of the young people they are caring for.

In addition to the above, staff attend regular team meetings which discuss practice issues and they receive regular supervision with a reflective and knowledgeable management team. A member of staff described his supervision as, 'a two way street, very stimulating and promotes development'. Regular high quality supervision ensures that practice is monitored and it provides scope for further improvements in the delivery of care.

The home's Statement of Purpose provides clear and accurate information to parents and placing authorities about the care, support and services the home offers. Young people are also provided with a guide so that they know what to expect when they come to live in the home.

Managers and leaders are very reflective and learn from experiences in practice to

improve the service further. For example, pre-placement planning has improved. The Registered Manager undertakes robust impact assessments. Decisions as to whether a placement is appropriate are delegated to her and her team. In addition, placements will now only commence when it has been confirmed in writing by placing authorities that essential support services are up and running from the day a placement starts. These improved practices will further ensure that young people's needs are met and that they will have the best opportunity to reach their full potential.

Managers and leaders comprehensively and effectively monitor the progress young people make while living in the home. Monthly progress reports enable social workers and parents to see what young people have achieved over time, educationally, socially, behaviourally and emotionally. Additionally, staff and young people jointly collate information on a monthly basis in respect of their progress. This is reviewed with young people and measured against their aims and goals when they first moved into the home. This enables young people to clearly see how much progress they have made over time. It also enables the managers to demonstrate the impact and value living at the home is having on young people's lives and how their life chances are significantly improving as a result.

Quality assurance monitoring, both internally and externally, is effective in identifying strengths in the home as well as minor shortfalls. There have been recent improvements in respect of the evaluative quality of internal monitoring reports and in respect of consultation with young people, parents (where appropriate) and stakeholders within this process. This has resulted in monitoring reports being more rigorous and effective in driving improvements. This is indicative of a service which wants to continually assess, develop and improve practice so that young people achieve even better outcomes.

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.