

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	06/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC370949
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Bettercare Keys Ltd
Registered provider address	The Keys Group, Laganwood House, 44 Newforge Lane, Belfast BT9 5NW

Responsible individual	Kelly Looker
Registered manager	Michelle Davie
Inspector	Clive Lucas

Inspection date	06/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged as good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. At the last inspection, a recommendation was made to reduce the length of the location risk assessment, so that it was easier to read and use. The registered manager has done this and the document is now clear and succinct. Since the last inspection, the children have made progress; for some of them this progress has been very significant. Even so, the standard of record-keeping has slipped. However, this has had a limited impact on the outcomes for the children. One child has moved on from the home. The move was unplanned and followed a brief, very unsettled period. Her placing social worker is clear that she was doing very well at the home and had reduced her risk-taking behaviour, but circumstances beyond the control of the staff led to the breakdown. The social worker said that the staff had built a good rapport with the child and had managed her risk-taking behaviour well. The social worker said, 'Being at the home had a good effect on her and she totally changed in a positive way.' Another child has moved into the home in the last month. Her social worker said that she did not have time for an introduction to the home, but, when she did visit, the staff were very welcoming. Staff have been responsive to the child and are getting to know her and her needs well. Moves for children can be traumatic, but the staff help to reduce this through their support for the children who move into and out of this home. One child has been at the home for three years. She is settled and doing very well in her education, and has been made pupil of the year. Her social worker said, 'She is a different girl; she is confident, has come out of her shell and has good relationships with the staff.' This is very good progress and will help the child as she grows and prepares for a more independent placement. The remaining child has been taking part in some very risky behaviour. This has settled down very recently. The child went missing from the home seven times between 1 January and 17 February 2017. She has not been missing since that time. While this is still a short period, it is a notable improvement. She has also begun to engage with specialist services to help her to reduce the risk that she will be exposed to from drug use and sexual exploitation. Her youth offending worker said that staff work hard with her and have not given up on her when others might have done. The	

staff respond appropriately when she goes missing; they report her as missing and try to find her. The child describes the staff as 'lovely' and says that they do help her to keep safe, even though it can be annoying at times. Some risks for her do remain, but they are currently decreasing due to the staff's perseverance and their joint work with her placing authority.

The staff have good relationships with a range of agencies, including the placing authorities, the youth offending team and the local police community support officer. However, their relationships with some areas of the local police are not so good. This does lead to the possibility for misunderstanding at times. This has the potential to impact on their joint responses to the children, although it is not currently doing so.

The staff use sanctions sparingly and appropriately. They also use rewards to reinforce positive behaviour. The staff rarely use physical interventions in the home. They are used appropriately and only when necessary. Records of these incidents are mostly appropriate, but a few do not have details of the staff being spoken to by a manager or someone independent of the incident after the event. This could mean that there are fewer opportunities to fully and objectively consider practice in order to help reduce the number, length or severity of physical interventions. The staff are aware of the risks for children and how to reduce these, but the written risk assessments are not always consistent with other information. Information is sometimes recorded in places other than the risk assessments. While this has not had an impact on the children, it does leave the potential for things to be missed or misinterpreted. Notwithstanding this, children are becoming safer in the home. Some of the other records also contain inconsistent information. As with the risk assessments, this has not had a negative impact on the children, but does have the potential to do so.

The registered manager had not identified the shortfalls in recording through her monitoring. She has undertaken regular reviews of the quality of care, but has not included the views of the children, their parents, the placing authorities and the staff. Consequently, the reviews are not as well informed as they could be and this can limit the improvements which are made to the quality of care.

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned by a large private organisation and provides long-term placements on behalf of local authorities. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/09/2016	Full	Good
15/03/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
10/12/2015	Full	Good
29/01/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meet(s) the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that the system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children, provides for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45(5))	31/05/2017
13. The leadership and management standard: In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to children's files, the registered person must ensure that staff: 2(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	28/04/2017
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes all of the information required under this regulation. This relates in particular to ensuring that the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so, has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(b)(i))	28/04/2017
12. The protection of children standard: In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to ensuring that children's risk assessments contain information which is consistent with other records and contain all the relevant information, the registered person must ensure that staff: 2(a)(i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child.	28/04/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Develop further the home's effective working relationships with relevant agencies, organisations and establishments that work with children in the local community ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3). This relates in particular to relationships with the local police.
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4). This is with particular reference to information on the aims and objectives and the progress that the children make against these.

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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