

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	10/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC370949
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 Laffin
Registered manager	Michelle Davie
Inspector	Jo Henderson

Inspection date	10/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC370949

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people say that they are happy living in an environment that is warm, comfortable and homely.
- Young people feel safe and report that they enjoy close and nurturing relationships with a mostly consistent staff group.
- Young people make progress across most areas of their development.
- Most of the young people go to school and attendance is good. Those not attending undertake a full, varied and bespoke programme within the home.
- Staff understand child sexual exploitation and are working successfully with young people to increase their awareness and ability to reduce risk.
- Young people do not often go missing and staff respond appropriately to ensure a safe and timely return if they do.
- Young people understand what is expected of them in terms of their conduct and are aware of the consequences of positive and negative behaviour.
- Regular key work sessions focus on individual areas of need, depending on the young person.
- Staff consult with young people about how they want their home to be. They are able to influence decisions made.
- The manager leads the staff group by example, with energy, confidence and clarity.
- There are times when experienced members of staff are used to cover vacancies elsewhere within the organisation. This has the potential to interfere with consistency of care offered to young people.
- Staff receive professional supervision regularly but it is not always of a consistently high standard.
- Staff do not always complete all paperwork necessary to comply with the home's policies and procedures.

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

Recommendations

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

Ensure that the use of external agency staff is a positive choice to complement the skills and experiences of the permanent workforce and is carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure children receive continuity of care. (The Guide to the Quality standards, page 54 paragraph 10.16)

Ensure staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording in all relevant files and documents. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 62 paragraph 14.4)

Ensure that staff receive good quality supervision, which allows them sufficient time to reflect on their practice and discuss matters relating to the children assigned to their care. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61 paragraph 13.2)

Full report

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 young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/01/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/08/2014	Full	Good
24/10/2013	Interim	Satisfactory Progress
03/06/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
All of the young people living in this home say that they are happy living here. Even those who want to move on say that the home offers them good, consistent care. Young people particularly value the quality of their relationships with staff and are able to build strong attachments with them. One young person said that one of her keyworkers is 'so lovely, like my second mum'. Young people respect and trust the adults in this home to protect and care for them The environment is bright and comfortable and it is clear that young people have been part of designing and furnishing rooms to their taste. As a result, they have a sense of pride and ownership in their surroundings. Young people are encouraged and enabled to contribute to the upkeep and decoration of the home and take pride in their achievements. Staff and young people eat together in the kitchen dining area, which provides the hub of the home. Young people contribute to planning the menu for the week at weekly house meetings and are encouraged by staff to enjoy a varied and balanced diet. Young people mostly enjoy good health and attend their health appointments. Staff have supported one young person to engage with a specialist resource, supporting her to significantly reduce drug and alcohol use. Another young person, previously unable to take part in any therapy has recently attended three important therapeutic sessions with help and support. Young people make positive progress whilst living here. Two are attending school regularly and one achieved a significant number of examination passes in the last academic year. This is significant progress. Another young person who is not in school is working to a bespoke timetable with staff in the home. She has achieved an impressive portfolio of work. This includes significant work around building independence skills, including budgeting, cooking, job seeking and home maintenance. She has also completed specialist work around child sexual exploitation. A social worker said: 'They have done some excellent work with her, she now has the knowledge and insight she needs to make informed choices.'	

Young people have very detailed and highly individualised care plans, which staff regularly review and update. Each plan takes account of a young person's specific needs and areas for development and is subject to regular management oversight. Young people have the opportunity to contribute to their own care planning, which helps them to understand their experience. Therefore, young people are clear about why they are living in this home and their plans moving forward.

Staff do not always ensure that all records are completed in line with the home's policies and procedures. Although this does not have a significant impact on the experiences of young people, it does not ensure that all information is easily accessible.

Young people have the opportunity to take part in activities both inside and outside of the home. Each young person has an activity schedule for the week and is able to suggest additional trips out, or treats in the home as a 'reward' for positive behaviour. This supports their social development and nurtures their interests.

Staff work hard to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to maintain contact with friends and family wherever safe and possible. Staff have travelled long distances with young people to ensure this happens.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
All young people have individualised risk assessments, which detail relevant behaviours and situations and offer clear strategies to reduce the likelihood of harm. Staff update them on a regular basis and following specific incidents. Staff have a good level of knowledge and insight into child sexual exploitation and the particular vulnerability of young people living in a children's home. Staff have worked intensively with one young person to provide her with a greater understanding of the subject. She says that she now feels confident to make better choices and believes that as a result she will be able to keep herself safer in the future. A worker from the local child sexual exploitation (CSE) multi-agency group said: 'I was very impressed with the CSE work the home is carrying out with the young people. I think they go above and beyond and the resources they use are well researched and recommended by experts in the field.' Young people rarely go missing from the home but if they do, staff respond quickly and in line with their policies and procedures. Staff make every effort to ensure that they stay in contact with young people and are proactive in arranging the	

earliest safe return to care. They have built strong professional links with the local missing persons police officers, who say the home 'works very well with them'.

Physical restraint is used infrequently and only as a last resort. Staff record all incidents thoroughly and the manager oversees every report. Young people and staff have the opportunity to reflect and offer feedback after every incident. Risk assessments are updated accordingly, ensuring most recent information is easily available.

Young people are clear about what is, and is not, acceptable behaviour. They are encouraged to select their own positive and negative consequences to either reward or sanction accordingly. Some young people have exhibited extremely challenging behaviour, particularly towards staff, resulting in police and youth offending team involvement. Despite this, relationships between staff and young people remain positive and work continues, to develop more appropriate coping strategies. The young person involved understands and accepts the consequences of her behaviour, which is indicative of significant progress for her. As a result, serious incidents of anti-social behaviour have reduced.

All relevant health and safety checks are undertaken regularly, ensuring that the home offers a safe physical environment for young people. There are clear processes and procedures in place to ensure regular review.

All young people say that they feel safe and protected living in this home.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager has been in post since January 2013. She holds the NVQ Level 3 in Health & Social Care and is due to complete the Level 5 Diploma in March 2016. The registered manager is a key figure within the home; she leads her team by example and is liked and respected by staff and young people. She is clear that young people's needs are paramount at all times and they in turn know that she is available to them whenever possible. The office opens directly onto the kitchen diner, which is the hub of the home, and the door is rarely closed. This ensures that interaction is constantly ongoing between the manager, staff and young people. The manager is clear that young people have and continue to make progress living in this home. She is able to provide clear information and evidence to demonstrate	

progress, which is supported by professional colleagues.

The permanent staff group are well trained and experienced and offer young people strong role models and consistent care figures. However, this is compromised at times when experienced members of the team are required to cover staff shortfalls in other homes. This is particularly significant for young people for whom predictability and routine is of great importance. The manager is aware of this and is confident to challenge when she considers this will have a negative impact on young people in the home.

All staff have regular professional supervision from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional. However, records indicate that this is sometimes brief and perfunctory. This does not allow sufficient time to reflect on practice and discuss matters relating to children assigned to their care or individual professional development. Staff have access to a wide range of training opportunities through the organisation. The registered manager audits and monitors this, ensuring all staff access relevant training and updates as required.

The manager and staff have built strong professional relationships with colleagues in social care, the police and local safeguarding and specialist support services. Social workers are complementary about them saying: 'My experience of working with this home is excellent. They have stuck with my young person. Whatever she throws at them they don't give up on her. They try really hard to meet her needs.'

Staff understand the recently updated statement of purpose and demonstrate that their practice is in line with the aims, objectives and ethos outlined.

The manager and staff are proud of the strengths of the home and of the experience of care they provide for the young people living there. The manager is clear that there is room for improvement and has an ongoing development plan that is reviewed on a regular basis. Complaints are few, however on a recent occasion when a young person did make an allegation the matter was taken seriously. The investigation is ongoing and the manager is clear that lessons learned will inform the future planning and running of the home.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 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 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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