

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC374268
Inspector	Julia Wright
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	Christine Suzzanna Matthews-Harvey
Date of last inspection	18/03/2014

Inspection date	17/12/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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 high quality care delivered by a committed staff team who are responsive to their needs. Considering their starting points, young people make good progress in all areas of their lives. They utilise the emotional and practical support of staff to understand their experiences to date. They receive good support to meet their physical and emotional health needs. They have the opportunity to participate in a variety of leisure activities in the community. The home is overall, well decorated and provides a safe and homely environment for the young people.

Young people are kept safe through staff knowing and understanding the safeguarding procedures, and adhering to them on a consistent basis. Where young people go missing, they are well supported by staff who work together to manage these risks and support young people, and incidents have reduced as a result. The staff team is led by an experienced and proactive Registered Manager who promotes change to improve the service for the young people. Monitoring systems are effective and evaluative and this ensures a high quality service is maintained.

Minor shortfalls were identified at the inspection in relation to staff confirming that they have read updated information about young people and areas of the home that need decoration. These have not had an adverse impact on the overall quality of care that the young people receive.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home offers medium to long-term care for a maximum of three young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a large national provider of children's residential care.

Specific direct work and individual therapy programmes are provided to young people by a qualified and experienced psychotherapist, employed by the provider organisation, who makes weekly visits to the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
06/06/2013	Full	adequate
09/10/2012	Interim	inadequate progress
11/06/2012	Full	adequate

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 there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. In particular ensure that staff read and sign updated information in young people's files(NMS 22.1).
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS10.3).

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make good progress whilst at the home. They become aware of how the choices they make impact on their lives. They develop an understanding of their personal history and they utilise the support of staff to understand their life events. This means that young people begin to develop a sense of self value and self-confidence, leading to a more settled placement.

Young people harness the support of staff to maximise their physical health, including attending routine medical appointments. They understand the reasons why they have to look after themselves, and this has resulted in an improvement in young people's health overall.

Good communication between young people and staff enables mutually respectful relationships to form. As a result, young people live in a safer environment. Dialogue between young people and staff ensures that their needs are addressed. Young people said: 'I can talk to any of the staff here, they are all approachable'.

Young people are encouraged to overcome previous difficulties and negative attitudes towards school and education. Some young people have significant histories of poor educational attendance and attainment. These have improved, and this means that their educational and life chances improve as a result. Most young people have an educational placement and where these are not full time, they engage with staff in completing educational activities at the home and in the community. This ensures that young people are fully focussed on enriching opportunities which enhance their life skills and learning. Where young people are not in education, they are supported by staff to identify appropriate opportunities helping them to focus on their interests and abilities.

Young people participate in community activities offering opportunities to develop new skills, and participate in different social groups. As a result their self-confidence increases.

Young people, where appropriate, maintain relationships with friends and family and those important to them. Friends are able to visit the home. This supports young people's understanding of their identities and backgrounds and means that important relationships are maintained. As a result, young people's security is enhanced.

Quality of care **good**

Young people develop positive relationships with staff and peers. Staff consistently support young people and are responsive to their needs and wishes. Staff work well together to offer a consistent approach to young people in relation to behaviour. As a result, young people understand the boundaries in place in the home leading to a safer environment for all. A Social Worker said: 'The home has been brilliant for my young person. Staff have instilled routines and boundaries. These have made a massive difference'.

Young people's views and opinions are consistently sought through weekly meetings and ongoing discussion and interaction with staff, including key work sessions. Young people contribute their ideas about a range of subjects of importance to them. This ensures that young people have a say in the running of the home, and they also understand when their requests cannot be met. As a result, young people know that their views are of importance and listened to.

Complaints processes are explained to young people when they arrive at the home as they are given relevant information at the start of their placement. This is also discussed in key work sessions and young people's meetings. Complaints are fully recorded including outcomes. Consequently, young people develop confidence that adults listen to them and resolve their complaints through a variety of ways, and this develops self-confidence as a result.

Placement planning is highly individualised. Staff are proactive in ensuring that the views and wishes of young people are heard. Wherever possible, placement planning reflects the wishes of the young people themselves. Staff know the young people well and are able to advocate on their behalf to achieve positive outcomes for them. This means that young people are reassured that they will have stability and that adults listen to their wishes. Working relationships between staff and other professionals are good. A Social Worker said: 'Staff keep me updated all the time, and if there are any difficulties we get together for a multi-agency meeting. This has been really helpful'.

Independence skills are promoted in line with young people's needs. For older residents, staff work with the young people's pathway plan, and devise a specific independence plan for the young person. As a result, young people develop the life skills necessary for independent living in the community. All residents, depending on their age and interests develop life skills through daily living, including looking after their rooms, and completing chores in the home. Staff support ensures that young people are confident in undertaking these tasks and as a result, young people's self-esteem is enhanced.

Staff work proactively to support young people's educational progress, seeking out different educational placements and challenging any barriers to young people's education. Where they are not in full time education, young people's educational placements are enhanced with a planned programme of enrichment activities which ensures that the young people's routine is maintained and educational opportunities

maximised.

Staff support young people to meet their global health needs. Visits to a variety of health professionals are completed following admission, and all health needs are fully addressed. Staff assist young people to participate in menu planning thus enhancing their understanding of nutrition and diet. Where young people smoke, cessation packages and programmes are offered. These promote a healthier lifestyle and reduce risks.

Staff are creative and effective in supporting young people's understanding of their backgrounds. Information, including photos and mementoes is kept for young people and will be given to them when they leave the home. This contributes towards young people's understanding of their past and assists young people's understanding of the progress of their lives.

Staff address equality and diversity issues through placement planning and through daily living. Young people are valued as individuals, and their similarities and differences respected. As a result, self-confidence is increased and young people develop respect and tolerance of others, promoting a sense of citizenship.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people are safe in the home and feel safe. They know who they can speak to if they are unhappy or concerned. Bullying behaviour is addressed promptly by staff and this ensures that the home environment remains safe and comfortable for all. Staff recognise the potential influences of peers on the young people which may affect behaviour and attitudes, and staff work consistently to address negative behaviour. This promotes safety.

The Registered Manager has developed links with local police and they visit the home to meet young people. This helped to break down barriers where young people may only have had negative experiences of police previously. Links with the police have improved outcomes for young people both in terms of safety and in offering opportunities for other community activities where police are able to introduce and involve young people. As a result, young people's life chances are enhanced.

Care plans clearly identify risks and protective factors for young people and these are regularly reviewed. The Registered Manager monitors these and her oversight ensures that information is updated as necessary and this means that staff are aware of the latest plan for each young person. One minor shortfall was identified in that staff have not signed to confirm that they have read some updated information but this has not had an impact on the young people's care.

The frequency with which young people go missing has reduced. Where young people have unauthorised absences, staff work with young people to reduce these.

Rewards and the promotion of positive behaviour assists young people to regulate their behaviour accordingly, therefore increasing their safety overall.

Staff are proportionate in supporting young people's behaviour. Where physical intervention is used, this is as a last resort and only where the safety of the young people or staff may be compromised. Staff are skilled in deflecting or diverting behaviour and assist young people to channel their behaviour into positive activities or events. Where an incident occurs, young people are encouraged to reflect on their actions as a way of learning how to improve their responses and to self-regulate their behaviour.

There is a thorough recruitment process ensuring that all staff are vetted before they start to work with the young people. This means that the young people are kept safe from adults who may wish to harm them. Visitors are checked and monitored, again to ensure young people's safety. The organisation provides a 24 hour on call service by senior staff so that young people and staff are supported at all times.

The Registered Manager and staff team complete regular health and safety checks of the home to help minimise any risks to the young people. They work to ensure that the home provides a safe and secure environment. Young people and staff are aware of and practice emergency drills, again enhancing safety for all.

Leadership and management

good

The home is well managed by an experienced Registered Manager. The Registered Manager has been in post at the home for over 2 years. She has an NVQ4 in Health, Social Care and Young People, gained in 2006. She is working towards the Registered Manager's award, which she hopes to complete in early 2015. The Registered Manager is supported by a committed staff team, whose aim is to achieve the best outcomes for young people in their care.

The home has a clear and updated Statement of Purpose which reflects the work undertaken at the home. A young people's guide is given to each young person when they arrive at the home and this includes details of who to contact outside the home for additional support and advice.

The staff team is stable, and new staff have been appointed to complement the team. Any gaps on the staff rota are covered by a small group of pool and agency staff. This offers the young people consistency of care as they are not exposed to repeated changes of staff and are able to develop and enhance their relationships as a result. All staff are regularly supervised by senior staff who have completed additional training to undertake this role. Induction, refresher and additional training, is overall, up to date. This means that staff have the necessary skills and abilities to meet the needs of the young people in their care.

The Registered Manager regularly monitors staff practice and the home's operation through established systems and by having a consistent presence in the home. She sets high standards and staff work diligently to meet these. Quality assurance systems, including consultation with external stakeholders and regular feedback from young people, staff and professionals informs the operation of the home. The Registered Manager ensures that any significant events relating to the protection of children are notified to the relevant agencies within a timely manner, and that appropriate action is taken following the incident.

The Registered Manager has a clear understanding of the strengths of the home and the areas she wishes to develop, and this is reflected in the development plan for the home. Previous recommendations from the last inspection, relating to proportionate risk assessments, the admittance of appropriate young people, and keyworkers monitoring placement plans, have been met.

Good relationships with other agencies are in place and these facilitate good outcomes for young people through staff and other professionals working closely together for the benefit of the young people. Social Workers commented, 'The staff are amazing. I am kept informed and they update me all the time. They arrange meetings so that we all work together'.

The home is comfortable and is, overall, well decorated and furnished. This inspection identified minor shortfalls in relation to areas of the home that need redecoration but these have not had an impact on the quality of care the young people receive.

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.