

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	7 and 8 July 2016
Unique reference number	SC429011
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	BetterCare Keys Limited
Registered provider address	Laganwood House, 44 Newforge Lane, Belfast BT9 5NW

Responsible individual	Emma Beech
Registered manager	Zoe Tompkins
Inspector	Maire Atherton

Inspection date	7 July 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved 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

SC429011

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The knowledgeable and experienced manager successfully leads and motivates the staff team in securing positive outcomes for young people. They feel safe and make progress, in particular with behaviour.
- Staff engage well with young people and influence them to make positive changes.
- Staff value the views of the young people. These inform the running of the home and are included in their records.
- Transitions are very well managed. Young people benefit from well-considered planning that is used to secure smooth moves into and out of the home.
- Staff recruitment, induction, support and training are robust. Suitable staff are properly equipped for their roles. They know and implement the therapeutic ethos outlined in the statement of purpose of the home.
- Staff are confident in identifying when young people may be at risk from child sexual exploitation, self-harm and going missing, for example. They are knowledgeable about and implement the appropriate safeguarding strategies.
- The house is well furnished and equipped to provide a homely living environment that young people are happy to share with friends and family.
- The manager and her team work very effectively in partnership with professionals.

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

Statutory requirements

None

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should demonstrate that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. In particular, ensure that risk assessment documentation is kept up to date. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5).
- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair. In particular, ensure that records detail the nature of the sanction precisely. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36).
- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.) In particular, record the location of fire extinguishers in the fire risk assessment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that the home's records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. In particular, ensure that they cross-reference accurately. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)
- The relevant plan may include a strategy for a particular type of care, treatment or intervention (for example therapy relating to neglect or abuse). The care staff will need to understand the purpose of any such care and the way in which the past experiences of abuse or neglect may manifest itself in the day-to-day life of the child. In particular, ensure that guidance for staff ensures a consistent approach. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.15)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The service is run by a large private organisation that operates a range of services. This home is one of a group of six that comprise a cross-regional project commissioned by six local authorities to provide a residential service for children and young people within their local area.

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Young people living at the home can attend a school also run by the same provider and have access to in-house therapeutic support.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
7 March 2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25 November 2015	Full	Good
26 March 2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
14 January 2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people benefit from and enjoy positive and warm relationships with staff. A professional observed, 'Staff genuinely care and want to do the best they can.' Staff effectively communicate this to the young people living in the home. As a result, young people feel valued and this underpins the good progress that they make at the home. Young people moving into the home do so in a planned way that is tailored to meet individual circumstances. Some have a phased admission with a series of visits, increasing in length and subject to regular review, before moving in. Others visit once before moving in. A social worker was complimentary about how staff had actively listened to the young person's wishes for the decor of the bedroom. When the young person moved in, the room had been very attractively decorated to the satisfaction of the young person. Another had been out and chosen the wallpaper, and proudly showed it to people. Those leaving the home usually do so in accordance with the plans for them. When moves have been unplanned, this has been due to unforeseen events and not been at the instigation of the manager. Young people who have left the home keep in touch with staff to let them know how they are getting on. One rang during the inspection to tell staff of a successful tenancy application. Staff shared the young person's pleasure in the achievement. Young people have a central voice in the home. They feel well listened to by staff. The weekly young people's 'catch up' meeting works well. There is a record of the issues discussed and the manager provides a written response that is taken to the next meeting. This demonstrates to young people that their opinions are important and are taken into account in the running of the home. They have made no formal complaints. Care planning is of a good standard. Young people know the plans for them and their targets, and are actively involved in developing these. Staff complete a daily tracking sheet for each young person that reflects their targets and is used to inform the therapeutic plan. Guidance for staff on the criteria for scoring is lacking and creates the potential for inconsistency. A social worker commented positively on the significant progress that a young person has made while living at the home. An example was their attending a review from beginning to end to hear the positive achievements and outline their part in securing the aim of returning home. Staff encourage and support young people to access to the health services that	

they need. Staff are knowledgeable about young people's health issues and liaise with specialists effectively, including child and adolescent mental health services. As a result, the health needs of young people are consistently met.

All young people have specialist education provision. Those new to the home are working to establish attendance, for example on a phased reintegration after a period of absence. A social worker acknowledged that, for one young person, 'education is a real sticking point', but the placing authority is working on this. An individual education plan meeting is scheduled before the end of this summer term.

Staff actively support young people to develop and practice independence skills. There is a formal framework for this that staff use to good effect. This recognises and celebrates the skills that young people already have and is helpful in constructively identifying areas that need work.

Staff achieve a good balance for young people between promoting group living and shared experiences and one-to-one interactions. Young people have enjoyed group activities, bowling for example, as well as individual activities that reflect their interests. Staff are skilled at focusing on the interests of young people and using these to develop relationships.

When appropriate, young people are actively encouraged and supported to maintain regular contact with parents, friends and people who are important to them. Young people are pleased to invite family and friends to the home, and staff accommodate friends sleeping over.

The manager and her team have ensured that the house provides a welcoming and homely environment. There is ample communal accommodation for group activities and to provide places where young people can be alone if they wish.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people who have been in the home for some time feel safe here. One attributed this to the staff team. They have come to appreciate how the actions of staff have enabled them to achieve a sense of security that has helped them to work towards the objectives of their placement plans. As a result, young people have moved on in accordance with their plans. Young people new to the home are at the beginning of this process. Some, but not all, accept and understand the reasons for the restrictions that staff apply for a limited period while they are getting to know them. Young people and placing social workers know and agree to the use of door alarms on bedroom doors overnight where this is an identified need.	

Young people say that there is always someone whom they can talk to. Young people approach staff confidently, and are sure that they will be listened to and that staff are interested in them and what they have to say. Staff are trained in and knowledgeable about the actions to take, should young people tell them of any safeguarding matter or if they have concerns arising from their own observations.

Risk management is good. Staff have a sound understanding of risk and are familiar with the individual strategies to use with each young person. These are well recorded in their individual plans. Staff are skilled in engaging with young people. This enables unobtrusive supervision and monitoring. This vigilance minimises opportunities for bullying and other forms of discrimination.

Staff know the individual risks to each young person. Staff use their training to inform a consistent approach that keeps a central focus on the well-being of each young person. This has enabled the team to adopt individualised approaches to the young people in the management of risks such as going missing from home, self-harm and sexual exploitation. Professionals report very effective liaison and partnership working, and are confident that staff are familiar with, manage and respond to a range of risks well in their efforts to keep young people safe. Staff use a similar approach in behaviour management. They place a strong emphasis on restorative justice. This is underpinned by the strength of relationships between staff and young people.

There have been limited occasions when young people have gone missing from the home. When this does occur, staff take prompt action and young people know what staff will do. Staff make every effort to find the young person. They go out and look for them and make continued efforts to get in touch. They record relevant details and share these appropriately to assist others in looking for the young person. The manager involves independent professional specialists to undertake the return home interviews. One was appreciative of the manager's 'open door' policy. This enables the worker to maintain contact to try and develop a relationship with young people so if they go missing again they may be more willing to engage in a positive discussion. The manager is confident to challenge social work decisions that she thinks do not support sound risk management. For example she presented a strong case as to why a young person should retain a mobile phone, with the protective factors outweighing the identified risks. The good practice of staff is not fully reflected in the risk assessment documentation.

Staff make every effort to ensure that moves to the home are well planned where this is possible. The manager leads the team in actively seeking information from others involved with the young people and the young people themselves. This provides them with the information necessary to keep young people safe from the beginning of the placement. For example staff promote the safe use of the internet and social media and provide the young people with the information they need and monitor their use of both as appropriate.

Staff successfully model a culture of respect that young people learn to appreciate. Staff consistently implement positive behaviour management strategies. Young people engage well with reward and incentive schemes. These have made and are making a difference to young people as they change their responses to issues they find difficult to manage. Staff understand and implement their behaviour management training to good effect. They deploy de-escalation techniques tailored for each young person and are confident in conflict management and resolution. As a result physical intervention is infrequent, and when it is used it is the minimum required to keep people safe from harm. Sanctions are also minimal with good evaluation of the effectiveness of the measure when applied. Some of the individual records lack precise detail about the nature of the sanction, for example 'loss of one activity'.

The implementation of sound recruitment policies and procedures ensures that only those considered suitable are employed to work with young people.

The home provides young people with a welcoming and safe environment. Any potential risks associated with its location are identified along with the protective measures. The house is well maintained with routine fire safety and other household checks and servicing carried out regularly. However, the location of fire extinguishers is not obvious and this is not included in the fire risk assessment.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced for the role. A commissioner of the service commented 'She has "got it" and is really keen to do a good job.' She has a clear focus on young people's needs and wishes and supporting them to achieve, to 'dream big'. Staff follow her lead and young people pick up and repeat the phrase 'dream big' when outlining very ambitious desires. The staff team is stable, diverse and cohesive. Staff report a very supportive culture and structure. This is achieved through regular supervision, team meetings and daily handovers. Staff particularly value the consultation meetings with the therapists. They talk enthusiastically about how reflection in these meetings has informed and developed their practice for the benefit of young people. For example considering different ways of delivering a message so that young people hear it positively. The manager herself is effectively supported by the operations manager and peers in the cross regional project group of homes. This promotes an environment in which staff are confident to challenge each other and have difference of opinion and debate.	

Staff induction and training is thorough and equips them for their work with young people. There is a core training programme and staff also access training in the light of the identified and emerging needs of young people placed. A commissioner described the staff as 'well trained'. Staff have a good understanding of the therapeutic model used in the home and can explain and give examples of how this informs their work with young people. For example understanding the part hypervigilance plays in a young person's challenging behaviour, having an awareness of the triggers and being prepared with effective distraction and diversion techniques that lower a heightened state of arousal. Another cited the use of play as part of the therapeutic engagement with young people.

The manager engages the staff team in the active consideration of referrals. This is part of the process for ensuring that only those young people who can be cared for effectively move into the home. The written consideration of the risks does not evaluate whether or not the risks are manageable or indicate the impact a placement could have on those already living in the home. However there is evidence that the manager has said no to referrals where she has determined it would be a poor match for the young people in placement.

The manager has an in-depth understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the home. This is supported by comprehensive development plans, including one for the workforce. The plans arise from consultation with colleagues in the wider organisation alongside internal monitoring, feedback and good use of the independent visitor reports. The progress in implementing actions arising is kept under review by the manager. For example a new kitchen is to be fitted over the summer.

The statement of purpose and the young people's guide clearly set out the aims and objectives of the home. Young people and professionals say that what is described is what happens. The therapeutic ethos underpins the work of staff and ensures a shared understanding that translates into practice.

Professionals spoken with during the inspection were unanimously complimentary about the quality of their relationships with the manager and the staff team. One described them as, 'Accommodating all the way down the line, they have bent over backwards'. Another said, 'Staff are helpful and accommodating in sharing information.'

The systems for recording are many and varied. Some, key work sessions for example, are detailed and will inform a young person's life history. Others are limited and do not always cross reference fully. The organisation has recognised this as an area for improvement and work is well underway to develop a new electronic recording system with the aim of providing young people with more easily accessible information as well as reducing the time staff spend in recording.

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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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