

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC429011
Inspector	Kenneth Smith
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	Zoe Tompkins
Date of last inspection	04/03/2014

Inspection date	14/01/2015
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Previous inspection	good 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	outstanding
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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This home has continued to provide young people with effective and well-focused care in, sometimes, trying circumstances. Since the last inspection the then-Registered Manager has left, and the deputy manager at that time has been promoted, registered and successfully led the team, ensuring continuity for young people.

Young people's safety and well-being has been effectively promoted even under some duress, and decisions about the best interests of individual children have been difficult, but well thought through and resolved. At the time of this inspection the home is settled and all young people present as well cared for and not putting themselves at any significant risk.

The very determined and effective practice of managers and staff has built strong and nurturing relationships, which are used to help young people come to terms with difficulties and move forward in their lives. The outcomes for young people are good and include some really excellent results in education. There is highly effective safeguarding even when young people have been challenging by putting themselves at risk.

There are no requirements arising from this visit and a single recommendation is

made to ensure non-statutory records are kept up to date.

Full report

Information about this children's home

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

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/03/2014	Interim	good progress
10/10/2013	Full	good
12/12/2012	Interim	good progress
25/04/2012	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 records are clear and up to date; in particular that the bullet points in behaviour management plans are those currently relevant and implemented for each child (NMS 22)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people thrive in this home, building productive relationships with staff and making good progress from their starting points. Managers and staff work well in partnership with other agencies and through building relationships with young people's families. This produces lasting results because it takes into account all significant people in young people's lives.

Young people enjoy good health and staff manage healthcare needs discreetly. Young people learn to take responsibility for themselves, they have a real say in any health treatment or plan whilst being advised wisely.

Young people's attendance in education is excellent and this has produced some very good educational outcomes for some young people. The effort and application of young people in their education has been commendable and this resulted in some very pleasing GCSE results last summer.

Young people learn self-control and make improvements in their behaviour. They have enjoyed acceptance and support by staff even in some very challenging circumstances. Where behaviour has not improved the young person concerned has benefitted from a planned ending to the placement, and experienced ongoing support from some staff after leaving the home.

Young people are able to maintain relationships with their families and enjoy good support to do this. They retain a strong sense of identity and know that staff are interested in, and respectful of, their backgrounds.

Young people who are ready to prepare for independence or moving on are sensitively supported to do so. The staff complete very good assessment documents that give them clear guidance on areas to work on with young people. Some opportunities to practice independence have been utilised. For example, a young person has been supported in job hunting, joining clubs or meeting friends back in their family's home community, some distance from this home.

Quality of care **good**

The relationships between young people and staff are a real strength in the home. Staff maintain clear professional boundaries whilst being personable, genuine and really interested in the young people they care for. They know and understand them as individuals whom they respect, and they engage in all aspects of home life. Young people confirm this, and the home has helped them to feel secure and move on in their lives.

Young people are routinely consulted with and their views are listened to, both in formal processes (house meetings and key work sessions) and in their everyday interactions. Staff want young people to understand their situations and their rights, they explain decisions to them and this will sometimes include when young people cannot have their chosen way. Young people have, over time, learned to handle this better. Young people have access to a complaints process and examples of them using this and being heard were seen.

The managers and staff have defined carefully, in considered care plans and related documents, how they should care for young people and these are implemented in practice. Plans are individualised and regularly reviewed to ensure they meet the changing needs of young people.

Young people's health is promoted; mealtimes pay due regard to healthy options and this has been broadly well received by young people. Young people are encouraged, to some good effect, to exercise. For example, one staff member has been running with young people wishing to do this. Smoking is not permitted inside the home and staff have no role in the supply of cigarettes; young people know and abide by the rules. Help with smoking cessation is offered.

Medication is stored safely in the home if needed and staff administer this safely and maintain clear records of all administration including for homely remedies.

The staff in the home liaise with schools and colleges to promote the best interests of young people. They ensure they know the successes or difficulties that may be experienced, and they seek to help young people to achieve in their education including encouraging and facilitating homework. Young people's attendance and achievement are good. Staff have been proactive and imaginative in helping a young person seeking employment.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

Young people feel safe in the home and young people have been helped to keep safe throughout the year, including in some challenging circumstances. Staff communicate to young people the paramount importance they place on keeping them safe and young people are positively influenced by this concern. For example, staff in the home make it their business to know or find out where young people are, or will be, in their free time. They make considered decisions as a 'good parent' in determining if young people should be permitted to go to friends' houses. For example, they have not permitted this when it was without parental presence after weighing up the situation and the maturity of the young person concerned.

Behavioural management in the home has been effective under challenge. At the time of this inspection the house was calm and young people were generally getting along very well. This has not happened by chance. There has been a protracted period of friction and staff have intervened assertively in bullying between young

people to manage this effectively. Managers and staff communicate their concerns genuinely so they are understood by the young people. One young person has moved out of the home since this period (and another moved in), and this has been managed in a planned way. This has ensured that the success in building a constructive relationship is not lost. The effective reduction in episodes of missing, and near eradication of bullying, with very minimal use of physical intervention throughout this period, are indicative of a confident and very well-engaged staff team.

The home has a missing policy which is followed in practice. It is appropriate in content and promotes effective partnership working with other agencies including the police. Staff in the home see it as their business to safeguard young people at all times and they have sought to do this in looking for young people, with knowledge of likely places, and sharing that information fully. They have greatly improved the safety of young people who did place themselves at high risk while missing.

Records maintained for the management of missing and of physical intervention are detailed and informative. They are positively used to analyse past practice and inform future management. The consideration given, and the shared understanding across the staff team, are strengths. Managers lead in a collaborative way which has resulted in all staff taking shared responsibility for this high standard of safeguarding practice.

Staff demonstrate a real understanding of safeguarding principles. They know both the procedures to follow and the concepts behind those procedures. They have grasped both the vulnerability of the young people in their care and also the opportunities they as staff have to make them safer. Professionals in regular contact with the home, including the local authority designated officer, confirm that the home works transparently and with children's best interests at the forefront of all decisions.

There are thorough recruitment processes applied which ensure no-one commences work in the home without all checks being satisfactorily completed. The written evidence for this is retained in an easily auditable format. All records seen were thoroughly maintained including records of Disclosure and Barring Service checks, references with telephone verification, interview notes and employment history with explanation of any gaps. This is a well-implemented, safe and rigorous process. Health and safety of the environment is given prominence with clear and up-to-date records, for example, evidencing fire safety is comprehensively promoted through upkeep of appliances, tests of alarms and periodic fire drills involving all in the home.

Leadership and management

good

The manager was registered in the autumn of 2014. She is suitably experienced, and was previously the deputy in this home and has provided continuity in this transition. She is currently undertaking the level 5 qualification in managing care and anticipates completing that in six to nine months from now.

The home works to a comprehensive Statement of Purpose, which is an accurate and meaningful document which fairly reflects the practice and ethos of the home. Many aspects of this are also transferred, in child-friendly language, into the young people's guide which gives new or prospective young people an insight into the home on, or prior to, their arrival.

The staffing in the home is provided by a small, dedicated team. There are six full time staff, including the Registered Manager and deputy, who seek to provide cover at all times. The company is able to support with staff from other homes should the need arise, but this has seldom been required. Shift patterns are unusual and staff often work consecutive shifts meaning they stay in the home for up to three or four days. This has suited the current team and it provides very good continuity for young people. The manager is mindful of the risk of fatigue. Opportunities to take breaks or bring in staff at an earlier point are taken if the shift or the overnight has been difficult. Whilst staffing is kept under review by the manager, it is clearly the case that this is not compromising the quality of care or the 'freshness' of staff and it is providing very good continuity for young people who know with confidence who will be on shift.

The staff in the home are effectively supervised with a focus on staff development, resulting in a team which performs well and consistently. The manager is a reflective practitioner and this is modelled to team members who are able to consider their practice honestly. The creation of this reflective culture in the staff team is notable.

Training is provided for all staff by the organisation. This ensures induction, awareness of safeguarding, health and safety and basics of child care are understood well. Additionally, the staff receive a very good depth of training in the homes chosen therapeutic model. Their practical application of this is less easy to demonstrate but the project to enhance their psychological insight is of value, with scope for further development.

The management of the home is informed by effective monitoring practice, by both an independent monthly visitor and the manager's own periodic review. These are to a good depth and recommendations made are acted upon.

Record keeping in the home is generally maintained to a high standard. Young people's files contain all essential information. Some aspects of recording are quite complicated and there is some inconsistency in the practice of completing them. Behavioural management plans on files had not been updated and included some out-of-date bullet points. It was clear that all staff working in the home were aware of the plan to be followed, but this could still cause some confusion.

The physical environment is very suitable for its purpose. The home provides a homely and well-maintained environment with good communal space. This includes well-furnished rooms for young people and good communal space which affords the opportunity to spend time apart when young people wish to. The quality and freshness of most furnishings is indicative of a well-resourced home.

The last inspection, in March 2014, contained no requirements and one recommendation to provide internet access for educational purposes. This has been fully implemented.

The managers in the home work assertively and effectively with other agencies, contributing to young people's reviews and enabling young people to do so through practical and sincere encouragement.

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.