

Inspection report for children's home

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| Unique reference number | SC063883 |
| Inspector | Monica Hargreaves |
| Type of inspection | Full |
| Provision subtype | Children's home |

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| Registered person | BetterCare Keys Limited |
| Registered person address | Laganwood House 44 Newforge Lane Belfast BT9 5NW |
| Responsible individual | Heather Ann Laffin |
| Registered manager | Mumtaz Sodha |
| Date of last inspection | 20/11/2013 |

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| Inspection date | 30/07/2014 |
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| Previous inspection | satisfactory progress |
| Enforcement action since last inspection | There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection. |

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| This inspection | |
| Overall effectiveness | good |
| Outcomes for children and young people | adequate |
| Quality of care | good |
| Keeping children and young people safe | good |
| Leadership and management | good |

Overall effectiveness

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| Judgement outcome | good |
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Young people benefit from the individualised care and support they receive from staff and overall they make steady progress from their starting point on admission to the home. Care staff have developed positive relationships with young people. This has helped them to feel valued and as a result they have grown in confidence and self-esteem.

Staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding issues and they understand the vulnerabilities of the young people they look after. They work effectively with professionals from other agencies to ensure that young people are protected. Young people respond appropriately to the boundaries that staff put in place in the home and to the way staff work with them. As a result their behaviour improves over time. Young people themselves report that they feel safe in the home. Professionals and relatives also say that they think the home is a safe place for young people to live.

The home is managed effectively. Staff are supported and there is good management oversight of the care that is given to young people and the progress they make. The manager responds promptly to issues that are raised through the inspection and monitoring process. This demonstrates a clear commitment to continuous improvement.

Areas for improvement identified at this inspection relate to young people's education, their activities and health needs and to the environment.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private company. It provides three long-term placements for young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 20/11/2013 | Interim | satisfactory progress |
| 14/05/2013 | Full | adequate |
| 11/09/2012 | Interim | satisfactory progress |
| 28/05/2012 | Full | inadequate |

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 young people understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed decisions about their own health, specifically in relation to smoking, healthy eating and exercise (NMS 6.2)
- ensure that young people pursue individual interests and hobbies (NMS 7.2)
- ensure that young people achieve their educational goals (NMS 8.4)
- ensure that all areas of the home are well maintained, specifically that the kitchen is refurbished. (NMS 10.3)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Young people are able to make steady progress over time in many key areas of their lives. They develop positive, nurturing relationships with staff which help them to settle. They gain a good understanding of their history and background and they make progress in developing confidence and a positive self-view.

Young people's health needs are met to a satisfactory standard. They have access to all primary health care services and are supported at routine appointments. Young people do not use alcohol and those young people who had used drugs before they came to live in the home have stopped. This has a positive impact on their overall health. However, some young people smoke and do not always eat the healthy meals that are provided for them. Also young people do not exercise regularly. These issues can compromise their good health. Young people have access to regular sessions with the organisation's therapist. This ensures that their emotional well-being is monitored and supports their progress.

Young people's attendance at school improves over time in the home which gives them the opportunity to achieve. However, young people do not always engage well when they are at school. This limits the progress that they are able to make.

Planned contact with their relatives enables young people to maintain their sense of identity and to keep in touch with people who are important to them.

Young people are consulted with about their care in a variety of ways. They have regular key work sessions with staff. This gives them the opportunity to talk about the issues that are identified in their placement plans and matters that are important to them. They are encouraged to attend regular house meetings where they talk about the running of the home and they have frequent informal discussions with the manager and care staff. These arrangements enable young people to be involved in all the decisions that are made about their care.

Young people learn to be independent at a pace that is appropriate to their age and individual needs. For example, all young people help to keep their own rooms clean and tidy, learn to budget and to plan and cook meals. As they grow older, young people start to work through an independence programme. This enables them to identify the practical and social skills they have and those they need to develop. This helps young people to prepare for adult life.

Quality of care **good**

Young people are well cared for. Professionals and relatives report that they are happy with the way young people are looked after. One relative said 'I think that staff are very understanding, compassionate, caring and meet (Name) needs'. Young people have also made positive comments about the staff and the way they are looked after. For example, one young person reported that staff are 'the best thing about the home. They're nice and some make me laugh and smile'.

Staff have a good understanding of young people's individual needs. They work closely with agencies outside the home and with the organisation's therapist to ensure that young people are supported to achieve their potential. Social workers confirm that staff have been able to engage very well with young people and that as a result, young people have settled. One professional said, 'This is the longest placement (name) has been in'. Young people feel able to talk to staff. They say that they are listened to and are confident that any complaints they make are taken seriously. This helps to develop their sense of self-worth.

Detailed individual placement plans are developed for young people. These are drawn from the aims and objectives set out in their overall care plans. Placement plans address all aspects of young people's care and needs, including those that arise specifically from their sense of identity, their culture and religion. Placement plans promote consistency in the way staff care for young people which supports young people's progress. Young people contribute to their care plans. They confirm that they understand their plans and that they are involved in their reviews. This ensures that they have a voice in the decisions that are made about their care. Professionals confirm that staff work well with local authority care plans and keep them fully informed about incidents and how young people are progressing. Placement plans are regularly monitored and updated to reflect young people's emerging needs.

Staff have a very positive view about the value of education and they are keen for young people to achieve. They ensure that young people have an identified education placement and work hard to promote daily attendance at school. Young people have personal education plans. Staff liaise closely with schools and attend all education meetings. This means that they are able to develop a good understanding of young people's educational needs and how to support them. Some young people had not attended school regularly before they came to live in the home. Overall their level of attendance does improve because of the work that staff do to support them. However, some young people continue to struggle to engage with education when they are at school and this has an impact on the progress they can make.

Staff encourage young people to take part in activities outside the home in order to develop their social skills and interests. They also organise trips and holidays for young people. Some young people have been involved in some activities at different times, for example swimming and going to the cinema. Other young people do not take part in any structured activities. This limits their opportunities to develop their interests and links in their community.

Staff work hard to help young people to learn to manage difficulties in their lives and to behave in ways that are socially acceptable. Staff provide positive role models and they praise and reward young people when they behave well. They also respond appropriately to anti-social behaviour in the home. As a result, young people's behaviour improves over time. Professionals comment on the progress young people make in this regard. For example, one social worker said, '(Name) is challenging and staff have been able to calm and engage with (Name).'

Young people benefit from living in a comfortable and homely environment. The home is suitably located in a residential area. There are public transport links to local towns and cities. The home is generally well maintained. However, the kitchen requires refurbishment and this detracts from the overall presentation of the home. This had been noted by the independent visitor prior to the inspection and the manager had reported it to the organisation. There is a plan in place to renew the kitchen.

Keeping children and young people safe good

The home has effective safeguarding arrangements which ensure that young people are protected. Staff understand the home's safeguarding procedure and their training is regularly renewed to ensure that their knowledge is kept up to date. Staff have a good understanding of safe care practices and of the vulnerabilities of the young people they look after. Individual risk assessment and management plans are put in place for young people. These promote consistency in the way staff work with young people and help to eliminate or minimise risk. Safeguarding concerns are managed effectively and reported to relevant agencies in order to keep young people safe. Young people themselves say that they feel safe and that they are well cared for. They report that there is no bullying in the home and that they are not bullied outside it. This contributes to their sense of safety. Social workers confirm that young people are cared for safely. They say that they are confident that young people would feel able to let staff or professionals outside the home know if they had a concern.

Before they were admitted to this home, some young people had a history of going missing and therefore of potentially being at risk in the community. Staff understand the risks and work well with young people to reduce them. As a result young people rarely go missing. The manager and staff have developed strong links with local police. Police report that the manager and staff liaise closely with them and take appropriate action if young people do go missing in order to ensure their prompt and safe return. In addition, the manager attends quarterly multi-agency meetings held locally where current policy and strategies on safeguarding young people are discussed. This promotes good partnership working and contributes to the protection of young people.

When some young people come to live in this home they have had a history of

presenting with very challenging behaviour. Staff are trained to respond positively to such behaviour. Their training includes the safe use of restraint. Staff work effectively to de-escalate and defuse challenging situations in order to minimise the need to intervene physically with young people. As a result of the way staff work with young people, their behaviour improves over time and consequently there are few incidents of restraint. This contributes to the safety and well-being of young people. Professionals make positive comments about the way staff work to promote changes in young people's behaviour. For example, one social worker said, 'Staff have formed a positive relationship with (name). They are able to put appropriate boundaries in place and be consistent with her'. The manager monitors the use of restraint closely to ensure that the welfare of young people is promoted.

Robust recruitment practices ensure that all staff are vetted before they start work in the home. The manager also ensures that checks on agency staff are up to date. The identity of all visitors to the home is verified before they are allowed in. These practices protect young people from individuals who may pose a risk to them.

Young people benefit from living in a safe environment. Regular health and safety checks are undertaken and the equipment is routinely serviced to ensure that it is safe. Staff ensure that young people practise the home's evacuation procedure regularly so that they know what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency

Leadership and management

good

Young people benefit from living in a home that is managed effectively. The Registered Manager is suitably qualified and experienced. She holds a National Vocational Qualification at Level 4 in working with children and young people and also a National Vocational Qualification at Level 4 in management. She has worked with children living in residential care for some years and has managed children's homes for 5 years. Regular monitoring by the manager and a person who is independent of the home ensures that there is good oversight of the progress young people make and the care they receive.

Young people are looked after by a sufficient number of staff. There is an established team of staff who have worked in the home for some time. The manager has recently recruited new staff to the team to fill vacancies that have arisen due to some staff leaving. She has employed a small number of agency staff to work regularly in the home in order to cover the vacancies. Agency staff always work alongside members of the permanent staff team. The use of agency staff in this way ensures that young people are always cared for by staff who know them. This ensures their safety and well-being.

Staff report that they feel well supported in their work with young people. They have regular supervision and annual appraisals of their performance. This enables them to review their work with young people and plan their training and development needs.

They have access to good training opportunities to maintain their knowledge. The manager ensures that additional training is provided to staff to help them to meet the specific needs of young people. For example, staff have recently completed training in self-harm and sexually harmful behaviours. Staff also have access to regular consultation and training input from the organisation's therapist to support them in their care of young people. The manager keeps up to date with changes to current legislation and ensures that this is cascaded to the staff team in order to maintain their knowledge.

The home has a development plan that has clear and achievable objectives. This demonstrates that the manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for improvement. The manager involves the staff team in setting these objectives and reviewing progress. Young people are encouraged to contribute to their own development plan for the home. This gives them the opportunity to put forward their views on how the home is run and things they would like to see developed. The manager makes sure that young people are given feedback so that they can see how their suggestions have been acted on.

The Statement of Purpose is detailed, providing clear information to young people's relatives and professionals outside the home about how the home works and how young people are cared for. It is reviewed annually to ensure that it is up to date. The home meets the aims that are set out in this document. The young person's guide to the service is produced in a format that is appropriate to the understanding of the young people who live in the home. It gives them good information about the home, how they will be looked after and their rights in care.

Young people's records are well managed. The information that is kept contributes to young people's understanding of their history and time in this placement. All files are stored securely and kept up to date. Young people are encouraged to read their files and to contribute to them. This ensures that their views are incorporated into their records.

There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection. However, the home has a good track record of responding promptly to any issues that are raised in inspections or through the home's own monitoring process. This ensures that the service continues to improve and develop.

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.