

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	26/07/2016
Unique reference number	SC063883
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Bettercare Keys Ltd
Registered provider address	The Keys Group, Laganwood House, 44 Newforge Lane, Belfast BT9 5NW

Responsible individual	Christine Bird
Registered manager	Mumtaz Sodha
Inspector	Tina Ruffles

Inspection date	26/07/2016
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	Outstanding

SC063883

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people allow staff to parent and nurture them and they begin to trust the adults caring for them.
- Young people become more resilient, with an improvement in their emotional well-being due to the therapeutic approach adopted by staff.
- Progress is made at school and young people obtain educational qualifications.
- Young people have many opportunities to engage in activities at the home and in the community with staff.
- Health outcomes improve because of the support young people receive to attend medical appointments for previously neglected health issues.
- Young people are involved in care planning with comprehensive, individualised care plans in place. They are actively involved in decision-making at the home and voice their opinions.
- Missing from home episodes have decreased and child sexual exploitation risks have reduced.
- Risk assessments are regularly updated, with clear strategies and instructions for staff to follow.
- The manager is developing the staff to provide a consistent, high level of child-focused care and support to young people.
- Staff monitor progress made by young people against their targets, using an effective monitoring system.

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:

- When establishing the home, the registered person must ensure that it is suitably located so that children are effectively safeguarded and can access services to meet their needs identified in their relevant plans. This is specifically in respect of making the location risk assessment more localised, identifying risks in the immediate area. For example, a train station making it easier to abscond to other parts of the country. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private company. It provides care and accommodation for up to three young people who experience emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
19/01/2016	Full	Good
16/01/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/07/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
<p>Young people live in a safe, homely environment cared for by committed and nurturing staff. They settle and want to remain at the home as a result of positive relationships built with staff. This stops further placement moves and offers stability to young people. The result is that they begin to address their unmet developmental and emotional needs.</p> <p>Young people allow staff to parent and nurture them and begin to trust the adults caring for them. Staff take a therapeutic approach when engaging with young people. This helps young people to become more emotionally resilient, with an improvement in their emotional well-being. Consequently, young people become more open and honest with staff. One young person said, 'I am slowly starting to trust adults and to share my feelings more.'</p> <p>Young people attend school and college, even though attendance has been sporadic prior to moving to the home. This has led to young people gaining qualifications and making educational progress. This has led to improved employment and training opportunities.</p> <p>Staff have an excellent understanding of the young people. Staff clearly enjoy spending time with young people, who have many opportunities to engage in activities at the home and in the community. This offers them new experiences, assists with their social development and they keep fit. Young people are kept busy and active and their confidence grows as they learn new skills. This leads to improvements in their social skills and physical well-being.</p> <p>The involvement of young people in decision-making has led to individualised care plans. These are easy to read but comprehensive documents. Young people understand where there are gaps in their development and engage with staff to address these. Staff create charts, which help demonstrate to young people the progress they are making and they reward and celebrate achievements. This helps young people recognise the improvements, with one young person saying, 'In myself I am a better person, I have matured so much and am a much stronger person.'</p> <p>Young people are encouraged and supported to attend medical appointments. This</p>	

means previously neglected health issues are met and young people's health improves. Staff monitor food intake to ensure that young people eat a full, healthy and balanced diet. This ensures that young people are not neglecting themselves and, through staff educating them, they make changes to start leading a healthier lifestyle.

Staff are aware of the impact that young people's backgrounds have had on their attitudes and beliefs. They appropriately challenge young people, and discussions take place about different cultures and religions. This broadens their perspectives and young people become more tolerant and understanding of others.

Young people are actively involved in decision-making at the home and voice their opinions. They take their own minutes of their meetings, engage with their statutory reviews, comment about key working sessions, have access to an advocate and know how to make a complaint. Young people personalise their bedrooms and take ownership of the home, promoting a sense of belonging and permanence for them. When speaking about one young person, a professional said, 'This is a positive placement and she has said it is like a second home to her.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>Instances of young people missing from home have reduced. However, young people continue to go missing from the home but the independent return home interviews demonstrate that young people are no longer putting themselves at such a high risk. This is collectively managed through the regular strategy meetings which are held if there is an escalation in missing from home episodes. Close working arrangements with the police and multi-agency planning ensure that there is a coordinated response. Young people are aware of the staff's responses if they go missing from home and now remain in contact with staff throughout their missing episodes. As a result of this good communication, young people have developed skills to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>The risk of child sexual exploitation is still present due to some young people's past experiences. The police undertake preventative work with young people. This proactive response has led to a reduction in the risk. Young people change their behaviours and association with inappropriate adults.</p>	

Meetings take place using an external psychological service. This offers staff a different perspective on the young people's behaviour. Staff use a monitoring system to inform these meetings and receive advice and information about different strategies to use. Team meetings and supervision have a reflective practice element. This holistic approach enables staff to effectively review and make changes to young people's risk assessments and behaviour management plans. There has been an improvement in young peoples' behaviours as a result of the strategies put in place.

Staff receive refresher training in relevant safeguarding issues, which ensures that they have up-to-date knowledge. They are more vigilant and notice signs and indicators that could be indicative of a young person planning to abscond. This includes subtle changes in a young person's demeanour. Additional staff resources are available if necessary to keep young people safe.

Positive and negative consequences are effectively used. Staff increase their use of natural consequences to educate young people about their negative behaviours. Young people are encouraged to choose the sanction for their actions. This helps young people with their decision-making: they recognise the cause and effect of their actions and it helps them to learn to be responsible for their actions. Staff promptly make referrals to external agencies to obtain specific therapeutic support for young people in behaviour management.

Staff provide up-to-date safeguarding information to young people in key working sessions and young people's meetings. This empowers young people to gain knowledge in relevant areas, such as internet safety, drugs and alcohol and sexual health issues to enable them to make safe choices.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
<p>The manager has held registered manager status since 2013 for this home, but has managed other children's homes since 2009. She has considerable experience, is educated to degree level and has a diploma in psychotherapy in transactional analysis. The manager provides strong, effective management. She is approachable and provides support to the staff, 'without stifling them'. She delegates tasks to team members but will closely monitor performance and practice through the effective monitoring systems in place.</p>	

One of the home's aims and objectives is, 'Providing social, emotional and behavioural guidance and support to help individual children and young people by working therapeutically, focusing on child development and attachments.' This is achieved through the manager imparting her knowledge to staff, and encouraging them to use a therapeutic approach with young people. She does this through staff mirroring her actions and words. Young people become more resilient and emotionally stable through this subtle approach.

The manager is developing the staff to provide a consistent, high level of child-focused care and support to young people. Staff are assisted through comprehensive and clear instructions for behaviour management and risk management strategies. Staff understand the manager's expectations and are confident to manage situations effectively themselves. The manager said, 'Staff morale is boosted as they feel good about dealing with things themselves.'

Monitoring forms and a monthly audit plan have been developed for use by each key worker. Staff monitor progress made by young people against their targets, using the effective monitoring system. They review outcomes and adapt their key working sessions to provide more support and guidance in targeted areas. This helps young people continue to make progress and meet new objectives.

The manager has an excellent knowledge of the young people through undertaking occasional key working sessions with them. She gets to know the young people, which assists when looking at the matching process for new young people referred to the home. Young people develop a relationship with the manager and ask her to advocate on their behalf, particularly in respect of negotiating with the local authority. Young people feel listened to and supported.

To ensure that an excellent level of care is provided to young people, the manager quickly responds if staff fail to meet these high standards. This is through the use of a performance management plan. Issues are dealt with promptly, with additional training and monitoring put in place if needed. Staff are dealt with fairly and young people benefit from having competent staff to care for them.

The manager recognises that having a fairly new staff team can be both a weakness and a strength. New staff bring different skills, attributes and abilities but need to work to become a cohesive team. Regular, reflective team meetings take place discussing young people and strategies. Open discussions take place for staff to flag up any difficulties they are experiencing. One staff member said, 'It is a happy environment and homely. Everyone works together and you don't feel uncomfortable to share ideas.' The manager provides support, ideas and resources. Young people benefit from the predictability of having a stable, consistent team.

Close links are developed and maintained with professionals, such as safeguarding agencies, to ensure that external support and advice are available, which provides

a multi-agency approach. The manager has improved the quality and standards of care further by taking into account and putting into action the recommendation from the last inspection. Although the home is well informed about risks within the area, the locality risk assessment needs to reflect these external risks and areas. Staff will then be fully aware and this will provide further protection for young people living at 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 children looked after 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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