

# 1247491

Registered provider: Bettercare Keys Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children who have learning disabilities. A private provider operates the home.

**Inspection dates:** 31 October to 1 November 2017

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 11 January 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** Sustained effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:**

none

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Children and young people who have complex needs develop positive and lasting relationships with a stable, caring staff team.
- Children and young people benefit from an approach to care that seeks to maximise their opportunities to increase their resilience, develop independence

skills and become safer.

- Staff ensure that children and young people are given every opportunity to experience activities that may not otherwise be available to them. Staff are extremely dedicated to their role and show great commitment to ensuring that vulnerable children and young people are enabled to live life to the full.
- The staff team is skilled at balancing and encouraging appropriate levels of engagement. Detailed risk assessments and behaviour support plans enable children and young people to engage safely in community activities, which develop their social skills and confidence.
- Staff are highly effective in managing children and young people's complex and challenging behaviour. They are consistent in their response to negative behaviour and have been successful in their efforts to help children and young people manage their frustrations and anxieties.
- Independent advocates are available and children and young people feel fully included in all decisions about their lives.
- Children, young people, parents and professionals hold this setting in very high regard. This demonstrates that children and young people's well-being is at the centre of the care delivered.

The children's home's areas for development:

- All staff should receive supervision, including relief or agency staff.
- The children's guide should be produced in a format that all young people can access and understand.
- Records need to be accurate, signed and dated and have a rigorous management overview.
- Recruitment records need to be robust, including exact months and dates of previous employment.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>5. Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met</p> <p>Seek to challenge each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans. If they consider the placing authority's response to be inadequate.(Regulation 5(c))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person should ensure that the placing authority provides the current relevant plans for each child in a timely manner.</p>	04/12/2017
<p>33. Employment of staff</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that relief staff working within the home receive supervision.</p>	04/12/2017

### Recommendations

- Ensure that staff play a full role in preparing a journal for young people which captures their journey through care and provides children and young people with a lasting memory. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.14)
- Ensure that the children's guide is accurate, reviewed and accessible to young people. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21)
- Ensure maintenance of good employment practice for each prospective employee by requesting specific dates of previous employment and scrutinising any gaps in employment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording, particularly with reference to recording the dates and designation of the recorder. ('Guide to

the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people make very good progress because of good-quality, nurturing relationships with the staff. Staff are skilled and adept at building relationships with children and young people. Interactions observed during the inspection were relaxed and staff communicated with each child and young person using their preferred communication style. A social worker said, '[name of staff member] has excellent communication with [name of young person], he relates to him very well and they have a fantastic relationship.'

Children and young people regularly attend full-time education. Developmental targets are shared with the school and these promote progress. Other targets are environment specific, depending on the needs of the child or young person. Children and young people who would previously have spent a lot of time indoors are encouraged to make use of the outside space and get involved in physical activities, such as swimming and camping holidays. This supports children and young people's physical and emotional well-being. The staff capture these moments with photographs. However, these photographs could be used to make a journal for young people, as a lasting memory of their time living at the home and to demonstrate their progress and experiences.

Staff are particularly skilled in observing and understanding the complex needs and vulnerabilities of children and young people, and ensure that they receive a very good quality of personalised care. Staff understand the full range of individual needs of children and young people, including the support they need to reach their full potential. An example of this is staff's observation and analysis of the triggers for a young person's anxieties, which were being in loud places and busy shops. Staff devised a plan to alleviate these anxieties by supporting the young person in using public transport at peak times and going to the swimming baths at busy times. This measured, supportive approach has led to a reduction of incidents brought on by the young person's anxieties.

Staff are enthusiastic about their work and committed to providing an inclusive service to overcome the difficulties associated with additional needs and disability.

Communication with schools and parents is productive, and is used not only to communicate concerns or difficulties but also to identify young people's strengths in order to promote progress. A parent commented, 'I couldn't fault them at all. I think all the staff know my son really well. They don't see any barriers for him.'

Staff have registered children and young people with a range of external services such as doctors, opticians and dentists. They proactively liaise with external colleagues to review each young person's physical health and matters of well-being. A school nurse commented, 'The communication between the home and ourselves is very good. We work together on anything related to health issues.' Recorded health plans keep the staff team up to date with each individual child and young person's current health concerns. This prioritises their unique needs and results in children and young people

making significant progress in meeting their developmental milestones, for example in self-care.

Children and young people have advocates. This helps to facilitate communication and enables children and young people to share their ideas and opinions. Visual prompts around communal areas of the home and in bedrooms provide reminders that the children and young people are at the centre of this home. Tailored support plans mean that children and young people are in a routine. They are used to taking part in household chores such as cleaning and baking, appropriate to their individual abilities. This helps to prepare children and young people for their individual transitions and provides structure that helps them to value their environment.

Very good arrangements are in place to support children and young people with contact with their families. A social worker commented, 'The staff are excellent at facilitating contact.' A parent commented, 'I phone nearly every day and staff are happy to speak with me to tell me how my son has been that day. They are very good at looking after him and keep me updated about everything.' This means that parents are kept informed about children and young people's progress and any items of importance.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Observations of staff interaction and supervision of children and young people indicated that staff are very alert to any potential risks. The close supervision and high staffing ratios do not impact on the homely domestic environment. The registered manager ensures that staff are familiar with safeguarding procedures and protocols, and in particular safeguarding matters relating to children and young people who have a disability. All staff have received safeguarding training and show a good awareness of the potential heightened risks posed to children and young people who have a disability.

Managers and staff demonstrated a thorough understanding of the risks to individual children's safety, including the risks associated with their disability, level of understanding and communication. Managers and staff are well trained in safeguarding, able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, and aware of the children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation resulting from their disabilities. Staff take suitable action when they have concerns about children and young people's welfare, reporting all concerns in a safe and timely manner. This ensures that children and young people are kept safe.

The behaviour management techniques staff use are very effective. Staff know the children and young people extremely well and use helpful diversionary techniques if they are becoming agitated or anxious. Staff use strategies that are individual to the children and young people and engage them in positive activities of their choice. A real strength of the care provided is the way in which staff express clear and consistent boundaries for children and young people. Staff take time to explain that the need for such boundaries is to prevent harm to staff or children. As a result, behaviour is managed well. When physical intervention is used, it is as a last resort and only when it is considered that a child or young person may be in danger. Most interventions are low level and are used to defuse a situation before it reaches crisis point. All incidents

are recorded in detail. Records are subject to management review and risk assessments are updated accordingly. Children, young people and staff are given the opportunity to express how the incident affected them, both at the time and after the event.

The home's care-planning process includes arrangements to identify and address potential individualised risks posed to children and young people in their day-to-day care and activities. Placement plans set out in impressive detail how staff should approach and interact with children and young people. For example, the plans for children and young people are very specific about how they like to communicate and how this communication differs when they are distressed. This is important as it prevents the children and young people from becoming distressed. This demonstrates how well the staff team understands the children and young people, and ensures a positive and proactive approach to understanding and managing their behaviours.

Medication, including periodic and emergency medication, is well managed and suitably administered. Written protocols and consents are in place, and staff receive regular refresher training. Staff are clear about expectations to ensure that children and young people receive their medication safely.

Greater care is required when recruiting staff to work at the home to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and young people. During the recent recruitment of a new staff member, the manager failed to follow safer recruitment procedures. On the application form, the new staff member had only recorded the year of his previous employment history and omitted the months. Furthermore, the manager accepted a reference that indicated only that he had been employed by a recruitment agency and did not answer specific questions regarding his suitability for the role.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

An experienced, qualified registered manager manages the home effectively. Children and young people are settled in the home, with an established, experienced staff team looking after them. Staff have high aspirations for children and young people.

Staff spoken to during the inspection said that they felt supported. Their comments included, 'great support from the manager', 'I value my supervision to discuss young people and what I can do better' and 'the managers have an open door policy for us'. However, some staff employed via an agency have not received the appropriate supervision within the timescales set out in the home's policies and procedures. This does not provide sufficient opportunities to review if, or how, staff are contributing to children and young people achieving improved outcomes.

Team meetings take place regularly. This allows staff to discuss the running of the home and to look at ways to improve the service they offer. Staff also use this time to reflect on children and young people's progress and to decide how best to support them. A handover was observed as part of the inspection. This was child and young person-focused. Throughout the meeting, staff presented as professional, knowledgeable and passionate about their work. Staffing levels are good and rotas clearly show the management arrangements that are in place daily.

Staff morale is high. Staff members commented, 'This is the best place that I've

worked' and 'The strongest thing that works in here is the staff team; we gel very well.' The staff team is diverse, dedicated and experienced. This is further supported by a programme of ongoing, appropriate training in matters related to the needs of the young people living in the home.

Care-planning documents held within the home are of a very good quality. However, some records are not signed or dated. The manager does carry out audits of all documentation within the home. However, he agreed that these shortfalls had not been identified in the current auditing system. He has made a commitment to review and revise his systems to ensure that complete and accurate records are kept within the home.

Managers are proactive in their efforts to maintain strong links with partner agencies, including local authorities, education professionals and healthcare providers. Such agencies report that the home works with them to ensure that children and young people's needs, risks and vulnerabilities are safely and caringly met. A social worker commented, 'We have just had a very positive review which highlighted how well the multi-agency team have worked together to support [name of young person] and I feel the home have played a big part in his progress.' However, the manager has not been robust in challenging local authorities when full care-planning documentation has not been received. For example, a young person who is in transition to leave the home and move into adult services did not have a current pathway plan.

External monitoring of the home takes place regularly and is of a good standard. This process takes account of the views of children and young people, placing authorities and families. The monitoring system provides a robust review of the home's practice relating to the quality of children and young people's care. This feeds into the development plan and demonstrates the manager's commitment to continue and sustain improvements in the home's function.

The statement of purpose is kept under review and captures the ethos of the home. Staff practice is reflective of the statement of purpose. However, the children's guide has not been updated to reflect the communication needs of the children and young people. This means that children and young people are not afforded the opportunity to access a guide that gives them an insight into the daily running of the home.

The home has appropriate systems in place to notify Ofsted and other relevant bodies of significant events that occur within the home or with children and young people. This ensures that those with an interest in children and young people's welfare are kept appropriately informed.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1247491

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Bettercare Keys Ltd

**Registered provider address:** Laganwood House, Newforge Lane, Belfast BT9 5NW

**Responsible individual:** Melanie McGuinness

**Registered manager:** Matthew Faux

## Inspector

Elaine Allison, social care inspector

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