

2625942

Registered provider: My Choice Children's Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home is privately owned. The organisation has several other homes in the local area. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children with social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. The organisation also has a school, which children at this home could be eligible to attend.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2021.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 16 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/08/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff demonstrate fondness and affection towards children. As a result, positive relationships develop and children feel valued and well cared for. All children can identify a member of staff that they would speak to if they had any worries, and they say that the staff listen to their concerns. One child told the inspector that 'there could not be a better home'.

Children experience a welcoming environment that helps them to enhance their sense of stability and security. Consequently, they begin to make steady progress across aspects of their lives.

Children are supported to attend school. The registered manager has taken a proactive approach to ensuring that one child is provided with a suitable education until a school placement is found. Although some children experience barriers to their learning, others are making exceptional progress. For example, one child is successfully reintegrating into a mainstream school setting.

Children's healthcare needs are prioritised. Staff receive training to enable them to support children's specific medical needs.

A healthy lifestyle is promoted. Children are encouraged to remain active and to take regular exercise. Many of the activities arranged for the children provide them with the opportunity to burn off excess energy while having fun.

Children's mental health and emotional well-being are given equal priority. The organisation has strong links with a local specialist service. This ensures that children have access to counselling and other therapeutic interventions.

Staff support children to gain independence skills. Careful plans are made to ensure that children can acquire independence skills over time and at a pace they feel comfortable with. One child takes pride in the fact that they can now cycle to school and is looking forward to having some free, unsupervised time in the local community. This approach ensures that children gain self-confidence without feeling overwhelmed.

The home is spacious, well-furnished and comfortable. The outside space provides opportunities for children to enjoy games and sporting activities. Children like their bedrooms and enjoy personalising them. Consequently, each bedroom reflects an aspect of the child's personality, individuality and their personal interests and hobbies.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Managers and staff demonstrate a commitment to keeping children safe but have not been entirely successful in eradicating the bullying behaviours demonstrated by some children. Most of the children feel safe at the home, but one child recalls being targeted by their peers. Incident reports and correspondence from one professional clearly indicate that bullying has taken place on more than one occasion.

Generally, practice relating to the assessment and management of risk is effective. However, the proposed actions for managing bullying behaviour are generic despite each child's unique vulnerabilities. In a minority of cases, the strategies specified in children's risk assessments are not being fully implemented into practice.

The records pertaining to child protection concerns do not always contain detailed information or provide a clear audit trail of the decisions made and the actions taken. In one case, records of the discussions that have taken place with the local authority designated officer and a child's social worker have not been recorded.

Other aspects of safeguarding practice are well developed and implemented effectively. Staff have a good understanding of children's past experiences and how these can affect a child's ability to keep themselves safe. Consequently, work is carried out with children to raise their awareness of risks they may be exposed to in the local community and online. One child told the inspector about the actions they had taken to ensure that they were safe when accessing the internet.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from the home since the last inspection. Staff have clear protocols in place if a child were to go missing from the home, including the action that they should take to safeguard a child.

All the children have made progress in terms of maintaining positive behaviours. There are clear behaviour management plans for each child and proportionate sanctions are used to address negative behaviours. One child told the inspector that he thought these sanctions are fair. Physical intervention is only used as a last resort and always includes staff and children being given an opportunity to participate in a debrief meeting.

Safe recruitment practice is implemented effectively. This minimises the potential for unsuitable adults becoming employed at the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager was not present when this inspection took place. The organisation's area manager was present throughout the inspection.

Records indicate that the registered manager has a detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Some of the shortfalls identified during this

inspection have been recognised by the registered manager and there are indications that these are beginning to be addressed.

There are effective systems for monitoring the quality of care. Serious events are reviewed by the registered manager, along with other significant areas of practice, such as the frequency and quality of key-work sessions with children. The home's independent visitor provides a good level of external scrutiny and makes helpful suggestions regarding practice development.

There has been one complaint made by a child since the last inspection. This relates to a bullying incident. There has been a delay in resolving this complaint and this is due to an investigation into staff practice not being concluded in a timely way. Consequently, the child has not benefited from seeing their concerns being prioritised.

Children's case records are maintained to a good standard. These provide a clear record of the progress that the children are making. They also contain helpful information from other professionals who work with the children.

The staff receive a good range of training opportunities. One member of staff described the positive impact training was having on their practice. The staff receive regular supervision, but the quality of the recording is variable. In some cases, there is not a clear description of the discussions that have taken place in the supervision meeting, or the actions that have been agreed.

Leaders and managers ensure that the home is maintained to a high standard. This helps to ensure that children benefit from living in a safe and homely environment.

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff— manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(iv))	27 August 2022
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received. (Regulation 13 (1)(2)(g)(ii)) This is with specific reference to ensuring that action is taken to enable the investigation of children's complaints to be completed in a timely manner.	27 August 2022
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which— is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect.	27 August 2022

The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular—

provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response.
(Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d))

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. This is with specific reference to ensuring that strategies for protecting children from harm are specific to their individual circumstances and that these strategies are consistently implemented in practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person must ensure that there is a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice and keep appropriate records for staff in the home. This is with specific reference to ensuring that the records of staff supervision give a detailed account of the issues discussed and the actions agreed during a supervision meeting. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 2625942

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: My Choice Children's Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 3a, Mill Green Business Estate, Mill Green Road, Haywards Heath RH16 1XQ

Responsible individual: Dawn Ives

Registered manager: Michelle Allen

Inspector

Stephen Collett, Social Care Inspector

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