

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	04/02/2016
Unique reference number	SC008485
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Choices Home for Children Limited
Registered person address	31 Wellington Road, NANTWICH, Cheshire, CW5 7ED

Responsible individual	Susan Mackay
Registered manager	Gary Holt
Inspector	Stella Lovie

Inspection date	04/02/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged Good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has improved effectiveness. This home was last inspected in June 2016. It was found to be providing a good service. Two requirements and five recommendations were made to further improve practice and ensure compliance with regulations. At the point of this interim inspection, these have all been addressed by the Registered Manager. This shows that he learns from inspection activity to promote the positive development of his service. Many of the young people say that living in this home has improved their lives. It has given them opportunities to keep safe, improve their education, meet new people and make new friends, enjoy new experiences and grow with increasing confidence and independence to become their own person. As one young person confirms: 'It's all good here and the staff are nice. If I hadn't moved from my last placement to here, I'd be in jail. Staff here have saved my life.' Young people have developed positive bonds with experienced, motivated, well-supported staff who care about them and act as influential role models. This helps young people to aspire and improve their life chances. As one social worker commented: 'Staff have excellent relationships with the young people. My young person has made remarkable progress. He has got real engagement with his education. He says he feels sense of belonging there. I cannot speak highly enough of the home. His behaviour prior to going there was very negative. I think staff are able to make this difference because they spend quality time with the young people. They go above and beyond what other placements do.' Young people are very well supported to develop their self-confidence, emotional resilience and self-esteem. They are helped to make sense of their past experiences, learn to manage their feelings and emotions and devise coping strategies to promote their resilience and psychological well-being. As a result, young people make excellent progress in all aspects of their lives. As one senior education professional commented: 'This provider is phenomenal with my young person. Prior to going there, he was in a very bad state. They have built very, very strong relationships with him and with his school, and have supported him successfully into college. He's gone from a lad who could have ended up inside to doing really well in college and performing dance internationally at a very high	

level. He gets tough love there in the right quantities and this has been transformational.' As a result, young people in the home present as confident, articulate and positive role models for all young people in care.

Effective promotion of education remains a particular strength of this home. The manager has established a good partnership with a local school which creates bespoke and flexible full-time education packages that previously disaffected young people are able to buy into. Those packages play to young people's strengths and thereby capture their interest, and restore their belief and confidence in their ability. Staff understand the need to be flexible in their interventions according to the needs of each young person. They take every opportunity to engage, stimulate and teach them through the experiences provided. By taking part in structured one to one activities, young people have the opportunity to learn in ways that conventional schools are not always able to provide. This approach is based on a strong emphasis on building trust, thereby helping young people to feel safe and secure which is a pre-requisite for learning. It promotes improvements in a range of areas such as concentration, communication skills and reduced absconding. As a result, challenging young people achieve well in this nurturing, supportive and structured environment.

Excellent communication is maintained between school and education staff, allowing for any concerns or achievements to be shared, thus further promoting young people's well-being and attainments. Shared aspirations and targets for young people ensure this holistic approach to developing their social and life skills and educational ability. As one education professional enthused: 'They are very supportive and flexible and allow us to work with their young people in a bespoke way. This enables the young people to actually enjoy their education. Staff are very good communicators which allows us to respond effectively. I can't recommend them highly enough. I think they are one of the best care homes. They always have the young people's best interests at heart. I have one young person from there at the moment who has been an absolute joy. He used to have real problems in attending school but they have turned him completely around.'

A strong focus on the protection of young people means that their safety and well-being remain central to the running of the home. Young people are safe and they say that they feel safe. Staff clearly demonstrate respect and regard for the young people. There are highly effective and well-embedded working relationships with a range of external agencies. Placing social workers, young people and relatives complement the manager and staff on their pro-active approach to managing and reducing risk, and in identifying and promptly responding to emerging concerns. As one parent commented: 'My daughter's doing really well there. All the staff go out of their way to help her. She is doing absolutely brilliantly from what she was like when she first went there. She's doing so well at school. I know she didn't like it there at first – too many rules and she didn't like rules –but now she knows that staff are actually helping her with her problems.'

Staff are skilled at discussing with young people their areas of risk, behaviour, responsibilities and how these are to be managed. On the relatively infrequent

occasions that young people go missing, staff go out on to the streets and known addresses to look for young people. Young people are respected as emerging young adults. Effective behaviour management is based on dialogue, negotiation and sensitive guidance from staff. This helps young people to work things out for themselves, make informed choices and take responsibility for their decision-making. Physical restraint is seldom used.

The manager provides very effective leadership to the staff team and demonstrates a strong commitment to driving forward improvements in the home. He is a strong presence there and sets clear high standards about how he wants staff to behave and perform. He has clear, well-worked out strategies for dealing with behaviour and education. This means that staff have high morale and feel they receive clear guidance. The young people behave better as a result. As one senior placing authority education professional commented: 'Staff are very tenacious and the manager gets it very profoundly right with what he is doing in there. We want to get a deeper understanding of what it is that makes it work so well in that home. I think it must be to do with the fact that the manager is absolutely straight down the line and very direct in a safe way with the young people. And somehow they are able to take this from him.'

Robust internal and external arrangements for monitoring practice ensure that there is good oversight of the care that is given to young people and the progress they make. That said, three areas for improvement are identified from this interim inspection. External monitoring by the independent visitor could be improved further by more frequent consultation with young people, their relatives and placing authorities. This provides a wider evidence base on which to base external scrutiny of practice in the home. In addition, monthly reports by the visitor need to evaluate how effectively the home is managing risks associated with missing from home episodes. There is one further shortfall in relation to timely notification of relevant people of all serious events in the home. However, none of these shortfalls have impacted adversely on the safety or welfare of the young people.

In conclusion, the home is able to demonstrate that it has improved its effectiveness in all aspects of its work and outcomes with young people.

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to six young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, and/or physical disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/06/2015	CH - Full	Good
22/12/2014	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
21/05/2014	CH - Full	Good
06/01/2014	CH - Interim	Inadequate Progress

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
44: Independent person: visits and reports. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives as the independent person requires; this is with specific regard to getting as wide a base of evidence as possible to inform the independent person's opinion as to the efficacy of safeguarding and the promotion of young people's welfare. (Regulation 44 (2) (a))	04/04/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. (The Guide, page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care: with specific regard to more analysis of the home's response to missing from home events. (The Guide, page 65, paragraph 15.5)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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