

SC008485

Registered provider: Choices Home for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and is registered to provide care for up to five children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, four children were living in the home.

A new manager has recently been appointed. She has not submitted her application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 August 2023

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are widespread failures that mean children's welfare is not promoted and the care and experiences of children are poor.

Date of last inspection: 30 May 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Following the full inspection on 30 and 31 May 2023, the home was judged to be inadequate and compliance notices were served in relation to regulation 12 (the protection of children standard), regulation 13 (the leadership and management standard) and regulation 33 (employment of staff).

A monitoring visit took place on 4 July 2023. At this visit, it was identified that sufficient progress had been made against the specified steps in the compliance

notices for regulations 12 and 33 and these had been met. A further compliance notice was issued under regulation 13. This compliance notice was monitored during the full inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/05/2023	Full	Inadequate
12/01/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
20/09/2022	Full	Inadequate
08/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Since the last inspection, the progress of children living at the home has been variable. One child left the home after notice was served by the provider. The transition for this child moving out of the home was poor. Leaders and managers were unable to demonstrate that the child's views and wishes had been gathered or that adequate support had been implemented to help the child move safely to a new home.

Staff do not have access to up-to-date statutory plans for all children. This prevents children from receiving the correct level of support and impacts on the quality of care being provided.

Children have made progress in education and some children are transitioning to college to study their chosen subjects. However, not all children have been supported to access college placements or had robust plans in place when they have not attended formal education. This impacts on children's aspirations and future employment opportunities.

Children are supported to have fun and to seek new experiences through a variety of activities. They are encouraged to participate in their hobbies and interests, such as horse riding, swimming and gymnastics. This helps children to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Staff work well with a variety of professionals to ensure that children's health and emotional needs are understood and supported. One child is being helped to take responsibility for their diet and to administer their own medication as part of a plan to manage a long-term health condition.

Children speak positively about their relationships with some of the staff. Children are helped to keep in touch with people who are important to them. This helps them to maintain healthy relationships and to develop their sense of identity.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Despite efforts to improve safeguarding practices in the home, children's safety has been compromised by shortfalls in management oversight. Leaders and managers do not have effective oversight of children's care, and they do not adequately evaluate incident reports, direct work or consequences for negative behaviours. This limits opportunities for managers to ensure that the strategies used to support children are safe and effective.

Management oversight of an incident involving a child being held to keep them safe was poor. There was a significant delay in the incident being recorded, actions

identified by the responsible individual had not been carried out and the child had not been spoken to. This limits opportunities for leaders and managers to ensure that practice is appropriate and to identify any learning for the team.

Information about children is not consistently recorded. Children's risk and support plans have not all been updated to reflect changes in the home. A safety plan for one child contained out-of-date information about another child who no longer lives in the home. This reduces opportunities to promote consistent responses from staff and is not helpful to children.

When children have gone missing from this home, staff have responded in line with the child's plan. This has resulted in children being found quickly and returned home safe and well. However, return home interviews do not take place, which has not been escalated by leaders and managers. This is a missed opportunity to seek an understanding of why children have been missing from the home and to promote their welfare.

Since the last inspection, improvements made to the environment have not been sustained. The cleanliness of the home is poor and there are several health and safety hazards, including loose electrical wires, potential fire hazards and uneven flag stones. This does not enable children to live in a safe home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Significant shortfalls were identified in the leadership and management of the home. A new manager has recently been appointed. She has not received a formal induction plan to support her transition into the role or to enable her to understand the home's strengths and areas for development. As a result, the manager has an unrealistic view of the home and the quality of care provided to children.

Leaders and managers have failed to implement robust systems to monitor and evaluate practice in the home effectively. They do not demonstrate that they understand the quality of the care delivered to children or the home's strengths and areas for development.

Leaders and managers do not evaluate incidents effectively and have failed to identify poor staff conduct and a lack of professional boundaries. These shortfalls negatively impact on children's experiences and lead to unclear expectations around practice in the home.

The leadership team has failed to ensure that all staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of children living in the home. Not all staff have completed the relevant qualification within the regulatory time frame.

Previously identified shortfalls in the frequency and quality of staff supervision sessions have not been adequately addressed. Not all staff are receiving formal supervision. When supervision sessions do take place, records are brief and do not evidence any meaningful support or challenge. Leaders acknowledge that they have

missed opportunities to provide additional support to staff in their probation period to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their role and of children's individual and group needs.

Leaders and managers have not updated the home's statement of purpose to record the staff team and their changes in roles. Leaders and managers have also failed to detail the use of all monitoring and surveillance used in the home to keep children safe online.

The independent visitor reports are not regularly shared with Ofsted in a timely way. This limits the oversight of the regulator.

A case review was held following this inspection. It was determined that leaders and managers have failed to take sufficient action to meet the compliance notice issued under regulation 13. Further compliance notices have been issued under regulations 13 and 33.

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 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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(f)(h))	24 September 2023
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.	24 September 2023

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iii)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that transition plans for children moving out of the home are comprehensive and meet their needs.	
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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that: children’s safety plans are regularly reviewed and kept up to date; the home and grounds are kept clean and well maintained; any hazards are quickly identified and addressed to reduce risks to children.	24 September 2023
The registered person must compile in relation to the children’s home a statement (“the statement of purpose”) which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must provide a copy of the statement of purpose to HMCI and make a copy of it available upon request. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (2) (3)(a)(b))	24 September 2023

The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home. The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b)) The registered person must ensure that all staff complete the appropriate qualifications within the regulatory time frames.	24 September 2023
*The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	24 September 2023
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—	24 September 2023

has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that children are spoken to following physical holds and that holds are evaluated by someone who was not involved in the intervention.	
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that each child has up-to-date local authority plans and that records are completed and maintained.	24 September 2023
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1) (7)(a)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that reports are shared with Ofsted regularly and in a timely manner.	24 September 2023

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that there are clear plans in place to support children when they are not accessing education or employment. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)

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: SC008485

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Choices Home for Children

Registered provider address: 31 Wellington Road, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 7ED

Responsible individual: Linda Heywood

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Kelly McCurdy, Social Care Inspector
Steve James, Social Care Inspector

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