

SC008485

Registered provider: Choices Home for Children Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is privately owned. It provides care for up to five children who may have social and emotional difficulties.

Four children were being cared for at the home at the time of the inspection.

The registered manager post has been vacant since September 2021. A new manager has been appointed. He has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 January 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be 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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 20 and 21 September 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: Inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

On 26 September 2022, compliance notices were served in relation to regulation 12, the protection of children, and regulation 13, leadership and management.

A monitoring visit took place on 1 November 2022. At this visit, sufficient progress had been made against the specified steps, and the compliance notices were met.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/09/2022	Full	Inadequate
08/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/07/2021	Full	Inadequate
11/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

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 as staff were unable to keep him safe. Another child, who has come to live at the home since this time, appears to be having a more positive experience, although her placement is still in its infancy.

Children have positive relationships with most staff. Some children who have lived at the home for a longer period have established good relationships with key staff. The quality of these relationships is not yet consistent across the staff team.

Most children attend school and are making progress. One child, who left school last year and is not currently in any education, is being supported to look for alternative training or employment.

A child who will be eighteen later this year is being helped to gain the skills she needs to move towards independence. She is working with a housing project for care leavers. Staff from the project have identified a flat for her in her own community. They are working alongside her and the staff at the home to ensure that she is able to make a positive move to her own accommodation.

Children's health needs are understood and met by the staff team. Children have the specialist input they need from services outside the home to address their emotional health needs. One child with a long-term health condition is increasingly taking responsibility for administration of his own medication, with the oversight of staff. This is providing him with the knowledge he needs to manage his health as he moves into adulthood.

Improvements have been made to the previously poor living environment for children. Children's bedrooms are clean and have appropriate bedding. Children have storage for their clothes. Most bedrooms reflect the children's personalities and interests. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their rooms, alongside staff. These improvements, particularly in children's bedrooms, mean that children have safe and pleasant spaces to spend time away from others. This helps them to feel valued and cared for.

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

Children are cared for by staff who understand their needs. This knowledge is used to keep children safe and reduce risks they may face.

The newly appointed manager has identified changes required to written plans and assessments to ensure that they provide staff with clear and concise information which supports good practice. However, these changes have not yet been implemented. A requirement was raised in relation to children's care records at the last inspection. This requirement is restated.

The interim manager has ensured that risk management plans and behaviour plans are reviewed regularly, and he has regular oversight of this work. Despite this, some children's care records still have information missing or contain inaccurate information. Improvements required in this area of practice have been identified in previous inspections, and requirements have been raised. This requirement is restated.

Children's care records do not contain all the relevant information from children's placing authorities. Some care plans, delegated authority permissions and court orders have not been obtained, despite children living at the home for a long period. One child does not yet have a pathway plan. Consequently, leaders and managers have not ensured that staff have all the information they need to care for children effectively. They are not holding placing authorities to account when information is not provided in a timely manner. A requirement was raised in relation to children's care records at the last inspection and has been made at previous inspections. This requirement is restated.

There has been a reduction in the use of physical intervention in this inspection period. Physical intervention has only been used as a last resort to keep children and staff safe. Records of these interventions are clear. They contain detailed evaluations from leaders and managers. Post-incident discussions with children and staff are completed in a timely manner. It is unclear whether children have the opportunity to read staff's records of events, and electronic records are not signed by children. As a result, there is a lack of evidence that children have all the information they need to respond effectively to staff's written record of events.

Leaders and managers have responded quickly to concerns raised by parents and children about the conduct of staff. Appropriate processes are followed to ensure that children are safeguarded. This has led to some improvements in the culture of the team, with a more positive, child-centred approach to responding to children's behaviours when they are distressed or anxious. The interim manager and the responsible individual are aware that further work is needed to ensure that this approach is consistently evident in the practice of all staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leadership and management of the home has been strengthened by the appointment of a permanent manager, who has applied to register with Ofsted. The responsible individual has plans in place to increase his own skills and knowledge in relation to his role, with external training and peer support. In

addition, a second responsible individual has been appointed to provide additional capacity at this level in the organisation. They have not yet taken up their position.

The interim manager is gaining a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the home and of his staff team. He has implemented a new shift-leader system. This ensures that all shifts have an identified member of staff who is accountable for the running of the shift and the completion of tasks.

The new manager is child-centred in his approach. He has identified where improvements are required in the practice of some staff to ensure that children receive warm and nurturing care. The manager has worked effectively with a local authority to postpone the move of one child into her own accommodation, to make sure she is as prepared as possible for this significant change in her life.

The frequency of staff supervision meetings has been increased to ensure that the interim manager has better oversight of staff practice and that staff have increased support. Staff say they have an opportunity in their supervision meetings to reflect on the experience and progress of children. However, supervision records are not yet evidencing this. The interim manager recognises this is an area for development.

Staff have not yet had an annual appraisal of their practice. This was raised as a requirement at the last inspection and at previous inspections. This requirement is restated.

The responsible individual has commissioned a new provider to carry out the home's monthly independent person visits. The quality of these visits was raised as a concern at the previous inspection, and a requirement was made. These new arrangements are recent, and therefore the impact of these changes cannot yet be evaluated.

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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) Specifically, that the registered person ensures that children's risk assessments and risk reduction plans contain evidence that explains the assessed level of risk and provide staff with the information they need to undertake their roles and responsibilities in protecting children. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	28 February 2023
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; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	28 February 2023
The registered person must ensure that all employees—	31 March 2023

receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience and

have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))

This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of clear and careful recording. In particular, staff should ensure that children's names are correct in children's care records. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that children have an opportunity to read and comment on their records, particularly, although not exclusively, records of physical intervention. The registered person should record if children have seen, but chosen not to sign, these records. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.6)

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 Limited

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

Responsible individual: Simon Haddrell

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Dawn Parton, Social Care Inspector

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