

SC008485

Registered provider: Choices Home For Children Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately run and owned. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six young people.

The home does not have a registered manager.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 November 2018

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 serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 5 September 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/09/2017	Full	Good
28/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
02/08/2016	Full	Outstanding
04/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the role and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi))	16/12/2018
* 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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home that each child's relevant plans are followed; that, subject to regulation 22 (contact and access to communications), contact between each child and the child's parents, relatives and friends, is promoted in accordance with the child's relevant plans; that the child's placing authority is contacted and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if— the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm	11/01/2019

or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(i)(c)(d)(e)(i))	
* 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 outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate 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)(f)(h))	11/01/2019
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(b)(i)(viii))	11/01/2019
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and support them to fulfil their potential In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose protect and promote each child's welfare provide personalised care that meets each child's needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the	11/01/2019

child's background help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult. (Regulation 6 (1) (a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iv)(vi))	
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 10(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i))	11/01/2019
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(2)(a)(i)(ix)(xii)(xiii))	11/01/2019
The registered provider must notify HMCI without delay of any incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(e))	11/01/2019
The registered person must maintain records for each child ("case records") 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))	11/01/2019
Schedule (4) sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date.	11/01/2019

(Regulation 37(1)(2)(a)(b))	
The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to the home- the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25(2)(b)) With particular reference to the home following the fire safety risk management measures within the home's fire safety risk assessment.	11/01/2019
The registered person must review the appropriateness of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46(1)(2))	11/01/2019

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The independent return home interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting. ('Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care', January 2014, page 14, paragraph 32)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Care planning arrangements for young people are weak. For example, managers had previously identified that one young person could not be kept safe by staff or have their needs met. This young person, however, continues to reside at the home. There is an absence of up-to-date planning or guidance for staff on how this young person is to be safely cared for.

Admissions to, and transitions from, the home are poorly managed. Ineffective approaches to matching and considering the compatibility of young people have had a detrimental impact on young people living in the home. As a result of the negative influence of some young people admitted, other young people have ceased to make progress. They have reverted to previously exhibited behaviour, such as drug misuse and frequent incidents of going missing from home.

Staff and managers were unable to identify any progress for some young people who had been admitted to and discharged from the home on an emergency basis. They were described by the managers as 'doing exactly as they pleased'. Those young people frequently misused alcohol and drugs and influenced others to go missing from home.

Some young people do not attend education. They have not been assisted to maintain healthy daytime routines in preparation for their return to school. For example, one young person is not given, or encouraged to complete, education work or offered daytime activities of an educational nature. Rather, they rise late in the morning, spend all day out of the home and do not return until evening time. Staff assist with these arrangements by offering lifts in cars and arranging bus passes for travel.

Young people's plans are poorly understood by staff. For example, staff and managers were unaware of the contents of one young person's education, health and care plan. Clear advice in this plan regarding learning and communication needs is not being utilised by staff. As a result, the care and support being offered to this young person by staff are significantly limited.

Staff are unclear about the overall aim of young people's plans. For example, one young person had been wrongly informed by staff by phone about significant changes in her care plan. The manager confirmed that the information given to the young person was not correct. Managerial and staff insight into young people's plans is restricted through not being in possession of relevant documents, including up-to-date local authority care plans, pathway plans, children looked after review records and placement plans.

Staff do not work sensitively or consistently with young people when behaviours posing a risk to their welfare and safety are identified. As a result, they have not been assisted to discuss these issues, nor have they been successfully supported to access therapeutic intervention.

'Contracts' regarding the expectations of young people's behaviours are without timescales, are not reviewed for their effectiveness and do not provide incentives; nor are they reflective of young people's learning needs as laid out in other plans. Staff have not completed work with other young people who were identified as being at high risk of child sexual exploitation.

Staff and managers do not know the plans for some young people's contact with others outside the home. The team is not aware of any restrictions, the frequency of contact or conditions placed on contact. As a result, some young people were assisted by staff to have contact with family outside of agreed arrangements.

There is confusion among staff and managers with regards to some young people's access to primary and secondary healthcare services. For example, managers and staff were not clear whether an 'urgent' appointment made for one young person was for the GP or child and adolescent mental health services. They also did not know whether the young person had attended either of such appointments.

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

The manager and staff fail to recognise risks presented by young people, which compromise their safety and well-being. The home's arrangements to protect young people from harm are ineffective. For example, staff facilitated contact between one young person and an adult whom the young person regarded as her boyfriend. No information was known about this individual other than a name, and attempts by managers to secure information from other agencies were ineffective. This young person is identified as being at high risk of child sexual exploitation and going missing from home.

Staff are not always able to maintain boundaries with regards to keeping young people safe. For example, on being transported back to the home, one young person was taken by staff to drop money off to a family member. As a result, the young person became in breach of a court-imposed curfew time. In addition, staff had not enquired where this money had come from and managers were not aware of this incident being documented.

Managers are unable to provide an overview or evaluation of young people's risk-taking behaviours. As a result, staff insight into the patterns, frequency or changes in such behaviours is extremely limited.

There are significant safeguarding concerns that the manager and staff do not manage effectively. Specifically, when young people go missing from the home, their risk assessments fail to identify strategies to help staff reduce the risks to young people while away from the home and to support young people to be safe. Staff do not work consistently with young people on behaviours that pose a risk to their welfare. For example, a young person had not received any direct work during a period in which they were missing a total of 22 times.

Young people have not received return home interviews when they have been missing from the home. This limits staff insight into the risks that young people face and opportunities to improve arrangements to keep young people safe are missed.

Risk assessments are not comprehensive with regards to known risks. This includes when young people have stated their intention to self-harm or to take their own lives. Staff and managers minimised these risks as 'attention-seeking' and, for some young people, they were unaware of such risks.

Young people have experienced being bullied in the home by other young people. Although some young people have been identified in risk assessments as being at 'very high risk' of bullying others, no direct work has been completed with them to protect others or to minimise the likelihood of bullying occurring.

Not all serious incidents, as identified in risk assessments, have been notified to Ofsted. As a result, the regulatory body's oversight of such incidents is reduced.

Young people's bedroom arrangements in the home have not undergone suitable scrutiny for fire safety. Managers don't know whether some downstairs doors are fire doors, or how the young person using a downstairs room would escape in the event of a

fire. These issues have been reported by Ofsted to the local fire safety service.

The location of the home has not undergone appropriate review. The locality risk assessment document contains misleading and incorrect information. For example, it cites that staff are in regular liaison with Greater Manchester Police and local shops and that they provide specialist skills to the neighbourhood policing teams. The manager confirmed that none of this is correct.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

There has been a series of managers since the last full inspection in September 2017. As such, there has been no long-term, stable leadership and this has had a negative impact on the staff team and young people. In the absence of stable leadership, staff have lacked the necessary oversight, guidance and support to work effectively with the young people.

The most recently registered manager resigned his post in August 2018, and a replacement manager was appointed. This replacement manager resigned from his post a week prior to the inspection. There is currently an acting manager who has been in post approximately one week and a deputy manager who joined the home in early September 2018.

There is no managerial system in place to provide a clear overview of the quality of care provided. As a result, not all weaknesses regarding the quality of care being offered to young people are known. For example, during this inspection, managers were unaware of the contents of some young people's plans and the lack of direct work that staff have conducted with young people.

Although an improvement plan is in place, this is not comprehensive with regards to the urgent actions that are required to ensure that young people are kept safe and staff are given suitable support and guidance.

Documents that provide guidance to staff regarding young people's care are completed in isolation from, and with no reference to, other documents. As such, they are not comprehensive and omit important information regarding the best ways to work with some young people.

Case records are not updated appropriately, nor do they reflect the young person's life at the home. For example, staff stated that direct work had been conducted with one young person. However, there are no records of direct work sessions. As a result, it is unknown when this activity took place, for how long or how effective the staff intervention was. Consequently, managers are unable to challenge staff inaction or make necessary adjustments to ensure that young people's needs are being met.

Decision-making regarding young people joining or leaving the home lacks planning and has little regard to young people's needs. The current manager spoke in terms of the home having been in 'chaos' and staff not understanding how to keep young people safe

as a result of several previous admissions.

Although both management and staff expectations are that monthly supervision sessions will be undertaken, this has not been the case. Managers have not responded effectively in offering support to staff, during a particularly difficult time in the home.

An accurate register regarding the details of young people's admissions and discharges has not been maintained. For example, the details of three young people who are, or who have been, at the home, do not appear in this register.

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: SC008485

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Choices Home For Children Limited

Registered provider address: C/o Afford Bond, 31 Wellington Road, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 7ED

Responsible individual: Pamela Burden

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspectors

Pauline Yates, social care inspector

Paul Robinson, social care inspector

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