

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 home is privately owned. It is registered to provide care for up to five children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, four children were living in the home.

The registered manager's post is vacant.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 July 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
---	--

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
---	------------

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: 7 May 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: Following the full inspection on 7 and 8 May 2024, the home was judged to be inadequate and Ofsted took action to restrict the accommodation at the children's home, under section 22b of the Care Standards Act 2000. Three compliance notices were also issued, under section 22A of the Care Standards Act 2000. These related to regulation 12, the protection of children standard and regulation 13, leadership and management standard and regulation 24, monitoring and surveillance.

A monitoring visit took place on 17 June 2024. At this visit, it was identified that sufficient progress had been made against the specified steps in the compliance notices for regulations 12, 13 and 24 and these had been met. The notice restricting accommodation remained in place but ended on 18 July 2024.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/05/2024	Full	Inadequate
26/09/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
09/08/2023	Full	Inadequate
30/05/2023	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

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

Children say that they like living in the home and that they can identify staff they trust and feel supported by.

Not all children's plans are individualised. Plans do not contain children's views and wishes, or important information such as family time arrangements and children's education attainment. Staff were unaware of personal information such as the name of one child's primary school teacher or education targets. This does not demonstrate child-focused care.

Children's progress in education is variable and attendance for some children is very limited. Some children attend alternative education settings and are on a reduced timetable. However, a lack of routine and structure does not support children's engagement in education. Leaders and managers do not demonstrate that they are proactive in challenging professionals to ensure that children who are not in full-time education receive sufficient support.

Children are in good health and are supported to attend regular health appointments. However, staff were unable to locate one child's statutory medical report or confirm if this had been completed.

Children are supported to develop interests and attend youth groups, swimming clubs and cubs. One child has a keen interest in horse riding and continues to be encouraged to enjoy lessons.

Children are supported to spend time with people who are important to them. Staff work with families to support their relationships with children, and parents provided positive feedback about the support provided by the team.

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

When children go missing from this home, staff take appropriate action to ensure that children are safe. On their return, children receive return home interviews from an independent person.

Children's plans are not regularly reviewed or kept up to date. This means that staff do not always have the most recent information to keep children safe. This was previously identified as a shortfall and has not been addressed. A requirement made at the last inspection has been restated.

Direct work covering a variety of topics such as healthy relationships and online safety is undertaken with children. However, the quality of records is varied. Leaders and managers have not ensured that children have been supported to explore and understand their sexual and cultural identity, or that children have received adequate support to repair relationships following incidents of conflict. This lack of direct work has impacted on children's relationships and their experiences of living together in the home.

Medication errors continue to be a shortfall in the home. The responsible individual had addressed an incident of one child being given another child's medication in error. However, she had not identified that there was a time discrepancy in the administration of the child's medication and that staff had not followed the medical guidance.

Door alarms remain in use on three of the children's bedroom doors, but the rationale for their use is unclear. There is no evaluation for the use of alarms or evidence of their use being kept under review to ensure that they are only used when required to keep children safe. This potentially limits children's privacy unnecessarily.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The manager's post is vacant. The responsible individual is currently managing the home. She is being supported by two deputy managers and, together, they are providing leadership and guidance to the team. Recruitment for a manager is ongoing, but has so far been unsuccessful.

Management oversight is not yet consistently present across all areas. A review of the quality of care provided in the home has not been completed or shared with Ofsted as required by regulation. This was raised at the last inspection and has not been addressed.

Monitoring and oversight by leaders and managers is not adequate. The lack of management oversight and professional curiosity when incidents are reviewed means that opportunities to make improvements and identify any learning to improve practice have been missed.

Staff say they feel supported and have been given opportunities to reflect on their practice and children's progress. However, they have not had appraisals during this review period and there are no arrangements in place for the responsible individual's supervision. This is a missed opportunity to provide the responsible individual with opportunities for reflection and development.

Inconsistent staffing and the use of agency staff continue to have an impact on the quality of care delivered to children and have impacted on team morale. This is something that the responsible individual is trying to address.

Four requirements made at the last inspection have not been met and have been restated.

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, The 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; understand the roles 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; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)(i)(ii)(v)(vi)(b)) Specifically, the registered provider must ensure that children's risk plans are individual to children and contain the most up-to-date information to keep children safe. The registered provider must ensure that the rationale for the use of alarms on children's bedroom doors is clear, that alarms are used only for safeguarding purposes and do not restrict the movement of children. The registered provider must ensure that these measures are kept under review with clear evidence of decision-making.	30 August 2024

This was a requirement at the last inspection and has been restated.	
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 the home has sufficient staff to provide care for 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and 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)(d)(f)(g)(i)(h)) Specifically, the registered provider must ensure that the management oversight of the day-to day running of the home is consistent. Also, that there are robust monitoring systems in place to enable effective oversight of staff practice in the home. The registered provider must ensure that children are supported by a stable and consistent staff team. This was a requirement at the last inspection and has been restated.	30 August 2024

The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. 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; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(x)) Specifically, the registered provider must ensure that children are supported to address conflict and manage their relationships. This was a requirement at the last inspection and has been restated.	30 August 2024
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 supports 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;	30 August 2024

ensure that staff— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(iv)(ix)) Specifically, the registered provider must ensure that children's plans are personalised, contain their views and wishes and are specific to their individual needs. The registered provider must also ensure that children are supported to understand their sexual identity and cultural heritage.	
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)) Specifically, the registered provider must ensure that decisions regarding children's education are challenged and appropriately escalated.	30 August 2024
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—	30 August 2024

help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) Specifically, the registered provider must ensure that children not attending full-time education have a regular routine and education timetable, and are consistently supported to complete educational activities while not in school.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) Specifically, the registered provider must ensure that the responsible individual receives meaningful and reflective practice-related supervision to support her management of the home.	30 August 2024
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))	30 August 2024

This was a requirement at the last inspection and has been restated.	
--	--

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, Cheshire CW5 7ED

Responsible individual: Linda Heywood

Registered manager: Vacant

Inspectors

Kelly McCurdy, Social Care Inspector
Sarah Gilbert, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024