

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	18/06/2015
Unique reference number	SC008485
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Choices Home for Children Limited
Registered person address	31 Wellington Road, NANTWICH, Cheshire, CW5 7ED

Responsible individual	Mrs Susan Mackay
Registered manager	Mr Gary Holt
Inspector	Mrs Angela Whiteley

Inspection date	18/06/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved Effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC008485

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

Young people are supported by a highly motivated and competent diverse, stable staff team who have high aspirations for them to achieve their potential. They enjoy strong and trusting relationships with staff that know them well and are able to discuss any issues or concerns with them as they arise. In addition, some young people have access to independent advocates; however, staff should regularly remind other young people that they can access this support.

Young people benefit from the stability of their placement and settle quickly in a caring and supportive environment. They make excellent progress across all aspects of their welfare and development, particularly in terms of education, health, family relationships, self-esteem and behaviour.

Staff are proactive when managing young people's behaviour and support them to make positive choices to overcome particular crisis and help them succeed. As a result, young people's behaviour has greatly improved. The homes records confirm incidents of young people going missing from home; physical intervention and sanctions have significantly reduced for most young people. However, the effectiveness of some consequences could be improved if they were restorative in nature.

Young people, parents and family members have a very positive view about the staff and the home. Young people said, 'It's the best house ever, staff are very supportive, they listen, have a laugh but are strict and keep me on track.' They confirm staff help them to feel safe and they feel protected from harm.

The home is highly regarded by other professionals, such as teachers, police and social workers. A head teacher comments positively about staff support of a young person, he says, 'Your tenacious, over and above, personal and professional support has made a tremendous difference to (name)'s life, something really special.'

Safeguarding arrangements are strong and staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures and policies. Staff receive effective training that ensures young people's safety and welfare is paramount. Despite this, the screwing shut of bedroom windows to prevent young people from climbing out is being reviewed, as it presents a health and safety hazard.

Strong management arrangements and robust scrutiny provide the foundations from which young people experience high quality care. Monitoring of the home is generally good but the quality of the independent monthly monitoring reports needs to improve to ensure young people are effectively safeguarded and their welfare is promoted. Additionally, the independent visitor requires consent to

inspect young people's case files. The manager is to review and revise where appropriate; the homes Statement of Purpose, the children's guide and policies for the protection of children to ensure accurate and clear information is provided.

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
12: The protection of children standard: In order to meet the protection of children standard the provider must ensure that the premises used for the purpose of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. In particular, this relates to the provider reviewing the homes practice of screwing shut young people's bedroom windows to keep them safe (Regulation 12 (2) (d))	10/07/2015
44: The registered person must ensure that the independent person produces a report about a visit which sets out the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. Additionally, ensure the independent person has consent from the child and the child's placing authority to inspect a child's case records. (Regulation 44 (2) (b) & (4) (a) (b))	31/07/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home's Statement of Purpose indicates how the home provides individualised care to meet the Quality Standards for the children in their care. In particular, this relates to accuracy of information and clarity about rules in relation to smoking, mobile phone use and use of electronic door alarms on young people's bedroom doors (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15, paragraph 3.5)
- ensure staff regularly remind young people of their right to access an independent advocate (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 23, paragraph 4.17)
- ensure the children's guide helps young people to understand what happens in

the home; with specific regard to clarification about house rules in relation to smoking, use of mobile phones and the use of electronic door alarms on young people's bedroom doors (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 24)

- ensure all policies for the protection of children are reviewed regularly and revised where appropriate (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 44, paragraph 9.19)
- ensure sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature, to help young people recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 46, paragraph 9.38)

Full report

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
22/12/2014	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
21/05/2014	CH - Full	Good
06/01/2014	CH - Interim	Inadequate Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Young people benefit enormously from the support and nurturing environment provided by a dedicated and knowledgeable staff team who have high expectations of them. They make significant improvements in their education, health, emotional development, relationships and personal safety. Young people feel staff are consistently concerned about their welfare and that they will go the extra mile to help them achieve their goals. One young person said, 'Staff listen and act on what I say.' Another said, Staff have helped me a lot, they've changed my life around; I understand things better now, I'm good now.' Young people have been at this home for some time and benefit from the stability and permanence of their placement. They have a strong sense of belonging and speak positively about how much they like living at this house. They have developed strong and trusting relationships with a stable staff team and with each other, and feel secure enough to express their views, wishes, feelings and worries in constructive ways. They have developed coping strategies with the support of staff and other professionals, such as anger management and the use of positive behaviour management plans. This helps them through particular difficulties and keeps them safe. The commitment and motivation of staff, the use of behaviour management strategies and effective incentives and rewards, helps to strengthen young people's emotional resilience and psychological well-being and keeps them on track when any setbacks occur. Young people have detailed health assessments and enjoy good health. They are supported to attend all their medical appointments. Staff provide good information and guidance on a range of issues that include diversity and cultural needs, the dangers of smoking, substance misuse and sexual health. Staff refer young people to specialist support services where appropriate. Young people enjoy a balanced and healthy diet that includes a range of diverse foods that takes account of young people's cultural needs and particular likes and dislikes. Young people are experiencing excellent outcomes in their education settings. Staff provide strong support that motivates young people to maintain full attendance and they do well. Young people are ambitious but plan for realistic careers. They are proactive, with staff support, in arranging further education courses, work placements and paid employment. Staff have established good links with educational providers. They work effectively with them and challenge any barriers to young people's full participation in education. For example, helping a young person find a suitable new school and challenging reasons for exclusion.	

Young people benefit from clear, safe contact arrangements, understanding when they will see their family and other significant people. They have good support from staff to maintain regular contact visits. Young people's identity and family origin are viewed as very important in developing positive self-esteem. This is promoted by staff helping young people prepare life-story work and photo albums. Young people have the same social experiences as other young people their age; this includes spending time seeing their friends and having overnight stays and friends visiting the home.

Individualised planning prepares young people well for independence. Young people are encouraged from an early age to develop their independence skills at a pace to suit them and tailored to their individual needs, which is of benefit to them as they move into adult life.

Staff work proactively with young people and their placing authority to ensure reviews are timely and include the views of young people. Young people fully participate in all aspects of planning, which mean they know what progress they are making. Their views are central to staff practice and their opinions matter and are taken seriously. A new 'bright ideas' box is in use, which allows young people to post suggestions or raise issues anonymously for discussion at the next house meeting. Young people know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy with any aspect of their care. A new system has been developed that provides young people with easy access to a complaints form and an envelope ready for them to complete. However, there have been no complaints at this home for some time.

Certificates and photographs are displayed in the home and in young people's bedrooms, as a result, young people feel cherished and valued and this significantly promotes their self-esteem. Young people are involved in a broad range of social and sporting activities of their choice. This helps maintain their psychological and physical health. For example, horse riding, helping at the local animal farm, dance, football and youth club. They follow individual interests and are encouraged to develop their talents. Young people confirm there is always plenty to do. This enhances their learning experiences and increases their social networks and self-esteem.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Young people in this home feel safe and protected from harm. They have a stable and competent staff team who fully understand safeguarding policies and procedures. However, these policies need to be reviewed regularly and revised	

where appropriate to ensure they are up-to-date and relevant.

Staff receive quality training that enables them to respond appropriately to any concerns about young people's welfare. Staff develop strong relationships with young people and are effective in encouraging them to think carefully about the choices they make, which will affect their future. Staff regularly complete individual work sheets with young people on a range of safeguarding topics, such as, sexual exploitation, missing from home, drug and alcohol use and internet safety. As a result of this work and the support provided by other specialist professionals, young people choose not to run away from the home, do not take drugs and are no longer assessed as being at high risk of sexual exploitation.

They understand that bullying is not acceptable behaviour and have confidence in staff to deal with any incidents that may occur. Staff effectively balance the need for protection with enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. Staff encourage young people to be open and honest about their friendships, to talk about their relationships and welcome friends to the house.

Staff place strong emphasis on promoting positive behaviour through praise, rewards and incentives. They regularly talk through issues with young people in a constructive way and help them not dwell on mistakes and positively refocus. Young people say they feel fairly treated. They benefit from a consistent nurturing and supportive approach from staff, where they understand what is expected of them and know the consequences for poor behaviour. Young people would benefit from consequences that are restorative in nature, that help them recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others. However, the current measures are effective as the homes records show sanctions are minimal.

Staff are trained in the appropriate use of physical intervention that is only ever used as a last resort. However, there have been several incidents of restraint since the last inspection; this is mainly due to a period of instability when young people were changing education placements. These incidents have begun to reduce as young people settle into new routines.

Robust and thorough recruitment and vetting procedures are in place and visitors to the home are vetted and supervised appropriately. Young people enjoy a safe and secure environment in a home where there is a strong ethos on safeguarding. However, the practice of screwing shut some young people's bedroom windows to prevent them from climbing out is to be reviewed as this compromises the health and safety of these young people. Young people are involved in fire evacuation practices so they know how to leave the home in the event of an emergency.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
The manager has been in post since 2010. He is highly motivated, experienced and suitably qualified. He has an effective management style that promotes expectations of staff to provide high quality care. As a result, staff clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering high quality care tailored to the needs of the young people they care for. The effectiveness of this approach is evidenced by the excellent progress young people are making. The manager is proactive in challenging placing authorities where the care plan is not meeting young people's needs or where services are not effective. However, he has not ensured that all young people have access to independent advocacy, especially where young people want to challenge the placing authority about plans for their future care. He has developed strong working relationships with other professionals who have an interest in achieving positive outcomes for young people. These relationships ensure a consistent approach to young people's care. The home's Statement of Purpose is a comprehensive document that sets out their aims and objectives. Despite regular reviews of this document, it does not give clear and accurate information in respect of the house rule on smoking, use of mobile phones, and the use of electronic door alarms on young people's bedroom doors. Similarly, this information is not clear in the children's guide. This limits young people's understanding of what is expected of them. Staff are sufficient in number and have a broad range of experiences and skills to meet the everyday challenges of caring for young adults. They provide a mix of gender, culture and ethnicity, which reflects the culturally diverse needs of the young people in placement. Staff confirm they are well supported, guided and valued through regular supervision and yearly appraisals which young people contribute to. This ensures they have the opportunity to reflect and develop their practice. In addition, the provider shows a strong commitment to holding detailed handover meetings and provides regular training opportunities. This ensures staff are kept up-to-date with young people's care plans and are aware of any new developments and are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet young people's emerging needs. Staff are enthusiastic and caring and work together to promote young people's welfare and safety. Effective internal monitoring and quality assurance systems have been developed to ensure that young people continue to enjoy high standards of care. However, some external monthly monitoring reports provided by the independent visitor do not give sufficient evaluation of the information collected. This prevents the independent visitor forming an opinion as to whether young people are effectively	

safeguarded and how the home promotes their well-being. Also, the independent visitor requires consent from young people and their placing authority to inspect their care files. The manager has arranged to meet with the independent visitor to progress these matters.

Consultation with young people, parents and other professionals influences the progress of the home. The manager has a realistic understanding of the strengths of the home and promptly addresses areas where improvements can be made. He has addressed the requirement and recommendations from the last inspection and acted upon recommendations received from a recent placing authority audit visit that judged the service as good. This demonstrates his commitment to improving the service they provide to young people.

Young people live in a very welcoming, large spacious family house that receives regular maintenance and repair. They have ample safe external space to socialise and play in. They benefit from living in a home that provides a homely and comfortable environment.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 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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