

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 owned and managed by a private organisation. It provides care for up to five children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, four children were living at the home. Inspectors were able to speak with three children living in the home and one child who has recently left the home.

The registered manager left the organisation in July 2025 and there is no manager currently in post.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 August 2025

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: 16 July 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/07/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/05/2024	Full	Inadequate
26/09/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
09/08/2023	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

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

Children say that they are happy and that they like living in the home. They talk about positive relationships with staff and say they feel cared for. This contributes to a homely and nurturing environment where children are comfortable to share their thoughts and experiences.

All children attend education regularly, which promotes their academic progress and personal development. Their consistent engagement with learning helps them build confidence and achieve educational goals. Staff work closely with education providers to support attendance and address any barriers to learning, ensuring that children's educational needs remain a priority.

Children benefit from positive conversations with staff that help them to reflect on their experiences and behaviour. For example, following an incident in which a child damaged their bedroom wall, staff supported them with conversations that enabled them to consider the impact of their actions and explore alternative responses.

Staff speak and write about children in a warm manner. This helps children to feel valued and understood. Children have a positive mix of activities inside and outside of the home. Staff capture these experiences and collate memory boxes so that children can take these with them when they leave the home.

Staff support children to see their families and friends. Staff have developed positive relationships with families, and where possible, families are welcomed to the home to have regular family time. Staff also supervise family time when required and ensure that these interactions are safe, meaningful and in line with each child's care plan. This strengthens family relationships and contributes to the child's overall sense of stability and belonging.

The recording of daily life in the home is not always evident. Staff say that key conversations have taken place but there is no evidence of this being recorded. This means that measuring children's progress over time is limited.

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

Managers and staff understand children's risks, and risk assessments are updated regularly. Staff say that they talk to children about their risks to support them to keep themselves safe. However, records are not always kept of these conversations, which makes it difficult to understand and measure the impact this is having for children.

Physical interventions do not happen frequently in this home. When children are held, records are thorough, and children and staff are spoken with. Some incidents may have been prevented had staff utilised de-escalation strategies sooner. Leaders and managers do not reflect with staff about their practice around incidents. This is a missed opportunity for learning and development for staff.

When allegations have been made, these have been acted on, although this was delayed on one occasion. When concerns are raised, they are responded to and appropriate action is taken, but records are not maintained to reflect this. Leaders and managers refer to allegations as complaints. This does not provide leaders and managers with an accurate overview of the home.

Children rarely go missing from the home. On the occasions when they do, staff respond appropriately to safeguard them and to support their safe and timely return. However, during one incident, when a child returned to the home, door alarms were activated without consideration for the routines or plans of the other children. This decision was made without prior consultation with management or external professionals, such as the local authority social workers.

There is a lack of clarity around the use of door alarms in the home. The use of these does not feature in children's risk assessments and there are inconsistencies across the staff and management team around the necessity of these. This limits children's liberty and privacy in the home unnecessarily.

On one occasion, a child took the home's vehicle without authorisation and was subsequently arrested. In response, leaders acted swiftly to implement a series of robust safeguarding measures designed to prevent any recurrence and ensure the safety of all children in their care. An internal investigation is still ongoing; however, leaders are clear in their understanding about the severity of this incident.

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

The home is currently without a registered manager. The deputy manager provides consistent leadership and stability to the staff team. Leaders have developed a plan and demonstrate awareness of areas requiring improvement.

Children's legal documents, such as care plans and minutes from reviews, are not consistently held within the home's recording system. Additionally, children's records are sometimes inaccurate or contain information about other children. These gaps lessen leaders' ability to demonstrate how children's needs are being met and compromise the overall quality of care.

Staff benefit from clinical supervision that is delivered regularly and say that it is supportive. For example, one member of staff described how these sessions helped them to reflect on their practice and manage challenging situations more effectively. This supports staff to remain focused on children's needs. Despite these strengths, staff

supervision is not consistent. This means that opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and receive guidance are sometimes missed.

The provider does not have a policy regarding staff entering into personal relationships. This compromises professional boundaries and has the potential to affect the quality and consistency of care offered to children.

Internal auditing processes are not yet fully embedded. They do not always identify shortfalls in recordings in children's records, supervision records or the quality of the workforce plan. This limits the ability of leaders and managers to monitor practice effectively and drive improvements.

Some of the staff team are new to the sector and their inductions are ongoing. Safer recruitment practices are followed, which helps to reduce the risk of unsuitable people working with children.

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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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 are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that effective safeguarding measures are in place so that children are not able to access secure areas. In addition, the provider must ensure staff are aware of the policies on door alarms.	30 October 2025

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; 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)(f)(h)) Leaders and managers must ensure that they continuously evaluate staff practice in the home and identify areas of learning and improvement. Furthermore, they must continuously monitor the care provided to children, as well as continuously reviewing systems and procedures in place to keep children safe. This was a requirement at the last inspection and has been restated.	30 October 2025
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—	30 October 2025

that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that care plans and other local authority documents are in each child's file and that if this is absent the provider's escalation policy is followed.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; 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)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff are supervised in line with the organisation's supervision policy.	30 October 2025
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which— is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular— provide for liaison and co-operation with any local authority which are, or may be, making a child protection enquiry in relation to a child accommodated in the home; provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located; provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about past abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the alleged abuse or neglect occurred;	30 October 2025

provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response; describe the measures which may be necessary to protect children following an allegation of abuse or neglect; and describe how and to whom staff are to report, without delay, any concern about abuse or neglect of a child; and, as necessary, revise the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f) (6)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that allegations are treated in line with the provider's policy. In addition, where policy is not in place, such as for when employees are in a relationship, then ensure that this is created so that clarity, openness and professional boundaries are maintained.	
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. Case records must be kept— if the child dies before attaining the age of 18, for 15 years from the date of the child's death; in cases not falling within sub-paragraph (a), for 75 years from the child's date of birth; securely in the children's home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d))	30 October 2025

In particular, the registered person must ensure that records are an accurate reflection of a child's time in the home. In addition, records should be securely locked away.	
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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: Post vacant

Inspectors

Colin Jones, Social Care Inspector
Danielle Allen, Social Care Inspector

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