

SC008485

Registered provider: Choices Home for Children

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.

A new manager has recently been appointed. She has not submitted her application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 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: 9 August 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

During a full inspection on 8 and 9 August 2023, the home was judged to be inadequate. Compliance notices were served under section 22A of the Care Standards Act 2000. These were in relation to regulation 12 (the protection of children standard) and regulation 33 (employment of staff).

The compliance notices were monitored during this inspection.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/08/2023	Full	Inadequate
30/05/2023	Full	Inadequate
12/01/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
20/09/2022	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

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

Four children were living in the home at the time of the inspection. They all spoke with the inspector about their experiences living at the home and about their positive relationships with the staff team.

Staff take time to get to know the children and to learn about their interests. They support and encourage children to engage in various activities, such as horse riding, swimming and martial arts. This helps to promote children's physical and emotional health and supports them to develop positive peer relationships.

Staff are aware of children's health needs. They know how to support children's emotional well-being as well as their diagnosed health conditions.

Staff support children to develop skills in preparation for their independence. However, not all children have a pathway plan to support care planning for their future. Leaders and managers have not followed their own escalation process when challenging professionals to obtain children's up-to-date records. This reduces opportunities to ensure that children's needs are being met in line with their plans.

Since the last inspection, children have been encouraged to contribute to their plans. Children's voices are now reflected in some records. This supports them to better understand their care plans, their individual risks and in planning for their future.

Staff encourage children to attend education. Most children engage well in education and benefit from a clear structure and routine to their day. On occasions when there have been concerns around children and their education, staff have been proactive in advocating for children and supporting teaching staff to understand children's individual needs.

The staff team supports family time in line with children's wishes. Children are helped to spend time with the people who are important to them.

Measures are being taken to improve the standards in the home. The garden area has been made safe with the removal of uneven paving slabs. The remaining redecoration and the replacement of carpets in the home are ongoing. One child has recently moved bedrooms. However, their new bedroom does not have additional storage and needs redecorating to ensure that their room is personalised.

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

Staff use a model of care that is relationship based and trauma informed. This helps

children to regulate their emotions. As a result, there have been no incidents of staff needing to hold children to keep them safe.

Staff listen to children. Following any incidents, they talk to children about what has happened and help them to reflect on incidents. This helps children to become more self-aware and helps them to manage their behaviours.

Staff are proactive in preventing children from going missing from the home. Consequently, there have not been any recent incidents of children going missing from this home. When incidents do occur, staff know how to respond.

Direct work with children requires further improvement. Sessions cover a range of topics, including sexual health, smoking cessation and making safer choices. This helps children to develop their understanding of risks and supports their social and emotional well-being. However, sessions are not always purposeful and are not always in line with the aims outlined in children's placement plans.

Children have detailed and individual risk plans; however, these are not always followed by staff. On one occasion, staff failed to follow children's plans, which resulted in a serious safeguarding incident taking place between children. Leaders and managers took swift and appropriate action to address the incident and worked successfully with the relevant safeguarding agencies to ensure that the children were safeguarded effectively.

Communication with partner agencies is positive. Staff build close working partnerships with external professionals to reduce complex safeguarding risks for children, including around radicalisation and exploitation.

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

The manager has recently joined the organisation. She is supported by deputy managers and the responsible individual. They are working together to improve outcomes for children.

Leaders and managers have now implemented monitoring and review systems to support them in understanding and improving practice in the home. However, the review of the quality of care has not been carried out in line with regulations. This limits opportunities to review and improve the quality of care delivered to children.

The manager has changed the structure of team meetings, giving staff the opportunity to discuss the development of the home and to reflect on the progress children make. However, meetings do not include research and development. This is a missed opportunity to further develop practice in the home.

Supervision practices have begun to be strengthened. However, their impact is currently limited. Staff have been given the opportunity to reflect on their practice

but do not routinely reflect on their learning or demonstrate how they will implement their learning to meet children's needs.

New staff members have been recruited using safer recruitment practices. This has reduced the number of casual staff being used and has brought greater stability and consistency to the workforce and for children. The manager is aware that the staff team needs time to fully embed changes to improve the quality care delivered to children.

Following this inspection, a case review was held on 2 October 2023. It was agreed that sufficient progress has been made against the steps in the compliance notices served under regulations 12 and 33 and that the notices have been met.

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that all staff remain vigilant to risks for children and that they are supported to understand and follow children's plans to keep children safe.	7 November 2023
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.	7 November 2023

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(g)(i)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that research and developments are brought into team meetings to further develop and support staff to improve the care delivered to children.	
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))	7 November 2023

Specifically, the registered person must ensure that direct work carried out with children includes topics that are specific to children's individual needs.	
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 person must ensure that escalation processes are routinely followed when requesting missing plans or statutory documentation from children's placing authorities.	7 November 2023
In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (2)(c)(i)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that the home is well maintained and homely. In addition, ensure that children's bedrooms are personalised and have sufficient storage for children to store their belongings.	7 November 2023
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;	7 November 2023

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))

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

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

Responsible individual: Linda Heywood

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Kelly McCurdy, Social Care Inspector

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