

SC014650

Registered provider: My Choice Children's Homes Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home that is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is one of 10 homes that the provider operates in the area.

Inspection dates: 9 to 10 January 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 20 September 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The leadership and management of the home have improved resulting in improvements to the quality of care provided.
- Young people develop good relationships with the staff which are helping them

to make progress.

- The staff know the young people well and manage their difficult behaviour successfully. Staff reflect on how their actions affect young people.
- The changes to the premises have created a more homely environment.
- Managers have improved the staff's understanding of safeguarding.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The staff do not consistently identify, assess and minimise risk.
- The managers do not monitor and review all areas of practice well.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/09/2017	Full	Inadequate
11/01/2017	Full	Good
25/08/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
18/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) 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(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
(1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (i) 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; (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12(2)(i)(ii))	28/02/18
(1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(2)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that their monitoring and reviewing systems adequately monitor all areas of practice effectively.	28/02/18

Recommendations

- Sufficient staff means a home having enough suitably trained staff (including someone in a management role) on duty to meet the assessed needs of all children in the home, and that those staff are able to respond to emergency placements, where accepted. The registered person must demonstrate every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted, including ensuring that the employment of any temporary

staff will not prevent children from receiving the continuity of care that they need (regulation 31(1)). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 51 paragraph 10.1)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that any decisions to deploy staff to and from this home do not adversely affect the continuity of care.

- Registered persons have a key role in seeking to develop the home's effective working relationships with each child's placing authority and with other relevant persons which may include services, individuals (including parents), agencies, organisations and establishments that work with children in the local community, for example police, schools, health and youth offending teams (regulation 5 – engaging with the wider system to ensure that children's needs are met). These working relationships will also be key to success in delivering the care planning standard (regulation 14). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52 paragraph 10.3)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that clear, consistent plans are adopted by all the staff to aid young people to stop smoking or engaging in drugs misuse.

- Where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs (see regulation 5(c)). Staff should act as champions for their children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. The registered person should consider the use of an independent advocate (see paragraph 4.16) if the child's needs are not being met. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff record information accurately.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Good decision-making about which young people should come to live here has promoted stability in the home. The managers have improved the matching process, which has decreased the risk of placement breakdowns and led to greater placement stability.

Young people are offered a variety of activities. However, mostly the young people choose to meet with friends or spend time with the staff. The staff continue to find opportunities to widen young people's interests and hobbies. For example, the staff contacted a local sea cadet group for a young person who aspires to join the armed forces.

Education is consistently promoted. The staff team works closely with educational professionals to ensure that the young people have a positive educational experience. Young people who find school attendance difficult, or who are not in full-time education, are helped effectively. The close links with education services have enabled one young person to take small steps in engaging positively with his education.

Young people are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. Their daily routines include physical activity such as swimming and bike riding. The staff facilitate sociable mealtimes and assist young people to develop skills, such as budgeting and planning meals. However, the staff have not investigated a potential link between food and migraines experienced by young people.

Young people are encouraged to make their views known and to be involved in decisions about their care. The staff advocate well for young people to support their needs being met. In one instance, however, the staff did not offer a young person the support of an external advocacy service. The staff, therefore, do not take every opportunity to ensure that young people can make use of all possible services to make their views known.

Independence programmes lack detail of how the staff consider each activity will support young people's independence. There is no written analysis of the effectiveness of the programmes. It is, therefore, difficult for staff to assess the progress or challenges young people face in developing their independence skills.

Planning for young people to move on is effective and staff subsequently support them well when they do move on. The staff work with other agencies to ensure that the young people receive a positive experience and their views are taken into consideration.

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

Young people's safety and well-being is prioritised by the staff, leaders and managers. Safely recruited staff, including maintenance staff, know how to refer safeguarding concerns internally and to external safeguarding agencies. Training undertaken has improved the staff's understanding of their roles and responsibilities. As a result, the staff have up-to-date knowledge of a range of areas including child sexual exploitation.

The staff build strong relationships with the young people. As a result, the young people learn how to better manage their emotions. This has led to a decrease in the number of incidents of young people going missing.

Positive behaviour is promoted and the management of challenging behaviour has improved. The staff identify, monitor and review individual goals for young people's behaviour. Young people show an interest in gaining rewards and these are having a positive impact on their behaviour. The written goals do not clearly identify what each young person needs to do to gain the reward. This omission may mean rewards are inconsistently applied.

The more experienced and permanent members of staff are competent in preventing young people's behaviours from escalating. When staff from other homes work here, they are likely to be unable to provide the same level of care or record events with the same eye for relevance. This can prevent information being shared across the team. For example, when the majority of staff on shift were from another home, they did not know the behaviour management strategies and did not refer to them to inform young people's care.

Sanctions are relevant to young people's behaviours and used only rarely. The use of physical intervention has decreased. The staff know how to apply the organisation's chosen method of restraint and maintain good records of its use. There is a good standard of debrief after any restraint, including team discussions in relation to the effectiveness of the debrief.

Relevant risk assessments reduce the risk of harm for each young person. However, the staff do not consistently identify risks or act quickly to reduce the possibility of harm. For example, a risk assessment regarding riding a bicycle was not in place.

Health and safety checks are managed well. Fire checks are made regularly and the staff and young people take part in fire drills so that they know what action to take if a fire occurred. Fire records, however, lack clarity of how managers have ensured that the staff and young people have received satisfactory levels of training throughout the year.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leadership and management have improved. An interim manager is currently in day-to-day management of the home. The staff spoke very positively about the changes that the interim manager has made and the support that they now receive.

Training supports the staff to meet young people's needs. The interim manager has identified individual and collective staff training needs and has implemented a plan to

improve staff training and increase staff's attendance on courses. This has improved staff's knowledge and the training has positively enhanced their practice.

Managers have taken into account the monthly independent's visitor's reports and acted appropriately on the recommendations made. The independent visitor's visits now include regular discussions with parents and social workers. The wider range of views gained from outside sources supports managers to understand the quality of care provided and identify improvements needed. Monitoring of records does not consistently support improvements or identify issues. For example, managers did not identify that information is not always transferred to the necessary records and logs. This means that, on occasions, behaviour management strategies are not updated.

There are sufficient numbers of staff on duty. Staffing levels are mainly maintained by transferring staff from the provider's other homes and some use of agency staff. The level of change adversely effects the consistency of care provided and impacts on the team's communication and organisation of shift responsibilities. The provider is working hard to engage more permanent staff so that there is greater stability in the home.

The managers are improving relationships with external agencies. The manager has ensured that social workers receive more regular updates regarding young people's care and that staff work more constructively with education professionals. Professionals confirm that they now have improved communication with the manager.

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: SC014650

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: My Choice Children's Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 3a, Mill Green Business Estate, Mill Green Road,
Haywards Heath RH16 1XQ

Responsible individual: Peter Kazmarski

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Ruth Coler, social care inspector

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