

# 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

The children's home caters for up to four children between the ages of eight and 17 years. The stated purpose of the home is to provide care for children whose needs include difficult behaviours and learning difficulties, and who are at risk of self-harming, substance misuse and sexual exploitation.

There has been no registered manager since December 2017. The manager has submitted an application to register with Ofsted.

Ofsted conducted an additional evidence gathering visit on 25 May 2018. This was due to additional information being provided to Ofsted. Some matters are currently under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incidents were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection on 10, 11 and 25 May 2018 to inform inspectors' judgements.

**Inspection dates:** 10, 11 and 25 May 2018

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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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 January 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 09/01/2018      | Full            | Good                    |
| 20/09/2017      | Full            | Inadequate              |
| 11/01/2017      | Full            | Good                    |
| 25/08/2016      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |

## 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, 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   |
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| <p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</li> <li>(b) use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</li> </ul> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(b) ensure that staff— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</li> <li>(ii) protect and promote each child's welfare;</li> <li>(iii) treat each child with dignity and respect;</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The conditions are—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(c) that the care is delivered by a person who— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) has the experience, knowledge and skills to deliver that care.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>(Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(i)(i)(iii)(3)(c)(i))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that managers write and implement clear and comprehensive improvement plans for the staff when poor practice is identified. Also, ensure that the staff consistently check and address health and safety matters.</p> | 30/07/2018 |
| <p>The standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) that staff— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(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;</li> <li>(v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</li> <li>(vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</li> <li>(vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 30/07/2018 |

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| <p>child protection policies.<br/>(Regulation 12 (1)(a)(i)(2)(a)(v)(vi)(vii))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ the staff follow the safeguarding policies in place and refer any concerns or questions they have about other staff's practice without delay;</li> <li>■ relevant risk assessments are quickly implemented and updated when necessary; and</li> <li>■ any decision to use a local authority's child sexual exploitation risk assessment provides the staff with sufficient guidance about what to do to protect that child.</li> </ul>                                                                                   |            |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—<br/>(a) undertake appropriate continuing professional development;<br/>(b) receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (3)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that all staff receive regular supervision and that strategies to address unacceptable practice are clearly recorded on a member of staff's records.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 30/07/2018 |
| <p>The care planning standard is that children—<br/>(a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.<br/>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—<br/>(b) that arrangements are in place to—<br/>(i) ensure the effective induction of each child into the home.<br/>(Regulation 14 (1)(a)(2)(b)(i))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that impact risk assessments cover all relevant needs and fully consider the needs of children who already live at the home. Also, the manager should ensure that there are clear care plans to help children who smoke to reduce their smoking and ultimately to stop.</p> | 30/07/2018 |
| <p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.<br/>Matters to be included in the Statement of Purpose<br/>Details of any healthcare or therapy provided, including—</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 30/07/2018 |

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| (b) information about how the effectiveness of any healthcare or therapy provided is measured, the evidence demonstrating its effectiveness and details of how the information or the evidence can be accessed. (Regulation 16, Schedule 1 (14)(b)) |  |
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## Recommendations

- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff receive additional support where necessary to enable staff to fulfil their roles.

- The information set out in the Statement of Purpose is an essential part of the process of agreement between the registered person and placing authority that a placement in that home is the right one for that child, and that the home will be able to respond effectively to the child's assessed needs. Emergency admissions should not be taken unless the home's Statement of Purpose and its capacity and support systems mean that it has the capability to care for children admitted at very short notice while continuing to offer high quality care to children already living in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that decisions to admit a child demonstrate how consideration has been given to the length of time between admissions.

- The registered person must specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that the staff have clear guidance about procedures to follow when children go missing and that records reflect all decisions.

## Inspection judgements

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

The quality of staff support for a children when they move into the home is of variable quality. One recent impact assessment was written well. The assessment for a second child was inaccurate, lacked detail of how staff would be able to manage the child's specific behaviours and at times referenced the wrong child.

The timing of when one child moved in did not fully consider the amount of change occurring for children and staff; another child had moved in two days before. This resulted in challenges for the staff in managing the behaviours between the children.

Care planning and recording remain areas of development. Some records and plans are clear; others lack detail. This is a missed opportunity to use all possible information to reflect on whether the plans in place fully meet a child's needs. This was identified as an area for improvement in the development plan. While there is some evidence that the managers' actions are improving practice, this is not yet embedded.

The recommendation from the last inspection, that if children smoke there should be clear plans that assist them to stop, has not been actioned. Children do not keep to the smoking area allocated to them and no literature about stopping smoking was available. Impact assessments did not assess the risks presented by some children smoking to others who did not.

Education is promoted well by the staff team and support plans are individualised. The staff work effectively with other agencies and the children to promote attendance and involve children in appropriate educative experiences. Ambition is promoted; the staff plan well with children for their futures and help them to achieve their goals.

Children spoke positively about their care and support. A social worker reported that they were impressed with how quickly the staff had built a positive relationship with a child. Children's views are respected and valued. The staff listen to children's points of view and, when possible, take them into consideration, for example by helping a young person to maintain important friendships.

Advocacy services are promptly found and have a positive effect on promoting children's views about decisions being made, as well as helping them to raise issues of concern.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted through regular exercise and nutritious meal planning. The frequency and timing of therapists' input positively supports children's progress and experiences. Regular meetings between a therapist and the staff team have been recently instigated as part of the manager's programme to support the team in working with children's emotional needs and developing a therapeutic approach to children's care.

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

The managers' response to any information regarding safeguarding concerns is appropriate and follows due process. Managers cooperate well with the relevant safeguarding agencies and take appropriate advice on how to proceed if allegations against staff are made.

Staff do not always pass on concerns about each other's practice in a timely manner. Additional safeguarding training and support was provided following similar concerns being raised last year. However, questions remain about whether the staff understand the need to raise issues urgently. This detracts from the positive safeguarding culture that the managers aim to provide.

Staff responses when children go missing from the home are inconsistent. There is no guidance for the staff about whether to continue to search for each child if they are missing. It is therefore not clear that staff's actions when a child goes missing fit with the organisation's policy, consistently reflect good practice and demonstrate a drive to find the child as soon as possible.

Risk assessments are in place for all children and cover a variety of issues that are particular to that individual. However, the assessments are not always available from the time a child arrives. Reliance on a local authority's child sexual exploitation assessment meant the quality of guidance for the staff was poorer in comparison to that of an assessment completed by the home's staff.

Discussions with children about issues of concern are regular and thoughtful. However, records of these conversations are not always made. Some records lack the depth of discussion which the staff can describe. There is therefore no full record of discussions which can be used to consider a child's progress and plan for the child's future care.

Quick staff action ensures that repairs to damage caused are rectified. The staff undertake appropriate health and safety checks regularly. However, they did not notice that changes to the home's flooring resulted in some fire doors no longer having appropriate fire seals.

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

There have been four changes to the manager of the home in the last eight months. The most recent manager took up her post in March 2018. She has already made an application to register with Ofsted and is working towards a relevant qualification. Since her arrival, the manager has made some changes to the home's operation which the staff were positive about.

Sufficiency of staffing has improved. There is less movement of staff between the organisation's homes and an emphasis on ensuring that consistent agency staff are

used. The organisation has recruited more staff and, in the near future, will have a full staff team. There is also an intention to increase the staff numbers so that there is a further reduction in the movement of staff across the organisation's homes.

The quality of how the staff work with other professionals to focus on a child's immediate and long-term needs has improved. The staff now foster good relationships with others and are willing to challenge plans if they do not consider that these are in a child's best interests.

Nevertheless, supervision is not sufficiently frequent and concerns about staff's practice do not always result in clear, detailed improvement plans. These issues detract from the new manager's ability to develop greater consistency of practice, understand each member of staff's individual strengths and development needs and address any inappropriate practice.

Understanding equality and diversity is promoted well for children. The diversity of the team's experiences and knowledge provide a range of good role models, which the children appreciated. However, the organisation does not have clear expectations of how staff needs are supported.

The home's statement of purpose is inaccurate; it has several references to the therapeutic nature of the home. However, the quality of therapeutic support described is not sufficiently evident in practice. The statement does not provide sufficient detail about what therapeutic models underpin the practice that the staff are working to develop.

## **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:** Dawn Ives

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Ruth Coler, social care inspector

Liz Driver, social care inspector (25 May 2018 only)

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