

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC014650
Inspector	Kevin Whatley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	My Choice Children's Homes Limited
Registered person address	My Choice Childrens Homes Ltd, Unit 3/A Mill Green Business Estate, Mill Green Road HAYWARDS HEATH West Sussex RH16 1XQ
Responsible individual	Peter Christopher Kazmarski
Registered manager	Lorna Jayne Roberts
Date of last inspection	25/02/2014

Inspection date	13/05/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people receive good levels of care, support and guidance leading to them making significant progress in improving their behaviour, education and personal development. Young people say that they feel safe and looked after and have benefitted from living at the home. Positive and meaningful relationships with staff assist young people to improve feelings of poor self-esteem and self-worth and to move forward in their lives.

A comprehensive approach to care planning, assessment and review results in individualised care programmes which meet the specific and changing needs of each young person, and are followed by staff in practice. Young people are kept as safe as possible and reduce their risk taking behaviours; for some young people reductions in placing themselves at considerable risk have been significant since the last inspection. Staff provide consistent and committed levels of care which is a marked improvement on previous findings. Young people are given every opportunity to express how they feel.

Robust monitoring procedures are in place, which are considered in detail. Management of the home has improved with leaders ensuring that the needs of young people are at the forefront of practice and development. Requirement and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met; no requirements or

recommendations are made on this occasion.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home that is registered to accommodate three young people who have emotional and or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/02/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
23/07/2013	Full	good
09/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
25/07/2012	Full	good

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people enjoy positive relationships with the staff who look after them. Young people make good progress during their stay at the home. Some young people make significant progress in reducing their risk taking behaviours. As a result young people develop improved levels of confidence and self-worth and gain greater insight into their own vulnerabilities. Young people who have lived in care for some time say, 'this is the best children's home I have ever lived in'.

Young people benefit from an environment where learning is a part of the daily routine. Attendance levels in education are generally good. Young people who have previously struggled to attend the in-house provision are now improving both their attendance and general engagement. Young people accessing mainstream schools and colleges are provided with focused support and guidance which ensures they make progress. This includes taking exams and being successful in obtaining college places for the summer term. As a result young make good progress which for some is particularly telling given their poor starting points and low self-esteem.

Young people have their medical health care needs met well. Young people often arrive at the home presenting with a range of complex health problems or issues. These are assessed and responded to. The availability of psychological support and intervention assists staff to provide a holistic approach to address the emotional well-being of young people.

Young people are supported by staff to maintain contact with families and others of importance to them. In some cases such support is excellent and includes young people being accompanied by staff to visit family members abroad. This approach ensures young people can continue to build and maintain positive contact with significant people in their lives, and promotes understanding of those important to them. Young people are able to make and receive calls in private and did not raise any concerns about contact arrangements.

Young people are given appropriate support and guidance to prepare them for transitions away from the home. Independence needs are considered from the point of admission, notably where the young person is expected to move on to more semi-independent living situations. Planning involves close liaison with families/carers and social workers. Young people are supported to develop life-skills during their stay at the home. This includes personal care, washing, ironing and learning to plan, budget for and cook some meals.

Quality of care **good**

Relationships between young people and staff are positive. Young people state that 'staff are brilliant and always there to talk to you...they give you space when you need it.' All young people spoke positively about the adults who look after them. Staff display a clear understanding of each young person's needs. This means that when issues arise staff respond in a thoughtful and calm manner which enables meaningful relationships to develop.

A range of avenues are in place to promote the voice of young people. Their views are sought on a regular basis through young persons meetings as well as within key work sessions. Young people in the home were seen to communicate openly in an atmosphere where they clearly have their views heard. Review meetings incorporate young people's comments and their opinions are always taken into account. Recent decisions made involving young people include plans for the half term holiday and the implementation of a young person's rota for watching television. Key work sessions include tackling issues such as peer group dynamics and the pressures of living together.

Young people are aware of the complaints system within the home. Information is given to them on admission with further details advertised around the home. No complaints had been made by young people since the last inspection, and no concerns were expressed by them during the visit.

Care planning at the home is good with staff recognising the importance of agencies sharing information. The home actively seeks relevant information where this has not been provided. Care plans are detailed and focus on the individual needs of young people. Clear strategies for meeting their needs are in place and consequently appropriate support is given when young people are anxious, distressed or where they have specific health needs. Weekly reports demonstrate that strategies are adopted in practice, with young people benefitting from consistent care and support. The home provides detailed reports for looked after children reviews, with young people encouraged to contribute their views fully. Consideration is given to whether the young person would benefit from advocacy services which allows them opportunities to gain independent advice and support to represent their wishes.

Young people receive good health care with particular emphasis on meeting their emotional and psychological well-being. All required health care needs are implemented such as routine medical appointments and the appropriate storage and administration of medicines. Young people receive age appropriate sexual health advice and guidance from health care specialists. All aspects of care planning and intervention place emotional well-being as a guiding principle of practice. The organisation has a specialist child care consultant who provides in-depth analysis and assessment of the therapeutic needs of young people should this be required. Young people are registered at the local GP surgery with staff promoting healthy lifestyles including regular exercise and healthy eating. Young people report that they enjoy the sports that they do at the home and especially enjoy challenging the adults that care for them within a sporting context. Issues around young people snacking on

unhealthy foods such as crisps and chocolate has recently been addressed with the introduction of a 'tuck box' system. This has resulted in young people eating far less snack items, replaced by more fruit and yoghurt alternatives.

Young people enjoy a range of activities that meet their own wishes and that of the living group. Staff are pro-active in encouraging young people to participate in a number of pursuits including gym, football and swimming that result in a good level of engagement during the week. Group activities include visiting theme parks with young people excited about a forthcoming overnight trip during the half term holidays.

Young people are provided with a good standard of accommodation. Some areas of the home have been decorated since the last inspection and young people state that they are pleased with the environment and feel comfortable. Young people are encouraged to personalise their own areas and have also recently created art work that is displayed in communal areas. They have helped to improve the garden and outdoor areas which they were clearly proud of. Such an approach encourages young people to invest in the home they are living in and to add their own touches to the environment.

Keeping children and young people safe good

The home is good at keeping young people as safe as possible. Young people say that they feel safe. Safeguarding procedures and practices are implemented robustly in practice. When issues arise, such as bullying type behaviours, swift actions are taken to ensure any impact is minimised; the levels of such behaviours are low. Young people receive good opportunities to learn how to take appropriate responsibility for their own wellbeing. This includes close liaison with other agencies leading to visits by specialised workers who aim to reduce the risk of young people being sexually exploited. Staff are trained in safeguarding, and the home takes a preventative stance with any issues which may indicate a child protection concern. A robust recruitment process ensures only staff and volunteers who work with young people have been deemed suitable to do so.

The approach toward addressing challenging or risk taking behaviours ensures young people make progress in keeping themselves safe. The home networks appropriately with all relevant safeguarding agencies, including the police. This has been particularly useful for young people who may place themselves at risk of sexual exploitation when away from adult supervision. For instance young people have made considerable progress in reducing the occasions when they leave the home without permission; this is particularly significant for those who had regularly been placing themselves at considerable risk several months ago. This has resulted in the significant reduction of occasions when young people leave the home without permission with just one recorded incident since the last inspection.

The specific emotional and behavioural needs of young people are assessed in detail prior to their arrival and met thereafter. This ensures that staff are fully aware of the risks young people may pose to themselves or others. Risk assessments focus on key areas of concern, including self-harm, violence or running away from care and provide a clear guide and reduction/management strategy for staff who subsequently follow them in practice.

Young people live in a home where appropriate behaviour is encouraged and expected. Staff impose consistent boundaries which young people say are, 'fair'. Since the last inspection such an approach has been applied more consistently by a staff team who are now communicating with each other more closely. Each young person has individualised targets to achieve, such as reducing swearing, attending school or helping out around the home. Behaviour seen during the inspection was generally good with the quality of relationships between staff and young people, indicating an environment where mutual respect is understood and appreciated. Staff are trained to deal with incidents where the use of physical intervention may be necessary. The culture of the home focuses on de-escalation and communication as a core aspect of care. As a result no restraints have been required since last year. Young people are given every opportunity to find appropriate ways to deal with feelings of stress or anxiety with staff seen to use their relationships to intervene calmly when situations occurred.

Health and safety is given a suitable priority with all required checks and tests being completed, ensuring the well-being of all who live and work in the home. Fire drills are carried out monthly, while the servicing and testing of fire-fighting equipment is routinely completed.

Leadership and management

good

Management of the home is good. Strong, focused and improved levels of leadership have resulted in robust actions being taken to address previous shortfalls. The Registered Manager has been in post for over two years and is well-qualified and experienced to run the home. Requirements made at the last inspection have been addressed with vigour resulting in an approach that recognised shortfalls in management and staff practice and sought to put them right. This includes improved vigilance in responding swiftly when young people go missing, ensuring staff practice is consistent and young person focused. Staff and young people recognise such improvements and note that there is a more consistent and firm approach to the implementation of rules and boundaries.

The Registered Manager completes regular reviews of the running of the home with Regulation 34 reports providing a retrospective assessment. The reports help the management team to confirm the strengths of service provision and evaluate areas where more emphasis may be required to improve outcomes. The Registered Manager has also completed a local assessment of the home which included

consulting with police; this provides a good overview of risk within the area including crime statistics and railway lines. Regulation 33 reports are completed monthly which provide an objective review of care, and include the views of young people. The organisation has recently acquired the services of an independent consultant to take over the role, in keeping with the amended Regulations in this area.

An appropriate number of staff are available day and night to meet the needs of young people. Since the last inspection new staff have been appointed which has boosted the numbers of permanent staff to a level where the use of agency staffing is no longer required. Despite the anxieties of the impact of the previous inadequate inspection, staff have shown a willingness to learn from the experience and move forward. Staff say they are suitably supported by the management team and state that they are now provided with clearer expectations of practice.

Training and induction programmes provide staff with appropriate opportunities to learn and develop their skills. Staff receive all the necessary compulsory training before they start working at the home and at regular intervals thereafter; new staff say the induction and training programme is, 'fantastic'. This includes child protection and the use of physical intervention. A suitable number of staff have obtained the required care awards, while all others are enrolled to complete it.

Records are maintained to a suitable standard and evidence the progress and development made by young people.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.