

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 staff at this home provide care for up to four children whose support needs are primarily in relation to their emotions and behaviours and/or learning disabilities. The provider has links with a range of therapeutic services that can be made available to children depending on their needs.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since November 2019.

We last visited this setting on 28 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection date: 17 March 2022

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: 6 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/02/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14/05/2019	Full	Good
17/01/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/05/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff are energetic, enthusiastic and nurturing. This enables children to feel comfortable and trust the staff that look after them. Children are looked after by staff who shower them with attention, affection and care. Where needed, this is balanced with realistic expectations and appropriate boundaries. Staff focus is to ensure that children feel valued and loved. Children thrive in the positive and fun environment that has been created.

Staff understand the peaks and troughs of the children's personal development and growth. Therefore, they are not surprised or worried when the children's progress falters or dips. They see this as normal childhood development and they expect the children to sometimes have difficulties and challenges. When this occurs, the staff respond by increasing the positivity in their approach. This practice gives the children permission to make mistakes and to know that they remain highly valued for who they are.

The children's unique personalities and needs are very well known and understood by the staff. Care plans, strategies and risk management plans are cohesive and make sense. These are subject to regular review as each child's individual circumstances shift and change.

Children have a range of opportunities and experiences which builds on their self-esteem. As a result, they progress and begin to accept and learn from past experiences. Key working with staff provides children with valuable reflection time. Staff understand the important role they take in shaping children's behaviours and they work consistently as a team to achieve this. As a result, missing episodes are reducing and children are asking for guidance and help.

The diverse staff team brings a wide set of skills. They share fun times and different experiences with the children. This results in children being prepared to move on with both resilience and confidence. One professional commented, 'my experience of staff in the home has been amazing. My child has settled amazingly and changed completely, for the better, whilst in their care.'

Staff have the ability and confidence to understand the importance of listening to and involving the children in decision making. At times, children choose not to be involved in more complex decisions. In these circumstances, staff will advocate for the child and challenge, without hesitation, in the child's best interests.

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

Staff are united in their approach. They give consistent messages about expected behaviour of children and children's conduct towards each other. There are times when there is conflict between children and staff have to intervene. Staff are quick

to recognise and act on these occasions. They continue to provide opportunities through key working to explore children's individual feelings and behaviours.

Staff demonstrate good knowledge of safeguarding processes. There is consultation with external professionals and oversight from the manager. This enables them to be fully aware of any safeguarding concerns and ensure that they are confident in the processes. Where necessary, decisions are made to move staff to other homes in the organisation while investigations take place. However, the decision making is not formally recorded. This does not enable ongoing assessment and oversight.

A professional commented, 'the staff know the child amazingly and very quickly grasped how to meet his needs and best manage his behaviour.' The relationships staff have with children are crucial in how behaviours are managed. Children are becoming increasingly safer because the staff recognise the risks and vulnerabilities of each child.

Risk management plans and strategies remain fluid and responsive to all events that place the children at risk of harm. Plans are reviewed appropriately. There is no prescribed timeline. This often results in frequent ad hoc staff meetings and catch-ups between the staff to ensure that the methods to protect children are up to date and relevant in response to changing circumstances.

Staff understand the underlying reasons and factors that trigger the children's risk-taking behaviours. Consequently, the staff focus on preventive strategies and react swiftly to any unsafe event. For example, one child struggles with self-esteem and this increases her vulnerability to be sexually exploited. Proactive measures include activities and regular key working sessions to discuss healthy relationships and to boost this child's confidence. Over a period of almost two years, this approach is starting to have the desired impact and the child is increasingly safer.

There are some gaps in recruitment checks undertaken for new staff. References are not verified in a rigorous manner. Inaccuracies on dates of previous employments in the recruitment records are not explored. The lack of oversight has also meant that these gaps have not been identified.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A cohesive staff team is led by a competent registered manager. He understands the strengths of the home alongside the areas he has highlighted to develop and improve. The management team has a good understanding of the progress children make and will challenge in the best interests of all the children. This enables children to feel valued.

There is supportive leadership in place. Staff are confident to hold and manage risk. They take a measured approach that allows children to make mistakes and errors of judgement. Staff discuss and agree the approaches that will be used to support children with their development and these are thoroughly reviewed at individual staff supervisions and team meetings.

The needs and well-being of the children are central to all meetings and records. Their progress is diligently monitored and the staff delight in the smallest achievements that they make. This is because the staff understand the significance of the children's histories and their past events.

All staff receive frequent, supportive supervision that gives them the opportunity to reflect on their practice and to develop their knowledge and skills. This is enhanced by regular team meetings that bring further cohesion. The registered manager accepts that the records for these meetings do not always fully capture the content.

Staff have access to high-quality training and specialist support. The manager understands the importance of ensuring that staff are equipped and understands the key role he holds in training and developing the staff in the home. The registered manager acknowledges that staff would further benefit from undertaking training in relation to post traumatic stress disorder.

The management team has developed strong links with other agencies. Communication and information sharing are described as good by those spoken to. The support for children in relation to their health is a particular strength. This contributes to keep children healthy, safe and happy.

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
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d))	29 April 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the policy on protection of children from abuse and neglect is reviewed. In particular, ensure that decisions made following allegations against staff are recorded and risk assessments are completed as required to enable monitoring. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.19)

- The registered person should ensure that the workforce plan is kept up to date to ensure all necessary training is undertaken. In particular, ensure that staff undertake training in post-traumatic stress disorder. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

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: SC014650

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: My Choice Children's Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: My Choice Childrens Homes Ltd, Unit 3a, Mill Green Business Estate, Mill Green Road, Haywards Heath RH16 1XQ

Responsible individual: Dawn Ives

Registered manager: Tom Chilton

Inspectors

Emeline Evans, Social Care Inspector
Sophie Wood, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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