

SC014650

Registered provider: My Choice Children's Homes Ltd

Interim 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.

Inspection date: 17 January 2019

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Date of last inspection: 10 May 2018

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.

The home has been through a turbulent few months; serious issues have occurred for children. Several changes of manager have also occurred in the last year. This has resulted in an unsettled staff team that has struggled to meet the challenging situations which it has faced. There have been several incidents of poor decision making. However, since November 2018 improvements have been made.

The area manager and the newly appointed manager of the home have improved care. All children were positive about the care they received during the inspection period. One child said, '[Name of manager] is good; she does care about us. Even though sometimes I don't agree with her, I do understand she wants the best for us.'

Inconsistencies in staff practice are being addressed. The managers have created a more stable environment and several children's education attendance has improved and incidents of restraint have decreased in number. Children's involvement with the police and the number of times children go missing have also reduced significantly. Managers are also promoting appropriate boundaries between staff and children by regularly monitoring practice. Three members of staff spoke positively about the leadership and guidance they are now receiving.

A detailed plan for how leaders and managers will be improving the service over the next few months was implemented this month. This plan is in its infancy and therefore it has not been possible to comment in this report on how well the plan is achieving its short- and long-term aims. However, indications are positive, with children and staff noting improvements.

The requirement from the last inspection that staff supervision meetings must occur regularly has not been met. There are more sessions occurring than previously and the new development plan clearly outlines how the organisation will monitor this on an ongoing basis. This requirement will therefore be repeated.

The managers are thoughtfully assessing the impact that a child coming to live here will have on the child and the others who live here. Two recent assessments carefully considered and took account of a child's previously known risks well. Staff training needs were reviewed and updated.

Staff follow safeguarding procedures well. Staff have been instrumental in disrupting an abusive gang in the community which affected the safety of the children who live here. Managers work well with safeguarding partner organisations. They have challenged them where necessary to ensure that safeguarding issues are fully explored and acted on.

Children said that the staff talk to them regularly about difficult issues. It is disappointing that many of these discussions are not recorded. This is a missed opportunity to demonstrate the level of support the staff provide.

Children's views are regularly sought through one-to-one discussions. The manager is working to reinstate regular children's meetings, and knows how important such meetings are in helping children to live together well.

Children are steered towards participating in appropriate activities, taking into account their individual interests, with plans for two children to join a local drama group. Another child regularly attends cadets, which is supporting his aim to join the armed services. Staff encourage children to have an advocate if this would be beneficial.

Individual risk assessments for the children include good common-sense strategies that tell staff how to manage, minimise and prevent risk. The assessments are now being regularly reviewed and updated appropriately.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/05/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
09/01/2018	Full	Good
20/09/2017	Full	Inadequate
11/01/2017	Full	Good

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 ensure that all employees—receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that all staff receive regular supervision which is in line with their supervision policy. The registered person must also ensure that records of supervision are promptly recorded.	29/03/2019

Recommendations

- Staff should have the skills and confidence to communicate easily and understand the importance of listening to, involving and responding to the children they care for. Staff should understand that they have a responsibility to observe, notice and respond to children who are expressing their views, acknowledging that it is not the sole responsibility of the child to 'tell'. They should also understand how children might communicate their feelings through their behaviour or non-verbally, especially where the child has a disability which does not allow them to communicate as others might. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.10)

In particular, the registered person should ensure the staff record all discussions that they hold with children. The records should be used to help them to review

and improve the care they provide as well as provide a clear record of their support.

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.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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: 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

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