

SC025657

Registered provider: Creating Care Choices Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately run and provides care for up to 11 children with learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities.

The home registered with Ofsted in 2001. There has been no registered manager since 20 April 2023.

There were four children living in the home at the time of this inspection.

Ofsted is aware that a number of serious incidents and concerns are currently under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate all aspects of the incidents and concerns, the inspector considered the actions the home has taken, alongside other relevant evidence available to them.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 August 2023

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 25 April 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

The home was judged as inadequate at the last full inspection on 25 April 2023.

Following this inspection, Ofsted issued a notice restricting accommodation to prevent new children from being admitted to the home. Monitoring visits were undertaken on 5 June 2023 and 11 July 2023. Following the monitoring visit on 11 July 2023, a further restriction of accommodation notice was issued.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/04/2023	Full	Inadequate
06/07/2022	Full	Good
09/02/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
10/02/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Children's overall experience and progress are significantly compromised by poor leadership and management. Since the last full inspection, there has been little change, and there continue to be widespread failures that place children at risk of harm. This has led to another inadequate judgement.

Three children have left the home since the last full inspection. Although some of the children currently living in the home have been more settled, there are still concerns about their emotional well-being and how effectively staff are supporting them. Children's social workers are not always informed when children's behaviours change. This limits external oversight of children's progress and joint working to identify how they can be supported.

There has been some improvement to the condition of the home. Leaders and managers have carried out some redecoration of the home. However, children were not consulted about the choices made. Furthermore, some of the decorations, books and toys are not age-appropriate for the children living in the home. One child said, 'They have made it into a nursery.'

Health appointments for children are made when required, and staff support children to attend. The deputy manager has tried to progress one child's health plan to ensure that they receive the appropriate support. However, it is still unclear how staff should be using additional medication for chemical restraint. Care plans and risk assessments do not provide clear guidance for staff about when and how to use the medication.

Staff understand that it is important for children to maintain relationships with the people who are special to them. Parents are warmly welcomed into the home, and staff support children to spend quality time with their family when it is safe for them to do so.

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

The safeguarding culture in the home has not improved. Leaders and managers have failed to work closely with staff and provide extra support to ensure that they feel able to talk about their concerns. Additionally, a number of staff have left since the last full inspection.

Leaders and managers do not respond appropriately when safeguarding concerns are raised by other professionals. There has been failure to reflect on the issues raised and provide additional training or support to staff.

Communication with other professionals continues to be a concern. Serious incidents

are not always reported to the relevant professionals. Furthermore, safeguarding professionals have had difficulty contacting leaders and managers to discuss safeguarding concerns. This prevents children from receiving support and being adequately safeguarded.

Children's care plans and risk assessments do not include all known risks and vulnerabilities. For example, one child's risk assessment does not include information about the child's attempt to drink washing liquid. The inspectors observed that the cupboard where washing powder and fabric softener are kept was closed but the key was left in, so the items could be easily accessed by the child.

Staff have not had any additional training on safeguarding or whistle-blowing procedures since the last inspection. Subsequently, not all staff demonstrate a good understanding of what to do if an allegation is made against a colleague. This does not demonstrate that staff are able to respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns relating to other staff and managers.

Since the last inspection, one member of staff has been suspended. This was not reported to Ofsted or the local area designated officer as required. Furthermore, there is no record of the suspension on the staff's file and no record of the meeting and decision-making when the member of staff returned to work. Additionally, the member of staff has not had supervision for almost four months, and no additional training has been offered to them.

While there has been no new concern raised about staffing arrangements at night, the lone working risk assessment has not been updated to ensure that the arrangements at night are safe.

There are shortfalls in safe recruitment practice. Recruitment and induction records include conflicting information about when staff applied and started to work at the home. Records indicate that staff have started their induction and received supervision before their start date. The inspectors were not provided with the recruitment file of the proposed new responsible individual, despite several requests for this. The provider also gave conflicting information about when this person was interviewed and appointed. The proposed responsible individual had attended the home and was due to attend the team meeting, scheduled two days after this inspection, to meet the team. However, the inspectors were informed at the end of day one of this inspection that this candidate had now decided not to accept the role.

Children's missing-from-care protocols are not specific to the needs of the children and provide out-of-date information. Strategies recommended to staff are inconsistent and sometimes unsafe for children, for example to call the police after 30 minutes of the child being lost. They do not take into account the children's diagnosis or communication needs, and some children do not have individual missing-from-care plans. This demonstrates that there is a lack of proactive approach to prevent risk.

It is unclear what actions, if any, were taken to address the recommendations made in the fire risk assessment. Furthermore, the assessment was completed over a year ago and recommends that it should be reviewed at regular intervals. However, the fire risk assessment has not been reviewed, and the inspectors were informed by the director that the recommendation is incorrect.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers have not taken effective action in response to the shortfalls identified at the previous inadequate inspection. A number of requirements and recommendations have not been addressed or met and are restated.

Leadership and management of the home are absent. Currently, there is no registered manager and no acting responsible individual. The deputy manager has been left in charge of the home but with very little support. This impacts on the quality of leadership and management oversight of the home. Additionally, there is a lack of clarity about leaders and managers' roles and responsibilities.

Leaders and managers lack openness and transparency. This is demonstrated in the inspectors not being provided with all of the information requested, such as the new responsible individual's recruitment file. Furthermore, conflicting information was provided, such as in relation to recruitment start dates and the safeguarding lead for the home.

Although staff reported being well supported by the deputy manager, they have not received regular supervision. Supervision is not always focused on children's needs. New staff do not have the level of supervision that is outlined in the induction plan. This is despite several staff having no experience of working with children. Furthermore, staff appraisals are weak and do not provide feedback from the manager, children or relevant professionals. This compromises staff development and the continuous improvement of staff practice.

Leaders and managers do not work effectively with the wider network. For example, children's records do not include all relevant plans for children formulated by the child's placing local authority. Furthermore, there have been several incidents regarding one child that have not been reported to the placing local authority.

Leaders and managers have failed to update the home's statement of purpose and complete the quality of care review. This compromises the regulator's external oversight of the home.

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, The 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health; and that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(b)(d)(e)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that there are up-to-date risk assessments and safety plans in place for children when situations change so that staff are able to manage risk safely. This includes for when children are missing from home.	6 September 2023

Leaders and managers must ensure that there is an open safeguarding culture within the home that promotes children's safety and well-being. Leaders and managers must ensure that the home environment is safe for children, including following the correct fire precautions and ensuring that all harmful products are stored securely. Leaders and managers must ensure that they implement clear procedures for staff working alone at night. This requirement is restated.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(d)(f)(h)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that they lead the home in a positive way that promotes the best outcomes for children.	6 September 2023

This requirement is restated.	
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child’s placing authority effectively in the child’s care, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child’s needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)) This requirement is restated.	6 September 2023
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b))	6 September 2023
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children’s home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and the registered provider— is an organisation or a partnership; does not satisfy regulation 28; or is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home. If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of— the name of the person so appointed; and	6 September 2023

the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii) (2)(a)(b))	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))	6 September 2023
The registered person must maintain records (“case records”) for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	6 September 2023
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children (“a quality of care review”) at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review (“the quality of care review report”). The registered person must—	6 September 2023

supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and

make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home.

The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.

(Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account the registered manager's view and, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and of children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should ensure that the whistle-blowing policy is adequate and that staff are familiar through the induction process with the home's internal whistle-blowing procedures. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.9)

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: SC025657

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Creating Care Choices Limited

Registered provider address: 38 Castle Drive, Ilford, Essex IG4 5AE

Responsible individual: Parmeswar Gopee Singh

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Aneta Wasilewska, Social Care Inspector

Leanne Grant, Regulatory Inspector Manager

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