

SC029865

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 is privately owned. It provides care for up to four children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties and/or learning disabilities. At the time of the inspection, there were four children in the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2020.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/01/2022	Full	Good
13/08/2019	Full	Good
30/10/2018	Full	Good
15/11/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have positive relationships with staff, friends and family. There is a clear focus on what matters to the children. Staff know children's plans and ensure that children see their friends and families in an agreed way. For example, one child has a sleepover at a friend's house every week, and another child meets her friend after school. Staff advocate strongly for children.

Children are encouraged to achieve and have individual reward systems for positive behaviour. Children enjoy themed activities and can access group holidays run by the organisation. One child enjoys playing football, and this is promoted by staff. However, not all children have the same opportunities to develop their interests and hobbies, which would further support their well-being. For example, one child enjoys arts and crafts, but structured day-to-day activities with staff are not always planned or organised.

Staff motivate children to attend school. They work closely with educational settings and a therapist who supports children's attendance and re-engagement. Children have made progress from their starting points. For example, one child who was refusing to attend school now attends with an individualised timetable. This is reviewed weekly by home and school staff. One education professional said, 'The managers have an active interest in the child's education.'

Children can personalise their bedrooms, and the decor reflects what they like. Children were proud to show the inspector photos and items that 'connect' them to their families. However, some other areas of the home require tidying, refreshing and repairing. For example, some areas of the home were cluttered, hanging baskets with dead foliage at the front of the house had not been removed and some walls needed painting.

Staff prepare children well for the future. They support children to develop independence skills and advocate strongly for them. Staff stay in touch with young people and see the progress that children continue to make.

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

The registered manager understands her safeguarding responsibilities and ensures joined-up working with other professionals. Incidents are well managed, and necessary actions are taken to ensure that children are safeguarded effectively. However, the recording systems are not always clear about what action has been taken and when.

Incidents where children go missing are well managed. Staff work well with other professionals and take clear steps to reduce the number of these incidents. There is clear guidance and protocols in place to ensure that children are safe.

Children access a therapist who has strong links with staff in the home. This joined-up working informs strategies to support children to change their behaviour. The therapist said, 'This [supporting children's behaviour] is a definite strength of the staff in this home.'

Children are supported to be safe online. Appropriate safeguards are in place, and staff are trained to understand the risks to children when accessing the internet.

Leaders and managers make sure that staff are safely recruited. The registered manager and staff are aware of their responsibilities to ensure effective health and safety processes are in place. Consequently, children, staff and visitors are protected, and the home is safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. She is passionate and understands the needs of the children. There are effective monitoring systems in place. Consequently, the management team has good oversight of children's day-to-day experiences and the progress that children make.

Feedback from external professionals is very positive regarding communication and partnership working. This demonstrates a culture of openness that keeps children's needs at the heart of decision-making. One professional explained that the staff are 'always warm and welcoming'.

Staff are supported in their role by the manager and senior leaders. However, supervision is not frequent. A very small number of consistent staff employed by an agency work in the home. However, these staff do not receive any formal supervision. This reduces the opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice or discuss the children in detail.

Staff are knowledgeable and receive a range of training to meet the specific needs of the children. Staff also obtain a 'Therapeutic Practitioner Award', which links to key-work sessions for children. For example, staff learn skills to understand behaviours and trauma, which has enabled them to have the skills to listen to the children in the home and implement strategies as a team to support the children.

Children move to the home following a carefully considered matching process. The manager and staff review the needs of the child moving in alongside the needs of the children already living in the home. Staff work well with children, parents and professionals to ensure that moves are sensitively managed. Children in the home help choose items for a 'welcome pack'. Consequently, children settle quickly into 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, 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 enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills. In particular, the standard in paragraph 1 requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— develop the child's interests and hobbies; participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences; and make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community; and that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))	31/03/2023

Recommendations

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including agency staff and the manager, receive regular supervision that allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of their children and is a homely, domestic environment. The children's home must comply with relevant health and safety legislation; however, in doing so, the home should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic impression. This is in relation to the front of the home, redecoration and keeping the home free from clutter. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. This is in relation to recording systems being clear as to what action has been taken and when. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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: SC029865

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: My Choice Children's Homes Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Dawn Ives

Registered manager: Polly Edwards-Bayne

Inspector

Hannah Cox, Social Care Inspector

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