

SC029865

My Choice Children's Homes Ltd

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home is privately owned. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2020.

Inspection date: 10 to 13 July 2020

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken following Ofsted being notified of a police protection order having been secured for a child living in the home. Police were required to be physically present in the children's home for the duration of the order. The visit focused on understanding the impact of this on all the children living in the home and staff on duty over the course of the three days when the order was in place.

A new admission of a child who recently moved into the home was not well planned. The independent person undertaking monthly monitoring visits to the home highlighted that no one from the home met the child before she moved in. There was a delay in the planning meeting held after the child moved into the home. The registered manager did not challenge this. The individual needs of the child were not fully understood, and her need for urgent specialist mental health support was not acted on. The child went missing from the home, for an extended period, days after moving in.

The police protection order was in place due to safeguarding concerns following a child having been missing from the home. The registered manager did not inform the placing authorities for the three other children living in the home. Therefore, the allocated social workers' views were not sought in relation to their respective children's needs. Children's views were not sought, and independent advocacy was

not provided. Consequently, the impact of the police presence on the children living in the home was not adequately explored or understood.

Staff did not understand how the restriction of liberty for one child had an adverse impact on their sense of dignity. In addition, some of the basic care needs of this child were not met. Staff did not consider the context of the child's known history when making decisions about how to best care for them.

The findings of this inspection identified significant, previously unknown, safeguarding concerns regarding a number of children living in the home. Two children went missing during the period that this visit focused on.

There was an identified risk of significant harm from outside the home for one child. Staff did not use this information to inform their response to specific safeguarding concerns that were identified when the child returned to the home. The risk management plan for this child was not updated to address these new concerns. They were not considered in the context of significant concerns identified following a previous period when the child had been missing. Ofsted was not notified of either significant safeguarding concern.

Staff did not use known information to help prevent another child from going missing from the home. There was a lack of professional curiosity from staff when further relevant information was shared that indicated that this child was at risk. The child's whereabouts were not confirmed. The potential risks were not understood or appropriately explored on the child's return to the home.

The risk management plan for a third child included additional staff support in response to them going missing from the home. This was not consistently put in place. This demonstrates a lack of adequate safeguards having been in place.

The registered manager and the responsible individual for the home did not undertake an internal review following the safeguarding concerns that necessitated police being present in the home. No learning points were identified, and the known risks for the child were not addressed. The risk management plan was not followed when the child subsequently went missing from the home.

The deputy manager was responsible for the management of the home at the time of this missing episode. He was also providing on-call support to two other homes in the organisation at the time. This had a detrimental impact on his ability to adequately respond to the identified risks.

The impact on staff needing to be on duty both during the day and night while police were present in the home was not reflected on. Following the inspection, the registered manager has now reflected on the use of agency staff members who have no previous experience of working in the home. This is in response to practice issues identified in relation to an inadequate response by a new agency staff member to a further incident when a child went missing from the home. The agency member of

staff did not fulfil their safeguarding duties. After running away from the home, the child was admitted to specialist inpatient care due to safeguarding concerns. The registered manager has addressed their concerns with the recruitment agency.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/08/2019	Full	Good
30/10/2018	Full	Good
15/11/2017	Full	Good
23/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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
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; and seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs. (Regulation 5(a)(b))	13/09/2020
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; and ensure that staff provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(iv))	13/09/2020
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. (Regulation 7(1)(a)(b)(c))	13/09/2020
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; and take effective action whenever there is a serious concern	13/09/2020

about a child's welfare; and 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. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(iii)(vi)(b))*	
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; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(e)(h))*	13/09/2020
The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(b))	13/09/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation. (Regulation 40(4)(a))	13/09/2020

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Information about this inspection

In accordance with Ofsted guidance on COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions, this inspection was undertaken remotely. Telephone discussions were held with the registered manager prior to inspection. Various documents were emailed to the inspector that were also considered. The inspector had conversations with three members of staff and spoke with three children currently living in the home. The inspector also spoke with one child's social worker. One child gave the inspector a virtual tour of the home including the outside space.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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

Maria Lonergan, social care inspector

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