

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 and accommodation for up to four children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 17 Nov 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 January 2022

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: 13 August 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: One compliance notice under Regulation 13 was issued following an assurance visit on 15 September 2020. At a subsequent monitoring visit on 19 and 20 November, this was judged to have been met.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children live in a well-maintained home that has a relaxed atmosphere. Children struggled to name anything that they wanted for the home that they did not already have access to. They like the house and also enjoy each other's company.

A highly skilled staff team ensures effective planning for children newly admitted to the home. Clear and effective strategies are in place to promote the best chance of success. The most recently admitted child has settled well and is not displaying any of the risks or behaviours that he had displayed before admission.

Children and staff share very positive relationships. Their interactions are warm and full of humour. Children actively engage in the day-to-day life of the home, helping staff with basic household chores, preparing meals and helping staff with errands.

Children were confident to speak during the inspection and had lots of very positive things to say about staff. They feel well supported and valued.

Staff are skilled at motivating children to achieve their goals. They do this in a nurturing way that also emphasises the need for children to develop autonomy and independence. One child is starting her journey towards working in the NHS, and this sense of high ambition for children's futures runs through the whole staff group.

Staff work creatively to support children with their mental health and well-being. One staff member described a colour-band system they use to allow children to communicate their mood without having to talk about it if they didn't want to.

Children feel listened to and feel their views are important to the registered manager and the staff. A child gave an example of a complaint they had sent to the director of the group. She felt this was handled well, and she has received a satisfactory response. However, some children felt unsure of why records are made and what is recorded about them. They felt record-keeping was done to them, not with them.

One parent spoke of her gratitude to the team. She felt staff were supportive of her child but also very supportive of her relationship with her child. She said that one member of staff, in particular, 'should be given a medal' for what she has done for the family.

Staff also show a very well-developed understanding of the complex health needs of some children. They have advocated well to support medication reviews where required. They have also gone out of their way to develop a deep and useful knowledge about children's specific health conditions.

A child's placement ended recently after several disruptive and challenging episodes for staff. However, staff and children alike were deeply saddened by the child's

departure and spoke reflectively and with deep care about the child and held no negative feelings.

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

Staff demonstrate good knowledge in key areas of safeguarding, such as online safety and risks to children with regard to exploitation. Staff produce effective risk management plans for children.

Children who self-harm have been supported sensitively and have been able to dramatically reduce this behaviour. A parent said that the progress for her child had been remarkable.

Staff recognise where they fit into wider safeguarding networks. They can identify all external agencies that play a role in supporting the safety and well-being of children. Staff understand how to raise the alarm to ensure that good safeguarding practice is followed. Instances where children make allegations are dealt with swiftly and all relevant agencies are notified. Investigations are conducted promptly, and outcomes are proportionate and effective in eliminating repeat occurrences.

Since the last inspection, incidences of children going missing have been relatively high. However, it was clear that this was linked to some placement breakdowns at the end of 2020. Since this time, frequency of incidents has dramatically reduced, and at present, only one child remains at risk in this area. Staff are focused on this. They are trying to support the child to keep themselves safe while balancing their natural desire for independence as they approach adulthood.

Staff recording and practice with regard to missing-from-home episodes are very good. Records and chronologies are clear and demonstrate a proactive response to safeguarding missing children.

Staff use creative strategies to manage behaviour without the use of sanctions or approaches that may feel punitive to children. Firm boundaries are applied consistently by all staff. Children say that behaviour management is done well and feels fair.

Most importantly, children say they feel very safe at the home. This is particularly noteworthy given a recent placement breakdown that was potentially disruptive for them. This demonstrates that staff provided good care and support to reduce the impact of these events on the rest of the children.

Children do not feel that bullying is a problem at the home. When any concerns are raised, action is taken swiftly to eliminate any bullying behaviours that cause distress to others. When children have raised concerns about bullying at school, communication with the school has been prompt and helped to resolve issues quickly.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager demonstrates a passionate commitment to ensuring high standards of care for children and good management support to staff. In return, staff respect and value her leadership.

She is a strong advocate for the children in her care. Staff, both internal and external to the home, were unanimous in their praise for her management style. She was described as child-focused, compassionate and a children's champion.

Professional feedback is consistently positive. They speak of love, care and a strong child focus being important attributes of the manager and her team. Professionals feel that she goes out of her way to find constructive solutions to obstacles and problems that may be affecting the progress of children.

Support structures are strong, and staff at all levels benefit from regular and effective supervision that supports them to manage both the practical and emotional challenges of their role.

The registered manager's oversight of practice at the home is strong, and she uses external and internal review processes to define her action plan for continuous improvement.

The registered manager prioritises effective partnership working. This was reflected by a member of staff from a local school that has educated several children from the home. She said that the manager will go above and beyond to solve problems and work in creative partnership in the interests of children. She also said, 'One thing that is really clear is the love that children feel from staff.'

Leaders and managers show a good understanding of their roles as leaders and role models for staff. Reporting on significant events to social workers is timely and Ofsted are notified when required.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children are encouraged by staff to see the home's records as 'living documents', supporting them to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulation, including the quality standards' page 58, paragraph 11.19)

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: Unit 3a, Mill Green Business Estate, Mill Green Road, Haywards Heath RH16 1XQ

Responsible individual: Dawn Ives

Registered manager: Polly Edwards-Bayne

Inspector

Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector

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