

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 staff at this home look after children who have a range of needs including challenging behaviour, learning difficulties and disabilities, self-harm, minor physical difficulties and mental health issues. The registered manager's position has been vacant since 3 October 2018. The person managing the home has applied for registration with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 August 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 30 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/10/2018	Full	Good
15/11/2017	Full	Good
23/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/08/2016	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 maintain records ("case records") for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36(1)(a)) In particular, the registered person must review the number of entries that the staff make in various records regarding doses, and the times they administer medication. This action is required to review whether multiple recordings of medication pose any risk to children.	01/10/2019
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— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(v)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff maintain a clear chronology of how safeguarding concerns are managed.	01/10/2019
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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(h))	01/10/2019

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff carefully monitor all areas of the premises to make sure they meet health and safety requirements.

- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that any risks that are no longer current or relevant are removed from relevant documents.

- Regulation 45 sets out requirements for the registered person to have a system in place which allows them to monitor the matters set out in the regulation at least once every six months; also see regulation 13(2)(h) (the leadership and management standard). The registered person should undertake a review that focuses on the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. Reviews should be underpinned by the Quality Standards as described in regulations 5 to 14. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', pages 64–65, paragraph 15.2)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that appropriate levels of analysis and evaluation inform their assessments. The registered person should also ensure that a clear action plan explains what they will do as a result of their review.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children progress well. One social worker described the support that staff have provided for a child's progress as, 'amazing; the difference in her has been extraordinary'. The quality of staff care that children receive helps them to trust the staff. It has also assisted children to share their views with the wider network of professionals who

support them.

Staff make children feel welcome when they arrive at the home. Children's needs are carefully assessed, and this enables them to live together well. The relationships that staff build with children are strong, supportive and helpful. Several children talked about how caring the staff are, how much they like them and how they have helped them to develop and deal with difficult situations.

Support for children's education is well organised and extremely effective. Staff are responsive to children's changing educational needs and plan effectively and successfully to meet these. One child said that when she was studying for her examinations every member of staff had helped her with revision.

Interests and hobbies are catered for well. There are clear plans for each child which consider the group's and each child's needs well. The plans for the summer have helpfully provided good structure to every week of the holidays. Children were excited by the plans for the organisation's summer Olympics. They were engaging enthusiastically in preparing for these events, such as making team t-shirts for staff and children.

Children's contact with their families is promoted well. One parent spoke positively about how the staff had worked in partnership with him to support his son. He said staff had been very accommodating in providing transport for his son to see him. He was especially grateful to the staff as this had involved them travelling a long distance.

Overall, staff provide good support for children to lead healthy lives and to eat healthily. They encourage children to take part in cooking meals, taking regular exercise and attending external health services such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) or counselling.

Medication management has improved, for example the staff now record reasons why an entry on the medication management sheet has changed. If a child has a complex medication regime, staff follow this carefully. Medication information is, however, kept in various documents; this means that there is the potential for an error to be made in administration and recording.

Importance is given to supporting children to move on from the home well. One parent was extremely positive about how the home had helped his child to move on. Plans to support each child during this time of change are individual and helpful. The plans assist children to celebrate their time living in the home, and to make each transition as smooth as possible.

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

Children feel safe at this home. They say that the way the staff care for them and talk to them helps them to keep themselves safer. Other professionals and a member of a child's family spoke positively about how the staff promote children's safety. One social worker said that if there are any concerns the communication from the home is good.

Staff have good safeguarding knowledge and are committed to ensuring that concerns are dealt with quickly. However, records of safeguarding referrals are not kept in a chronological order, which means there is no sequential record of what occurred.

Staff manage children's challenging behaviour and support their good behaviour well. Frequent use of mediation by all staff helps children to develop empathy and learn how to discuss difficult issues. One child talked about the way the staff help her to talk through issues. She said this had really changed her view on how to talk to people in all situations. This is a very positive aspect of the service which children value. Children will voluntarily seek a mediation meeting to manage issues between themselves.

Regularly reviewed and updated risk assessments are completed from the time a child comes to live at the home. However, in one instance a risk remained listed when it had not been evident for over a year; this means that this area of the child's progress had not been formally recognised. Staff could not clearly explain why the risk continued to be monitored.

Staff are better at responding to children who go missing. For example, staff work appropriately with other safeguarding agencies if a child runs away. However, a few months before the inspection leaders and managers did not quickly identify that staff practice did not follow their policies. If this discrepancy had been noticed earlier, this might have prevented some incidents of children going missing. Managers have introduced changes to practice, including more timely review of missing incidents. There are some indications that these changes are having a positive impact; there was a significant reduction in children going missing in the month before the inspection.

Health and safety checks are well documented, and generally the home is safe from hazards. However, leaders and managers are not monitoring sufficiently well that the staff are identifying and rectifying potential risks, particularly in the garden and when children use electric extension leads in their bedrooms. For example, the external emergency staircase had several items stored under it that could potentially compromise this fire escape. The items were immediately removed, but this demonstrates that staff do not always pay careful enough attention to health and safety in all areas of the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a strong focus on children's needs. They provide good direction, and this supports the staff to work effectively as a team. The manager is working on her level 5 management diploma and is on course to complete this in appropriate timescales.

Staff deployment, support and supervision are well organised and provide positive opportunities for staff to share what is going well and what should improve. The number of staff on duty meets children's diverse needs. Children confirm that they know who is on duty and that they are always cared for by people they know.

Supervision meetings are frequent and helpful. Senior leaders from the organisation sometimes undertake supervision meetings, which staff like and appreciate. Training records indicate that staff attend a wide range of appropriate training. Staff speak positively about how the courses they attend help them to understand and support the children they look after.

Team meetings are well attended and provide a helpful forum to discuss children's needs and how staff will meet these needs. The meetings provide a forum where staff plan how they will give children consistent messages.

Planning, reviewing and monitoring systems are in place, but these do not fully cover all aspects of the service. For example, managers do not monitor effectively whether children's online records are stored systematically; this means that the full record of a child's life at the home is difficult to follow and monitor. A recommendation from the last inspection was to improve the quality of analysis and evaluation in the six-monthly reports on the quality of the services provided. This recommendation was not met.

Professionals are very positive about how managers and staff work collaboratively with them. Professionals receive regular updates, especially if there are concerns. One social worker said that if things need resolving and the local authority is not making this happen quickly enough, 'the staff will continually remind me'.

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.

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: Post vacant

Inspector

Ruth Coler, social care inspector

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