

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC029865
Inspector	Angela Whiteley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	My Choice Children's Homes Limited
Registered person address	My Choice Childrens Homes Ltd, Unit 3/A Mill Green Business Estate, Mill Green Road HAYWARDS HEATH West Sussex RH16 1XQ
Responsible individual	Peter Christopher Kazmarski
Registered manager	Eva Samantha McNeil
Date of last inspection	07/08/2014

Inspection date	13/01/2015
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Previous inspection	improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people live in a safe, caring and supportive environment. They settle quickly in the placement and make good progress from their starting points across all aspects of their welfare and development, particularly in terms of education, health, behaviour and self-esteem.

A particular strength of the home is the consistency of the staff team, which allows young people to develop warm and trusting relationships with staff that they know and respect. Young people comment positively on the quality of care they receive and their relationship with staff. A young person gave the home a score of ten out of ten and said, 'It's a good place to live, its home.'

There is excellent communication between young people, staff, other professionals and families who have an interest in securing positive outcomes for young people. Staff are patient and persistent in their efforts to help young people understand and manage their behaviour differently. Individualised planning, target setting and chosen incentives are used effectively to encourage young people to achieve their potential.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding practices and are supported by robust policies and procedures that ensure young people's safety and

welfare are promoted.

The Registered Manager provides strong leadership and has a clear commitment to an improvement agenda. She generally has a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and is committed to developing the provision further. A highly motivated staff team shares the managers' vision and is committed to the support of young people helping them to progress and achieve their individual potential.

Nevertheless, some relatively minor shortfalls are identified as areas for improvement. These relate to aspects of recording practice, providing clear information in the Statement of Purpose and children's guide, staff training and supervision records. Other improvements in practice relate to providing an independent person to interview young people who have run away from home; and careful monitoring of the home's records. Furthermore, two requirements are made in respect of the monthly monitoring reports completed by the independent visitor and the quarterly monitoring reports completed by the Registered Manager. These reports do not clearly demonstrate direct consultation with young people, staff, parents, carers and placing authorities. However, these shortfalls are mainly administrative issues and have not impacted negatively on the welfare or safety of young people, and do not undermine the otherwise high quality of care provided.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home caters for up to three young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/08/2014	Interim	improved effectiveness
20/02/2014	Interim	good progress
21/10/2013	Full	good
10/01/2013	Interim	good progress

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
33 (2001)	ensure the independent person interviews, with their consent, young people accommodated at the home, their parents, relatives and persons working there to form an opinion about the home (Regulation 33 (8) (a))	24/02/2015
34 (2001)	ensure the system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for consultation with children accommodated at the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	24/02/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure where children's homes use restraint, staff are trained in the use of those physical restraint techniques approved to be used in the home and only use the home's agreed techniques. Training is regularly refreshed, this relates specifically to agency staff (NMS 3.15 and Volume 5, statutory guidance paragraph 2.101)
- ensure where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure the home has a clear Statement of Purpose, particularly in respect of qualifications, experience and supervision arrangements of staff commissioned to provide health care and education (NMS 13.1)
- ensure the Children's Guide includes information about how a young person can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer (NMS 13.5)
- ensure all staff have access to appropriate training that keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments, with particular regard to self-harming behaviour and ligature training (NMS 18.1)
- ensure a written or electronic record is kept by the home detailing the time, date and length of each supervision held, particularly for the registered person (NMS 19.5)
- improve the system that is in place to monitor the quality and accuracy of reports and record keeping and take action when needed (NMS 22.1)
- ensure that when a missing child is found, they are offered an independent return interview. The interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their care setting. This should be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person (someone not involved in caring for the child) who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able to follow-up any actions that emerge. (Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, January 2014, paragraph 31-32)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make good progress at the home. They are supported to develop a healthy self-image through child and adolescent mental health support services and keyworker sessions. The sessions address behavioural issues and consider the impact of their earlier life experiences. As a result, young people begin to develop confidence and emotional resilience. They learn to relate to others and begin to express themselves more appropriately. Placement stability, a consistent core staff team and the nurturing care approach helps young people develop and sustain strong and positive attachments within the home and in the community.

Young people enjoy relatively good health, are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and learn to understand the benefits of eating a healthy diet. Their daily routine and specialist health care needs are effectively addressed and health appointments are mostly well attended. Young people access support services to help them give up smoking. Risk-taking behaviours have significantly reduced as placements settle. They actively participate in activities, such as walking, movie nights, eating out and visits to the seaside. They are supported to engage in a positive way in the local and wider community.

Most young people have improved education attendance and make good progress from their starting point. Individual education programmes support young people's learning. Some learn through individual home study packages and appropriate education and life skills visits. All young people benefit from the support of staff that are committed to promoting the value of education. Young people receive support with homework and revision sessions and have access to a range of learning resources in the home. Achievements are celebrated within the home and this has an additional positive effect on young people in terms of boosting self-esteem and confidence. Young people have positive aspirations for their future with realistic plans.

Young people play a full part in decision-making in the home and feel that their contribution is taken seriously. They have frequent opportunities to explore their wishes and feelings on an individual basis and share their views on the quality of service they receive. Young people contribute to their reviews; this enables them to influence planning decisions concerning their future.

Young people make progress in developing independence skills in accordance with their age and ability. They are well supported by staff in this aspect of their lives. As they grow and mature, young people are actively involved in preparing for the transition to adulthood through individual planned work that fully takes account of their age and needs. This enables them to take small steps to gain confidence in their own ability and understand the implications of being independent in the wider

community.

Young people's sense of identity is promoted through meaningful and safe contact arrangements with family, which is agreed with the placing authority. Staff work effectively with young people's families and support them to build strong relationships. As a result, some young people have been on holiday abroad with family members. This enables them to maintain and reinforce important relationships and reach an understanding about their past experiences. This contributes to a strong sense of well-being for young people.

Quality of care

good

Young people enjoy high quality care in a home that provides a nurturing family environment. They develop extremely positive relationships with staff and relate well to each other. They say that they like living at this home and feel safe. They confirm they can approach any staff if they have any worries or concerns and know how to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of their care.

Staff are patient but persistent and use appropriate humour in their exchanges with young people. They are confident about challenging young people when their behaviour warrants it or give them time and space to work things out. Staff make good use of their relationships with young people to effect positive change.

Young people confirm they are listened to and as a result, changes are made for their benefit. For example, purchase of new bedroom furniture, choice of decoration and furnishings in the dining room.

Young people have well written individualised management plans, risk assessments and care plans, which clearly identify their needs and show how these are met. They are frequently consulted about all aspects of their care planning, which means they know what progress they are making. Their plans are regularly reviewed to reflect their individual strengths. Creative planning and robust decision-making ensures the changing needs of young people are recognised. This ensures the home remains settled and young people's placements are stable.

Young people are widely consulted. This includes regular keyworker sessions and attending weekly residents meetings, which gives them plenty of opportunity to discuss any choices and views they have about the home. Despite this, young people's views are not consistently recorded in the home's sanction records. This means they may not fully understand the reasons why the measure is used, which may reduce its effectiveness.

Young people receive good quality care and support from a consistent and experienced staff team that demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of young people's needs. They are prepared to work hard to help young people develop

their potential. They are persistent when faced with setbacks or failures and continue to support and guide young people to help them make positive choices in their lives.

Strong partnership working with health, education and placing authorities means that young people receive the support and intervention to which they are entitled. Staff are proactive in challenging plans that prevent young people making the most of their education. They support young people's educational achievement and attendance and celebrate and reward their progress.

Staff provide good access to health support services and encourage young people to attend their health appointments. Staff respond positively to young people's diversity and cultural needs. They provide opportunities for young people to participate in activities and social events both in the home and wider community.

A social worker commented positively about the staff and the care provided. She said, 'this is an extremely good placement for the young person. They are able to offer her boundaries and consistency and are able to contain her behaviour in an appropriate and supportive manner. They advocate strongly for the young person and have a comprehensive understanding of her and her behavioural difficulties. Professionals are working together and advocating strongly for the young person's educational needs to be met.'

The home is a warm and welcoming spacious, family home. It is well furnished with modern furnishings. Young people have large bedrooms, which they are encouraged to personalise. They have ample comfortable living space in a quiet residential area that provides them with a safe and secure environment.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people say they feel safe, secure and well cared for in the home. They confirm they can talk to any member of staff if they are worried or concerned about anything. Staff are fully trained in safeguarding procedures and receive regular refresher training. They are confident and competent in implementing the home's policies and procedures if they have any concerns, or allegations are made about young people's welfare. There are no issues of bullying or child protection referrals for this home.

Young people receive high levels of support and supervision. Electronic monitoring devices are in use on external doors and young people's bedroom doors to ensure their safety. The use of this measure at night quickly alerts staff to young people who are out of their bedrooms and may require staff support. If young people do go missing from the home, staff know the local area and community well. They immediately go looking for young people and return them safely back home with the support of the police. They have developed good links with the local police and the newly formed specialist police service. If incidents do occur, there are clear practices

and agreements in place that staff understand. The home's written records show the frequency of young people going absent without permission has significantly reduced as young people settle. All such episodes are monitored, fully considered and reviewed to promote young people's safety and welfare. Despite this, return interviews of young people who have run away are not always conducted by an independent person, which means that opportunities are potentially missed to uncover information that can help protect young people from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from issues in the home.

Individual risk assessments and 24-hour management plans clearly identify risks for young people, which help to protect them. Positive behaviour is promoted with clear and consistent boundaries to help young people understand the effects of their behaviour on themselves and others. Regular individual sessions, target setting, incentives and rewards are all used to good effect to help young people develop socially acceptable behaviour. As a result, incidents of harmful and risk-taking behaviour have significantly reduced. Young people begin to learn appropriate boundaries; require minimal sanctions and the use of restraint is only used by trained staff as a last resort to ensure young people's safety. That said an agency worker used by the home is not trained in the use of the specific physical restraint technique used by this home, which may compromise the safety and welfare of young people and staff. Despite this, the home feels calm and nurturing and young people confirm they feel staff genuinely care about them.

The Registered Manager ensures staff are carefully selected and vetted before starting work in the home and visitors are checked and supervised as appropriate. This helps deter unsuitable people having access to vulnerable young people. Good practice around storage, handling, administration and disposal of medication also safeguards young people's welfare.

Young people enjoy a safe and secure home environment as good health and safety arrangements are in place. There are regular practice evacuations to ensure young people know how to exit the building safely and quickly in case of an emergency.

Leadership and management

good

Young people benefit from having a Registered Manager who is committed to helping them achieve their potential. She is an effective manager who is appropriately qualified and experienced. She has been a Registered Manager since October 2007. She returned as Registered Manager to this home in August 2012 having spent some months as a service manager. She has strong support from two competent deputies and a stable core staff team. Together they provide high levels of stability for young people and fully understand their needs.

The home provides high staff ratios. It employs sufficient staff that have a broad

range of experience and knowledge to meet the challenges of caring for young adults with complex needs. Staff confirm they are well supported through annual appraisals, regular supervision, and team meetings. This ensures they have frequent opportunities to reflect and develop their practice. However, a written or electronic record of supervision sessions containing a record of the time, date and duration, signed by the supervisor and supervisee is not kept at the home for all staff, in particular, for the Registered Manager.

Staff routinely undertake a broad range of training. The provider and Registered Manager identify additional training needs in response to staff and young people's current and emerging needs. Despite this, staff have not completed specific training in respect of self-harm and ligature training. The provider is to explore additional training opportunities to ensure staff have the skills required to meet the needs of the young people in placement.

The home has a comprehensive Statement of Purpose. However, information in respect of qualifications, experience and supervision arrangements for professionals who provide health care and education for young people is not clear. This means the document lacks sufficient information about what is provided. In addition, the home's children's guide does not provide information on how young people contact their independent reviewing officer. This means young people do not have all the choices they should have to ensure their views are known or to raise any concerns.

Young people live in a high quality environment, which is spacious, clean, tidy and homely. Their records are well structured, stored securely and recording is of a good standard. Young people are frequently engaged in discussions about their care and the home. They benefit from the Registered Manager and staff working collaboratively with professionals and parents, which provides a consistent approach to their care. A placing social worker speaks positively about the support provided and confirms, 'Staff are good at preparing written reports and are good at communicating with her.'

The Registered Manager has developed generally good monitoring and quality assurance systems to ensure young people continue to enjoy a good standard of care. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and promptly addresses any areas where improvements can be made. However, the home's quarterly quality assurance report and monthly monitoring reports completed by the independent visitor do not consistently capture feedback and views of young people, their parents or carers, staff and professionals. This may influence the identification of weaknesses and strengths of the home and may prevent further progress. Typing errors and inaccurate information in some of the home's records is being addressed by more robust quality assurance systems to ensure accurate information is recorded. There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection. The home has a realistic development plan that is reviewed regularly to drive forward further improvement.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.