

SC029865

Assurance visit

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.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 13 August 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The assurance visit was undertaken following a monitoring visit on 15 July 2020. This visit resulted in two compliance notices being issued on 17 July 2020. The provider informed the inspector they had received one compliance notice in respect of regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(iii)(vi)(b). It was therefore not possible to monitor the second compliance notice in relation to regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(e)(h).

Findings from the visit

We identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children feel positive about the care they receive from staff. They feel settled living in the home due to the support provided by staff. As the COVID-19 restrictions lifted over summer, children really enjoyed taking part in activities outside the home. Staff ensured children were also supported with a range of interesting activities in the home throughout these restrictions.

Children's education has been supported by staff during the COVID-19 period when most children were engaging in online learning. Tutorial support for two children was provided within the home. One child has started at a new school following the summer holidays. There is some tutorial support continuing for another child while an educational placement is identified. Staff support the child with informal learning.

There has been considerable reliance on agency staff, particularly over the summer months. This is in response to meeting the increase in support identified to meet children's needs. Children's needs have not been fully understood when agency staff have been regularly supporting individual children. There was a significant incident involving agency staff where the support of the police was required to ensure the child's safe return. Senior management addressed this with the agency following this incident.

Staff support children well to express their wishes, including one child being supported to access independent advocacy. This helped the child to ensure that their views were heard, and they were able to contribute to important decisions about their life. Children are supported well by staff to talk through their feelings about living as a group.

The safety of children

Children feel safe in the home. Staff help children to understand the risks associated with going missing from home. There has been a decrease in the number of times children have been missing from the home. However, staff's response to one missing episode did not adequately safeguard the child. This was due to the staff member not having the appropriate skills to address the known vulnerabilities of the child.

Although, overall, the individual vulnerabilities of children are better understood, the risk management plan for one child did not fully reflect all known risks. The registered manager has appropriately reviewed staff members' individual knowledge and skills in understanding and responding to safeguarding. Staff are also being provided with further training to strengthen their safeguarding knowledge. This means that the compliance notice in respect of regulation 12 has not been met.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager has strengthened their partnership working with statutory agencies. This has included ensuring all known information is shared with statutory agencies where there are identified risks for children going missing from the home. Professionals shared positive feedback in relation to working with the staff team. The registered manager has appropriately escalated concerns around access to services for children. Although there has been some improvement, the failure to meet the compliance notice under regulation 12 means that monitoring and review systems are not yet successfully embedded.

Senior managers delivered training to the staff team to develop their understanding of the impact on children of moving into and moving on from the home. Staff have applied this knowledge in supporting one child to prepare for a move to independence. The registered manager positively supported the child in their move into supported accommodation. The staff team continues to provide ongoing support to help the child manage this important transition. Children spoke enthusiastically about taking part in the celebrations in the home to mark the child's time living there.

Both compliance notices, issued at the last inspection visit, will be reissued. A further requirement is repeated.

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 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 and 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))	15/11/2020
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 and take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(vi))*	15/11/2020
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))*	15/11/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if an incident requiring police	15/11/2020

involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(4)(b))	
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*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC029865

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

Inspectors

Maria Lonergan, social care inspector

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