

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	18/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC029865
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	My Choice Children's Homes Limited
Registered person address	Unit 3a, Mill Green Business Estate, Mill Green Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 1XQ

Responsible individual	Peter Kazmarski
Registered manager	Eva McNeil
Inspector	Stephen Collett

Inspection date	18/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged Good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has declined in effectiveness. At the last full inspection in May 2015, a settled group of young people were making steady progress, working towards transition. All but one of these young people have subsequently moved on. The moves were planned and benefitted from good staff support along the way. Since June 2015 there have been a series of admissions of vulnerable young people, each with a known history of engaging in unsafe behaviours. These have included going missing, being at risk of sexual exploitation, alcohol and substance misuse and anti-social behaviour. Although these were all planned to be permanent placements, some lasted only a few weeks, due to an escalation in their risk taking behaviours. This unsettled period in the home has resulted in young people making little progress. Young people who have been resident over this period have not been able to reduce the number of times they go missing, and some have placed themselves at significant risk of sexual exploitation. Some young people continue to abuse alcohol, and some have been arrested and charged with criminal offences. Although some young people have initially engaged with their education provision, there has been a recent decline in attendance. Leaders and managers have not taken a robust approach to assessing the likely impact of admitting highly vulnerable young people with challenging behaviour in quick succession. As part of the admissions process managers do have discussions around the needs of young people, and how these will be met. They do not undertake a thorough impact risk assessment. This means there is insufficient analysis of how the behaviour demonstrated by one young person could potentially put another at risk. Consequently, some young people have been encouraged to engage in unsafe behaviour by others who have recently been admitted. Leaders and managers do not obtain sufficient information from placing authorities prior to admitting young people. In one case, the referral information was out of date, and stated that no assessment had been undertaken to establish whether the	

young person would be suitable for residential care. This issue was not explored by the Registered Manager prior to the young person being admitted.

As a result of poor admission planning, the home has become unsettled. There have been a number of incidents where young people's challenging behaviour has resulted in staff being assaulted and property being damaged. Some young people have engaged in anti-social behaviour in the community. This has resulted in the police being called to the home on a number of occasions and neighbours making complaints to the home and external agencies, including the regulator.

The Registered Manager has made attempts to resolve the neighbour's complaints, but the situation has not improved. Leaders and managers from the organisation are now engaging with the police and District Council Anti-Social Behaviour Officer. An action plan has been agreed to achieve a longer term solution to these problems.

Staff have sometimes struggled to maintain positive behaviour within the home. On one occasion this was partly attributable to an insufficient number of experienced staff on duty. Records indicate that during a sustained period of challenging behaviour over a particular weekend, only one experienced permanent member of staff was on duty. Other staff working included bank, agency and recently appointed workers.

Retention of experienced members of staff has been problematic. Since the inspection in May 2015 five of the nine permanent staff have left the home. Although the organisation continuously seeks to recruit new staff, and has rectified the shortage of experienced staff at the home, inconsistency has diminished the effectiveness of the service and support given to young people.

Leaders and managers do not robustly challenge placing authorities when they are perceived as not meeting their responsibilities to young people. Although they do report poor practice, they do not escalate their concerns where an inadequate response is made. Similarly, leaders and managers are not pro-active in ensuring they have sufficient information and clarity of young people's circumstances. This has included a failure to establish the legal basis for accommodating one young person. In another case, the implications of the police taking a protection order, and the potential for a young person's liberty to be deprived, was not examined or fully understood by leaders and managers. Many young people's files do not contain signed local authority placement plans to evidence the statutory basis for which accommodation is provided.

Three recommendations were made at the full inspection. One of these has been acted upon, and consequently young people have more opportunities to reflect on how the behaviour of their peers can affect them personally.

The recommendation relating to arrangements for independent return home interviews, following a missing episode, has not been effectively pursued. Records

indicate that only four interviews have taken place despite thirty two missing person reports being made. The record does not provide information on how many interviews may have been offered but refused. Consequently, the record is not an effective tool for monitoring and evaluating how effective the home and placing authorities are in ensuring these interviews take place.

Effective action has not taken place in relation to the recommendation made about care planning and setting relevant targets for young people. Many of the targets set for young people are vague. They do not identify specific steps that will enable young people to achieve them. Consequently, it is not always possible to encourage young people by demonstrating to them what they have achieved in relation to their targets.

Leaders and managers recognise this has been a disruptive period, and have recently taken some steps to address the concerns. This has included a team building day, which also included young people. Consideration has been given to putting a temporary stop to admissions. Further action is required to address the shortfalls identified in this inspection.

Information about this children's home

This section should outline:

The home caters for up to four young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned. Children and young people have access to the organisations school which is separately registered.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/05/2015	CH - Full	Good
13/01/2015	CH - Full	Good
07/08/2014	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
20/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress

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

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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
5: Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met In order to meet the engaging with the wider system standard, with particular reference to challenging the placing authority, the registered person must ensure that staff: Regulation 5 (c) challenge the placing authority or the relevant person if they consider the response to be inadequate	08/02/2016
*6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with specific reference to assessing the likely impact of new admissions to the home, the registered person must: Regulation 6 (2) (d) ensure that any care that is arranged or provided for the child satisfies the conditions in paragraph 3 (3) (b) that the care meets the child's needs (3) (c) (i) the care is delivered by a person who has the experience, knowledge and skills to deliver that care	08/02/2016
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, with particular reference to setting goals and targets specific to a child's circumstances, children should receive: Regulation 14 (1) (a) effectively planned care in or through the children's home	08/02/2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with	08/02/2016

particular reference to staff caring for children and monitoring the number and outcomes of independent return home interviews the registered person must: Regulation 13 (2) (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child 13 (2) (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home	
The registered person must co-operate with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the child's placement plan. (Regulation 17 (2)). Specifically, signed placement plans which clearly define the statutory provision under which accommodation is provided, should be kept for each child	08/02/2016

* These requirements are subject to statutory requirement notice.

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*, which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, workbased learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2015