

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, self-harming, minor physical difficulties and mental health issues.

The registered manager's position has been vacant since 3 October 2018. A manager has been appointed and is preparing to apply for registration with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 30 to 31 October 2018

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: 15 November 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/11/2017	Full	Good
23/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/08/2016	Full	Good
18/12/2015	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

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 compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (3) The registered person must— (a) keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and (b) notify HMCI of any revision. (Regulation 16 (1)(3)(a)(b))	28/12/2018
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (2) In particular the registered person must ensure that— (c) a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1)(2)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that any entries made in medication records are signed and dated appropriately. The registered person must also ensure that the reasons that staff alter or cross out entries on medication administration sheets are recorded.	28/12/2018

Recommendations

- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that each child's day to day health and well-being needs are met. Staff should work to make the children's home an environment that supports children's physical, mental and emotional health, in line with the approach set out in the home's Statement of Purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.15)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff appropriately monitor that the balance between children's right to privacy and care does not affect their well-being. The registered person should also help children to understand which holds the staff may use if they restrain them.

- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the

workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should:

- detail the necessary management and staffing structure, (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education), the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the homes Statement of Purpose;
- detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications);
- detail the process for managing and improving poor performance;
- detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see regulation 33 (4)(b)) and keep appropriate records for staff in the home.

The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff – including the home’s manager. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.8)

In particular, the registered person should ensure that any member of staff who is responsible for undertaking a fire risk assessment is appropriately trained to do so.

- Some records may be kept electronically (regulation 38) provided that this information can be easily accessed by anyone with a legitimate need to view it and, if required, be reproduced in a legible form. Electronic records should be held at the individual home in accordance with data protection principles. IT systems should ensure the safe storage of these records and business continuity planning should be in place to prevent loss or damage to them. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 14.2)
- 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 because of their review.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children can explain how living here has supported them to progress, and they like the staff who care for them. The staff build very positive relationships with the children. Conversations that staff have with children build children's attachment to the home and promote good relationships between children. One child said the changes she had made were due to her finding staff at the home who really care for her, adding, 'No matter what I do, they will not abandon me.'

Children are helped to develop their own identity, confidence and feelings of self-worth. The organisation inventively supported children to be meaningfully occupied during the summer holidays. They organised a 'My Choice Olympics' competition, which children from this home won. To celebrate their achievements, the children and staff had a meal out and their winner's certificate is proudly displayed in the house. The events provided a range of sporting activities that encouraged teamwork, promoted an interest in physical activity and were a lot of fun.

Children's views are sought regularly and are valued. Children help to decide what they want to achieve from living here and their care plans reflect these views. If necessary, children have the support of an advocate who they can contact when they want to.

Staff encourage and promote children's engagement and experiences at school and college. Children generally attend school and aspire to do well. Where children are not in school, the staff support local authorities to ensure that children can be tutored at home and find the right educational placement as soon as possible.

Staff engage well with parents. Any contact a child has with their family is planned and supported well. Staff recognise the importance of helping parents to build appropriate relationships with their child and staff guide parents appropriately to make good decisions about how to support their child.

The home is generally very pleasant, clean and homely. This is in stark contrast to one child's bedroom which was very cluttered and unkempt. The staff had not maintained an appropriate balance between the child's right to privacy and their duty to provide nurture and care and to maintain a healthy environment in the child's bedroom. This was rectified during the inspection and no other areas were found to be inappropriately maintained.

Medication is administered well. The staff have appropriately adjusted their practice to accommodate a child's complex health needs. Any concerns about medication-related practice are carefully evaluated. The staff do not, however, consistently record information about medication accurately. The child has not been harmed by these recording deficits, but such actions increase the potential for harm and do not provide a clear record of the medication that has been administered.

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

Children feel safe here and are protected well. The staff carefully follow safeguarding procedures. They have a good understanding of safeguarding matters and use this knowledge appropriately to identify concerns and to make decisions about how to protect children.

Staff work closely with safeguarding agencies. When staff are concerned about how an agency is managing a concern about one of the children, they confidently make their views known so that the best decision can be made about how to safeguard the child.

Positive behaviour is promoted well. The staff successfully helped the children to empathise with each other and to rebuild their relationships when the children had a falling out. This meant that when one child left the home, this was with good relationships that she can, and is, returning to. A memory book that was made for her by the children who remained at the home is now a treasured possession that helped her to move on.

Managers and staff respond well if a child goes missing from the home. Since the beginning of the year, the number of times children have gone missing has decreased considerably. Staff take the right action to try to prevent children from going missing. They will follow children immediately and are supported to make proper risk assessments about children's safety. When a child is missing, the staff work with other agencies very effectively to find them as soon as possible.

One-to-one discussions are held every week with each child. The staff's skills in managing these discussions is good. The content and timing of the conversations are carefully considered to encourage children to talk as openly as possible. The staff also find different ways of discussing a subject with a child if they think one approach is not working well. This shows that staff are persistent and engage well with children about difficult subjects.

Difficult behaviour is responded to well. Detailed risk assessments support the staff to understand how to keep children safe and how to keep themselves safer. The assessments are reviewed and are followed appropriately by staff.

While restraint is now rarely used, children do not know the holds that staff might use if this is needed in the future. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that children are supported to recognise good and poor practice and to tell someone if they think that they are not held properly.

Health and safety issues are identified well and are rectified swiftly. The fire risk assessment is completed as required, and staff put into practice many aspects of its contents. However, the person completing the assessment has not been trained to do so. Although the actions that have been recommended in order to reduce risk promote a homely approach to care, they do not concur with current practice. This did not pose a risk to children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are ambitious for children and work hard to ensure that the staff have the necessary knowledge and skills. The staff said that the recent changes to the home's management team have been handled well. However, it is early days as the manager only commenced her role on 1 October 2018.

The planning, monitoring and reviewing systems are effective in some areas. For example, managers undertake random competency tests of staff's safeguarding knowledge and the staff complete weekly health and safety checks. However, detail in the home's statement of purpose is not up to date. It continues to state that the home is therapeutic when this is an aim that staff are working towards, and it refers to previous guidance and regulations.

The six-monthly report on the home is very detailed but it lacks analysis and evaluation. This is a missed opportunity for managers to use it as a tool to identify any areas that need further development or to ensure that they have a full understanding of the strengths of the home.

While information is securely stored, access to some documents was difficult during the inspection. The lack of a backup key to the cabinet containing sensitive information means that access to these documents relies on the manager being present. The area manager confirmed that this would be resolved. The method of labelling of electronic records of key-work sessions does not assist managers to easily oversee what discussions have been held with children.

There are sufficient numbers of staff on duty each day to provide good care for the children. Staff have regular supervision and team meetings. The staff are very positive about the support they receive and said that they can talk to managers about any concerns that they have and things that are going well. Children said that there are some changes of people who look after them, but, overall, they know, and have established relationships with, the staff who look after them every day. Where necessary, additional staff are provided to support the children.

Staff learning and development are promoted well. The content of courses is supplemented when new learning is needed, and the staff can say how their training has supported them in their roles.

Staff are now completing their qualifications within appropriate timescales unless there are exceptional circumstances. The staff spoke positively about how the new qualification assessor is supporting them to complete their coursework. The assessor is further developing learning facilities so that staff can easily find information about their course topics and can complete their qualifications as quickly as possible.

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

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, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding 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 1231, 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 <http://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 <http://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: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018