

SC368637

Registered provider: Channels & Choices Kent Limited Liability Partnership

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for up to three children aged between seven and 16 on admission. It is operated by a private organisation. The home supports children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and attachment issues. Some children may have a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since August 2022.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 March 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 12 October 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/10/2021	Full	Outstanding
01/07/2019	Full	Outstanding
26/02/2019	Full	Good
07/11/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make exceptional progress while living at the home. The manager and deputy manager are highly committed to children. They are ambitious and lead a very caring staff team who understand the sensitive individual needs of younger children. Children make significant progress in settling, overcoming adverse experiences of care and multiple placement breakdowns. Children have restored trust and positivity in adults and now have very realistic prospects of moving on to a successful foster care placement in line with their wishes.

Children receive excellent quality and highly individualised support, and because of this they make sustained progress from their individual starting points. The restorative and therapeutic approach enhances the care provided and suits children very well. This means that children who have experienced trauma or difficult attachments settle quickly and begin to thrive. One relative said, 'I couldn't believe the change in her, now she is making friends. The communication is fabulous, her progress is unbelievable, what they have done for her is amazing. I wish all children could get the quality of care and help that she gets there.'

Children enjoy school and their academic studies. They have made better than expected progress with education to catch up with their peers and their expected levels of attainment. One education professional said the home had been instrumental in supporting the school to help one child to catch up, and the child was now expected to pass the expected levels for their age group. Children's health needs are actively monitored and managed. Any issues requiring support are acted on quickly.

Children receive extensive therapeutic support from the provider's specialist team. This team works very closely with the home's staff to review progress and has oversight of the implementation of strategies and their effectiveness. When children are moving on from the home to foster care, this support is extended to the new carers in a safe and monitored way for consistency. This has been essential to the success of placements. A foster carer for one child who had lived at the home said they felt well supported and prepared to meet the child's needs from the very start of the process.

Children who move on from the home continue to be valued and cared for by the home's staff. Children often come back to visit and still receive presents at Christmas and on birthdays. One foster carer of a child who moved from the home said, 'They made such a lovely girl of her, she still speaks so warmly of them all. I can see why they are outstanding. When the staff dropped her off, they all had tears in their eyes. When she goes back to visit, I can see in her face how happy she is to see them.'

The manager and staff are passionate advocates for children to explore and celebrate their individual heritage and identities. There is a very strong culture of equality and embracing positive values to celebrate all people. For some children, this has been their first positive experience and has been instrumental in them learning about their heritage, learning new languages and trying new foods. Staff have started to learn these languages and completed qualifications in understanding different cultures and traditions. Children have been able to explore Caribbean culture at markets for clothing and hair products, which has helped strengthen their identity. Relatives have been especially appreciative of this. One parent said, 'They have embraced her for the child she is and valued her for her heritage. I was worried she would be judged for her heritage, and she wasn't, they have been so warm to her. Whenever I see her, she is beautiful, really nicely dressed.'

Children benefit from extensive opportunities for enrichment and enjoyment. Staff have been creative and enthusiastic in exploring ideas for new experiences. Children have learned to swim and ride horses, and they own bicycles. Children are active at community events and have attended local festivals, community celebrations and Pride events. Children talked proudly about the community fundraising events that they have been active in, which brought strong feelings of achievement. The manager calls these events 'magic moments' and keeps photos of them in special books which staff and children look at together to reflect on the enjoyment. They are also shared with families, which enhances everyone's enjoyment and well-being.

The home is welcoming, spacious and vibrant. Children's personal spaces are decorated and furnished to their own tastes and interests. Children's photos of special events and happy times are placed all around the house, giving a homely and nurturing atmosphere.

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

The managers and staff are skilled and experienced in understanding the impact of adverse experiences and past traumas on children's well-being. The provider's therapy team works very closely with the manager to explore risks to children to keep them safe without limiting opportunities for increased independence. The manager and therapists ensure that staff are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to respond proportionately to behavioural incidents.

Children have positive relationships with staff. Coupled with effective implementation of high-quality behaviour support plans, this has led to significant reductions in disruptive behaviour. All the children have experienced previous placement breakdowns. However, since moving to the home, they have settled and thrived.

Professionals and relatives all said that incidents of challenging behaviour have significantly reduced for the children since moving to the home. They gave credit to the manager and staff for their consistent and expert approach. Children have comprehensive positive behaviour support plans in place, which staff understand

and follow consistently. External professionals said that this had been key in helping children to settle and form positive attachments with staff.

Incidents of behaviours requiring restrictive interventions are minimal. After any incident, there is very detailed and robust analytical exploration of why an incident occurred and how effective staff's responses were. Staff with specialist training review this work quickly after any incident.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from care. However, the manager has assessed risks of going missing and has responsive plans in place. When children are helped to be more independent in travelling alone, very detailed planning has taken place to mitigate possible risky scenarios.

Children say that they feel very safe, they have strong, trusting relationships with staff and listen to them when advice is given that helps them make wise choices. Children of all ages have explored their feelings and worries with staff in a way that suits them. The manager has sourced a range of age-appropriate books and information for children to read with staff, to explore and understand why adults want them to be safe.

The manager has built a culture of using consequences instead of sanctions, following evidence-based practice. This includes staff using clear and child-friendly terminology when explaining why they have needed to take action. Whenever incidents occur, the manager ensures that children can make reparation and restore relations with the adults involved.

Children are protected by a robust approach to safeguarding concerns, which have been minimal. Staff are skilled and confident in recognising abuse or when a child is at risk of harm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Managers know the children very well. Since arriving, the registered manager has brought an approach of therapeutic care, with an ambition for positive risk-taking to drive independence. This has helped staff embrace and be confident in a culture of being ambitious for children's growth and making progress to the next steps in their lives.

The manager's leadership ensures that staff remain continually focused on children's needs and have a strong desire for children to make the best progress possible. The manager works closely with the provider's specialist therapy staff to help staff grow in confidence and fully understand the planned therapeutic delivery of care. Professionals and relatives said this has been key to children making better than expected progress.

Managers are exceptionally aspirational for children; this is illustrated by the children's successful steps towards their desired family-based care placements. Managers implement the provider's research-based model of assessing and mapping

children's progress. This work has been essential in identifying when children are ready to consider foster care and for the matching process to begin. This work has been essential for social workers and independent reviewing officers to have confidence based on evidence.

The new manager and deputy managers have worked quickly to build a positive, open and honest working relationship. They understand each other's skills and experience, which they use to strong effect. Staff said that managers have complementary skills and strengths which have made them an excellent team. This ensures that the home continues to develop and enhance its care for children.

The training and support on offer to staff has continued to grow since the last inspection. Staff see this enhanced offer as a cornerstone of their ability to provide exceptional care. Staff have regular high-quality supervision and support opportunities with managers. Staff said that this helps them feel valued and motivated to provide the best care that they can to enhance children's life experiences. There are regular reflective and inclusive handover meetings, in which staff feel that their views and ideas are welcomed, which in turn encourages creativity. Staff benefit from forums with the provider's therapeutic staff to explore and reflect on the care that they give to children. Staff said that this is essential for inclusivity and consistency across the team and is a safe space to share what has or has not worked.

The management team has established very positive relationships with children's care, health and education professionals. A social worker said, 'This has been a really good home for her. They know her very well and have given a high level of very thoughtful care to meet her needs. They are always contactable and keep me informed with good joined-up working. They have a very good relationship with school, underpinned by them knowing her very well.' An education professional said, 'There is excellent communication and follow-up. The link between home and school is strong. This fosters a feeling of security for the young person.'

The manager recognises the importance of children rebuilding and maintaining relationships with family. They have instilled a culture of kindness and respect to relatives. One professional said that this exceptional work has benefited all professionals involved with one child's care. A relative said, 'They have the A-game there. They really look after children's individual needs, they take their time. I really can't fault them, they are amazing. She is so happy.'

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: SC368637

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Channels & Choices Kent LLP

Registered provider address: 44 The Pantiles, The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells,
Kent TN2 5TN

Responsible individual: Kate Stephenson

Registered manager: Nicola Standen

Inspector

Jamie Cousins, Social Care Inspector

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