

SC407169

Registered provider: Choices Home For Children Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 December 2017

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: 29 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people benefit from personalised care provided by a dedicated and nurturing staff team.
- Staff are skilled at developing trusting relationships with young people. These mutual trusting relationships help young people to feel safe and secure in their home.

- Young people make noticeable progress in all aspects of their lives, due to the staff team's continued care, support and guidance.
- Young people have a strong voice at this home and they are meaningfully engaged in decision-making.
- Staff work in partnership with other professionals to make sure that any major changes in the young person's life are well planned, such as moving into and on from the home.
- Young people thoroughly enjoy the wide range of activities, which improve their self-esteem and provide them with opportunities to try new things.
- Young people are safe because staff get to know the young people well and they are fully alert to potential dangers, taking effective action when necessary to minimise harm.
- An enthusiastic and child-centred manager leads the team well. She is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The lack of authority from social workers regarding the use of door alarms.
- The accuracy of staff rotas.
- Staff recruitment is not in line with safer recruitment requirements.
- Slow reporting of allegations against staff to the relevant safeguarding professionals.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/06/2016	Full	Outstanding
28/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
28/05/2015	Full	Good

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 may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)) In particular, the use of alarms on young people's bedroom doors.	09/02/2018
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) & (3)(d)) In particular, exploring gaps in employment and verifying the information provided in employment references.	09/02/2018
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. (2) The registered person must (a) maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4. (Regulation 37 (1) & (2)(a)) In particular, staff duty roster and a record of the actual rosters worked.	09/02/2018
The registered provider must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40(4)(c))	09/02/2018

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people benefit from well-planned, personalised care that enables them to make the necessary changes and improvements in their lives. They make noticeable progress from their starting points across all aspects of their lives. Staff understand young people's needs and help them to overcome any obstacles to their progress. For example, when young people refuse to attend school and have been without formal education for

some time, staff work collaboratively with the school, social worker and the young person to overcome the barriers to their learning. This has involved sharing young people's wishes and feelings at education meetings, negotiating suitable timetables, and requesting psychological assessments. Additionally, staff put incentives in place to encourage young people to re-engage with their learning. As a result, young people's attendance and engagement with their education improve.

Staff are skilled at building warm trusting relationships with young people. Their consistent nurturing care supports young people to develop and maintain positive attachments. This is reflected in young people's comments: 'Staff are supportive, funny, good cooks and they have given me new beginnings,' and 'This is a fantastic home; everyone who comes here should be glad they are here.' Staff's consistent care and ability to establish positive relationships are key strengths of the team and central to young people's progress.

Young people are listened to and they are encouraged to get involved in the running of the home, for example making decisions about their activities and menus, as well as designing their own bedrooms. As a result, young people feel valued and respected.

Young people enjoy a range of activities and hobbies, such as water sports, football and swimming. Additionally, they enjoy spending quality time with their staff and friends. This provides young people with opportunities to develop their interests, skills and friendships. What is more, these activities are helping to build young people's self-esteem, while at the same time, diverting them into constructive and safe pursuits.

Arrangements are in place to promote young people's health and well-being. Staff advise young people about key health issues, including personal hygiene and nutrition, and they encourage them to lead and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, young people have access to appropriate specialist services, such as therapeutic and counselling support.

Young people's moves into and out of the home are well planned. Three young people have successfully moved out since the last inspection and staff supported these transitions extremely well. Some young people have kept in touch with staff since moving on from the home. This reflects staff's commitment to develop and maintain meaningful relationships with the young people in their care.

The home provides young people with a safe and secure place to live where they feel cared for and wanted. The house is welcoming and homely and decorated to a high standard. However, bedroom door alarms are used in the home to monitor young people's movements, which can detract from the homely environment. Additionally, it was not clear in the young people's placement plans why these alarms were necessary, nor had permission been sought from each child's responsible authority.

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

The use of comprehensive risk assessment and individualised behaviour management plans promotes the safety and well-being of young people. As a result, staff have a good understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities of the young people and they take appropriate action when safeguarding concerns arise.

Staff are trained to deal with safeguarding concerns and difficult behaviour and situations. The majority of staff are confident and competent in implementing the home's policies and procedures should they have any concerns about young people's safety or welfare. Professionals speak highly of this service in how it protects young people. A social worker said, 'Staff have helped [young person] to make safer choices. She has made good progress since moving to the home and risks have reduced.'

Safeguarding is a priority at this home and, in the main, staff are alert to all potential danger and they tackle safeguarding concerns competently. However, safeguarding procedures have not been consistently followed, in particular when reporting allegations regarding staff practice to the relevant professionals as required.

A particular strength of the home is the stability of the staff team. This enables young people to develop warm and trusting relationships with staff, whom they respect. Staff are patient, calm and good-humoured. What is more, they are equally confident about challenging unsafe or unwanted behaviour. This often involves providing the young people with time and space to work things out for themselves. Young people appreciate the support that they receive from the team and recognise their progress. A young person said, because of staff's support, 'I'm controlling my anger issue better.' Incidents of young people going missing from home, offending, child sexual exploitation and aggressive behaviour decrease significantly as young people settle into the home.

Staff are skilled at de-escalating challenging situations and behaviour and they benefit from ongoing training in behaviour management. Consequently, staff rarely have to use physical intervention measures, such as restraint. When they have, it has been to safeguard young people, using safe and age-appropriate techniques. Improvements have been made in the use of restraints at the home. Young people are now routinely provided with the opportunity to speak to an independent person about the restraint and provide their view of what happened. Independent scrutiny of physical restraints in the home enhances young people's safety and helps the manager to identify any patterns or practice-related concerns.

Shortfalls in safer recruitment practice are evident, including not exploring gaps in employment history or verifying information in references. These shortfalls compromise the vetting procedures for new staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, the registered manager and responsible individual have left the home. A new manager has been appointed and she is suitably qualified and experienced for the role. Her application to register with Ofsted is progressing.

The manager showed enthusiasm to lead the team well, and the young people's welfare is at the centre of her practice. Although she has only been in post for five months, she has introduced some positive changes to the home, including improvements in paperwork and staff shift patterns. The newly appointed responsible individual and the dedicated and experienced deputy manager wholly support the running and development of the service.

Staff feel well supported by their colleagues and the manager. They said that they benefit from regular professional supervision and have opportunities to continue to learn and develop. Staff benefit from monthly team meetings, which help them to reflect on practice, discuss young people's needs and identify areas of learning. In addition to this, staff training is strongly promoted and the team is encouraged to access a wide range of courses. The manager confirmed that all bank and waking night staff who work at the home benefit from attending team meetings and having formal supervision to support their learning and development.

Young people's records are detailed, well structured and present a good overall picture of their background and life experiences. Young people are actively involved in the making of their placement plans, which helps staff to focus on young people's wishes and views, as well as their needs. Case records provide young people with good evidence of their progress and positive experiences at the home.

The manager makes sure that staff understand the ethos of the home and this promotes a continuity of care for young people. The team works collaboratively with all professionals, agencies and parents/relatives. This effective partnership working is supporting consistency in the young people's care.

Effective internal and external monitoring systems are in place. The independent monthly visits are thorough and provide the manager with a detailed overview of the quality of care and protection provided in the home. Additionally, the manager's monthly quality assurance audit provides clear evaluation on all aspects of life within the home and identifies areas for improvement and development.

Improvements can be made in staff rotas to ensure that they consistently reflect the actual rotas worked. So far, the errors found in staff rotas have not had a direct effect on young people's care or welfare; however, they have the potential to do so. For example, they could compromise future safeguarding investigations, such as allegations made against staff.

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: SC407169

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Choices Home For Children Limited

Registered provider address: Choices Home for Children Limited, 31 Wellington Road, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 7ED

Responsible individual: Simon Weldon

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Marina Tully, social care inspector

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