

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 home is privately owned and run. It is registered to care for up to four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Four children were living at the home at the time of this inspection.

The manager was registered by Ofsted in July 2020. He is suitably experienced.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 November 2022

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 **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 15 December 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/12/2021	Full	Good
12/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
11/06/2019	Full	Good
18/06/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are provided with a stable home environment, underpinned by good decision-making about which children should come to live at the home. As a result, three of the four children have lived at the home for a number of years and see it as their home. This provides them with stability and security during their adolescence.

Children say they have staff members they trust and can speak to about important issues. Children say they would be happy to live at the home until they reach adulthood.

Children are encouraged to develop their independence skills in the home and in the community. Staff support older children to spend time with friends, including overnight stays, working alongside children's social workers to ensure these arrangements keep children safe.

All of the children are in education. One child who came to live at the home more recently started at her new school during the week of the inspection, after a short delay in identifying a school for her. She is now attending a local school, and staff have ensured she has all the uniform and equipment she needs to settle in and make progress with her learning.

Some children have well-established therapeutic input from professionals external to the home. Staff support children to attend regular appointments with their therapists. Good communication between staff and therapeutic practitioners means that those involved in the day-to-day care of children have the information they need to offer children the right support and understanding.

Children's time with their family is encouraged when this is assessed as being in their best interests. One child is taken by staff to see her family some distance from the home each weekend. The child's mother told the inspector how valuable it is to maintain family relationships and make her feel part of her child's life.

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

Staff have developed a good understanding of children's needs, risks and strengths as a result of the length of time most of the children have lived at the home.

Children's written plans and assessments provide staff with the information they need to care for children in a way which reduces the risk of harm. Staff are not regularly reading updated care records. As a result, it is not clear that they always know about changes which may affect the child and how they should respond to them.

Staff play a key role in the multi-disciplinary planning and response for a child at risk of exploitation. Effective information-sharing helps the staff, along with other professionals, reduce risks to the child.

Staff have not been trained to identify and respond effectively to the risks for a child who self-harms with ligatures. This places the child at increased risk of harm.

Incidences of staff physically holding children are infrequent. Where this does happen, the practice is appropriate and proportionate. Staff records of incidents are good, and this aids transparency of practice. The registered manager oversees and evaluates the record of each incident. Thorough discussions take place with children after they are held by staff to ensure their experiences are understood.

The registered manager is not ensuring that all staff involved in physical holds of children are receiving a post-incident debrief. This means that he is not gathering all the available information to conduct his evaluations of practice.

When children go missing from home, staff are proactive in following children's individual plans in order to find them and bring them home safely. Records of these events do not always distinguish between visits to children by police to conduct safe and well checks and the visits from the local authority independent visitors. This means there is a lack of accountability for practice in this area.

Children's privacy is respected, and searches of children's bedrooms are rare. When searches take place in the absence of children, it is not always clear when they have been informed of the search and what has been done with items of concern that are found. Children's understanding of the rationale for these searches is not always clear.

The registered manager ensures that concerns brought to his attention in relation to the practice of staff are addressed appropriately. This includes initiating formal processes to investigate and respond to practice concerns. This helps to ensure that only trusted, safe and reliable adults are employed to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager provides consistency and stability to the staff and children. Children speak highly of him, and he has good day-to-day oversight of children's care.

A number of non-permanent staff are used in the home to provide additional support for children who need higher staffing ratios. The registered manager has lessened the impact of this on children by using, wherever possible, the same core team of additional staff.

Staff say they feel well supported by the registered manager and feel able to raise issues with him. Staff, including the registered manager, are not receiving formal

professional supervision of their practice with the level of frequency detailed in the provider's own supervision policy. One new member of staff, with no previous experience in children's residential care, had no formal supervision for the first two months he was in post. A new deputy manager of the home is supervising staff, although she has had no training to do so. No staff have had an annual appraisal of their practice.

Although staff get regular informal support from the registered manager, the lack of regular formal supervision and annual appraisals of their performance leaves staff without the robust oversight required to undertake their roles to a high standard. A requirement was made at the last inspection in relation to supervision of staff. This requirement is restated.

The registered manager is not ensuring that staff are up to date with their required refresher training. There is drift and delay with a small number of staff who have not completed identified training in a timely manner. These staff are not being held to account effectively. As a result, there is no evidence that they have the up-to-date knowledge and skills required for their role.

The registered manager's quality of care review reports lack reflection and evaluation. There is no input from children, families or staff. Action plans have generic tasks to be completed with no clear timescales. There is no oversight of the review by the responsible individual. A requirement in relation to the quality of these reports was made at the last inspection. This requirement is restated.

At the last inspection, requirements were made to ensure that the admission and discharge records for the home met regulation and that the statement of purpose for the home was regularly updated and shared with Ofsted. Neither of these requirements have been met, and they are both restated.

Senior leaders and managers have not ensured that all parts of the home provide children with a pleasant and homely environment to live in. Damage caused to children's bedrooms has not been repaired quickly. Not all children have suitable window coverings. The carpet on the stairs and landing needs cleaning and securing. The bathroom has mould in some areas. This does not help children to feel valued.

The responsible individual has acted to improve the quality of monthly visits to the home by the independent person. A new provider has been commissioned for this service but has not yet started this work. More broadly, the responsible individual is not using the learning from inspections of his other homes to improve practice.

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, the 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 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; and that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(d)) Specifically, the registered person should ensure that: ■ all staff have read and understood children's risk assessments and risk management plans ■ all staff have face-to-face ligature training ■ all staff have up-to-date training in relation to first aid, safeguarding and child sexual exploitation ■ mould is removed from the bathroom tiles and the bath tap is repaired ■ carpets are cleaned or replaced and are properly fitted and secured ■ children's bedrooms have adequate window coverings and damage is quickly repaired	24 December 2022

■ children's bedrooms and the hallway, stairs and landing are decorated to a good standard.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii)) Specifically, the registered person should ensure that all staff involved in a restraint have a post-incident discussion with the registered manager, which informs the manager's evaluation of the measure.	24 December 2022
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review, the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report"). The registered person must—	31 January 2023

supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))	
A responsible individual must— have the capacity, experience and skills to supervise the management of the home, or the homes, in respect of which the responsible individual is nominated. (Regulation 26 (7)(b))	31 January 2023
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; and ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)) Schedule 4 A record in the form of a register showing in respect of each child— the date of the child's admission to the home; the date on which the child ceased to be accommodated in the home; the child's address immediately before being accommodated in the home; the child's address on leaving the home; the child's placing authority; and	24 December 2022

the statutory provision (if any) under which the child is accommodated. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c)) Specifically, the registered person should ensure that all staff receive supervision with the frequency detailed in the provider's supervision policy; that staff in a supervisory role have completed supervision training; and that all staff have annual appraisals. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	31 January 2023
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	24 December 2022

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that missing-from-home records clearly distinguish between the completion of police safe and well checks and the completion of independent return home interviews. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards, page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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: SC407169

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Choices Home for Children Limited

Registered provider address: 31 Wellington Road, Nantwich CW5 7ED

Responsible individual: Simon Haddrell

Registered manager: Daniel Kinrade

Inspector

Dawn Parton, Social Care Inspector

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