

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 provides care for up to four children. The provider states in their statement of purpose that they provide care for children with EBD (social and emotional difficulties).

The manager was registered by Ofsted in July 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 21 January 2021 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 December 2021

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: 12 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
11/06/2019	Full	Good
18/06/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
06/12/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children with no previous experience of being cared for away from their families are supported to establish relationships with other children living at the home as well as with the staff team. Good matching of children coming to live at the home means that the home provides a consistent and homely environment for children. This helps them to develop trust and a sense of belonging.

Children who have experienced instability in other care settings make good progress from their starting points. Staff support children well through periods of crisis and maintain the home as a place of safety and stability for them. As a result, children do not have to experience further placement moves and the uncertainty and upset these bring.

One child, who left the home in the reporting period, was supported to move on in a planned way as a move towards independence. Staff understand the feelings associated with moving on. Children are helped to recognise the part the home has played in their life story and are provided with a memory book of their time at the home.

Children lead active lifestyles. They are supported to maintain their interests and hobbies and encouraged to develop new ones. For example, staff ensured that a child new to the home was able to join a local football team where he is now actively involved. Other children attend art classes and horse-riding lessons. This supports children to expand their horizons and develop their sense of self-worth.

Children living some distance from their families and communities are helped to maintain their important relationships. Staff take children to see their families and promote positive relationships between children, their families, and other important people. One child is being supported to maintain his school placement in his home local authority. It is recognised that this meets his educational and emotional needs at a time of uncertainty and change.

Children's physical and mental health needs are identified and addressed. All the children are receiving specialist support in relation to their emotional well-being. Staff have a good understanding of the impact of trauma on children. They care for them in a way which is nurturing and helps them to make progress in coming to terms with previous harmful life experiences.

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

Children's care records are comprehensive, and information is updated regularly. Risk assessments and plans support staff to care for children. One-to-one key-work sessions address information and objectives within care plans and support children to make progress.

Children can identify members of staff they have particularly trusting relationships with. This means that children have adults they can talk to and share any worries or concerns with.

The use of physical restraint is proportionate and appropriate. Written records are of a good quality and demonstrate clearly the circumstances leading to the intervention and the actions of staff. There is good oversight and evaluation of these incidents by the registered manager. Children are spoken to, in order to gain their views after physical intervention has been used. This means that children feel heard and can contribute verbally to their own plans.

Staff reflect on children's wider experiences and the possible triggers for behaviours which demonstrate children's distress. This reflective practice supports staff to care for children in a way which reduces the need for physical intervention. Staff are able to reduce children's heightened behaviours using the organisation's model of practice. Police are not called to manage incidents within the home. This reduces the likelihood of children becoming criminalised and supports them to feel safe in their home.

Children do not go missing from the home. Although this behaviour is not a current risk, comprehensive missing-from-care plans are in place and readily accessible by staff. This means that if a child does go missing, staff have all the information needed to respond quickly to reduce risks and support the child to safely return home.

Allegations made by children, about the conduct of staff, are responded to swiftly and appropriately by the registered manager. Prompt information-sharing with the placing local authority and the local designated officer means that concerns raised by children are formally addressed and children are safeguarded.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager provides stable leadership to the staff team, and he is supported by an experienced deputy manager. There is good succession planning in place for the deputy manager's imminent move to another home within the organisation. This reduces the risks to the quality of care provided to children through a lack of continuity and increased use of temporary staff.

The registered manager has a good understanding of the children in his care. He has ensured that children only come to live at the home if staff can meet their needs. He has good links with placing local authorities and has built positive relationships with commissioners.

Children's care records are, for the most part, held electronically. These are currently not easily accessible to children. As a result, there are significant barriers to children understanding what is being written about them and being able to comment and contribute to their care records.

The registered manager has established systems in place to monitor the progress and experience of children. Quality of care review reports are task focused and lack reflection and evaluation. They are also not currently taking into consideration the views of children, families and other important stakeholders. This means that opportunities are lost to use all the information available to improve practice and support better outcomes for children.

There are appropriate levels of staffing in place, and staff have the skills and knowledge to care for the children at the home. Regular team meetings are used for discussions and reflection. The registered manager is now receiving regular supervision from the responsible individual. This was not the case at the time of the assurance visit to the home. Staff, including those undergoing their probationary period, are still not receiving supervision with the frequency detailed in the providers own policy. Therefore, staff do not have the level of professional oversight, through formal supervision with their manager, which both challenges and supports them to develop their practice further.

The quality of the home environment is a mixed picture, with some areas of the home well decorated. However, other parts of the home need repair and redecoration. Children have homely and personalised living space downstairs, which provides them with a pleasant family environment. The quality of children's bedrooms is inconsistent. All children's bedrooms have blinds rather than curtains at the windows. These do not always give the level of privacy required and do not contribute to keeping children warm, particularly in winter.

The statement of purpose for the home has not been updated to reflect the changes to the provision of clinical therapeutic services within the organisation. In addition, the record of admissions and discharges to the home is not held in a central register, and the registered manager was unable to readily access this information. These omissions have not had an impact on the quality of care for children. This does mean that some information needed to oversee and regulate practice in the home is not readily available.

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 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)) Specifically, the registered person should ensure that the statement of purpose accurately reflects the current arrangements for the provision of therapeutic services and clinical assessment of children.	15 February 2022
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)) Specifically, that the registered person should ensure that staff receive supervision with the frequency set out in the providers supervision policy.	31 January 2022
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—	31 January 2022

that staff help each child to access and contribute to the records kept by the registered person in relation to the child. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f))	
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; ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b))	15 February 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the review of the quality of care provided by the home demonstrates that the views of children, families and professionals external to the home have been taken into consideration and contribute to the outcome of the review and future planning. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)
- The registered person should ensure that any damage is rectified in a timely manner and children are provided with curtains for their bedrooms. Consideration should be given to the use of the large walk-in wardrobe in one bedroom. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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, Cheshire CW5 7ED

Responsible individual: Simon Haddrell

Registered manager: Daniel Kinrade

Inspector

Dawn Parton, Social Care Inspector

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