

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	28/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC407169
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Choices Home for Children Limited
Registered person address	31 Wellington Road, NANTWICH, Cheshire, CW5 7ED

Responsible individual	Susan Mackay
Registered manager	Linda Darbyshire
Inspector	Stella Lovie

Inspection date	28/01/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged Good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has improved effectiveness. The home was last inspected in May 2015 when it received judgements of good in all areas. Three requirements and one recommendation were made to further improve practice. These have all been addressed satisfactorily by the manager. This demonstrates that she learns from inspection activity to promote the development of her service. All the young people have excellent participation and engagement with their education from their starting points. As one education professional confirmed: 'From the outset, staff have been very supportive to his education. He speaks highly of them and has very good relationships with them- especially his key worker and the manager. He is getting on fantastically at the school. He engages really well with the programme. His attendance is nearly 100%. He is on track for all his exams. He's in a great home. They run it very well.' Young people have plans and aspirations for their futures. Some are supported in this by additional coaching in maths to improve their grades. There is ample evidence that young people's self-worth and confidence has grown significantly since the last inspection. For example, some young people are playing competitive sports within local leagues; others have performed in their school shows; and others have worked with the Children's Society on a research project. This helps them to feel valued and to know that they have something to contribute. All the young people give unequivocally positive feedback about their experiences in the home and their relationships with staff. As one young person said: 'This is the best care home I've ever been in and I've been in a few. The staff are all nice and have helped me start to think about my life. They've sorted me out a school. This care home is right on. The manager is funny and not stiff. She's alright even when she tells me off. The other kids are alright as well. I score this home a full on 10 out of 10.' Young people continue to enjoy excellent relationships with staff. The manager and her staff have managed to create a real sense of a nurturing family home. As one external professional commented: 'I found the home to be one of warmest and homely environments I have visited in the eight years of doing this work. From	

first arriving on the doorstep, I felt like I was entering a family home. It has been a pleasure to experience such a quality home and I would like to see the model you use across the country.’ Staff strive to encourage young people to reach out to them when they are in distress rather than act out their feelings. Staff demonstrate great mindfulness in recognising each young person’s triggers so they can be proactive in supporting them. This approach has been successful in reducing overall the frequency of missings and restraints. Staff are very successful in establishing genuinely strong bonds with the young people, even those who have only been in the home for a relatively short time. They are extremely adept at getting the young people to buy into their placement plans. As one social worker enthused: ‘I don’t know what they are doing but they have been really successful with him. They clearly give him real nurturing and consistency that he is prepared to accept from them. I have never had any results for a young person like I’m now having with this one. He is engaging with everything –health, education and therapy. I can’t speak highly enough of the placement. His actions and responses speak for themselves. It’s like someone has kidnapped my previous child! I’m so overwhelmed with how well things are going. He’s smiling, happy and engaging. What more do we want? And it’s not tokenistic. He has developed excellent relationships with the care team there. They consistently apply firm but fair boundaries. I’ve never had this level of success ever. It’s such a fantastic placement there. The nurturing part of it really delivers. It has helped his self-worth to develop at a pace I never thought it would. I’m very proud of him and his progress.’

Young people have a strong sense of safety in the home and in the local area. They trust the staff to be there for them if they have any concerns or worries. As one parent confirmed: ‘I think they’re amazing. I’m going to kidnap the manager and keep her for six months when my son comes home. I can’t fault them. He says he loves it there one day, then hates it the next. But he obviously feels safe and comfortable there as he’d just run away otherwise.’ Staff aim to get the balance right between keeping young people safe and yet enabling them to make mistakes within the safety net of the home. This balance is achieved in full consultation with relevant agencies. This means that staff allow young people to take calculated risks in line with their age and as part of appropriate preparation for independence. Sexual exploitation risks are very well-managed through highly effective working together with partner agencies. This has included some of the young people designing a poster for a local agency to use as part of their awareness-raising in the local area about sexual exploitation risks. Some young people are working with the specialist sexual exploitation police team to learn self-defence techniques. This has given them new skills and has definitely promoted their self-confidence. It also helps them to view the police in a more positive light.

All safeguarding concerns are dealt with swiftly and fairly in line with agreed child protection procedures. There is good evidence that allegations are investigated thoroughly. That said, the records of such investigations do not clearly show the outcome agreed with the local authority designated person, and that the young person, and the person about whom the allegation has been made, have received

feedback about the actions taken and the outcome.

The Registered Manager continues to provide effective leadership. She has been successful in obtaining her higher level qualification in leadership and management since the last inspection. She has established very strong working partnerships with local partner agencies so that young people's holistic needs are met. She provides appropriate challenge if external services needed by young people are not forthcoming. Quality assurance arrangements remain good. Internal monitoring is very reflective and demonstrates the manager has a strong grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of her service. She receives regular positive feedback from the independent visitor who now includes an overall summary about the home's performance. However, that feedback would be strengthened further if it included advice on actions the home could take to promote continual improvement.

In conclusion, the home has definitely improved in its effectiveness since the last inspection. Two recommendations are made to address relatively minor shortfalls.

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/05/2015	CH - Full	Good
03/12/2014	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
10/07/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
19/05/2014	CH - Full	Inadequate

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- 'Any allegation of harm or abuse must be addressed in line with the home's child protection policy; with specific regard to ensuring that the records demonstrate clearly the beginning, middle, and end of the investigation; and give clear feedback about the actions taken, and the outcome, to the young person and the member of staff involved. (The Guide, page 44, paragraph 9.17)
- 'Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care; with specific regard to making regular recommendations as to how the home could improve further. (The Guide, page,65, paragraph 15.5)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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*.

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