

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	02/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC008485
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Choices Home for Children Limited
Registered provider address	31 Wellington Road, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 7ED

Responsible individual	Susan Mackay
Registered manager	Gary Holt
Inspector	Rebecca Quested

Inspection date	02/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC008485

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The registered manager and staff provide aspirational care which promotes the very best outcomes for young people.
- Staff develop positive relationships with young people, who quickly feel safe and secure and invest the home. As one young person said: 'The staff understand young people... I feel settled – they did proper good things for me and the other young people.'
- Young people make exceptional progress from their starting points. A parent told staff: 'When she first came she had a bad attitude, didn't follow rules, took drugs, ran away from home and took risks with older males... she has made so much progress in all areas. If she wasn't sent to you, none of this would have happened.'
- Staff develop excellent relationships with professional stakeholders and families to ensure that young people receive highly individualised and consistent care.
- Staff are passionate about young people's education. All young people attend, engage and achieve, including those who have been disengaged from education for long periods.
- Staff are robust in their challenges to placing authorities and other partners. They advocate effectively for young people so that their views about their care have the maximum influence on their plans.
- There are a couple of shortfalls. The registered manager has not always recorded that he has debriefed staff following the use of restraint, and essential documentation on children looked after is missing for one young person. There has been a delay in notifying Ofsted when serious incidents have occurred. The registered manager immediately started to address these issues during the inspection.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and '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 ensure within 48 hours of the use of the measure of control, discipline or restraint that the registered person or the authorised person or a person authorised by the registered person to do so has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(b)(i))	02/09/2016
The registered person must maintain records for each child, which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to a child, are kept up to date, and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36(1))	02/09/2016

Recommendations

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

- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for six children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or physical disabilities. The home forms part of a small social care company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/06/2015	Full	Good
22/12/2014	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/05/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
<p>Staff provide highly individualised care which influences young people’s excellent outcomes. The registered manager and staff take the time to really understand young people’s needs and develop care which meets their individual specific needs. For example, staff developed a planner for one young person to support their understanding of what is happening now and in the near future.. This enabled the young person to settle quickly on arrival at the home. A social worker said: ‘The home is incredibly proactive in its care of the children placed with them. The progress of my young person has been excellent and in no small part due to the team in place.’</p> <p>All young people develop positive relationships with staff, who they feel genuinely care for them. They respond to staff’s high aspirations and trust to make progress consistently and sustain their improved outcomes. Staff ensure that young people’s views are understood and actioned. They support their wishes and feelings, whenever that is safe and in their best interests. For example, they advocate for young people so that they can remain in placement while they complete their education, as any parent would.</p> <p>Staff ensure that young people are supported to have contact with their families, including those who live a long way from home, so that their sense of identity is maintained and developed. For example, staff are proactive in supporting young people to re-establish contact with their extended family and friends when their previous care experiences have disrupted their relationships. This promotes young people’s self-esteem and makes them feel valued.</p> <p>Staff prepare young people well for the future. They are exceptionally proactive in ensuring that young people attend education, and all young people are engaging well and making excellent progress. A headteacher said: ‘We have a really good relationship with staff. Young people’s attendance is excellent – they are motivated to come in. It is the most proactive home that I work with in terms of promoting young people’s education.’ Some young people have recently completed public examinations, and others are on college courses and achieve diplomas. Some young people have apprenticeships and others do part-time or voluntary work. Staff support young people to achieve their personal ambitions. For example, one young person is attending college to study sport science and play football, and another travels internationally as a professional dancer.</p> <p>Young people complete work which prepares them for their lives as adults, such as</p>	

cooking, budgeting and shopping. They are confident in handling money and using public transport. Staff ensure that all young people develop skills which are appropriate for their age, development and ability, so that all are achieving and progressing.

Staff ensure that young people are supported to improve their health. They eat healthy and nutritious meals, and exercise frequently. Where young people have specific health needs, staff are robust in challenging services to ensure that they receive the right support, for example to help them sleep or to have their medication reviewed.

Staff support young people who are new to the home effectively and quickly develop an understanding of their needs. This ensures that young people settle quickly. Staff are consistent and clear in their management, which allows young people to feel secure. They support young people with the most complex needs to develop new strategies to manage their behaviour. This is recognised by placing social workers: 'Staff have been very proactive in ensuring the progress of my young person. They have implemented a visual plan and work with him in structuring this. They have put into place anger management strategies and work with him through this.' As a result, the young person makes significant progress in self-regulation, and the need for restraint is reduced.

Young people's life chances are improved by living at the home. Staff provide research-informed practice which develops from a strong base and continues to develop, making an exceptional difference to young people's lives. They understand the importance of attachment theory in supporting young people to develop and maintain relationships, and are always seeking out new research which will improve their understanding of how to meet young people's needs.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>Staff are highly skilled in identifying risks and ensure that young people are supported to become increasingly safe. Staff are tireless in their commitment to ensuring that young people understand the risks associated with substance misuse, abusive relationships, internet use and missing behaviour.</p> <p>Staff respond promptly and effectively to young people's missing behaviour. They are proactive and go out to find young people whenever they can. They really care about young people, know where they might be and who they may be with, and take immediate action to ensure that they are at risk for the minimum amount of time. Staff work effectively with the police and families when young people are missing. There are few incidents of missing and staff always ensure that police conduct 'safe and well' checks and that an independent visitor sees them on their</p>	

return. This ensures that all factors underlying young people’s missing behaviour are understood and inform the strategic response. Young people make considerable progress in reducing their missing behaviour. One social worker said about her young person, who has been in placement for six months: ‘my young person was very out of control and was missing every day before moving here. He has never gone missing from this placement, which is significant. He has invested here, as the staff approach is more of a family... I would never have believed that he could change in such a short space of time.’

Young people feel safe. They are happy and relaxed, living at the home, and can talk to staff about what is difficult. They understand how to complain, but there have been no complaints since the last inspection. Staff support young people to manage their behaviours more effectively and use restorative practice, when appropriate, to promote an improved understanding of how their behaviour impacts on others. This improves relationships within the home and means that police intervention within the home is never necessary.

Staff understand how to manage allegations and child protection issues, but there have been no concerns since the last inspection. Staff consistently promote positive behaviour, and the use of sanctions is absolutely minimal. Their detailed knowledge of young people leads to an excellent understanding of their behaviour and, accompanied by their skill in de-escalation techniques, means that restraint is used infrequently. The recording of restraint is clear and shows that the registered manager reviews this and that the young people’s views are recorded. The registered manager does not ensure that his debriefing of staff is always recorded. This represents missed opportunities as, when it has taken place, it is effective in identifying staff’s developmental needs and how young people’s behaviour can be managed more effectively in the future.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced permanent registered manager, who has been in post for three years. He is highly aspirational for young people and is extremely influential in changing their lives. He creates a positive culture which is replicated by staff. He leads by example and ‘thinks outside the box’ to ensure that young people receive the best possible care and outcomes. For example, when he is concerned that a young person’s diagnosis does not match their behaviours, he arranges for them to be re-assessed by the child and adolescent mental health service. This results in excellent outcomes for the young person, who is able to develop greater independence, such as the cessation of having waking night staff and being able to start volunteering at a local charity shop.</p>	

The registered manager prioritises the needs of young people. He places each individual child at the centre of his and the staff's practice. He ensures that their needs are met and that they are effectively safeguarded. When considering new placements, he ensures that the security and safety of the group are maintained. He ensures that each child receives the education and opportunities that will maximise their outcomes and achieve their plans. For example, when one young person is offered opportunities to travel abroad as a professional dancer, he supports them emotionally and financially. This represents an exceptional outcome from the years of dance classes and the college course which staff have supported him in attending. Young people make consistent progress which is sustained over time. For example, on arrival, one young person had a history of missing from home, substance misuse, child sexual exploitation and non-school attendance. Now they have attended school and taken their GCSEs, do not go missing, are no longer being sexually exploited and do not misuse substances. This represents considerable progress and she is able to return to live with her family.

When placing authorities are not progressing care plans, he challenges them robustly and advocates effectively on behalf of young people. For example, when young people are making progress against their plans yet placing authorities seek to move them on to semi-independence, he supports them to complain to their placing authority to achieve security of placement at the home so that they can consolidate and maintain their exceptional progress. As one social worker, who has two young people placed at the home, said: 'Both my young people speak highly of the staff and call this their home. The changes in them are remarkable and this is due to the staff being consistent, working with them and running the placement as a family home.'

The registered manager ensures that the home is properly staffed to meet the young people's needs by a stable staff team who are appropriately vetted and qualified to provide high-quality care for young people. The registered manager ensures that staff receive excellent support, both through informal supervision and informal support. There are structured detailed handovers every other day to ensure that all staff have a comprehensive understanding of young people's needs and behaviours. Staff receive a good induction into the home and all receive appropriate training to meet young people's identified needs. This includes the use of research to inform their practice and attachment theory to underpin their responses to, and understanding of, young people.

The registered manager takes time to ensure that staff work with a colleague who complements their experience and skills, ensuring that young people receive the highest quality of care. The registered manager takes robust and decisive action when staff, on one occasion, did not respond appropriately to young people in accordance with regulations on physical intervention. The manager ensures that the all staff learned from this experience, and this drives forward improvements in the quality of care provided by all staff. He has effective succession plans in place to ensure that there is consistency of staffing at the home.

Staff provide care in line with the statement of purpose, and are nurturing and positive in their management of young people. This results in young people making consistent and sustainable progress from their starting points. The registered manager ensures that staff develop positive and proactive relationships with professional stakeholders and families to maximise the outcomes for young people. They provide a consistent circle of support around a young person so that they develop a sense of permanence and security from living at the home.

The registered manager ensures that Ofsted is informed of all significant events at the home so that these can be reviewed for patterns and trends. These are not always submitted in a timely manner. The registered manager has ensured that other shortfalls identified at the last inspection have been addressed, regarding the feedback that independent visitors obtain and also that more detailed information is recorded about 'missing' incidents.

The registered manager reviews and monitors the quality of care provided to young people to drive forward improvements. He is innovative and keen to embrace new ideas. However, there have been oversights in ensuring that essential documentation on children looked after is in place for a young person, which means that the home does not have in place the appropriate consents and delegated authorities. He took robust action during the inspection to remedy this immediately.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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