

2550622

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The home was registered by Ofsted in June 2020.

There is a registered manager in post. She was also registered with Ofsted in June 2020.

Visit dates: 28 to 29 October 2020

Previous inspection date: Not previously inspected

Previous inspection judgement: Not previously inspected

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit:

- Children are not consistently kept safe by staff. There are significant shortfalls in safeguarding practice and procedures in the home.
- There is poor risk management and failures by managers to address significant risk-taking behaviour.
- The management team is not leading the home in a manner that is consistent with the aims outlined in the statement of purpose.
- Children's needs are not being met because inexperienced and unqualified staff work at the home and they do not have the skills to meet the needs of each child.
- Children are not provided with suitable daily routines and structure. This includes any structures or support for education, bedtimes and mealtimes.
- The management team does not take sufficient action when staff report concerns about care practices in the home, including in regard to the safety of children.

The care of children

Children do not live in a warm and nurturing environment. They do not have trusting relationships with staff. One child told the inspector that he felt intimidated by a member of staff. He said that staff are not always honest with him, do not tell him what is going on and that they keep letting him down.

Managers and staff have failed to ensure that the children have all the physical necessities that they need before they move in to the home. When a child recently moved in to the home, the television in their bedroom was broken and they were unable to use the light as the lightbulb did not work. The child brought this to the attention of the manager. This fails to demonstrate that children are provided with a clean and welcoming environment on arrival at the home.

Furthermore, children do not move on from the home in a planned way. They are not helped to prepare for leaving both practically and emotionally. Therefore, the current care planning arrangements put in place by the registered person do not properly support staff to provide effectively planned care in the children's home.

Children are not provided with suitable daily routines and structure. This includes any structure or support for education, bedtimes and mealtimes. One child said that he did not understand what is expected of him to support his learning or development and staff are often inconsistent in their approaches. This causes further disruption and is not in line with children's care plans.

Staff identify that some children need specialist help, for example, in relation to cannabis misuse. However, this work is ineffective because children do not engage with it. Furthermore, staff talk to children about the COVID-19 pandemic. However, children do not adhere to the health guidance in place.

The safety of children

Children living at this home are at risk of harm. This is because there is a lack of appropriate boundaries and structures, poor risk management and unsafe practice. There are significant shortfalls in both safeguarding practices and procedures in the home. The leaders, manager and staff do not appropriately respond to incidents that occur, nor do they implement effective strategies to safeguard and protect the children living in the home.

Managers and staff do not fully understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe. For example, when children are missing from home, there is not a consistent strategy in place when shifts end for staff. Consequently, children are not appropriately safeguarded by the adults who are caring for them and staff confirmed that they all take different action as they are unclear on the correct approach. The manager reported that waking night staff are required to ensure that they search for children when they are missing from home. However, this has not been consistently actioned and is not in place each night.

Risk assessments are ineffective because they do not include all known risk factors for children. Nor do they include appropriate strategies for staff to follow to keep children safe. For example, the manager had failed to identify effective strategies to support staff in minimising risks for a child who had attempted to set fire to cushions and tea towels in the home and had caused damage to his bedroom window. This continued to place the child, other children living in the home and staff at risk of harm.

The management team does not take sufficient action when staff report concerns about care practices in the home, including the safety of children and staff. For example, staff report that they told the management team that they were exhausted and anxious about one of the children's unpredictable violent behaviour and no effective action was taken. The failure to present a strong and effective management response, with suitable guidance for staff, is a barrier in managing and reducing significant risks.

The home environment is poor in some areas and one child's bedroom requires immediate action. One child's bedroom was unclean and had a broken window and fire damage that had not been rectified. This was an additional risk factor that had not been carefully considered.

Leaders and managers

The manager fails to demonstrate that she inspires and leads a culture that helps children aspire to fulfil their potential. Throughout the visit, the manager recognised the concerns identified by the inspectors but had not previously used this information to implement effective plans for children and staff.

The management team is not leading and managing the home in a manner that is consistent with the aims outlined in the statement of purpose. The statement of purpose states that, 'The staff recognise the need that many children have to regain control of their lives and their behaviour and provide the necessary care, nurture, structure and boundaries to enable them to do so.' However, the manager and staff have not provided children with structure and suitable daily routines that meet their individual needs. Therefore, children's opportunities for improved outcomes are being restricted.

Managers have not developed a stable staff team that understands its role in working together to provide a consistent level of care. Consequently, staff report that they do not use strategies consistently and children are not provided with clear and unambiguous boundaries that help them to feel safe and secure.

The staff do not all have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. Most of the staff have not achieved the required qualification. Furthermore, most of the staff have not had training relevant to the needs of the children in their care, including behaviour and conflict management, trauma and attachment, and managing substance misuse. This demonstrates that staff do not have the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to support the children in the home safely.

The monitoring of children's care and the home is not effective. The management team fails to continually assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. The external monitoring is limited to telephone discussions with the registered manager and examination of records remotely. Furthermore, the managers do not always notify Ofsted about serious safeguarding incidents. This means that Ofsted do not have all the relevant information to ensure children's safety.

The manager has not sent the statement of purpose to Ofsted, in line with regulation. This means that Ofsted does not have the most up-to-date details in respect of the staff team.

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 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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; 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)(v)(vi)(b)(d))* This is specifically in relation to children who are missing from home.	22/11/2020
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.	22/11/2020

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(f)(h))*	
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. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b))	22/11/2020
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must provide a copy of the statement of purpose to HMCI and make a copy of it available upon request to— 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 (1)(2)(3)(a)(b))	22/11/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	22/11/2020

a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation;

an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;

there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;

a child protection enquiry involving a child —

is instigated; or

concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;

there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;

a child protection enquiry involving a child —

is instigated; or

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.

A notification made under this regulation —

must include details of —

the matter;

the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and

any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter;

must be made or confirmed in writing.
(Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e)(5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2550622

Registered provider: Cambian Childcare Ltd

Registered provider address: Cambian Childcare Ltd, Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Asjad Mahmood

Registered manager: Amy Condon

Inspectors

Catherine Fargin, Social Care Inspector
Nick Veysey, Social Care Inspector

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