

SC035657

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private organisation. The home provides care and accommodation for up to seven children who may experience emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. A new manager has been appointed and is registered with Ofsted.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 24 April 2019

Previous inspection judgement: requires improvement to be good

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.

During this visit, the inspector also monitored compliance against two compliance notices that were issued on 12 June 2020.

Findings from the visit

We identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The provider has demonstrated that they have made sufficient improvements to meet the two notices issued under regulation 12, The protection of children and Regulation 13, Leadership and Management.

The care of children

The children living in the home have made progress in all areas of their development. Placements are now rigorously assessed to ensure that children's needs can be appropriately met by staff who have the necessary knowledge, experience and skills.

Placement plans now include individual targets that identify the aims of the placement and the work required to meet them. Consistent key-work sessions now take place and are accompanied by a monthly key-worker review to assess each child's individual progress.

Children are supported to maintain contact with those who are important to them. Clear contact plans are now in place and include regular consultation and feedback from families. Likewise, a further area of development is the recognition of the impact of negative friendships within the community. Free time plans are now revised to ensure that children are regularly monitored while in the community and any concerns are quickly identified and addressed.

Trusting relationships are formed between children and staff. A child said, 'Staff are great.' This has helped to promote children's engagement in all areas, including taking part in a range of activities. Children say that they are happy and relaxed in the home.

The primary healthcare needs of children are now prioritised and addressed. Likewise, children benefit from regular online drop-in sessions provided by external healthcare agencies. This enables the children to gain professional support and guidance on matters such as drug misuse, smoking and suitable friendships.

Children received individual educational tuition during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has helped them to prepare for their imminent return to school and college. All children who have educational placements are excited about returning to education.

The safety of children

The home experienced a significant period of crisis resulting in an urgent monitoring visit on 11 June 2020. As a result of the monitoring visit, a compliance notice was served under the protection of children standard.

Since the monitoring visit on 11 June 2020, there has been a significant reduction in safeguarding concerns. The manager has taken the time to review the placements of children and some children have since been discharged from the home. Staff have received further additional training to ensure that they have the skills to support children appropriately. The strategies for the assessment and management of risk have been revised and developed. It is acknowledged that since 11 June 2020 children have not gone missing from the home and there have been no physical interventions. There is one reported incident of violence by a child and one incident of a child using cannabis. These incidents were managed well.

The registered manager and staff now receive regular support from the organisation's psychologist in the development of risk management strategies. As a result, risk assessments, behaviour management plans and de-escalation strategies have been reviewed and updated. Staff are aware of the strategies in place to safely manage risk-taking behaviours.

Individual missing-from-home plans have been updated. Records now include pertinent information that may trigger a child to become missing. Likewise, staff are provided with clear guidance on the action to take should a child be missing from home. However, the assessments require clarity in the area of when a child should be reported as missing in accordance with their placing authority plans. This amendment will aid staff to take the right action at the right time. A recommendation is made to address this matter.

All staff have received refresher training in the use of physical intervention, including de-escalation and redirection strategies. Furthermore, children are now involved in the development of de-escalation plans, including the use of a suitable physical intervention. This means that children have a clear understanding of how their behaviours will be managed in the home. However, guidance for the safe management of a child with a diagnosis of asthma is not included. This guidance is essential should a situation arise where a physical intervention is deemed necessary to safeguard the child. A recommendation is made to address this matter.

Leaders and managers

As a result of the monitoring visit, a compliance notice was served under the leadership and management standard.

The home is now managed by a registered manager who is supported by a deputy manager and senior staff team. The majority of staff have completed or are working towards achieving the diploma at level 3.

The registered manager and senior staff team receive regular guidance and support from the responsible individual. This is helping to build a strong management team.

New referrals to the home are now subject to rigorous evaluation to ensure that children's needs can be met at the home. The registered manager now works collaboratively with the responsible individual and the organisation's psychologist.

This ensures that residential placement plans, including behaviour management plans and risk assessments, are robust and meet the needs of the children living in the home.

Although generic monitoring systems are improved, the registered manager's biannual monitoring of the home requires further development. The regulation 45 report does not reflect on previous poor practice or address any lessons learned. This is essential when evaluating how positive change has impacted on the care provided in the home. A recommendation is made to address this matter.

The members of the staff team are now in receipt of regular supervision and are provided with practice lead training and focused workshops to help develop them in their roles. Daily routines are further developed. This ensures that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and children understand what to expect each day.

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

Recommendations

- In a restraint situation, staff should use their professional judgement, supported by their knowledge of each child's risk assessment, an understanding of the needs of the child (as set out in the relevant plans) and an understanding of the risks the child faces. Professional judgements may need to be taken quickly, and staff training and supervision practice should support this. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 48, paragraph 9.53) With specific regard to the arrangements for a physical intervention for a child suffering with asthma.
- The registered person must specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care or away from home without permission and how staff should support the child on return to the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28) With specific regard to ensuring that risk assessments contain the details of when to report a child as missing.
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulation including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035657

Registered provider: Cambian Childcare Ltd

Registered provider address: Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Asjad Mahmood

Registered manager: Mohammed Suleman

Inspector

Maria McGranaghan, Social Care Inspector

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