

SC043972

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is one of a number of children's homes run by a large, private organisation. It is registered to offer care and accommodation for up to five young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The home does not have a registered manager.

Visit dates: 22 to 23 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 16 March 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Sustained effectiveness

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 did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff. These relationships have helped them to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. Young people experience positive and enjoyable activities inside and, subject to local lockdown restrictions, outside of the home. One young person has resumed martial arts classes and these keep him physically fit and active.

Young people do smoke cigarettes occasionally, which the home attempts to address with individuals, but with limited effect. A young person reported: 'I was smoking weed a lot and now I've stopped. I'm doing a mechanics course at college. The home is loud but it's also chilled. I have good relationships with staff. Based on it being my first experience of a care home I'd rate it a nine.'

The home provides young people with a homely and nurturing environment. Young people continue to make progress in relation to their individual starting points. Individuals are encouraged to attend school or alternative educational provision. However, there are some young people who are waiting to resume or start their identified educational provision.

The staff have helped young people to keep in touch with their social workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. A social worker reported: 'The staff have managed to support him to enrol at college, which is amazing. They have supported all the young people well during the difficult time of lockdown.'

The safety of children

The safety and well-being of young people is reliably at the centre of staff's practice. Young people are kept safe and feel safe.

There have been no complaints since the last inspection and no complaints were raised by young people during this visit. Young people have positive views about their individual experiences of living at the home.

The frequency of young people going missing and that of drug misuse have reduced significantly, considering young people's starting points. The use of sanctions is rare, but when they are used they are fair, balanced and proportionate.

Staff manage young people's behaviours well. Staff support young people to self-regulate their feelings and behaviours safely. As a result, there have been no restraints and there are fewer incidents of disruptive and challenging behaviour. Young people show positive improvements in their attitudes and behaviour.

Some new staff require training on first aid and restraint to enable them to do their jobs safely and effectively. However, face-to-face training has proven difficult to source throughout the periods of lockdown and localised restrictions. Staff ensure that young people's risk assessments are reviewed and updated regularly. However, records do not always include staff signatures, as confirmation

that staff have read the risk management plans and are therefore familiar with them.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager has left the home since the last inspection. A new acting manager has since been recruited. He is in the process of completing an application for his registration with Ofsted. The home's statement of purpose has been reviewed and amended to reflect staff changes.

The acting manager makes good use of the home's external monitoring activities to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. He acts on identified shortfalls to secure the home's improvement. Young people benefit from experienced staff who promote their needs effectively.

A social worker reported: 'He has expressed positive views about his placement. He feels safe there and can express his needs openly. I am happy about the quality of care provided and, considering his history, how he has grown and matured into the young person he is today; the home has been an influential part of that.'

On arrival, visitors are asked to use hand sanitiser and have their temperatures checked and to complete a COVID-19 questionnaire, as part of suitable infection control measures.

Two recommendations were not met from the last inspection. As a result, these recommendations are repeated. These relate to minor issues with recording and evidencing the ongoing support provided for young people who continue to smoke cigarettes.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that each child's day-to-day health and well-being needs are met. Staff should work to make the children's home an environment that supports children's physical, mental, and emotional health, in line with the approach set out in the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.3). Specifically, that the registered person should provide written guidance which details the home's approach to the use and storage of cigarettes, e-cigarettes and related equipment by young people on the premises, and support for smoking cessation should be consistently promoted.
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations

including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5). This is with reference to risk assessments and risk management plans being signed and dated by the author and, when read, by the wider staff team.

- Where children placed in a home are not participating in education because they have been excluded or are not on a school roll for some other reason, the registered person and staff must work closely with the placing authority so that the child is supported and enabled to resume full-time education as soon as possible. In the interim, the child should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities. If no education place is identified by the placing authority, the registered person must challenge them to meet the child's needs under regulation 5 (engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15).

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC043972

Registered provider: Cambian Childcare Limited

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

Responsible individual: Asjad Mahmood

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Anthony Kyem, Social Care Inspector
Tracy Mese, Social Care Inspector

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