

SC359846

Registered provider: Cambian Childcare Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private organisation. It provides care for up to five children who may have complex needs because of childhood trauma.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2025.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 April 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 23 April 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/04/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
18/09/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
05/06/2023	Full	Inadequate
08/02/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Leadership in relation to children's experiences and safeguarding is inadequate, negatively impacting on their overall well-being in the home.

Children's individual needs are not considered and as a result, children are not safely matched with children already living in the home. Since the last inspection, three children have moved in and three have moved out. Despite an understanding that these children exhibited similar behaviours relating to going missing from home, the associated risk was not well considered at the point of admission. As a result, children have gone missing together on multiple occasions.

Children do not have meaningful and positive experiences because staff do not invest the time needed to build strong relationships with the child living in the home. Staff appear hesitant to engage effectively, citing concerns about allegations being made against them despite there being no identified risks. This lack of engagement has led to children spending more time outside the home. The child who currently lives in the home spends a significant amount of time alone in their bedroom due to staff not adopting a proactive approach or showing an interest in spending time with them.

The home lacks a warm and welcoming environment. Maintenance issues in the bathroom and hallway have remained unresolved for a significant period. Walls have visible cracks and scuffs, alongside unsanded and unpainted surfaces. Additionally, several areas lack blinds, and there is paint on the carpets in empty children's bedrooms. Managers and staff have not completed basic upkeep tasks, contributing to an unkempt appearance throughout the home.

Staff do not implement the strategies needed to work with children to improve their outcomes effectively. An in-house therapist supports the team in understanding children's needs, but inconsistencies in staff practice have resulted in an unsatisfactory level of care.

The child currently living in the home has begun attending school for two hours per day. However, as they approach their GCSEs, leaders have not established a clear plan to support their academic progress.

No complaints have been raised, although the child is aware of who they can approach should they have concerns.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Leaders and staff failed to demonstrate an adequate approach to safeguarding. Regulation 12 has been a repeated recommendation for several years, yet necessary improvements have not been made.

Staff fail to keep children safe and do not consistently provide a satisfactory response when children go missing from home. On two occasions, staff have failed to notice when children have left the home. When staff became aware that children were missing, there were delays in notifying the police in line with risk management plans. On one occasion, staff failed to act until prompted by a social worker, several hours after the children had left.

During another missing-from-home incident, when one child had returned home, there was no evident attempt by staff to engage with the child or create a sense of safety and belonging. Due to this poor engagement, the child went missing again later that evening and was found a significant distance from the home. The failure to implement a robust response to missing-from-home incidents places children at risk of harm.

The manager has failed to address weaknesses in staff practice. During a team meeting, staff admitted they had not been vigilant during the time frame of an alleged incident between two children. There is no evidence of any managerial action taken in response to this admission, raising concerns that similar poor practice may continue, placing children at further risk.

Leaders and managers fail to ensure that there are swift investigations in respect of poor practice. This has resulted in poor practice being left unaddressed. Leaders have not implemented appropriate risk management measures for staff under investigation, nor have they demonstrated how they ensure that staff are safe to work with children.

Leaders and staff do not always share critical safeguarding concerns with relevant agencies. On one occasion, the previous responsible individual failed to report a serious concern until the following day, despite the concern being raised by multiple children earlier. Additionally, staff have failed to notify the emergency duty team following incidents. These delays prevent external agencies from promptly addressing risks and safeguarding concerns.

Leaders and staff do not consistently follow up on concerns raised by children. In one instance, a child disclosed involvement in an altercation outside the home. There was no evidence that leaders or staff followed up to ensure the child's safety or assess any wider risks.

When children are suspected to be under the influence of substances, staff have responded appropriately. On one occasion, a child disclosed taking drugs, and staff

took prompt action by contacting health services. The child was monitored overnight to ensure their well-being.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers have failed to improve practice and meet regulation for several years. Regulation 12 and 13 has been a repeated area of concern for several years, with compliance notices served in the past. This demonstrates a continued inability to implement and sustain improvements in leadership and management within the home.

Leadership remains inconsistent and unsatisfactory. The manager, although newly registered, has been in post since September 2023. There has also been instability in the responsible individual position over the past 18 months, which has affected the level of support available to the registered manager and reduced effective oversight within the home.

Leaders do not ensure that staff understand what is expected of them and adhere to the intended ethos of the home. Staff fail to engage therapeutically with children and are not proactive in their approach. They require prompting for basic tasks, including supporting children with daily routines such as preparing for school and fostering engagement within the home environment. Leaders have not successfully addressed the ingrained culture of staff apathy and disengagement towards children in their care.

Leaders and managers have not provided consistent supervision for staff. Many team members are newly appointed and require additional support to develop their understanding of roles and responsibilities. There has been a four-month gap between team meetings since the last inspection. This lack of structured opportunities for staff to share learning and reflect on practice has hindered professional development and team cohesion.

The recruitment of new staff has been conducted safely. Leaders have ensured that all required pre-employment checks have been completed.

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, The 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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, ensure that the environment is well maintained and homely.	10 June 2025
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(b))	10 June 2025

In particular, ensure that staff support children to form positive relationships and routines in the home.	
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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; 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; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies; 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)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(d)) In particular, ensure that staff have the skills to respond to incidents appropriately. Additionally, ensure that hazards around the home are actioned promptly.	10 June 2025
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.	10 June 2025

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 work as a team where appropriate;

ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;

ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(e))

Recommendation

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC359846

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Cambian Childcare Limited

Registered provider address: 5th Floor, Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane,
Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1AG

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Ashley Reading

Inspector

Chanel Bryant, Social Care Inspector

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