

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	09/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC471153
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Cambian Childcare Ltd
Registered provider address	4th Floor, Waterfront, Hammersmith Embankment, London W6 9RU

Responsible individual	Michael Coleman
Registered manager	Sara Stoker
Inspector	Joanna Heller

Inspection date	09/02/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged as good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. At the last inspection, one requirement and six recommendations were set. Since then, the manager has ensured improvement in a majority of areas. The children have made variable progress from their starting points, due to the level of placement instability. The past six months have seen a period of significant change. Two of the children have moved on from successful long-term placements, in which they flourished. They have moved on either to foster care or adult services. While the manager has ensured that the home can broadly meet the needs of the children placed, the failure of a placing authority to share all pertinent information and the impact of the home's rural location have undermined some placement success. As a result, despite the appropriate care and support that the staff provide, three placement breakdowns have occurred since the last inspection. The staff are individually committed to delivering good-quality individualised care. They have been successful in building positive relationships with most of the children. The staff provide an environment in which the children feel nurtured, safe and secure. Equality and diversity are fully embedded within staff practice, and as a result, some of the children have been able to open up and receive support in relation to their identity. One social worker said their child is, 'Very happy and settled at this placement.' All of the children at the time of placement were considered to be at high risk of going missing. Some of the children have associated risks such as offending, child sexual exploitation, or gang association. For most of the children, their levels of going missing have substantially reduced, and incidents are no longer frequent. The manager has sought to understand potential reasons for the children to go missing and has addressed these where possible. For example, one child is taken by staff to have unsupervised free time with friends in their local area of origin, and since this arrangement has been instigated, there have been no incidents of this child going missing. When the children do go missing, the staff responses are well coordinated, robust and effective. This demonstrates a strong commitment to safeguarding and protecting the children in their care. One social worker said, 'Staff are very on the ball. They are doing everything they possibly can do trying to	

balance risk and freedom.'

The manager has built on successful partnerships with partner professionals. This includes the local police missing from care liaison officer, and individual missing from care risk assessments are shared. This ensures that any key risk factors are known, which enables the police to direct appropriate responses. There are suitable arrangements in place to prompt a return interview to be offered to each child after every incident. This means that the children have someone outside of the home to whom they can express any concerns, and also provides a further opportunity to share any information which may help the staff to safeguard the children effectively in the future.

Since the last inspection, all of the staff have undertaken training in child sexual abuse and exploitation. As a result, the staff have a good awareness of and are alert to potential issues of concern. Effective partnership working with schools means that the staff are able to work together to identify joint management of any risks and reduce opportunities for the children to be exploited. The children's individual risk assessments are detailed. They guide the staff effectively as to the child's needs and actions that are needed to be taken to protect them.

Effective systems are in place to promote good behaviour, and as a result, the children are engaging more positively in the home. One partner professional said, 'There is effective boundary setting and really positive parenting. He knows they're there, they care about him and are reliable.' Physical restraint is rarely used. It is only used by suitably trained staff when there are concerns that the behaviour may cause harm to others. However, the records of sanctions do not clearly identify the effectiveness of each sanction. This affects the ability of the team to reflect fully on the success of the measure in effecting positive change.

The children's educational opportunities and progress are mixed. Some of the children's experience is of poor educational arrangements which undermine their future life opportunities. One Year 11 child is receiving just two hours of formal education per week. This is delivered by the local youth offending team. While the staff are being creative and responsive in accessing internet-based packages and attempting to respond to any interests that the child displays, they recognise that this is not an effective replacement for a proper education. The manager has raised concerns in the child's review meetings; however, she has not been proactive in utilising the role of the virtual headteacher or other services to challenge the authority effectively. Other children have successfully maintained their previous school placements and are fully integrated into their school community. The staff have developed close relationships with the school and maintain good support, for example, ensuring that the child attends the after-school GCSE revision classes available to them. One schoolteacher said, 'It's been a really, really good placement; we've been absolutely delighted with the support 'X' [the child] has received since they've been placed.' The staff encourage the children to maintain aspirations for their futures, supporting them to develop a curriculum vitae and visit colleges.

Medication arrangements in the home have improved since the last inspection. All the staff who administer medication are suitably trained and assessed as competent. Case recording has improved; for example, the manager now contacts the local authority in an attempt to obtain all key documentation which has not been provided prior to placement. The children's individual risk assessments are now more detailed and are reviewed at regular intervals. These assessments provide improved guidance to the staff as to the actions to be taken to protect the children.

There has been one complaint from a child, which repeats the theme of a previous complaint related to the lack of internet availability. This is particularly relevant as many of the children are placed at a significant distance from their families, and the home is in an area of poor mobile phone coverage. The children's ability to maintain contact freely with their family, particularly through social media, is therefore impaired and may potentially affect their ability to settle in the home.

The staff individually feel well supported by each other and the management team. There are effective induction and supervision systems in place. Clear records are maintained of staff deployment arrangements, and the staffing levels meet the needs of the children.

The home is a cosy and homely detached house in a small rural village. There are plans to refurbish the bathroom within the next year. Locks are fitted on some communal doors, including the lounge and kitchen, contrary to the ethos of the home and without risk assessment or clear reason. While the staff highlight that these locks are not used, the records show that the staff have, on at least one occasion since the last inspection, locked certain doors. The potential to lock rooms may present to the children an institutional feel. This has the potential to have an inappropriate impact on the children's freedom of movement in the home. Work continues on the development of the location risk assessment, with further research of the key challenges and protective factors in the area.

The quality monitoring arrangements in the home are robust. The manager has a good sense of the strengths and potential areas for improvements in the service. The staff and managers ensure that the service is responsive to each of the child's particular needs. While there are some shortfalls and recommendations that have been set at this inspection, this has not had a significant impact on the outcomes and experiences of the children. The placing authorities and schools are highly positive about the support that the children receive.

Their comments include:

- 'Staff are very on the ball and there is good partnership.'
- 'They have been very good. They are completely meeting the child's needs.'
- 'They always look out for him, and he feels safe.'
- 'I'm so pleased he's there; he has a really supportive environment.'
- 'The staff team is doing a brilliant job; it's a really good placement.'

Information about this children's home

This is one of a number of privately owned children's homes operated by this provider. The home is registered for up to two children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/07/2016	Full	Good
03/11/2015	Full	Requires improvement
25/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/07/2014	Full	Adequate

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home are only made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10) In particular, review the use of locks within the home and include their use in the statement of purpose and children's risk assessments.
- Ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure that their use is fair. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36) In particular, ensure that the effectiveness of sanctions is reviewed effectively.
- Ensure that children are able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11) In particular, review the feedback of children regarding the availability of the internet in the home.
- Act as effective advocates for or on behalf of a child who may be experiencing difficulties with education or training matters including, but not limited to, attainment, admissions, attendance or behaviour, as a good parent would do. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.12) In particular, proactively utilise all available channels, such as the virtual headteacher and independent advocates to advocate for each child's rights to a suitable education.

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 that 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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

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