

SC476270

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a large private organisation and offers care and accommodation for up to five children who have suffered significant harm or childhood trauma.

The manager has been in post since January 2020 and has applied to be registered.

Visit dates: 9 to 10 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 19 December 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Outstanding

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:

- There are widespread concerns about the impact of ineffective leadership and management in the home.
- Management of allegations has been inconsistent, which does not safeguard children or staff.
- The assessment of children's compatibility with each other and the home is poor. This means that the impact children may have on each other while living in the home is not considered prior to new children arriving.
- Risk assessments do not contain all known information about children's risks and behaviours in order for staff to use appropriate strategies to mitigate risk.

The care of children

Staff work hard to develop and maintain strong and supportive relationships with children who are happy living in the home. Staff are proud of children and show a passion for them and their wellbeing.

Staff support children to see their families. There have been some occasions where children have not been able to see their families as planned and it is not clear why.

Staff have supported children with their learning through lockdown. They work hard to support transitions when children start at new schools. School attendance and effort in learning are celebrated. This helps children understand the importance of education.

Staff are supported by a clinical team and have received training in areas of practice relevant to the home. They appreciate this and are keen to have more training to develop their skills in meeting the needs of individual children. As a result of this, children are supported by an increasingly skilled team.

The safety of children

A new manager began in January 2020. He is not yet registered with Ofsted. Due to concerns about his ability to manage safeguarding effectively, this responsibility was removed from his role. It is unclear when this responsibility was returned to him. The manager put in place an allegations protocol that bypassed organisational policy without discussing this with the designated officer or with senior managers. The regional manager ceased the protocol as soon as she became aware of it due to concerns it increased the vulnerability of children and staff.

Staff react well when children go missing and search the local area for them. In contrast, management oversight and records are poor. Since the last inspection, Ofsted directly intervened with the home due to concerns in this area and a safety plan was put in place. This safety plan was ineffective, and Ofsted was not informed about a continuing pattern of going missing from the home. Aside from the lack of progress in ensuring a child's safety, this also indicates a lack of understanding of what information should be shared with the regulator to ensure its overview of the home.

Managers and senior managers have not ensured that impact risk assessments fully consider issues and concerns for children who are moving into the home. Where children have additional needs, this has not always been clearly considered to ensure that staff have the experience to work with them. Some impact risk assessments are completed after children arrive. This means that matching children and their needs has the potential to be unsafe.

Staff do not ensure that children's risk assessments are updated with significant information and do not consider how their behaviour and needs impact on risk management. While there is some useful guidance for staff, risk assessments are not contextualised with children's specific needs. In addition, some children are referred to by an incorrect name in their risk assessments. Overall, this indicates that oversight of risk assessments is poor and staff do not have all the information they need to keep children safe effectively.

Staff physically intervene with children when they need to. Records meet regulation but are not of a good quality. This has improved over time and the manager has identified this as an ongoing area of improvement.

Leaders and managers

The regional manager has put considerable support in place to support the manager. Progress is being made, but it is too early to be clear that this has been effective in ensuring the manager has the necessary skills and knowledge to manage the home in its entirety.

The manager undertakes monthly monitoring. This is largely data driven and is not always accurate. The manager does not analyse this data and no clear actions to develop the quality of care children receive are put in place. The regional manager completed an audit of the home resulting in a large number of tasks to be carried out – some of which are significant and remain incomplete. This indicates that the managers' oversight and monitoring are not effective to identify issues and to develop the quality of care children receive.

The manager does not systematically receive feedback from parents and professionals outside the home. This limits the scope of the review of the quality of care provided to children.

The manager does not always notify Ofsted of serious incidents. This reduces the regulators' oversight of areas of concern and does not enable external scrutiny of significant incidents or allegations. This leaves children vulnerable.

The manager has not ensured that the statement of purpose is up to date in regard to staffing of the home.

Staff appreciate their supervision and feel supported by the management team. Supervisors do not capture the details of discussions in their records and actions do not have timescales. This reduces supervisors' and managers' ability to hold staff to

account for their work. Where significant issues are discussed about children, it is not clear what action is then taken.

Feedback from partners highlights that the home works well with them and that the home communicates well to ensure they know about children's lives.

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. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i))	22/10/2020
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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(h))	22/10/2020

The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a))	22/10/2020
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 (3)(a)(b))	22/10/2020
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which— is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular— provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located; provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about past abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the alleged abuse or neglect occurred; describe the measure which may be necessary to protect children following an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 34 (1)(b)(2)(c)(e))	22/10/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	22/10/2020

there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)(e))	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1)(2)(a)(b)(c)(5))	22/10/2020

Recommendations

- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b).
(‘Guide to children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.3)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC476270

Registered provider: Cambian Childcare Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Clare Hadfield

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspector

Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector

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