

1159397

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run home for children and young people aged between 11 and 18 years. It provides a therapeutic 12-month programme for children and young people who have experienced, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2020.

Visit dates: 7 to 8 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 30 September 2019

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

The children's experiences have improved since Ofsted completed a monitoring visit in August 2020. At that time, staff were unable to manage the behaviours of some children, and this effected the progress and experience of other children. However, the registered manager and responsible individual have addressed these issues. The children now enjoy positive relationships with the staff. One child commented, 'No one has helped me like staff have. They have all done something for me.'

The staff help the children to understand the current restrictions on their usual activities and hobbies caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. They offer the children other activities, such as barbeques and garden games, to improve their social skills and confidence. The children like to make the most of the home's rural location and the spacious garden.

The children receive support for their mental health and emotional well-being from the organisation's clinical team. This support includes art therapy and counselling sessions. The children said that they enjoy these sessions. A member of the clinical team commented, 'The children have made very noticeable progress in their overall well-being since arriving. They are able to reflect and acknowledge the progress they have made.'

Education remains a priority in the home, and the children have continued with their studies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff help and support the children to understand the importance of education. The children continue to make good progress and they are proud of their achievements.

The children keep in regular contact with their families, and this helps them to maintain a sense of identity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff supported the children to communicate with their families using computer applications and by writing letters. When COVID-19 restrictions allow, the children have met face to face with their families and friends. This means that the children do not feel isolated from the people who are important to them.

The safety of children

The children said that they feel safe and that they learn how to keep themselves safe. They take part in a range of key-work sessions, which includes learning about healthy relationships and online safety. As a result, the children are making positive life choices, and this reduces the risks to their safety.

The children learn how to use safe coping strategies to help them manage their feelings and frustrations positively. With the support of the staff, this means that for some children who self-harm, this behaviour has reduced significantly. One child said, 'Staff helped me to stop self-harming. They showed me how to manage my anger and emotions.'

The staff receive training in safeguarding and specialist training which helps them to understand the children's complex needs. Consequently, they are able to identify risks to the children's safety. Leaders and managers now make sure that children's risk assessments are clear and include all up-to-date and relevant information. This means that they understand what actions to take to help to keep children safe.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager and the responsible individual work together to improve the service for children. They have reflected on the recent period when children's risks were not well managed and have made changes to the service to better protect children from harm. This included some children moving to new placements. As a result, the children remaining in the home said that they feel 'happy and safe again'.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that the staff consistently complete children's case file records to a good standard. For example, not all records are dated, and some do not include the children's personal details when required. Consequently, some children's case file records are not accurate.

Leaders and managers have made improvements to internal monitoring systems. For example, these now help the registered manager to track the quality and frequency of key-work sessions. As a result, the registered manager is able to ensure that these sessions focus on meeting the children's individual needs and supporting their progress.

The registered manager and the staff have a good understanding of the children's needs. This is because they work closely with the children's social workers, teachers and the organisation's clinical team.

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

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 14.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1159397

Registered provider: Cambian Childcare Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Paul O'Neill

Registered manager: Rosemarie Hull

Inspector

Jamie Richardson, Social Care Inspector

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