

1235818

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a private organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children and/or young people. The home provides a programme for young females who have experienced or who are at risk of sexual exploitation. It is likely that these children will also have emotional, social and/or behavioural difficulties as a result of their experiences.

The manager has been in post since February 2018 and is registered with Ofsted.

**Visit dates:** 2 to 3 December 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 1 July 2019

**Previous inspection judgement:** Good

## 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 live in a home that provides them with stability, as they receive consistent care and nurture from the staff. The staff apply clear routines and boundaries and they teach the children healthy coping strategies to help them to manage their emotions. This is a home where children thrive. One child said, 'This home is the best.'

The children enjoy a variety of hobbies and interests and staff create individualised plans to support the children's engagement. When children occupy their time, it helps them to focus on their progress. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions are challenging for the children but have incited the staff's creativity. The children are engaging in new interests, including a garden project and sponsored walks. The registered manager has devised a newsletter that contains child-friendly information about the COVID-19 pandemic. This provides the children with age-appropriate facts and information and offers them necessary reassurance.

Children continue to access clinical mental health services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In partnership with mental health professionals, the staff find effective ways to deliver therapeutic interventions to suit the individual needs of each child. They devise techniques so that the children can express their feelings without verbally asking for help. For example, the children can use a specific symbol when they need support from staff. One professional said, 'Staff are empathic, committed and flexible in their approach. This means [child's name] can let her guard down and be supported to address the trauma that is influencing her high-risk behaviour.'

Children are helped to be healthy. Additional measures are in place to maintain the children's health through the COVID-19 pandemic. The children are also making positive health choices which have a life-long impact. For example, children have stopped smoking tobacco and are not using substances such as alcohol or cannabis.

### **The safety of children**

The culture of the home focuses on the formation of relationships. The staff are skilled at building quality relationships with the children. These foundations enable the children to make sustainable progress. The staff help the children to understand their risks and behaviours. This means that the children become increasingly safe as a result of living in the home.

Before moving into this home, the children's safety was compromised as they were routinely missing or absent from home. Children are not going missing from this home and any attempts by the children to abscond are managed well by the staff. If

children try to run away, the staff immediately follow, and through staff engagement and encouragement, the children quickly return safely to the home.

The staff are responsive to the children's needs and implement strategies to maintain the children's safety. As the children's confidence and self-esteem grow, the staff help them to acknowledge their risks. Through the stages of the therapeutic programme used in the home, the children are supported to take calculated risks. For example, the children progress towards unaccompanied free time and access to mobile phones. The children's plans reflect their progress and provide clarity for the staff. This means that the staff understand their roles and responsibilities to manage risks to children's safety. However, further management oversight is required to ensure that all the children's plans are dated to demonstrate when these plans take effect.

Children can make complaints. When children make complaints or disclosures, they are listened to by the staff, and are kept updated throughout any investigations. The children's telephone is also pre-programmed with numbers for the provider's complaints line, Ofsted, emergency services and Childline. This means that children can easily raise concerns.

Following the successful completion of the therapeutic programme, three children have experienced positive and planned moves from the home. These children gained confidence, knowledge and skills to make positive and safe choices.

### **Leaders and managers**

The registered manager and the staff demonstrate a dedication to helping children to achieve positive outcomes.

The staff have the theoretical knowledge and skills to understand the impact of the children's past traumas on their experiences and behaviours. This insight is strengthened as the staff work closely with professionals and the children's families, when appropriate. These collaborations mean that pertinent information is shared, and this equips the staff to support the children. For example, when ligatures and self-harm were identified as a risk for a child, the manager sourced training for the staff to enable them to recognise and respond appropriately to keep the child safe.

The registered manager expects the staff to deliver a high standard of care for the children. The registered manager's oversight of the staff team enables her to recognise and respond to areas of staff development. When staff conduct impacts on the safety and well-being of children, the registered manager creates support plans to improve staff's practice, knowledge and development.

This house feels like a home because the staff encourage the children to be involved in its design and decoration. The children have personalised their bedrooms and are adding personal touches within the rest of the home. The registered manager ensures that the children are involved in decisions that affect them, and children are encouraged to voice their opinions. An independent visitor routinely visits the home

each month and ensures that children's views are central to the evaluation of the service.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that is helpful to the child. In particular, all records should clearly state who has written them and include a date of completion. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

## **Children's home details**

**Unique reference number:** 1235818

**Registered provider:** Cambian Childcare Limited

**Registered provider address:** Caretech Limited, Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar EN6 1AG

**Responsible individual:** Paul O'Neill

**Registered manager:** Claire Sutcliffe

## **Inspector**

Jennifer Fenlon, Social Care Inspector

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