

1159272

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A private company owns and operates this home. The home provides a tailored care programme for approximately a year for up to four young females aged between 11 and 18 years, 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. No children lived in the home between 23 March 2020 and 2 June 2020.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2020.

Visit dates: 16 to 17 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 29 May 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

Staff provide clear routines and boundaries that benefit the children. This helps the children to maintain a positive structure and focus to their day. The children are routinely attending school and are engaging in hobbies and activities when COVID-19 restrictions allow. One parent said, '[Child's name] always loved boxing and staff have helped her pick that back up.'

The children are making progress. This progress is routinely reviewed in team-around-the-child meetings. The home's statement of purpose details the three-step model therapeutic approach used to support the children's progress. This approach emphasises the need for a consistent response from staff to meeting the children's individual needs. The registered manager and clinical lead work with the staff to embed this model into day-to-day practice. However, recent staffing changes mean that currently not all staff are fully familiar with this approach. As a result, some children do not feel that they are always treated with respect. One child said, 'Some staff need to learn how they should speak to us as it affects our feelings and our responses to them.'

The children are supported to understand their feelings and emotions. For example, staff encourage them to use a feelings diary to express their thoughts, emotions and anxieties and a scrapbook to capture happy memories of their time in the home. This is a positive step and a sign of good progress for all of the children.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the children tested positive for the virus. Some staff moved into the home to create a support bubble for the children. The children refer to this time as 'COVID Cottage'. These arrangements provided a consistent staff team to care for the children, helping them to feel safe throughout the duration of their isolation period.

The children are well supported to spend time with their families. The staff understand how important this is for the children and have creatively facilitated these get-togethers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents report feeling consulted and supported to get the best out of their family time. This ensures that children and families maintain close and stable relationships during the child's time in the home.

The safety of children

The children's welfare and safety improves as a result of living in this home. For example, incidents of the children going missing from the home have significantly reduced. One parent said, 'My daughter has made a 360-degree turnaround.' The children are progressing through the care programme provided by the home.

Although initially this means that some children experience restrictions to their time out of the home, as they learn to keep themselves safe, others can build on their independence skills and spend time in the community. This approach helps the children to see the progress that they are making and this increases their confidence.

The children are involved in the development of their behaviour support plans and intervention plans. The organisation's clinician creates these plans to enable the staff to provide the children with an effective response when children need support to keep safe. However, there are occasions when not all staff follow these plans. Although the registered manager has taken action to address this issue, this potentially placed children at risk of harm.

Although infrequent, when children go missing from the home staff take immediate action to help the children return safely. Staff recognise the circumstances when the potential for children to go missing increases, including when children spend time with their families. The registered manager mitigates this risk through collaborative working with the police. For example, she shares family contact plans with the relevant local police teams. This approach ensures that the police can quickly respond if a child is reported missing. This practice helps to protect children from harm.

The children understand how to make a formal complaint and these are quickly addressed by the registered manager. However, on one recent occasion a child raised a concern about the conduct of a member of staff. This concern was not passed on to the registered manager. Although this was not a safeguarding matter and the children were not at risk of harm, this shows that not all staff are fully aware of their responsibilities for the protection of the children.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager is an experienced practitioner who understands the positive impact that the model of care used in the home has on the children's progress. She is developing ways to strengthen the understanding of the model of care across the staff team, for example through formal and informal training sessions, team meetings, and regular consultation with the clinical team. This supports staff to provide consistent care for the children.

The registered manager uses internal monitoring systems to identify the strengths of the service and areas for development. She uses external monitoring, including the independent visitor's reports, to help her to address gaps in practice and improve the quality of care for the children.

Since the last inspection, there have been changes within the staffing and management structure. A number of new staff have been appointed and they have varying levels of relevant experience. The training available to staff reflects the needs of the children and helps the staff to gain necessary skills.

Staff are well supported by the registered manager. They receive regular practice-related formal supervision that helps them to reflect on their performance. There are some occasions when the registered manager delegates these supervision meetings to other senior staff to facilitate. In these circumstances, the registered manager does not always ensure that she is aware of any concerns discussed in these meetings, or if these concerns impact on the children’s welfare. This may compromise the manager’s ability to provide additional support to staff when they need it.

Partnership working between managers and other agencies helps to maintain the safety and protection of children. The registered manager ensures that safeguarding concerns and intelligence is shared with relevant agencies and within multi-agency meetings. Other professionals, including the children’s social workers, report that communication with the staff is good and that they are kept updated regarding the children’s progress.

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
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that staff— understand and apply the home’s statement of purpose; and treat each child with dignity and respect. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(i)(iii)) <p>In particular, staff practice and conduct should consistently reflect the ethos of the home as detailed in the statement of purpose to ensure that the children are respected and valued.</p>	12 February 2021
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p>	12 February 2021

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;

understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(v))

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.1)

Children’s home details

Unique reference number: 1159272

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: Amanda Oliver

Inspectors

Jenny Fenlon, Social Care Inspector

Louise Hollick, Her Majesty’s Inspector (shadowing)

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