

SC482294

Registered provider: Cambian Asperger Syndrome Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to 29 children with learning disabilities. Children are accommodated in five houses and all the children access the school which is located on the same site. Care is provided to children with a primary diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. The home offers a flexible package and provides care on a weekly, termly or annual boarding basis, depending on the child's needs.

There has been no registered manager since October 2020.

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 September 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: Following the full inspection in June 2021, a compliance notice relating to the protection of children standard was served.

In July 2021, a monitoring visit took place and found that some improvements had been made, However, not all areas in the compliance notice had been met and a further compliance notice was served relating to the protection of children standard.

In August 2021, a monitoring visit took place and found that some improvements had been made, but management oversight of staff practice was still weak. A

compliance notice was served under the leadership and management standard with specific reference to improving the monitoring of the quality of care.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/06/2021	Full	Inadequate
03/07/2019	Full	Good
20/02/2019	Full	Good
04/10/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

On 7 June 2021, a full inspection took place. Serious safeguarding shortfalls were identified. Following the inspection, two monitoring visits were undertaken to check the actions taken by the provider to safeguard the children and meet the compliance notices that were subsequently served. Significant improvements have been made, and the required steps to meet the compliance notices, relating to the protection of children standard, have been met.

In all of the homes, the children's living experiences are of a child-centred and safe environment which enhances their well-being. Staff encourage the children and support them to have a range of positive opportunities. The children's successes are celebrated and enjoyed. As a result, the children have a sense of belonging to a supportive community.

Trips to the local shops, work experience, and active participation in the local community help the children to develop their social skills and self-esteem. The staff utilise well established local networks to promote a strong community presence. Staff recognise that the children's engagement in the local community enriches their life experiences and well-being.

Staff provide a range of interesting activities that help the children to stay fit and be creative. Activities such as swimming and cycling encourage the children to lead healthy lifestyles.

Staff are in the process of preparing one young person to move to an adult home. There is good planning in place to help him develop practical and other skills required to live more independently. However, he does not have a local authority pathway plan. This has the potential to increase his anxiety because there is no recorded confirmation of identified actions and resources that need to be in place, to support his transition.

Some parts of the physical environment are poor and not maintained in a way that promotes the children's health and well-being. For example, there is damp and long-standing water damage on one of the ceilings and a boarded-up glass pane on a fire door. A fridge was found not to be working correctly which meant food was not being stored at the right temperature. The fridge was replaced during the inspection, and the replacement glass had been ordered prior to the inspection.

Despite some shortfalls in the environment, there are lots of personalised touches that make the homes a welcoming environment. Children's bedrooms are well furnished and reflect their tastes and preferences. The children enjoy the beautiful surrounding grounds which include a well-used outdoor swimming pool, used during the summer months. The outside area provides plentiful space for the children to play, make friends and have fun with each other.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Leaders have redesigned and rolled out a new whole-site training programme. All the staff have up-to-date safeguarding training. This includes peer-to-peer abuse training and other current safeguarding topics that are relevant to the children. Training is supplemented by using newly introduced safeguarding flash cards that link to real-life situations and scenarios specific to the needs of the children. These are used in staff supervision and team meetings to extend the staff's knowledge and understanding. A flash-card log, with the date and time, is maintained and highlights any extra training needs of the staff.

Local safeguarding agencies have provided training to the staff team. As a result, the staff have an increased understanding of the roles of designated officers of the local authority and of multi-agency safeguarding hubs. The responsible individual is the designated safeguarding lead. She is supported by an interim head of care and three senior managers who form part of the designated safeguarding team. The managers spend much of their time working with the staff and the children across the site. They provide ongoing safeguarding advice and support to the staff and the children. Consequently, the children feel protected and are protected from harm.

Leaders across the care setting, education and clinical team meet daily to share information about the most vulnerable children and safeguarding concerns. These meetings are focused on agreeing timely actions and follow-up work to be addressed and actioned.

An integrated therapeutic approach means that the children receive consistent, tailored help and support. Children's risk assessments and behaviour management plans have therapist and management oversight. A longstanding member of staff commented that staff practice is underpinned by a determination to 'get it right' and offer the best support possible for the children.

The children benefit from specialist help that is available from the in-house clinical team. This may involve direct work with the children, or indirect work and advice with the staff. Access to the therapeutic services helps the staff to develop strategies for working with a child's specific or communication needs.

Systems and processes in place to minimise the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) are robust and have been effective in reducing the risk of infection. The recruitment process operated by the home ensures that only adults with appropriate background checks and working histories are employed. Visitors are closely monitored when on site. This awareness and thoroughness reinforce the embedded ethos of ensuring that everyone is safe and accountable.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, there has been a change in the management structure at the home. There has been no registered manager at the home since October 2020.

This has led to a significant period when there has been no accountable person in day-to-day charge of the running of the home.

When she joined the organisation, the responsible individual embarked on a process of improving and developing the service. The homes' strengths, weaknesses, and priority areas for improvement have been identified, and approaches to addressing these continue to be developed. Additional auditing, review, and support from regional leads are evident.

The responsible individual, supported by managers, has made good strides in monitoring the quality of care and professional practice that the children receive. Immediate improvements to how the children are supported and safeguarded have been made. The compliance notice, served in relation to improving management monitoring systems, is met.

Previously neglected areas of staff support and development, such as regular supervision and appropriately structured team meetings, are back on track. However, it is too early to judge how some of the newer initiatives, such as weekly house audits and peer support, are improving the quality of care, as they are not embedded in the staff practice.

Staffing has improved and there is less reliance on agency staff. However, this is largely due to the reduction of the number of children living at the home. Regular bank and agency staff are now allocated to specific homes. This means that children are cared for by staff that know them. This provides consistency to the children and was commented on favourably by one of the children spoken to.

In-house care planning is child centred and is of a good standard. This reflects the caring and accepting culture at the homes. However, in one young person's care plan, there was a lack of information on how the staff support his exploration of his sexuality. However, in practice staff are incredibly inclusive and support children well to explore their identity. Consequently, the children experience care and help that are responsive to their individual needs.

Staff are feeling positive and motivated to engage in the process of improvement, and the responsible individual is enjoying the full support of the senior leaders from the wider organisation. Current efforts will, however, need to be sustained for the necessary changes to become fully embedded in the culture and day-to-day running of the home.

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
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d))</p>	<p>16 December 2021</p>
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children’s home if—</p> <p>there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a))</p>	<p>16 December 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the staff make a contribution to the pathway planning process, using their day-to-day understanding of young people’s capabilities and needs. They should actively seek to make the fullest contribution, working with other relevant persons, in particular ensuring that all young people have a local authority pathway plan as they prepare to move on from the home. (‘Guide to the quality standards including the children’s homes regulations’, page 17, paragraph 3.28)
- The registered person should ensure that children receive care which meets each child’s needs and promotes their welfare, taking into account of the child’s gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, any disability, their assessed needs, previous experiences and any relevant plans. In particular, children’s plans should take account of their sexual identity needs. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 14, paragraph 3.2)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC482294

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Cambian Asperger Syndrome Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Alison Priddle

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector
Alphie Khumalo, Social Care Inspector

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