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Sydney Childcare Worker Accused in Abuse Case

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A 26-year-old childcare worker, David James, has been charged in connection with multiple child abuse allegations at out-of-school care centres across Sydney, raising serious concerns about gaps in regulatory oversight within the early education sector.

James was first investigated in June 2024 after a colleague reported witnessing him inappropriately touching a child under the age of 10 at a Primary OSHCare centre. Despite the severity of the claim and reports made to the police, the Office of the Children’s

Guardian, and the sector regulator, his Working With Children Check remained valid. This allowed him to continue working in other centres with young children.

Although James was suspended from services operated by Junior Adventures Group (JAG) which owns Primary OSHCare, OSHClub, and Helping Hands he remained employed on paper and continued receiving part-time wages. Meanwhile, other childcare providers, unaware of the earlier incident, hired him on a casual basis.

In October, James was formally charged over the alleged abuse at several Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) facilities between April 2021 and May 2024. Over seven years, he is believed to have worked at nearly 60 different childcare centres across Sydney, many linked to JAG, a company owned by private equity firm Quadrant.

The case has placed Quadrant under scrutiny, particularly given its ownership of both JAG and Affinity Education, one of Australia's largest early learning providers. Affinity is already facing public attention following a string of disturbing abuse cases across its facilities.

In one instance, a different individual was charged in regional NSW with nine counts of intentionally sexually touching a child under 10. Another man, Joshua Dale Brown, who had worked at 24 centres 13 of them operated by Affinity has been charged with more than 70 offences, including sexual penetration of children.

Affinity-run centres have also faced allegations of physical abuse, including cases of toddlers being roughly handled, children being made to clean up vomit, and incidents involving broken bones, exposed metal hooks, and even a baby reportedly slapped repeatedly by an educator.

The case involving David James highlights growing concerns about how allegations are communicated or not communicated within the childcare system. Sector critics argue that the lack of a coordinated alert system between providers and regulators leaves children vulnerable and services uninformed when serious allegations arise.

Regulatory authorities have not yet commented on potential reforms in light of these recent cases.