

1236450

Registered provider: CareTech Community Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and run. It provides a specialist service for children with autism spectrum disorder and/or other complex needs. The home also provides care for children who may have learning, social and/or emotional difficulties. It can care for up to five children from the age of six to 18 years.

The registered manager's post has been vacant since 6 February 2022. The operations manager is overseeing the running of the home and has applied to be the registered manager until a permanent manager is recruited.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 September 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/02/2022	Full	Good
11/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
18/12/2018	Full	Outstanding
13/06/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy continuity of care from a dedicated and stable team of staff and a small number of bank and agency staff. Children benefit from good routines and high levels of stability. This helps children to feel secure.

Staff have a sound knowledge of the children and their individual needs. Staff spoke enthusiastically about children's individual skills, strengths and achievements. Children receive praise for the smallest of achievements. This encourages them to do well and feel proud.

Consultation with children is meaningful and ensures that children have a say in the things that are important to them, such as the school they attend and the time they spend with their family. Children who do not use verbal language are encouraged to express their wishes and feelings using visual communication aids and signs. Children learn that their views are important and that they can influence how they are cared for.

Children make good progress. This is measured through records of their activities and life skills. One child has learned to use a spoon to feed himself independently and another has learned to prepare their own breakfast. Children are learning skills that will support their independence and provide them with increased levels of dignity.

Children who are entering adulthood benefit from well-planned and child-centred transitions. Their departure from the home is put on hold if the right home is not found. One child has remained at the home past their 18th birthday because the manager wants to ensure that their next home is the right one for them. This ensures consistency of care because children are not subject to temporary moves.

Children's individual hobbies and interests are well catered for. Staff help children to take part in group activities. During a recent holiday, two children were included in the daytime activities even though they were unable to sleep overnight in a caravan. Children experience a variety of activities that support their development and take account of their sensory needs.

Parental involvement is promoted, particularly as children approach adulthood and are moving on. Communication between staff and parents is effective. Two parents told the inspector they are kept up to date, involved in decision-making and that their views matter. Parents are empowered to become strong advocates for their children.

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

Children's behaviours are understood, and good behaviour is encouraged. Behaviour support plans tell staff how children's behaviour should be supported. There is good

management oversight because review and reflection of incidents take place. Children are included in debriefs, and are learning how to manage their emotions.

Children's individual health needs are well understood by those who care for them. Some children have more complex medical needs, such as epilepsy. The manager ensures that safe practice is followed in the storage, monitoring and administration of medication, including controlled medication. Staff act quickly when children become unwell, and they receive the medical attention they need to be safe and healthy.

Risk assessments identify the needs of the children and how these should be managed. However, there is not always consistency of information between documents. One child's risk assessment did not contain the same information as their deprivation of liberty order (DLO). This could lead to confusion and affect consistency of care.

Children have trusting relationships with staff. Children are supported to communicate their worries using a symbol-based communication system. This is helping children to tell staff when they are worried. One social worker said, '[Child's name] has a voice. He is less vulnerable because he can communicate.'

When recruiting new staff, the manager ensures that all appropriate checks are in place before employment commences. References are verified and new staff receive increased support and supervision so any concerns can be identified quickly. Agency staff checks are in place. This ensures that risks to children from inappropriate carers are reduced.

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

The characteristics of good leadership and management are lacking at this home. The provider has identified the issues but has not been able to achieve effective leadership arrangements in the absence of a registered manager. Plans are in place to ensure that sufficient management support is in place, but this has yet to be achieved.

Induction for new staff is good. They are supported to offer quality care to children. When staff have been promoted internally to oversee the management of the home, their induction into the role has not been sufficient. This has affected their ability to lead the home effectively in the absence of a registered manager.

Staff, including night staff, receive regular supervision that supports them in their role. Supervisions provide opportunities for managers and staff to reflect on children's needs and on practice issues, and they take forward any learning from the sessions. Staff who are experiencing personal difficulties are supported effectively. This means that personal matters do not have a negative impact on the care that children receive.

Staff enjoy coming to work and feel well supported by managers, including the deputy manager, who provides support even when not on shift. Staff remain motivated.

Regular monitoring by the independent visitor provides scrutiny of the quality of care children receive. However, not all reports sent to the regulator assess whether children are being safeguarded effectively and whether their well-being is promoted. This demonstrates that the provider's own monitoring of records about the care of children is not yet good enough.

Children are provided with the opportunity to have an advocate. One child has opted for an advocate who ensures that decisions about moving to adult services are in their best interests. Managers recognise when decisions made by the local authority are not in children's best interests. However, they do not always challenge quickly enough to avoid poor decisions having an impact on children. Because of this, one child has no education in place.

The premises are poorly maintained. Handles are missing on some kitchen appliances and several of the downstairs rooms are damp. Some furnishings, such as the sofas, are damaged beyond repair. Some areas of the gardens are unkempt and broken benches have not been disposed of. This does not provide children with a homely environment or help them to feel valued.

There are no secure arrangements for the storage of children's records and the staff team's personnel files. Some files are kept in cabinets that do not lock and other records are stored in an outside building that does not have adequate security. This could result in a serious breach of confidentiality.

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
If the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c)) In particular, the manager must ensure that DLO safeguards remain relevant to the children as their needs change. In addition, the manager should challenge decisions that could affect the continuity of children's education.	9 November 2022
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— 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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(vii))	9 November 2022
Case records must be kept— securely in the children's home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (2)(c)(d))	9 November 2022

In particular, supervision files and children's records need to be stored in locked cabinets.	
The registered person must— ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. (Regulation 33 (1)(a)) In particular, the manager should ensure that employees who are promoted from within the organisation into a management position receive an induction that prepares them effectively for their role.	9 November 2022
The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b))	9 November 2022

Recommendation

- Children's records should be kept up to date. In particular, children's risk assessments should reflect any DOL safeguards that are in place. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

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: 1236450

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: CareTech Community Services Limited

Registered provider address: CareTech Community Services Limited, 5th Floor
Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Shelley Whiting

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Rachel Walker, Social Care Inspector
Catherine Sikakana, Social Care Inspector

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