

1236450

Registered provider: CareTech Community Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately operated home provides specialist care for up to five children who may have learning disabilities, physical disabilities and/or experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager post has been vacant since January 2025.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 June 2025

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: 8 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/10/2024	Full	Good
10/10/2023	Full	Good
03/07/2023	Full	Inadequate
07/09/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children have lived in the home since the last inspection, providing them with stability and security. Staff know the children well which has supported them to make progress. One child is now able to eat meals at the dining table with their peers, an activity they previously could not tolerate. Another child is being supported to follow a healthier and more varied diet, resulting in improved and more stable weight management. These achievements contribute to promoting the children's well-being, both physical and emotional.

Preparing children for adulthood is seen as a vital aspect of supporting children. The deputy manager is proactive in seeking out relevant information and networks to ensure that the child's local authority is actively involved in developing plans to support each child's transition to adulthood. This approach also provides significant reassurance to children's families and professional networks.

Improvements are evident in the language used in children's records. Staff demonstrate care, nurture and respect in their written work. One social worker commented that reports about the children are friendly and helpful to the children. This approach is important, particularly as records may be accessed by children later in life.

Children are helped to understand what is happening in their lives. One child has been supported through a family member's illness, receiving reassurance and emotional support during a difficult time. Another child has been encouraged to celebrate religious festivals and events that are important to their family culture and identity. This tailored support helps to promote the children's emotional well-being, strengthens their sense of belonging and reinforces positive connections to their family backgrounds.

The home feels and looks homely, with photos of the children displayed throughout. This helps to promote children's sense of belonging. The outdoor grounds are used to extend the children's living space and it is evident that they enjoy spending time outside. Although the children's bedrooms are personalised, the front bedrooms have frosted adhesive stickers on the windows, which significantly limit the children's ability to see outside their bedrooms.

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

Children's behaviour in the home is positive. Staff actively support children to recognise and reinforce positive behaviours through frequent praise and reassurance. This helps to build children's confidence and self-esteem. When children are struggling, staff quickly recognise these signs and provide timely, sensitive support to help the children manage their emotions effectively. This responsive approach contributes to a calm and nurturing environment where children feel understood and valued.

Staff understand that their duty of care is primarily to the children. All staff, whether on probation or more experienced, are confident to speak out about perceived poor practice. Staff have a good understanding of the whistleblowing process and would raise the alarm to other professionals if this was required. This sense of duty has contributed to the children living in a safe and nurturing home.

When incidents occur involving children, a thorough investigation is completed by the operations manager and staff are supported to reflect and learn from the experience. Children are supported throughout the process and all well-being and safeguarding checks are completed.

The interview process for new staff is thorough. Value-based questions and scenarios enable the organisation to form an early view of whether the candidate has the right values for the role of working with children. Additionally, safe recruitment checks are comprehensive, ensuring that the organisation has taken all reasonable steps to be confident that newly recruited staff are safe to care for vulnerable children.

Staff report that risk assessments are too long and unclear. For example, they reported confusion as to the staffing ratios in the kitchen for one child. Due to the length and number of risk assessments in place, staff find the information difficult to retain. However, staff remain confident in their understanding of how to keep the children safe, relying on their own knowledge and effective teamwork.

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

Children are making progress and this is evident within the home. However, the full impact of this progress is not being realised due to the home's responsible individual not fully exercising their role. The responsible individual has not visited the home for a significant period, despite ongoing instability in the home's leadership. As a result, staff have not always received the support and guidance needed to consistently plan and deliver care that meets children's individual needs.

Furthermore, as the responsible individual has not visited the home for a significant period, they have been unable to provide direct support to the staff team or form an independent assessment of the home's functioning and the quality of care provided to children. The lack of consistent management oversight has led to an absence of cohesive planning. Relevant information about children is not being effectively integrated to create clear and consistent plans for each child. Risk assessments are sometimes unclear, and children's plans do not always include all relevant areas of support.

Staff report that some colleagues have felt pressured into management roles before they were ready. While it is positive that the organisation aims to develop internal employees into leadership positions, the absence of effective support has contributed to ongoing instability in the home's leadership. Additionally, negative messages from previous staff have affected team morale.

Staff report that the current management team is more supportive and that improvements have been made. The newly appointed deputy manager is receiving support from the operations manager. Staff say that the culture in the home has improved. Staff say they feel more empowered and are working together as one team.

Training, including specialist training tailored to children's individual needs, is being delivered to staff. However, this learning is not yet integrated into practice. The connection between training and the impact on children's day-to-day care is ineffective. Current managers recognise this need for development and have plans in place to address the issue.

Despite the challenges arising from management changes, staff have remained committed to supporting the children throughout this period, maintaining a strong safeguarding culture. The team continues to prioritise the children's safety and well-being. The operations manager has an application in progress to register with Ofsted and there is a clear induction plan in place to support the new deputy manager.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(c)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	24 August 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children. In particular, children's bedroom windows should be clear to ensure they can see outside. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including, the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that, staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children understand key areas of health and well-being such as, but not limited to, sexual relationships, growing up and puberty. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18).

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: Metropolitan House, 5th Floor, 3 Darke Lane, Potters Bar EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Shelley Whiting

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Jo Birtwhistle, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Steve Guirey, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025