

1244000

Registered provider: CareTech Community Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The service offers short-break care for young people who have learning disabilities. It is registered to accommodate up to five young people at any one time. A private provider operates the service.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 December 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 6 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Young people thrive in a nurturing environment.

- A highly motivated manager and staff team provide exceptional care to young people.
- The manager consistently drives improvement through effective planning, monitoring and review.
- Staff work in excellent partnership with professionals and parents.
- Staff retention is a key strength and provides young people with high levels of stability and consistency.
- The home is excellently presented. It provides an environment which is warm, welcoming and homely for young people.
- The manager is innovative in implementing new ways of working.
- Staff help young people to strive towards developing independence skills.
- Young people enjoy their short breaks and have lots of positive experiences.
- Young people are exceptionally safe and protected from harm.
- Young people form strong bonds and make friends easily.
- Young people make excellent progress from their starting points.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people are extremely well cared for during their short-break or day-care experience and they thrive in a nurturing environment. Highly skilled and knowledgeable staff deliver care that improves outcomes for young people. For example, each young person's progress is skilfully tracked by the staff. Young people have small tasks to work towards, and these tasks contribute to achieving an overall objective. As a result of well-planned care, young people's independence increases and their confidence improves.

The relationships between young people and staff are exceptional. Staff are extremely tuned in to each young person's needs. They go above and beyond to make sure children and young people get the best out of their stay. When young people struggle to socialise or are hindered in taking part in activities, staff expertly use alternative methods to help young people to participate. For example, staff used a social story to enable a young person to learn how to put his coat on before going out to play and how to take it off when he returned inside. As a result, the young person began to enjoy precious playtime outside, without feeling anxious.

Staff use a consistent approach in delivering care that is highly commendable. Because staff work so well together and constantly share information about each young person, they all know the tiny intricacies that make their approach to care so personal.

Parents value the service that their children receive. A parent said, '[The staff] accommodate [my child's] needs well. [My child] suffers from anxiety and I have seen the change in him when he goes to this service. He is happy to go and he just walks in and gets on with it. He is happy.' Parents welcome the positive experiences that young people have and the impact this has on young people and their families.

Staff continually strive to enhance young people's independence skills. Because staff recognise each young person's abilities from the point they enter the home, staff push young people to improve their skills. As a result, young people can now lay the table, wash their hands before meals, use appropriate manners and communicate with their preferred communication style with minimal prompts from staff. The progress for some young people from their starting points is remarkable.

Staff rigorously implement care plans, which clearly outline how each young person's needs should be met. As a result, healthcare, education and contact arrangements are exceptionally well managed. All young people continue to access their education provision without disruption while on a short-break stay. Staff use home-to-school communication diaries to gain information about the young person's day. Because a lot of young people who use the service go to the same school, staff continue to use young people's preferred communication styles during the short break. As a result of this continuity of care, young people's vocal tones and signing skills vastly improve.

Young people are provided with an extensive range of activities that meet their diverse needs. Extremely enthusiastic staff encourage young people to take part regardless of their complex needs. A staff member said,

'Mom was very worried about [name of the child] being able to go a party. To prepare him for this, staff used a social story. This gave him a visual idea of what would happen. As a result, the young person was able to attend the party with no disruption. This was a significant improvement for him to be able to attend a social event.'

Staff support transitions into and on from the home very well. They support each young person at their own pace and provide information which is accessible and easy to understand. This helps young people to understand what is happening, and this lessens their anxieties.

The home is excellently presented. It provides a wonderful atmosphere that is warm and welcoming. Young people feel comfortable in their surroundings and often bring items with them from home while on a short break. As a result, they feel at home and settle well.

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

Young people are extremely safe while visiting or staying overnight. A parent said, 'The staff are very prepared and they know what they should do if something went wrong. He has a medical condition. It is hard to leave him, but I know he is safe because staff have the plans in place to help him.'

Professionals praise the quality of the service provided to young people. For example, a social worker gave the following compliment:

'When I visited the home it was evident the manager and the staff are experienced in dealing with children with difficult behaviours and offer an empathetic but firm environment. It was a positive experience for the child, and because of the support staff offered the child, his aggressive behaviour decreased.'

The staff expertly plan, review and manage risk. The meticulous attention to planning each day ensures that staffing levels are appropriate to manage the needs of each young person. Because of the effective planning and high attention to detail, each day runs smoothly with minimal disruption. Good daily handovers provide clear guidance to staff as to how the day will be managed. As a result, young people have a great time during their stay and are protected from harm.

The manager gives her full attention to making sure that the dynamics of each group are well considered and young people are suitably matched. Staff provide feedback of their observations of the group matching after each young person's stay. As a result, young people get on well with each other, make friends and are safe.

Staff keep young people safe because they have excellent knowledge of young people's complex health needs. The manager keeps the staff up to date with any research about specific conditions that young people may have. This information provides staff with underpinning knowledge that informs their practice.

The manager and staff respond to young people's behaviour calmly and consistently. The manager also continually reviews and reassesses young people's individual behaviour management plans. The manager said,

'The behaviour management information provides a clear and detailed account of how to look for triggers, what the triggers are and action to be taken if any behaviours manifest. This has enabled staff to provide the right support to the child, while keeping other children safe.'

Because staff are skilled in de-escalating challenging behaviour, the need for physical intervention is low.

Staff work extremely well with partner agencies and share relevant information to protect young people from harm. This helps the staff and others to review risk immediately. A staff member said,

'Meetings are attended where necessary to look at the behaviours. The staff discussed what the service is doing to help. This partnership working helped to identify inconsistencies and implement changes to better support the child. Because of this intervention the child is now interacting more, seeking out people to play games with. He is engaging more. School and home provide consistent strategies to enforce positive behaviour'.

The home is maintained to a high standard. The health and safety and fire safety arrangements keep everyone that lives, works and visits the home safe. Staff ensure that there are no hazards. This keeps everyone safe from accidents and injury.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is suitably experienced and qualified. She provides excellent leadership and maintains exceptionally high standards for young people. The manager is highly motivated, dedicated and extremely child-centred. She leads a committed, skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Staff speak highly of the manager and they are driven by the same enthusiasm she has. A positive, inspirational and aspirational ethos exists within the home and this ethos underpins the outstanding quality of care that young people receive.

The manager consistently drives improvement through effective monitoring and review. She monitors young people's progress and is always looking for innovative ways to measure this progress. The manager and staff know when young people are doing well and when young people need additional support. This promotes young people's development and ensures that their plans progress. The manager has a hands-on approach that gives her a wealth of knowledge and understanding of each child. Staff feed back all relevant information to the manager about young people's progress and experiences. As a result, the planning, monitoring and review of care is excellent.

The manager knows and understands the strengths and weaknesses of the service because she frequently receives feedback from parents and from staff through supervision. This makes sure the service continues to improve. Further rigorous monitoring by the independent visitor, coupled with the manager's own review of the quality of care, empowers the manager to develop and shape the service.

Staff receive high quality inductions, supervision and training. The excellent management oversight keeps them informed, up to date and abreast of legislative changes. For example, the manager uses the time during meetings to teach and seek out the staff's understanding and knowledge about the legislation that governs children's homes. As a result, staff develop excellent knowledge that informs their practice. This ensures that young people receive high-quality care that keeps them safe. Staff retention is excellent because staff feel valued and know that the manager invests in their development and progress.

The staff team understands the home's purpose. The manager and staff team successfully deliver the aims and objectives set out in the home's statement of purpose. A young people's guide is available in different formats and so is accessible to young people with particular communication needs. This guide provides young people with useful information about the home and what they can expect on their short stay.

The manager and staff team work exceptionally well with parents, social workers and school staff. This effective partnership working ensures that young people get the best experience from their short break. A professional said, 'I feel that we have a very good working relationship with the manager and the staff. [They] are always very helpful and get back to us very quickly with decisions and I think we should pride ourselves with this rapport we have.' A parent said, 'The home is brilliant, I have no concerns'.

The manager strives to improve practice because she is relentless in making sure the staff's skill set and knowledge base is enhanced by research. The manager provides a vast amount of literature that staff read and digest. This reading material complements formal training and helps the staff to work more effectively with young people who have a wide range of complex needs. Because of their up-to-date knowledge and commitment to their own learning, staff are able to deliver brilliant care that enhances young people's lives and opportunities.

Staff maintain high quality records. The manager and staff ensure that records are well written, kept up to date and reviewed in a timely manner. Information retained about young people is clear, factual and accessible.

The manager has taken action to address the one requirement raised at the last inspection. A new care plan has been devised. This allows more detailed information to be captured about the young people. As a result, care plans are much more personalised.

No requirements or recommendations are raised at this inspection.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 1244000

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: CareTech Community Services Limited

Registered provider address: CareTech Community Services Limited, 5th Floor
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Registered manager: Amanda Brace

Inspector

Michelle Spruce, social care inspector

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