

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	06/03/2017
Unique reference number	1244000
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	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	Mark O'Donnell
Registered manager	Amanda Brace
Inspector	Matt Hedges

Inspection date	06/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

1244000

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people enjoy a range of activities and are generally happy.
- Young people make good progress.
- Parents and professionals are extremely positive about the service.
- The registered manager understands the risks that young people face and is proactive in her efforts to reduce them.
- Staff promote young people's religious and cultural needs well.
- The registered manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the service.
- Staff are well supported.
- Some shortfalls were identified during this inspection. These relate to the quality of some records. There are also some specific concerns that relate to restraint and restriction of movement. These shortfalls are primarily recording issues. The procedures for recruiting new staff also require improvement.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meet(s) 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
6. The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular reference to providing personalised care, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(b)(iv) provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background.	14/04/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home, and any modifications to the environment of the home, are only made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, should be properly recorded and should be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- Ensure that approaches to restraint recognise that children are continuing to develop, both physically and emotionally. Any use of restraint should be suitable for the needs of the individual child. The context in which restraint is used should also recognise that, as a result of past experiences, each child will have a unique understanding of their circumstances, which will affect their response to restraint that is carried out by adults who are responsible for their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 48, paragraph 9.54)
- Ensure that the recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Full report

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.

Recent inspection history

The service was registered in October 2016. This was the first inspection.

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The service was registered in October 2016. The service is currently used by 24 young people for short breaks. The registered manager makes sure that young people's introductions are well planned. This helps young people to feel settled, reduces their anxiety and improves their day-to-day experiences. Staff have developed good relationships with young people and have helped them to access a range of positive activities. Young people's families confirm this. Families are very positive about the service and comment on how much their children enjoy their stays. One parent told the inspector, 'I am happy with the service, my son giggles when he goes to stay.' Another parent commented, 'It is an essential part of our life. They are brilliant. My daughter can't wait to go.' A young person also said, 'I love it.' Young people make good progress in key areas. For some young people, these steps are small, but highly significant. Staff set targets that are known as 'stars' for young people to achieve. When young people have reached these targets, staff add them to the 'achievements tree'. Staff also nominate young people for 'star of the week'. This increases young people's self-esteem. Staff help young people to develop independence skills that are suited to the age and ability of each individual. A social worker commented, 'They are good at promoting age-appropriate independence.' The registered manager and the staff seek young people's views and engage them in discussions about their care. Members of staff also make sure that they meet young people's cultural and religious needs. This includes meeting specific dietary requirements and supporting young people to follow particular religious customs. For example, one young person listens to gospel music before going to bed in order to replicate 'prayer time' at his family home. Although young people receive individualised care from staff, written care plans require improvement. For example, some plans do not contain sufficient detail and are generic. These plans fail to evidence that staff provide personalised care and do not show that they have taken account of young people's backgrounds. This is primarily a recording issue and is not reflective of staff practice.	

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Staff understand the risks that young people face. Generally, staff assess these risks well and work proactively to reduce them. Staff make sure that young people are supervised and supported during their stays. Young people do not go missing. This reduces other associated risks, including the risk of child sexual exploitation. The registered manager and staff are aware of these risks and are vigilant. The registered manager works proactively with the police by sharing information about young people appropriately. Consequently, there are clear plans in place should a young person go missing. The registered manager has strong oversight of young people's medical needs, particularly any prescribed medication that they take. She has implemented rigorous quality assurance processes in this area. She also takes personal responsibility for administering medication to some young people. This ensures that young people's health needs are well met. Staff recognise and reward positive behaviour. This helps young people's behaviour to improve. Young people do not harm themselves. Significant incidents are rare and are generally well managed by staff. A social worker commented, 'Staff manage young people's behaviour extremely well.' This helps young people to feel secure. Staff are trained in de-escalation and a range of physical restraint techniques. There has been no use of physical restraint since the service opened. However, some aspects of young people's 'conflict management plans' are generic and are not adequately clear. Specifically, they fail to fully explain which restraint methods are suitable to be used (and which are not) when supporting individual young people. In addition, the plans do not show that staff have considered young people's unique circumstances, which may affect the young people's responses to restraint. This is principally a recording issue. The awareness of staff, the fact that restraint has not been used, and the clear expectations of the registered manager all limit the effect that this shortfall has on young people's care. A small number of young people use a specialist bed during their stays. This bed has high sides and young people cannot get out without the assistance of staff. Written plans for some of these young people do not contain a rigorous assessment of their specific individual needs in this area. As a result, the plans do not evidence how the decision to limit the young people's movement was reached. However, this measure is designed to safeguard young people. Young people's families agree with its use, and it reflects the arrangements that they have in their own homes. This is predominantly a shortfall in recording rather than practice.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
An enthusiastic registered manager leads the team. She has been in post since the service opened. She is currently working towards the level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare. She has clear plans in place to make sure that she finishes this within the required timescale. An experienced assistant manager ably supports her. Together, they prioritise the needs of young people by helping them to make progress and to enjoy their stays. The registered manager has good oversight. She monitors and reviews the service effectively and takes action to tackle weaknesses when required. As a result, the service meets the overarching aims and objectives that are outlined in the statement of purpose. The registered manager and the assistant manager offer good support to staff, who talk positively about this support. Supervisions are regular. Induction processes are comprehensive and staff training is effective. This ensures that staff are equipped with the skills that they need in order to support young people. Some staff are yet to undertake the level 3 diploma in residential childcare or a suitable equivalent. All have sufficient time to complete this within the required timescale. The registered manager has fostered good relationships with young people's families. She has also developed strong relationships with some other agencies, particularly social care teams. A social worker confirmed this by telling the inspector, 'They bend over backwards to help me and provide good input... My assessment of the service is that it is very good.' Another social worker commented, 'Staff engage well with parents and professionals.' These relationships ensure that information is shared in a timely way. They also allow the registered manager to challenge other professionals should this be required. Recruitment processes are generally strong. In contrast, during the recruitment of one member of staff, the registered manager failed to notice that the dates provided by the applicant for one of their previous roles did not match those given by the referee. In addition, another previous employer of the applicant failed to respond to a request to provide a reference. The registered manager did not take sufficient action to pursue this. These shortfalls have the potential to place young people at risk. However, on this occasion, other safeguards reduced the impact of these omissions.	

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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