

1245823

Registered provider: CareTech Community Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private company owns this home. It is registered for six children. The home provides care for children with physical and learning disabilities.

The registered manager left her post in May 2022. A new manager has been appointed and has submitted her application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 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	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 22 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/12/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
05/03/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/05/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of this inspection, four children lived at the home. Two children have recently moved from the home following their 18th birthdays. The home is warm and welcoming and there is a sense that children experience lots of fun and enjoyment. Children who live here are settled and happy. One parent told the inspector that this was the best place for her son, and it was 'home from home'.

Children benefit from individualised support that is responsive to their needs. Barriers to communication are understood by staff and overcome using methods such as Picture Exchange Communication System. This good support has enabled children to increase their participation in day-to-day life and decision-making.

Children build trusting and meaningful relationships with those who care for them regularly. This was evident throughout the inspection, when staff and children could be heard laughing, singing and playing together. Children are comfortable to seek support from staff. This is because they trust staff to act in their best interests. This helps children to feel safe and supported and to make progress.

Staff encourage and support children to spend time with those who are important to them. One child who has recently moved into the home is supported to have daily contact with his brother. He enjoys spending time with his sibling in the home and also at fun activities such as soft play.

Children benefit from staff who are invested in providing them with new and interesting experiences. For example, children went on a beach holiday, and they have regular opportunities to go swimming and enjoy picnics at the park. In addition, one child got the chance to fly a plane as a co-pilot, in line with his wishes. This demonstrates staff's commitment to ensuring that children are not disadvantaged as a result of their disability.

Children have positive experiences of moving in and out of the home. When one child moved into the home on a Friday evening, the manager and deputy manager worked over the weekend to provide some consistency and ensure that the child had the best opportunity to settle in. Strong transition planning has supported children who have moved out. They keep in touch with the manager and staff and have been welcomed back for family meals.

Overall, staff support children's education well. However, one child is not yet enrolled in an educational provision. The manager has proactively identified possible suitable provisions, in consultation with the local authority. However, the manager has not ensured that the child has plans in place for educational opportunities in the absence of formal education. This has the potential to impact on this child's educational progress.

Children's health plans are generally robust and provide clear guidance for staff about the children's complex health needs. However, one child who recently turned 18 had not received an annual health assessment in line with his plans. This was a missed opportunity to ensure that his health needs were reviewed in line with statutory guidance and informed future care planning.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

There has been one significant safeguarding incident since the last inspection. Staff did not identify potential non-accidental bruising to a non-verbal child until this was highlighted by the child's parents. As a result, appropriate action was not taken to explore the bruising in a timely manner. Senior leaders and managers have ensured a robust response to this incident and a thorough internal investigation has been carried out, working closely with external safeguarding agencies. This reflective piece of work has identified learning and further training for the team. A new protocol in relation to professional curiosity is in the process of being implemented across the organisation. This aims to support staff to be more curious in their response to safeguarding children with disabilities.

Arrangements for the safe storage, recording and administration of medication are in place. Weekly audits and daily checks add to the safety of this system. However, an oversight by two staff members resulted in one child being given medication at the wrong time of day. This impacted on the child's behaviour. There has been a robust response to this incident and the entire staff team has been retrained in medication procedures.

Risk management plans are robust, informative and easy to follow. The manager recognises that the children have complex needs that need to be well understood by the staff who care for them. There are sometimes vulnerabilities as a result of the use of agency staff in the home. In response to this and to mitigate risk, the manager has developed a 'temporary worker file', which provides easily accessible and essential information about managing risks to children. Agency staff use this to enable them to provide continuity of care to the children.

Children receive a high level of supervision and support to ensure their safety. Staff are provided with clear guidance, which they follow. This reduces the likelihood of children being exposed to unnecessary risks.

The number of physical interventions used in the home has significantly reduced since the last inspection. This is because staff understand children's behaviours and the best ways to respond to them. Clear boundaries and expectations are evident, helped by the quality of relationships between the children and their adult carers. This contributes to children being able to manage their frustrations and regulate their emotions. Overall, children respond positively to this approach and physical intervention is only used when all other approaches have failed.

Overall, there have been significant improvements in safer recruitment processes. However, shortfalls remain. The manager had not ensured that there had been sufficient scrutiny of one member of staff's work history and there were gaps in the employment history that were not accounted for.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The previous manager left her post in May 2022. A new manager is in post who was previously the deputy manager for the home. She has submitted her application to Ofsted. The manager has a detailed understanding of each child and works hard to ensure that their needs are met. This has included advocating and making complaints when she does not feel services are acting in children's best interests. Despite some anxieties about the change in leadership of the home, one parent said, '[Name of manager] has been brilliant.'

Staffing challenges were identified at the last inspection. This continues to be the case and the home is still running with a number of vacancies. There is strength in the core staff team, which provides consistency and continuity for children. However, the use of agency staff remains high. The manager has minimised the impact on children by using the same agency staff and providing helpful guidance for them.

Overall, monitoring and oversight of the care children receive is effective. Independent monitoring of the home, internal audits and the manager's regular checks provide additional safeguards for children. Records are clear, well organised and reviewed frequently to keep abreast of children's changing needs. The manager is realistic about progress made and is committed to making continued improvements to the quality of care provided to children.

A culture of reflection and learning is a strength of the home. The manager is committed to ensuring that staff receive regular opportunities for reflection and learning. All staff receive good-quality and regular supervision along with annual performance reviews. Team meetings provide further opportunities to reflect on the care children receive and to improve practice. Leaders and managers recognise that they need to support staff to develop their experience and skills, and they do this well.

Staff working in this home are on a development journey. Because a number of the staff team are relatively new, a high proportion of the team has not yet obtained the relevant qualifications. Most are working towards the level four diploma while some are waiting to be enrolled following their probationary period. There are some gaps in mandatory training as a result of a number of new staff. In addition, staff have not had access to training that would support them further to meet children's individual needs, such as training in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and life-story work.

External professionals speak positively about the home. Despite the challenges brought about by staffing levels, professionals say children are safe, well supported and cared for and make good progress.

Home improvement plans are in progress and work has begun. This includes the refurbishment of bathrooms and personalisation of children's bedrooms, and there are plans to redecorate communal areas.

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
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(viii)) This specifically relates to ensuring that children have structure and regular opportunities for learning when they are not attending formal education.	21 October 2022
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;	21 October 2022

are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vii)) In particular, ensure that staff understand their role in safeguarding children, and have the skills to identify when a child may be at risk of harm.	
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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)) In particular, ensure that staff have the training and skills to meet children's individual needs. This should include, but is not limited to, training in life-story work, ADHD and professional curiosity.	21 October 2022

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children's health is assessed at regular intervals and the child's care plan includes an individual health plan setting out the approach that the placing authority will follow, and the desired outcomes required to meet the child's health needs. This specifically relates to ensuring that children have health assessments that inform their future care planning. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.4)
- The registered person should maintain good employment practice to minimise potential risks to children from unsuitable people caring for them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: 1245823

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

Inspector

Natasha Skinner, Social Care Inspector

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