

1245823

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 owned by a private company. It provides care for up to seven children with physical and learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2024 and is suitably experienced.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 January 2025

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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 30 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/10/2023	Full	Good
06/09/2022	Full	Good
22/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/12/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, two children have moved into the home and one child has moved out of the home. At the time of this inspection, five children were living in the home. Two of the children have lived in the home for over five years. The inspector spoke to all the children.

For the child who moved out of the home, this was in line with their care plan. The child was given a journey book with photos of their time at the home, goodbye cards and presents. The child is happy and has settled well in their new home. The manager meticulously and sensitively planned the transitions for the two children who moved into the home. The manager and staff visited children beforehand, introduced themselves and invited children and their parents to visit the home. This approach reassures children and helps them to settle into the home quickly. One child's parent praised the manager and staff, saying the incredible support during their child's transition period made what could have been a very daunting experience much easier for them as parents.

Children develop excellent relationships with the staff, who understand and meet their individual needs and invest in their progress. The manager regularly spends dedicated time with the children. Children were observed laughing and cuddling with staff, demonstrating clear emotional bonds between them.

Staff encourage children to have their say, using their preferred methods of communication. For example, one child has a resource pack containing communication aids that help them to share their wishes and feelings. The child's mum said, 'Staff are very in tune with [name of child]'s complex communication needs. They act quickly due to knowing [name of child] well.' Staff know the children well and can interpret their vocal tones, facial expressions and gestures. As a result, staff can act on children's wishes and feelings effectively.

Staff prioritise children's physical and emotional health and well-being. Their knowledge of children's needs, alongside their high aspirations, supports children to make good progress with their overall health and well-being. For example, staff have supported one child by promoting healthy food choices and a balanced diet. As a result, the child has lost a considerable amount of weight, which has led to their increased confidence, improved mobility and a reduction in seizures. A medical professional said the child's health has been flourishing since they moved into the home.

All children are in education and their attendance is excellent. Four of the children have 100% attendance. The manager and staff work in partnership with education providers to ensure that each child's educational needs are met. They attend children's parents' evenings and participate in children's educational reviews. This consistent support encourages children to do well and reach their full potential.

Children have access to a range of activities that they enjoy. The children went on holiday together. Photos available show the children participating in activities and enjoying each other's company on this trip. These experiences help children to learn new skills and create lasting memories, which contributes to their personal growth.

The manager and staff understand the importance of promoting children's relationships with the people who matter most to them. Staff actively support family time by providing transport for children to visit loved ones who live far away. One parent said, 'Staff are so supportive of my family time, they meet me at a halfway point, which really helps. I am so grateful.' This support helps children to maintain their identity by strengthening their connections with their families and preserving their sense of belonging.

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

Children trust the staff. They say that they like living in the home and know they can go to staff if they feel sad about anything. One child said, 'Staff are all good, I know I can go to them to talk about anything.'

Disclosures and complaints are rare. When they have occurred, they have been managed well. The manager ensures that children are safe and protected from harm and keeps them updated of outcomes. These actions support children to feel confident to raise concerns and help them to feel safe.

There has been only one missing-from-home incident. Staff promptly followed the child's missing-from-home protocol and quickly located the child. Staff spoke to the child about the risks and dangers of going missing and how to stay safe. This proactive approach has been effective, as there have been no further missing-from-home incidents.

Restorative conversations encourage children to communicate their feelings. Staff have developed their skills and understanding of how to make things better for children when they experience difficult emotions. Staff help children to understand behaviours that may present a risk to themselves. This work has supported children to be safe. As a result, physical intervention is rare. There have been two incidents necessitating the use of physical intervention. This is a significant decrease since the last inspection. Following interventions, children are spoken to and given the opportunity to express their feelings.

The home has robust medication systems in place to ensure the safety of all children. Medication is clearly labelled, and detailed information is recorded on individualised medication sheets to maintain accuracy and prevent mistakes. Medication audits are carried out twice each day to quickly identify and address any shortfalls and errors. Additionally, the home's medication policies provide step-by-step guidance for staff to follow when administering medication, and they outline clear procedures to oversee any errors. This thorough approach ensures the safety and well-being of the children in the home.

Staff and children participate in regular fire drills. Children have personal evacuation plans to help staff understand the level of support they require to evacuate the home safely. This keeps all those living and working in the home safe in the event of a fire.

On one occasion, leaders did not notify Ofsted of an allegation that was made against a member of staff. On another occasion, leaders did not notify Ofsted of a serious incident within the required time frame. This limits the regulator's oversight of the home. The manager has assured the inspector that he has implemented robust processes to prevent this from happening again.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is an experienced and dedicated manager, who is aspirational and effective. He knows the children well and is child centred in his approach. His approach and drive are cascaded to the team of staff in a way that motivates them. One member of staff said, 'The manager is brilliant. I have worked in care homes, he is the most reliable manager I have worked with. He understands and loves the kids like they are his own.'

Staff say they like working in the home. They support each other and are well supported by the manager. There is a good atmosphere in the home. This culture promotes healthy working relationships.

The manager ensures that staff are supported to carry out their roles effectively. Staff have received a variety of relevant training to meet the children's needs, including their individual communication needs. Consequently, staff have the knowledge and skills to provide good-quality care to the children.

The manager ensures that staff receive regular supervision sessions and appraisals. These sessions are reflective and help staff to identify opportunities to develop their practice. For example, in one staff member's appraisal, their goal was to progress to the deputy manager's position. This staff member has since achieved their goal and is now the home's deputy manager. Setting clear goals helps staff to stay motivated by providing them with a sense of purpose and accomplishment, which drives their ongoing professional growth.

The manager is aware of the home's strengths and areas for development. Overall, his monitoring and review systems are sufficient; however, they do not always identify shortfalls. For example, the manager updated the home's statement of purpose but did not send the revised document to Ofsted. The quality of care review report does not include all relevant information, including children's experiences of missing from home and physical interventions. The manager has given assurance that he will immediately implement processes to address these shortfalls.

In addition to the above, the home's independent visitor has not consistently spoken to the children during their visits. This has not been identified or addressed by the manager. The absence of this feedback hinders the opportunities for enhancing the

home's care and services and prevents children from having the opportunity to share their views about their care with an independent person.

None of the children have advocates, and leaders in the home have not offered access to, or support from, the advocacy service. Without independent advocacy support, children lack the vital channel for expressing their wishes, which potentially deprives them of essential guidance and reassurance. This lack of support limits children's understanding of their rights and their access to entitlements.

Partnership working with external agencies is effective. The registered manager and staff have developed strong relationships with parents and all external professionals, including social workers. One professional said, 'The manager answers all my emails quickly, communication is really good.' A parent said, 'I can really see how much they care for my little boy, and he is safe in their hands. This is a great home.' A common thread in the feedback from professionals is how well the manager and staff care for and support the children and that children are happy, making progress and settled in the home.

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, The 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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— ensure that an explanation is given to each child as soon as reasonably practicable after the child's arrival about— what advocacy support or services are available to the child, how the child may access that support or those services and any entitlement the child may have to independent advocacy provision. (Regulation 7 (1)(d)(iii)) In particular, ensure that all children are offered access to appropriate advocacy support.	24 February 2025
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)) In particular, ensure that all children are provided with an opportunity to communicate with the independent visitor.	24 February 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that Ofsted is notified of any serious concerns or events under Regulation 40 (Notification of a serious event). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.4)
- The registered person should ensure that their internal monitoring systems are effective. This specifically applies to the review of the quality-of-care report, which should include actions to bring about improvement. Additionally, whenever the home's statement of purpose is updated, a copy must be submitted to Ofsted. ('Guide to the

Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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

Responsible individual: Shelley Whiting

Registered manager: Jonathan Lewis

Inspector

Jas Nahar, Social Care Inspector

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