

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 who have physical and learning disabilities.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2021.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be 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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 5 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/03/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/05/2019	Full	Good
06/03/2019	Full	Inadequate
09/08/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Overall, the five children who live in this home receive a good standard of care. However, shortfalls relating to the safer recruitment of agency staff have led to the judgement of requires improvement to be good.

One child's experiences have been affected as a result of an alleged incident involving an agency member of staff. He requires ongoing support and reassurance, and the manager and core staff work hard to provide him with this. In spite of his experience, he is making good progress from his starting points in different aspects of his life.

The home is warm and welcoming, and bedrooms are well furnished and maintained. Other areas of the home are personalised with children's photos and the home environment is spacious. Children enjoy their own space and spend time with their peers. The homely atmosphere helps to create a sense of belonging for children in the home.

Children have complex needs which are well understood by managers and staff. Staff work hard to develop and maintain strong and supportive relationships with children. Children are positive about living in the home.

The registered manager ensures that children are able to stay in touch with their family. One child has resumed his relationship with his mother and his sister. Staff build good relationships with family members and one parent stated that she felt 'fully involved in [her child's] world'.

Children make good progress considering their starting points. One child has been supported with strategies to manage his emotions. This has enabled the child to learn ways to better regulate his emotions and behaviour. Another child has received good support with developing his independence. The child told the inspector that staff have helped him to develop his confidence and do things for himself. One child, who faced anxiety about leaving the home, now has the confidence to do so and regularly participates in community activities.

Children make good progress in education. Managers and staff are highly involved in the children's education. For example, staff listen to children read and comment on how much progress they make.

The registered manager and staff value the importance of providing children with memorable and positive experiences. Children enjoy a wide range of social and community-based activities which reflect their interests. These include swimming, trips to local parks, youth clubs and pantomimes. This not only supports children's interests but provides opportunities for social interaction.

Children have a wide range of opportunities to share their views, wishes and feelings. The manager has good oversight, ensuring that children have a range of opportunities to express their views and participate in their care.

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

Safeguarding measures in place to ensure that children are safe are generally effective. However, shortfalls in the safer recruitment of agency staff working in the home have resulted in children being cared for by staff who are potentially unsafe.

On one occasion, a child was not cared for safely by an agency member of staff. On that occasion, staff did not follow the home's safeguarding procedures. One member of staff did not intervene and the on-call manager was not informed. Due to this omission, the agency staff member remained in the home for four hours. Immediate action was taken by the manager when she became aware of the safeguarding concern. The matter was promptly referred to relevant agencies and an investigation is under way.

The manager has addressed shortfalls in staff practice. She has reminded them of their responsibilities should they come across something that they are concerned about and has revisited safeguarding procedures with them. All staff have attended safeguarding training since the incident. In addition, she continues to challenge senior managers in the organisation to improve procedures for recruiting agency staff. Until sufficient improvements have been made, the manager has implemented risk assessments and taken additional measures to ensure that children are safeguarded.

Risk assessments are of good quality and provide staff with clear guidance which supports them to safeguard children. In respect of a particular risk relating to one child, a detailed risk assessment has been written but this is not easily accessible to staff. To date, this has not had a negative impact on the child and the manager rectified the issue during the inspection.

Staff manage children's behaviour and significant incidents well. As a result, there has been a reduction in physical interventions. The manager has worked hard to develop staff's understanding of children's needs and behaviours. This has helped to create a calm and settled environment for children.

Children receive creative key-working sessions from staff who have a good understanding of their risks and vulnerabilities. These sessions are child-focused and support children's level of understanding. This enhances opportunities for children to learn about risk while supporting their learning needs.

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

The manager has identified shortfalls in safer recruitment practice. Although the manager has taken steps to reduce risk to children at the home, it is of concern that senior leaders and managers have not taken more urgent action to address this matter.

The home has a core team of regular staff who know the children well. However, the home is not fully staffed and the manager relies on agency staff to fill gaps in the rota. This means that children do not always receive care from consistent, experienced staff who know them well.

The majority of staff have completed mandatory training. The provider has not ensured that all staff have received training in relation to online safety and bullying, despite these being known or potential risks for some children. Although staff have some understanding of these issues, the absence of training means that staff may not have all the knowledge and skills required to support children's needs.

The manager has submitted a quality of care review. However, the review does not clearly identify actions and time frames. As a result, the review is not clear how the evaluation of the service will support continued improvement.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2021. She has implemented positive changes within the home and developed the skills of the staff team. As a result, children's experiences and behaviours are understood with a greater level of empathy by core staff.

Supervisions are thorough and provide opportunities for reflective practice. This enhances staff's professional development. One member of staff said: 'I am more confident since I have had the registered manager mentoring me – she is fantastic.' The manager has also developed the induction process at the home. This means that staff are well supported when they begin their role.

Professionals and parents speak highly of the manager. External stakeholders confirm that managers communicate well with them about children's progress and any incidents. The manager notifies other safeguarding agencies when there are safeguarding concerns. This means that children benefit from care delivered through a joined-up approach.

Managers and staff advocate with passion for children. They challenge other agencies when children do not receive appropriate services or support. This means that children with the most complex needs are supported to achieve positive outcomes.

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 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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation (12) (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) In particular, ensure that staff understand their role in safeguarding children. In addition, ensure that staff have access to all risk assessments which provide staff with strategies to follow to keep children safe.	01 February 2022

The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.

01 February 2022

The registered person may only—

employ an individual to work at the children's home; or

if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).

The requirements are that—

the individual is of integrity and good character;

the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;

the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and

full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.

The registered person may permit an individual to start work at the home despite the fact that the requirement in paragraph (3)(d) has not been met if—

the registered person has taken all reasonable steps to obtain full information about each of the matters in Schedule 2 in respect of the individual, but the enquiries in relation to any of the matters in paragraphs 3 to 6 of Schedule 2 are incomplete.

full and satisfactory information in respect of the individual has been obtained in relation to the matters in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 2;

the registered person considers that the circumstances are exceptional; and

the registered person ensures that the individual is appropriately supervised while carrying out the individual's duties, pending receipt of any outstanding information on the matters in paragraphs 3 to 6 of Schedule 2, which is then considered satisfactory by the registered person.

The registered person must take reasonable steps to ensure that any individual who is working at the home and who does not fall within paragraph (2)(a) and (b) is appropriately supervised while carrying out the individual's duties.

(Regulation 32) (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d) (7)(a)(b)(c)(d) (8)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b))

Recommendations

- The registered person must support staff to be ambitious for every child in the home and to gain skills and experience that enable them to actively support each child to achieve their potential, particularly in relation to online safety and bullying. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', paragraph 10.5, page 52)
- The registered must ensure that the regulation 45 report clearly identifies any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', paragraph 15.4, page 65)

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

Responsible individual: Shelley Whiting

Registered manager: Lucy James

Inspector

Natasha Skinner, Social Care Inspector

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