

SC005041

Registered provider: Caretech Community Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care for up to eight children with a range of disabilities and complex needs.

A new, qualified manager has joined the home since the last inspection and has been registered with Ofsted since December 2023.

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 January 2024

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: 10 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/01/2023	Full	Good
13/12/2021	Full	Good
12/11/2019	Full	Good
26/06/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy stable, long-term living arrangements in the home. Since the last inspection, no new children have moved into the home, and only one child has left the home, and this was when they reached adulthood. This stable environment helps children to build long-lasting relationships with other children whom they know well.

Staff have a very good understanding of children's individual needs. They provide sensitive, nurturing care and treat children with dignity and respect. For example, children were observed being supported with their individual feeding needs at meal times. One child who is fed through a feeding tube has the option to be with the other children at mealtimes but can also choose to spend time doing other activities if they wish.

Children have excellent school attendance. One child has been without a school place since arriving at the home but has recently started at their new school. The manager was proactive in seeking agreement from the child's placing authority for a tutor, who has completed musical and sensory activities with the child when they were not able to attend school.

Children's health needs are met to a high standard. Due to the children's complex needs, staff manage a high number of health appointments, and they do this well. On one occasion, when a child had to have an operation, the manager stayed overnight at the hospital with them to provide reassurance in an unfamiliar environment and to help them understand what was happening.

Staff understand children's different communication needs. Many of the children have very limited verbal communication, and staff have the skills and experience to use alternative methods of communication, such as Makaton. Staff display patience and curiosity to allow children time to get across what they are trying to say. This helps children to feel valued and listened to.

Children are consulted about their care in regular children's meetings. Observations during the inspection showed that staff also consult with children and discuss important topics as and when they arise; however, these conversations are not recorded. For example, two children had been admitted to hospital for planned procedures, and staff had supported them to understand what was going to happen. There are no records of these conversations, which is a missed opportunity to evidence the good work that staff are doing.

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

Staff care for children with a wide range of complex needs. Risk assessments are in place for each child, and staff understand how to care for children safely. Specialised

equipment is in place and is maintained to a high standard to ensure that the children are always safe when using it.

Behavioural incidents are rare in the home. This is because staff have such a good understanding of children's communication and behaviours that they can avoid children becoming unable to manage their behaviours. The use of physical intervention is rare. When it is used, it is done safely by trained staff.

Children know who to talk to if they are worried or unhappy. One child has made a complaint, and this was taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. This response helps children to feel listened to and have the confidence to speak out if they are not happy about their care.

Staff manage a lot of medication due to the children's complex health needs. In most cases, this is done safely; however, one child's medication has no clear prescription instructions. Staff were not able to provide evidence of why they were administering the dose being given, and there was no evidence of professional medical advice being sought. The child did not come to any harm; however, this shortfall in practice has the potential to cause harm to a child.

The home environment is generally safe and well maintained. However, not all actions from the fire risk assessment have been addressed. Two recommendations have been outstanding for several months, and this has not been highlighted by the manager's monitoring. This has the potential to lead to children being at risk if a fire should occur.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The new manager is very experienced in caring for disabled children and is very passionate about her role. She encourages good practice and high expectations from staff.

The manager has a very good understanding of the children's needs and plans. She is proactive in challenging other professionals to ensure that children receive the support that they need. For example, she requested an advocate and a tutor when there were significant delays in securing a school place for one child.

Staff receive regular supervision. The manager completes observations to inform supervision discussions, which allows for a deeper level of reflection to take place. This helps staff to learn from their practice and consider different ways of doing things.

The home has had ongoing difficulties recruiting sufficient staff. Several staff have left due to retirement or personal reasons, and there are a high number of vacancies. Agency staff are being used on a regular basis and on the majority of shifts. The leadership team has recognised the issue and is taking a sensible approach by not admitting any new children until they have been able to recruit

more permanent staff. While agency usage has been high, the permanent staff have worked together to reduce the impact on children.

The home has a statement of purpose; however, this does not contain details of the staff who are working in the home or their qualifications and experience.

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 registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that all medication has clear prescribing instructions and that the medication is only administered in line with those instructions.	28 February 2024
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the registered person must ensure— that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d)) This specifically relates to ensuring that action is taken quickly to address any shortfalls identified in fire risk assessments.	28 February 2024
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.	31 March 2024

In particular, the registered person must — ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d)(e))	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16 (1))	31 March 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. This specifically relates to recording important discussions with children. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: SC005041

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: Jacqueline Houlston

Inspector

Vicky Smith, Social Care Inspector

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