

SC426719

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 large private company. It provides care for up to six children with physical or learning disabilities.

At the time of the inspection, six children were living at the home.

A manager has been in post since May 2025 and has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 July 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: 13 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/01/2025	Full	Good
24/07/2023	Full	Good
10/05/2022	Full	Good
29/03/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Many of the children have been living at the home for several years. Most of the children are nonverbal and communicate through alternative means. Children appear happy, and they have positive relationships with staff who understand their needs. One child was able to communicate their views verbally and said that they are happy and like the staff and the children they live with.

Children make good progress from their starting points because of the care they receive. Staff value children as individuals and adapt their care to suit each child's needs. For example, staff have helped one child who used to eat with their hands learn how to use cutlery. This has increased the child's social skills and independence.

Staff understand children's nonverbal communication and consult them so that they can make choices. Staff are attentive to children's body language, vocalisations and facial expressions. One child has made significant progress with their communication after a period of selective speech. Staff have shown patience and perseverance, and the child is now starting to speak again.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities inside and outside the home. Staff consult children about what activities they would like so that they can have a voice in decisions. Children have been on trips to the zoo and bowling, and the manager hires a local school swimming pool for a session each week so that children can swim with the level of supervision they need to stay safe. One child asked for a new speaker for his music and was assisted in going shopping to buy it. The child was observed enjoying playing music in their bedroom, and they also enjoy playing music for the whole house during parties.

The home environment is pleasant, and recent improvements have made it more child friendly. The new manager has decorated several rooms with large murals linked to the children's interests and has also added new artificial grass and play equipment to the garden. Children were observed using a water sprinkler mat during the hot weather, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

Staff are committed to the children and are keen for them to receive the best care possible. They are very good advocates for children to ensure that they receive the support they need. Staff have challenged children's placing authorities when they do not feel that decisions are in their best interests. This helps children to have a voice in decisions about their lives.

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

Children are kept safe through high staff ratios and effective risk management. Children's individual needs and behaviours are closely monitored so that patterns or concerns can be swiftly addressed. Staff observed a significant increase in one child's behavioural

incidents and sought additional support to better understand his presentation. More staff support has been implemented, which helps to keep the child and others in the home safe.

When incidents occur in the home, staff work well as a team. All staff know each child well and can assist colleagues when behaviours escalate. Trained staff have safely and proportionately used physical intervention on several occasions.

Medication and health needs are managed safely. Children living in the home have a range of medical needs, and most children require regular medication. Staff receive appropriate training to enable them to administer medication safely, and two members of staff have received additional training so that they can train and support other staff. Some children require specialist equipment, which staff are trained to use. Specialist equipment is checked and serviced regularly to ensure that it remains safe to use.

Safe recruitment procedures are in place. However, on one occasion, the manager was alerted to concerns identified when verifying recruitment records for an agency worker. Senior managers acted immediately to ensure that the person could not work in the home. They shared concerns with relevant professionals and reviewed processes to reflect learning. While this incident was serious, management's investigation and follow-up action give confidence that it was an isolated incident and that safeguards are in place to prevent further incidents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, there has been a change in management. The changeover of managers was handled well to minimise any negative effects on the children. The new manager has quickly settled into the home and has developed positive relationships with staff and children.

The home employs a large, stable team of experienced staff, many of whom have worked there for several years. The home regularly uses agency staff to complement the staff team, but managers are keen to keep to a small pool of regular agency staff so that they are familiar to the children. All staff spoken to during the inspection gave very positive feedback about working at the home and shared a common goal of helping children to thrive.

The manager and staff team build positive relationships with placing authorities, schools and children's families. Several children are supported in having flexible time with their families, and their families regularly visit the home. Feedback from children's families is wholly positive, with one parent expressing that they would not want their child to live anywhere else because they trust the staff to care for them. Feedback from professionals is equally positive, with one social worker reporting that communication is excellent and that the home is one of the best that they work with.

The manager leads a resilient team of staff who support children through challenging times. One child's needs have recently escalated, and the team has managed a

significant increase in incidents over recent months. Due to the child's complex needs, they are unable to explain their feelings, but staff have demonstrated curiosity and dedication to ensuring that the child can continue living at the home. It has now been acknowledged that the home can no longer safely meet the child's needs alongside the other children, and the child will be moving on. However, the staff's commitment has enabled the child to remain in a stable home until their needs could be better understood, allowing them to move to a home that can better meet their current needs.

Managers use monitoring systems well and have good oversight of the home and staff practice. Senior managers are visible in the home and visit regularly, which has helped them to build positive relationships with the children. Despite the good internal monitoring, managers have failed to address weaknesses in the external monitoring by the independent person. Most visits to the home are announced and are arranged at times when the children are at school. As a result, the independent person has not consulted children often enough and has not been able to observe staff practice, which limits their ability to ensure that children are safe and well cared for. Consequently, this limits what managers can learn from the external monitoring so that they can make improvements.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make the best use of information from independent monitoring, including independent person visits, to ensure continuous improvement of the home. In particular, the independent person should see the children regularly and consult them as part of their visits. ('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: SC426719

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: CareTech Community Services Limited

Registered provider address: Metropolitan House, 5th Floor, 3 Darke Lane, Potters Bar EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Shelley Whiting

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Vicky Smith, Social Care Inspector

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