

SC483662

Registered provider: CareTech Community Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service provides short breaks for up to six young people who have learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities. Overall, the service supports 36 children. The service is privately owned and forms part of a larger social care organisation.

The registered manager registered with Ofsted in July 2020 and is appropriately experienced for the role. She is currently undertaking the level 5 management award.

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: 7 and 8 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 18 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/12/2019	Full	Good
22/10/2019	Full	Inadequate
10/12/2018	Full	Good
16/01/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of this inspection, three children were receiving their short break on the first day and four children during the second day. The service offers overnight, day and teatime breaks, depending on each child's plan.

Children enjoy coming for their short breaks. They feel welcomed and settle quickly by choosing their favourite bedroom and activities. Relationships between children and staff are extremely positive. Staff are passionate about the children they care for and are attuned to their differing and complex needs. They take the time to get to know children well and speak enthusiastically about their care.

Staff work closely with children's families, their teachers and their allocated health professionals. Because of well-coordinated care, each child's short break is a seamless extension to their routine and development.

The environment is well designed, warm and welcoming. Specialist equipment to meet the range of children's health needs and disabilities is available. Children enjoy access to a large lounge, playroom with toys and games, a large garden and a sensory room. The environment reflects children's individual needs, abilities and choices, as well as their tolerance to sensory stimulation. This creates a comfortable and relaxing home for children.

Children's personalised care and objectives enable them to have new and exciting experiences. Staff encourage children to participate in a range of leisure activities that enhance their social and emotional skills. These provide a mix of in-house and community activities that enable children to spend quality time with their friends and peers. As a result, children grow in confidence and self-esteem while having fun.

Children benefit from well-planned admissions to the home. Staff make sure that each child's induction to the home reflects their individual needs. They work with children's families and the placing authority to plan afternoon and evening visits to the home with the aim of moving towards overnight stays. Managers continually review the pace of these introductions to ensure that children do not become anxious or apprehensive and that their experience of the service remains positive.

Staff have positive relationships with parents and professionals involved with the service. Staff and parents communicate regularly to provide children with continuity of care. For example, staff contact parents prior to short breaks commencing and complete a diary outlining the child's stay. Parents feel involved in the service and appreciate the support that staff offer. A parent told the inspector: 'The communication is amazing, and the manager and staff really understand my child's needs. I feel safe leaving him in their care.'

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

Staff understand the children's behaviour and vulnerabilities and they use this knowledge to manage risks well. The staff understand the triggers that result in children feeling anxious or distressed and they take sensitive and supportive action promptly to help children.

Managers carefully match children with their peers and plan adequate staffing ratios. This robust approach to planning helps to keep children safe and promotes a calm and settled environment.

Children are safe and protected from harm. Staff devise comprehensive and effective risk assessments which recognise that for some children, their challenging behaviours, such as self-harm, are symptomatic of their disabilities. Risk assessments guide staff on how to best support children and staff implement this guidance well.

Managers have good knowledge and understanding of child protection thresholds and referral processes. Staff understand their own responsibilities for protecting children. As some children do not communicate verbally, staff are especially alert to any changes in their behaviours or reactions that may indicate abuse or harm. This vigilance and understanding promotes children's safety.

Since the last inspection, no children have gone missing from the home. Nevertheless, managers and staff are acutely aware of children's significant vulnerability should they do so. To reduce these risks, managers ensure that there is a high staff ratio available to support children.

Due to the vulnerabilities of the children, external doors are kept locked. This restrictive measure has been agreed with parents and social workers for children's safety, and is kept under review. However, this is not currently reflected in the home's statement of purpose. The manager made the necessary amendments during the inspection.

Staff use a wide and varied range of verbal and non-verbal communication methods, including pictures, visual aids and sign languages to seek children's views, opinions and wishes. This practice ensures that children are involved in decisions about their stay and their overall care and support. However, when children have displayed behaviour which challenges and staff have needed to physically intervene, their views and feelings have not always been captured following these incidents. This is a missed opportunity to help children reflect on and understand their behaviour.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has the skills and experience necessary to manage the service effectively. She is a strong and enthusiastic leader with a focus on meeting children's individual needs, supporting their progress and providing them with an

enjoyable experience. Staff, parents and professionals speak highly of her management style and passion for the service.

Professionals provided positive feedback to the inspector about good communication and information-sharing between staff, the manager and themselves. The registered manager confidently challenges other professionals and agencies when their actions fall short of acceptable standards. This means that children receive integrated care and their short-break experiences are extremely positive. Crucially, they remain central to the care they receive.

Staff receive regular and good-quality supervision. Managers use these meetings to help staff to consider their own practice and learning needs.

Training programmes reflect children's individual, and often complex, health and welfare needs. However, some staff have not received all the training required to ensure that they have the specialist skills needed to manage the health and communication needs of all the children.

The registered manager uses internal audits to collect information about the service and children. However, current monitoring systems do not allow her to fully identify shortfalls in training. Furthermore, one staff member has not achieved the qualification required for their role within the timescale set out in regulation.

The review of the quality of care has been completed and the report sent to the regulator within the required timescales. However, the report does not set out if recommendations have been actioned and if they have, evaluate what impact this has had. As a result, managers are unclear if objectives have been met and planned improvements have been made or need adjusting.

During this inspection, Ofsted was asked to consider the provider's application to vary the conditions of the home to provide full-time residential care for five children and provide short breaks for one child. Ofsted considered the variation and deemed the current conditions the home is registered for are appropriate for the proposals moving forward. The provider submitted a revised statement of purpose to reflect the proposed changes.

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 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(h)) This relates to ensuring that staff receive the necessary training to meet children's complex health needs and understand and use children's preferred style of communication.	31 January 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform.	30 March 2022

For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) (“the Level 3 Diploma”); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a))	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy (“the behaviour management policy”) which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children’s home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that— within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(c)) Specifically, following an incident requiring physical intervention, ensure that children are spoken to using their preferred communication system and their views recorded.	31 January 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the locking of external doors is clearly explained in the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.62)
- The registered person should ensure that the six-monthly review of the quality of care identifies areas of strength and weakness and clearly reviews previous actions and any actions required for the following six months. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

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: SC483662

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: Sarah McConnell

Inspector

James Tallis, Social Care Inspector

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