

SC405285

Registered provider: North East Autism Society

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private provider. It is registered to provide care for up to four children with learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2010.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

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: 16 May 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/05/2022	Full	Good
10/01/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
24/05/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
24/09/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, two children and one young person who had recently turned 18, were living at the home. No children have moved into or from the home since the last inspection.

The children and the young person have developed good relationships with each other. This is notable progress for them, and they are now able to play well together. This success is widely recognised and celebrated by the staff, professionals and families.

Children and the young person enjoy positive relationships with the staff team and staff understand how to support them. Staff actively seek the children and young person's wishes and feelings to improve practice. Positive interactions between the staff and the children were observed during this inspection.

Staff use illustrated short stories that describe social situations to help the children and young person to understand and prepare for important life events. This has helped the children and young person to understand their goals and what is planned for their future. As a result, one child was able to attend their mother's wedding, which is a significant achievement for them and their family.

Staff ensure that the children and young person's health needs are met to a good standard. Staff are creative in helping the children and young person to understand the importance of having a balanced diet and good dental hygiene. Staff plan carefully and prepare the children and young person well for their health appointments. This approach has helped them to feel relaxed and to engage well in their appointments.

Children and the young person have good attendance at school. Staff support the children and young person to take part in activities that complement their education. This helps the children and young person to make good progress with their learning.

Children and the young person have been supported to develop their independence skills. Staff have considered the children and young person's preferred communication methods and they share information in a way that is easy to follow. As a result, the children and young person become more confident in carrying out a wide range of tasks, such as meal preparation and shopping.

Staff are sensitive in supporting the children to maintain a positive relationship with the people who are important to them. This helps the children to maintain a connection with their family. Parents speak highly of the service. One parent said, 'The staff are great, and they treat me and my child like a family.'

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

The children and young person's care plans are detailed and updated regularly. Clear guidance is embedded in the care plans to ensure that staff have a consistent approach to support the children and young person. Staff know the risks for the children and young person and have a good understanding of the strategies required to mitigate these.

Staff respond to the children and young person with clear boundaries that help them to understand socially acceptable behaviour. Staff use praise and encouragement to promote good behaviour. This has resulted in a reduction in unwanted behaviours.

Staff hold children and young people only as a last resort and to keep them safe. Staff ensure that all relevant professionals are informed following an incident. The manager has good oversight of the records and ensures that the effectiveness of the measures is reviewed in a timely manner. This has helped the manager to identify any learning and improve care practice.

Staff prepare well for the children and young person's activities and excursions out of the home. There is a system in place to ensure that staff are well equipped to respond to the children and young person's needs. This helps to ensure that the children and young person are kept safe when they are away from the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has high aspirations for what the children and young person can achieve. Staff describe her as 'supportive' and 'nurturing'.

The manager ensures that all staff receive training to meet the individual needs of the children and young person. Bespoke training helps the staff to better understand the children and young person's specific needs. This has provided staff with the skills and knowledge to care for the children and young person safely.

The manager has developed a new auditing system which allows her to have better management oversight of the service. As a result, the quality of the children and young person's files and written records has improved.

Safeguarding concerns are responded to quickly, and subsequent investigations are thorough and involve all the relevant safeguarding agencies. However, the manager has not ensured that there is an effective system in place to report serious incidents to Ofsted. Consequently, one allegation that a child has made against staff was not reported to Ofsted. This oversight prevents independent scrutiny of how allegations are managed and how the manager ensures that children are safe.

Staff receive regular supervision sessions. However, the supervision records are brief and lack evidence of reflective discussions about the staff's practice. This is a missed

opportunity for the manager to support the staff to understand how their feelings may affect their work.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there is a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- The registered person should ensure that a record of supervision is kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)

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: SC405285

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: North East Autism Society

Registered provider address: North East Autism Society, 15 Lumley Court, Drum Industrial Estate, Chester-le-Street, County Durham DH2 1AN

Responsible individual: Brian Stoker

Registered manager: Julie Dunlop

Inspector

Cherie Chen, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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