

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 who have learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2010.

The inspector spoke with two of the three children who live in the home during this inspection.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2022

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 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/01/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
24/05/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
24/09/2019	Full	Good
02/10/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

All children are settled, thriving and making good progress from their individual starting points.

The children have a warm and welcoming home, which has been carefully furnished and decorated for their comfort and enjoyment. Staff use the Picture Exchange Communication System throughout the home, including in the children's bedrooms. This helps the staff to illustrate to the children's their daily routines, and prepares the children for their daily activities, so that they know what to expect.

Children are supported to spend time with people who are important to them. The relationships that staff have developed with parents are a particular strength of the home. Parents are provided with weekly and monthly reports, which include photos and videos of their child engaging in enjoyable activities. This enables parents to talk to their child about what they have been doing during family time. This is particularly important for those children who are not able to communicate this themselves. This practice has improved the quality of family time for the children and their families.

Staff have a good understanding of the children's health needs, and they help the children to manage their health conditions in a sensitive and empathetic way. Staff use child-friendly language and alternative communication methods to explain to the children how their health needs have an impact on them. Because of this, the children are well prepared for their health appointments and are able to engage with medical professionals well.

The manager and the staff support the children to attend their education provisions. Children engage with their learning and make clear progress. One child has successfully moved on to further education. As a result, the children have better life chances.

Children are encouraged to become more independent. For example, they learn to put their plates away, prepare some of their own meals and bring their laundry to the laundry room. They also learn to attend to their personal care, including brushing their teeth. This helps to build the children's confidence and independence.

Children benefit from positive relationships with the staff. Staff promote the children's individuality and interests, including their religious and cultural needs. For example, staff help the children to follow religious rituals that are important to them, and they encourage children's participation in their chosen religion. The children take part in different hobbies and they are encouraged to attend activities that help them to engage in the wider community outside the home.

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

Staff understand and know how to respond to safeguarding concerns. Children's risk assessments are clear and are reviewed regularly to reflect the child's presenting risks. Effective joint working relationships between the staff and other agencies, including schools, social workers and the occupational therapists, and good safeguarding practice helps to keep the children safe.

Staff know the children well and are quick to identify when children are upset or unhappy. Daily communication takes place between the staff and education professionals. This ensures that all the information about the children is shared appropriately. This enables the staff to help the children before their emotions and feelings become unmanageable.

Children do not go missing from the home. However, if a child were to go missing, staff understand what they would need to do. There are very few safeguarding incidents at the home. For those that occur, appropriate action is taken quickly to prevent reoccurrence. All relevant people and agencies, including Ofsted, are notified, and the child's risk assessment is updated.

Staff are skilled at supporting children who self-harm. Staff are nurturing in their response and are creative in helping the children to explore different coping strategies. As a result, self-harming behaviours have reduced.

Injuries or marks discovered on children are recorded on body maps and all of the relevant people and agencies are informed. This includes when children are injured while in the care of others. Ongoing monitoring of the children reduces the risk of harm to the child going unnoticed, and ensures that the appropriate safeguarding procedures are followed when required.

Children enjoy lots of freedom in their home. Restrictive measures are used to safeguard the children. However, the inspectors found that the reason for restricting a child's access to their wardrobe was not included in their risk assessment or care plan. Furthermore, consent for restricting the children's ability to exit the home has not been obtained from their parents and placing authorities. This has the potential to lead to inconsistent practice regarding the use of restrictive measures for the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed effectively by a qualified and experienced manager. She is supported by senior staff and together they lead a stable, enthusiastic and committed staff team. Collectively, they provide the children with a good standard of care that promotes the children's individual progress.

Staff receive regular supervision that gives them an opportunity to reflect on their practice. They feel supported in their role, and they work consistently to implement

good boundaries for the children. This enables the children to live in a calm environment and allows them to experience routine and structure.

The manager values the importance of training, and she actively seeks additional training opportunities for the staff. Team meetings are regular, and the recommendations made by the independent visitor are shared as part of the ongoing learning and development for the staff.

Children's records are detailed and provide a comprehensive picture of each child's needs, experience and their progress. Internal documents, such as care plans and risk assessments, are frequently reviewed and updated. However, supporting documentation from external agencies, such as looked after review minutes and education meeting minutes from the placing local authority, has not been acquired in a timely manner. Furthermore, the manager has failed to challenge the placing local authority when outstanding documents have not been received in a reasonable time. This means that the children's records are incomplete. In addition, the manager cannot be assured that she, and the staff, are providing care in line with the children's most up-to-date care plans.

Staff rosters are produced in advance. The manager ensures that there are a sufficient number of trained staff to meet the needs of the children. However, the inspectors found an isolated incident of a member of staff who was in charge of the waking-night duty not being up to date with their physical intervention training. This oversight might have prevented the children from receiving an appropriate response, should physical intervention have been required.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered provider must escalate their concerns to the director of children's services of the placing authority when documents, such as the children's looked after review minutes and education meeting minutes, are not received in a reasonable time.	20 June 2022
The registered person must ensure that— any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is kept under review and, if necessary, revised. (Regulation 21 (c)(iii)) In particular, the registered provider must ensure that the appropriate consent is obtained from each child's parent and/or placing local authority to restrict the child's access in their home.	20 June 2022

The registered person must maintain records (“case records”) for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that children’s review documents and school reports are obtained and kept up to date.	20 June 2022
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Recommendation

- The registered person should plan staffing levels to ensure that they meet the needs of children and can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities. Staffing structures should promote continuity of care from the child’s perspective. If children complain or give a view on how the staffing structure could be improved to promote the best care for them, appropriate action should be taken. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 54, paragraph 10.15)

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: 15 Lumley Court, Drum Industrial Estate, Chester-le-Street, Durham DH2 1AN

Responsible individual: Brian Stoker

Registered manager: Julie Dunlop

Inspectors

Cherie Chen, Social Care Inspector

Aasia Hussain, Social Care Inspector

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