

SC405285

Registered provider: North East Autism Society

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

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

The deputy manager led the inspection, as the registered manager was not present.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 August 2025

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: 27 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/11/2024	Full	Good
10/10/2023	Full	Good
16/05/2022	Full	Good
10/01/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The inspector spoke with all the children during the inspection.

Children are happy in their home and make progress in many areas of their lives. Some of the staff have worked at the home for a long time, which offers children continuity of care. Children have trusting relationships with the staff. This helps give children confidence to achieve their potential.

Staff understand the importance of families and friends to the children and ensure that families can spend quality time together. Families enjoy the time together and feel welcome in the home. Staff also ensure that a child living further away can play with their friends after school and attend birthday parties. One family member said about the staff, 'They were complete strangers, and they helped me understand [name of child] and how I can keep them safe. They are like my extended family now.'

Staff encourage children to participate in routine health checks and treatment. They use social stories that reflect the child's needs and previous experiences to support these visits. Children are growing in confidence around their health because of this approach and are more likely to better engage with health professionals in the future.

Children have made progress with their communication skills. Staff use various communication formats tailored to children's skills and needs to support them in expressing their wishes and views.

Staff make efforts to create a homely environment for the children. There is evidence of continuous damage to certain fixtures and furnishings. Repairs or replacements to an acceptable standard have not been arranged in a timely manner.

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

Staff are skilled at providing consistent boundaries for the children. In preparation for children moving into the home, the manager and staff plan an individualised daily routine for each child. This helps children understand what comes next in their day, and this familiarity reduces anxiety for children.

One child is subject to a court order that outlines specific restrictions. Staff follow these restrictions and ensure that they do not act beyond the permissions granted.

There has been a reduction in the number of occasions staff physically hold children to keep them safe. Staff use other strategies to help children express their emotions. Children and the people who are important to them express that children feel safe at the home.

Managers ensure that they carry out thorough recruitment checks on staff. This reduces the risk of unsuitable adults coming to work at the home.

Children's plans and assessments are detailed but are not always updated after incidents with current strategies. Some records held on file are also out of date. One child's plan refers to the use of a space that is no longer available to them. This increases the risk of staff failing to understand the current approach to supporting children if they become upset.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers provide regular support to staff and make themselves available for them. The manager and deputy manager have a good, shared understanding of the children and their needs. They work closely together and are child-focused in their priorities and sensitive in their support to children and their families.

Staff are supported through their induction and probationary period. This includes time spent receiving training to enhance their skills and knowledge, as well as time spent shadowing more experienced staff who work at the home with the children. This helps them to practise the skills they have learned while building positive relationships with children. Team meetings are held monthly and are well attended by staff.

Managers work closely with other professionals in the organisation and the rest of the team around the child. Managers refer to specialists for advice on children's individual needs to help better understand them.

The manager has produced a quality-of-care report, which includes plans to further develop the home. However, this has not been forwarded to Ofsted.

Managers have improved systems to oversee physical interventions in the home, and these are just starting to be fully implemented. The focus on reflection after incidents is often on the practical aspects of the intervention. There is a lack of reflection on how to reduce restrictions in the future or agreed actions to work towards this.

Managers carry out regular supervision sessions with staff, and these provide information and updates to them. However, they are not reflective of staff's interactions with children and do not capture their experiences and learning from practice.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)) This requirement is restated.	1 October 2025
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a) (2)(c)(i))	1 October 2025
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review	1 October 2025

and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report").

The registered person must—

supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1) (3) (4)(a))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff receive supervision that reflects on their experiences in the home and helps them develop their skills and knowledge. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.15)
- The registered person should monitor the welfare of the children in their care and reflect on their experiences in the home. This reflection should influence changes to their plans. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)

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, County Durham DH2 1AN

Responsible individual: Brian Stoker

Registered manager: Julie Dunlop

Inspector

Carol Jagger, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025