

SC405285

Registered provider: North East Autism Society

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for four children and young people who have a learning disability. All of the children have an autistic spectrum disorder.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 June 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
---	--------------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
---	-------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
---	-------------

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 7 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- The quality of care that is provided is exceptional. Highly skilled staff endeavour to ensure excellent outcomes for the children and young people. Relationships with the staff are outstanding.
- All of the children and young people have progressed beyond expectations. Their day-to-day experiences enhance their quality of life and they are achieving their full potential. Educational outcomes are inspiring, with the children and young people achieving their expected targets.
- The children's and young people's views are very important. They are regularly consulted and their wishes and feelings are acted on. Equality and diversity is significantly threaded through all areas of the children's and young people's lives.
- The children and young people are safe and they feel emotionally secure. Behaviour management is excellent and known risks are minimised. Structures and boundaries in the home support the children and young people to lead a happy, stress-free life.
- Collaborative working with other professionals successfully ensures that the children and young people receive the services and support they need. Relationships with parents and carers are very good. Transitions to and from the home are superior.
- The leadership and management of the home are dynamic. The registered manager leads a committed and motivated team that has high aspirations for the children and young people.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/12/2016	Full	Good
07/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/11/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children and young people receive highly individualised care that consistently meets their needs. All of the children and young people are seen as unique individuals, with their own personalities and traits. The registered manager and the staff have high aspirations for the children and young people, which impacts positively on their outstanding progress.

A staff member said: '[Name] has surpassed all expectations. When he came here, he was isolated and fully dependent. He now thrives doing his activities, and his independence skills are vastly improved. He interacts with others and he is now accessing the community. This is fantastic.'

A social worker said: 'I have been [Name's] social worker for about a year and it has been very positive from day one. The staff are very dedicated and understanding and they are very in tune with [Name]. He has made lots of progress and he is doing great.'

Nurturing relationships between the staff and the children and young people are a key strength. The children and young people have developed high levels of trust with the staff, and this has led to the children and young people feeling calmer and emotionally secure. Key workers have an essential role in supporting their individual key children and young people. This dedicated one-to-one work has aided the children's and young people's rapid progress.

An independent reviewing officer said: 'I am very impressed with the home. My young person has had the same key worker since his admission, which is very good and very unusual. This gives him excellent continuity. He has an excellent relationship with his key worker, who just seems to know him and understands him very well.'

Educational outcomes are exemplary. The registered manager and the staff actively contribute toward the children's and young people's educational achievements by proactively working with teachers and education providers. The children and young people are meeting their expected targets, and they enjoy going to school and joining in after-school activities. This helps them to reach their full potential and prepares them for further education opportunities. The children's and young people's health needs are fully met, and they have access to all of the healthcare services they need.

Activities play a pivotal role in enabling the children and young people to develop their social skills. The scope of activities is wide-ranging and includes individually tailored hobbies, interests, group outings, and holidays. The children and young people are asked about their interests, which are then included in their individual activity plans. This respects the children's and young people's wishes and feelings and inspires them to try new experiences.

A parent said: 'Everything is very, very good, and the staff take good care of my son. He has wonderful opportunities and he is always out and about, which is lovely for him. He is going on holiday soon and I never thought I would ever see the day that would

happen.’

All of the children and young people are substantially developing their independence skills. They are supported to achieve set targets and goals, taking into account their individual levels of understanding and their capabilities. The staff are highly skilled in supporting the children and young people, using creative and innovative techniques. Consistency is of paramount importance, teaching the children and young people new ways to become more independent. The registered manager and the staff excel in this way of working. Consequently, all of the children and young people are flourishing and developing positive self-esteem.

A social worker said: ‘My young person is always out and about, which is amazing. He is doing things he has never done before such as joining in activities, going out for meals, and he always looks happy. He is less isolated and he has gone from doing absolutely nothing for himself to feeding himself and sitting with the other young people for meals. No one expected to see any of this.’

Transitions for the children and young people coming into, and leaving, the home are exemplary. Comprehensive planning and preparation has been a key factor in making transitions, which are very difficult for children and young people who have an autistic spectrum disorder, a positive experience. There are very good examples of joint working between services when the children and young people have made a transition, which has enhanced the children’s and young people’s experiences.

A social worker said: ‘Moving into this home is the best thing ever for [Name]. The preparation and transition was brilliant, and I do not think [Name] would have settled here if it were not for the brilliant planning. His progress is phenomenal, he has come on in leaps and bounds. He has come on so far, no one would have thought it was possible for him to achieve what he has.’

A parent said: ‘My son loves the home, and he loves his new bedroom. I look and see how happy my son is since he came here. It has made my world because my son is where he is.’

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

The registered manager and the staff team know the children and young people extremely well. They are very experienced practitioners who fully understand the risks associated with the individual children and young people, as well as general risks associated with children and young people who have an autistic spectrum disorder. Their extensive knowledge and experience has translated into excellent risk management and a superior approach to keeping the children and young people safe.

A social worker said: ‘I have no issues with the home. Everything is very good. There are no safeguarding issues or any worries at all. My young person is safe, healthy and very happy.’

A parent said: ‘It took me a long time to make the decision for my son to live in a children’s home, but I am very impressed with this home. The staff are good, and I have no worries whatsoever. My son is safe, I could not ask for more.’

Good staffing levels and highly effective supervision, and observation, of the children and young people protect them from any risk of them going missing, being exploited or being radicalised. There are strict guidelines for the staff and the children and young people around e-safety, which enables them to use their computer tablets while protecting their vulnerability. The staff receive regular training to update their child protection knowledge, which keeps the children and young people safe.

The registered manager and the staff have a good understanding of the range of behaviours experienced by children and young people who have an autistic spectrum disorder. The children and young people undergo extensive assessments by trained behaviour management staff. They have detailed individual behaviour management plans that are regularly reviewed and updated, and the staff receive bespoke training specific to each child and young person. Consequently, all the children and young people have significantly reduced behaviours associated with their individual autistic spectrum disorder and their needs. This has vastly improved their quality of life by reducing their anxieties and stress factors.

A staff member said: '[Name] was having three and sometimes four staff with him because of his behaviours before he came here. He has really settled in here and, although we keep a close eye on him, we have never had any significant outbursts. I think this is because we are consistent with him and he knows this is his home.'

There have been two low-level restraints since the last full inspection, which shows that good behaviour management is having a positive impact on the children and young people. The staff maintain consistency and they know each child's and young person's individual routines, which need to be maintained to reduce their stress and anxiety levels. This dynamic and purposeful way of successfully supporting the children's and young people's needs, which are sometimes complex, is exceptional.

All environmental safety checks are carried out regularly, and all the utilities are regularly checked and serviced. This ensures that the children and young people live in a safe environment. All of the new staff are checked for their suitability to work with the children and young people, and all visitors to the home have their identification checked and vetted. These measures keep the children and young people safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager has been employed by this provider for 30 years, starting as a part-time support worker and progressing to her current role. During this time, she has gained extensive experience and her long service demonstrates a high level of commitment to the children and young people. The registered manager has the right qualifications and skills, which she utilises to be a highly effective manager. Her vision and values focus on providing outstanding care and she strives to provide a nurturing, caring family home for the children and young people.

The registered manager commented: 'This is my second family, and I see this as my second home. We operate as a family and I try to make sure that all of the young people have the same chances and choices that other young people have. I'm here because this is what I want to do and this is what I love to do.'

The registered manager is supported by a committed deputy manager who has 25 years' experience working with children and young people who have an autistic spectrum disorder. The deputy manager shares the registered manager's drive and devotion to improving the children's and young people's lives. The staff team is equally earnest in putting the children and young people at the heart of its practice. This combination of highly skilled workers and strong leadership and management significantly contributes to the children's and young people's accomplished progress and positive development.

A social worker said: 'The manager and the staff are excellent, and I am kept up to date with everything. The home is very welcoming and the staff have excellent relationships with the young people. There is nothing I can say, apart from they are all fantastic.'

A parent commented: 'There is very good teamwork and I do not worry about my son being there because I know he is happy. There is nothing bad or wrong about the home; I know that the manager and the staff look after my son very well.'

Equality and diversity is threaded through all aspects of the care and support of the children and young people. They are involved, within their understanding and capabilities, in decisions about their lives and everyday choices. Cultural needs are extremely well met, specifically with the children's and young people's faith and religious needs. The home has received an award for its excellence in supporting a young person to maintain important religious links for him maintain his cultural identity.

His social worker said: 'Everything is overall very positive. [Name] is very comfortable and his cultural needs are extremely well met. The staff fully understand his religious and cultural needs and they make sure he has regular contact with members of his religious community. The staff even took [Name] to London to meet his extended family, and to meet with a larger religious community to help him to learn more about his culture.'

Partnership working with parents, colleagues, other professionals and specialists is very good. This purposeful and united way of working ensures that the children and young people receive very positive holistic care. The registered manager was awarded a top award by the provider for her joint working in supporting and improving the children's and young people's outcomes. This well-deserved recognition fully supports the outstanding way in which this home operates.

A social worker said: 'The communication with the home and the manager is great. They keep me informed and they write fantastic reports. The support for parents goes over and above all expectations, and the staff are fantastic with contact arrangements. The staff here will try everything to help the young people, I could not have asked for a better placement. Everyone is very friendly and the manager has an open door policy. They fully contribute to working with all the professionals involved with my young person. It is absolutely brilliant.'

There has been significant progress since the last inspection that demonstrates continual and positive improvement. Internal monitoring systems are efficient and the provider is reviewing ways to improve the external monitoring to make it more focused on outcomes for the children and young people. Team meetings are more formalised to ensure that all aspects of the children's and young people's care and support is

discussed in detail, which maintains consistency. Individual staff members are now taking more responsibility in established individual roles. This highly values the staff's contribution to the home's operation and the outcomes for the children and young people.

Substantial staff training and development is very good and focuses on the needs of the children and young people. Regular and meaningful supervision fully supports the staff and improves their knowledge, skills and their day-to-day practice. The provider is investing in additional training workshops for all leaders and managers, and senior managers have set up a reference group for all levels of staff. The purpose of this group is to gain feedback about the staff's experiences in all the children's homes operated by the provider. The staff are able to put forward suggestions to improve the operational services and the outcomes for the children and young people. These progressive measures fully appreciate the workforce's contribution to the success of all the services provided for the children and young people and, specifically, to the ongoing outstanding outcomes for this children's home.

An independent reviewing officer said: 'I was so impressed with this home and the staff. The home is very warm and welcoming; I cannot tell you how impressed I was. When I left, I thought to myself this is a great place. I came away with a really good feeling.'

There are no new requirements or recommendations arising from this inspection.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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 Lee Street, County Durham DH2 1AN

Responsible individual: Brian Stoker

Registered manager: Julie Dunlop

Inspector

Debbie White, 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 children looked after, 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 <http://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 <http://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: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017