

Children's home inspection – Full

Inspection date	20/12/2016
Unique reference number	SC405285
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	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	Michael Dack

Inspection date	20/12/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC405285

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The staff build trusting and safe relationships with the young people quickly. There are always sufficient staff on duty to ensure that each young person's individual care is provided with dignity and respect.
- The staff improve the young people's lives by helping them to express their views and make choices. The young people are provided with a range of activities within the community. This provides them with positive social experiences which encourage interaction and learning.
- The staff work with a range of professionals, parents and carers to ensure that each young person is provided with an individualised package of care. The young people are supported to meet their cultural needs and are encouraged in developing self-care skills appropriate to their abilities.
- The registered manager and staff place the well-being of the young people at the centre of their practice, irrespective of the challenges that their behaviour may present. The young people receive praise on a regular basis, encouraging any aspect of achievement in their personal development.
- The staff focus on the young person first and not the disability.
- There are a few shortfalls in practice which require attention. As a result, requirements and recommendations have been made. These include improvements in accommodation and in the supervision of staff.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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
6. In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular reference to providing young people with appropriate bedroom furnishings, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(b)(vii) provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (c) ensure that the premises used for the purpose of the home are designed and furnished so as to – (i) meet the needs of each child.	30/01/2017
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16(1)) In particular, this relates to ensuring that care planning at point of admission includes the impact of any risks posed by new young people on established residents, and vice versa.	23/01/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that supervision of staff enables them to reflect and act upon how their own feelings and behaviour may be affected by the behaviour of the children they care for. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39 paragraph 8.15)
- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56 paragraph 11.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home accommodates four children or young people who have learning disability. It is operated by a charitable organisation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/11/2015	Full	Good
05/02/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
29/08/2014	Full	Good
10/09/2013	Interim	Good progress

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The staffing levels within the home are appropriate to meet the care needs of each young person. This ensures that at all times their specific needs are being supported to keep them safe. The attention to detail within the home and outside is very clear and commendable when considering the cultural and religious needs of one young person in particular. The staff have worked closely with the elders of the young person's faith community and have advocated on behalf of the young person to ensure that he has an opportunity to spend seasonal time celebrating and partaking fully in religious festivals. Dietary considerations in purchasing and preparing food are considered fully, and the staff ensure that the young person takes an active part. The staff team, and in particular his key worker, support his transport to and from a faith community to purchase food and interact with his peers. A young person who was recently admitted to the home was observed with the staff while being supported to express himself using Makaton. The staff are skilled in recognising the way in which the individual young people respond and indicate their likes and dislikes. They can appear happy, sad, anxious and distressed all in a relatively short period of time. However, staff respond and are quick to determine what works and what does not. This is developed through knowledge and experience of the individual behaviours associated with autistic young people in particular. The young people quickly respond to the staff and enjoy their attention. The staff produce monthly reports which display visual experiences in the form of photographs and pictures, detailing the progress in terms of young people's achievements and activities. They also continue to use electronic devices to demonstrate visually how the young people are progressing. These are shared with their parents and social workers. The young people have received awards for their achievements from their respective local authority. These experiences support and develop their confidence and self-esteem, developing resilience. The home is rightly proud of its Investing in Children award recognising the level of consultation with young people and a range of child-centred and child-focused approaches that are part of the everyday experiences of the young people living at the home. The young people benefit from a range of activities as well as celebrating cultural and seasonal events, theme nights and general activities, such as going to the beach for walks. One parent said: 'They take him on lots of activities, such as swimming, parks, visiting shops. He also goes on holiday to an autism specific place, which he loves.'	

The young people make progress in all aspects of their lives and have good experiences. The attention to detail provided by staff in giving consistent messages and support promotes independent skills, such as preparing food with support, dressing and ensuring that their laundry gets to be washed by encouraging them to bring it to the attention of the staff. Praise is constantly offered.

A new format for plotting progress of the young people is being introduced in the new year using 'SMART' targets, producing and recording evidence in a consistent manner. This continuous improvement is designed to enhance the young person's experience while living at the home. It will develop and provide staff with a format that can be easily followed, and identify areas for improvement. The new format will support the good practical based work that the staff do day to day.

The young people attend full-time education and are all making progress. Communication is strong between educational staff and staff at the home. Daily home-to-school diaries assist with the consistency of the care being provided.

All of the staff are fully trained in safe handling of medication and have worked with medical professionals in safely reducing prescribed medication as part of treatment programmes. Toileting issues have been addressed ensuring that young people have progressed significantly while in the home. This has led to a reduction of intimate care, and promotes dignity and independence.

The staff routinely provide consistent care to the young people and are strong advocates to ensure that they have positive experiences. However, sharing of knowledge and reflection on practice is limited in the forums that are provided. For example, supervision and team meetings. The staff all have individual key roles and do not currently feed this expertise back into the group, therefore missing an opportunity to be creative and innovative in practice to drive the service forward. Ultimately, an opportunity to improve the full range of experiences of young people is not taken.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The staff ensure that when a young person is being introduced to the home they work proactively with other agencies and their parents to provide a smooth transition into their care. The staff will then identify through observation what risks and supports the young person will need to keep them safe. Risk assessments are clear, detailing the actions required to minimise the severity of risk and allowing staff to identify when the risk is being managed effectively.	

The staff take time with the young people to understand their individual behaviours and abilities to ensure that opportunities are provided in which risk is managed. Basic self-care skills are introduced on a day-to-day basis at the level of each individual young person, therefore promoting independence. Support is provided sensitively, mindful at all times that their right to privacy is respected. A parent said of his child: 'Personal care has improved to the extent that he can make his own breakfast with support from staff.'

Risk could be managed more effectively if, upon admission, each young person's risk assessment took into account the impact that their specific individualised behaviours may have on other young people and vice-versa. This would support further care planning to minimise any anxieties relating to a disability.

The provision of consistent routines is at the forefront of the staff's practice. Autistic young people require very clear routines to reduce any anxieties and avoid subsequent behaviours that may put them at risk. The staffing ratios are good, which enables care to be provided with warmth and security. The young people clearly respond to the staff positively. This can be observed in the way that they behave. Key workers are especially responsive to and knowledgeable about their identified young person, and the relationships are strong.

Behaviour management plans are comprehensive and robust, identifying specific behaviours and responses required to manage behaviour safely. This level of insight and detail is ongoing, ensuring that young people are supported and helped to understand their behaviours and, in some cases, manage their own behaviour more effectively.

The home was observed to be a very happy place. This was reflected in a birthday party which was planned and took place the day of inspection. Parents and professionals attended alongside the young people. Planning was essential, given the diverse needs of each young person placed at this time. In addition to differing cultures, the sensory requirements were also particularly well managed.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The registered manager is suitably experienced and qualified. The deputy manager has also recently completed the recognised management qualification and is very experienced. The management team is respected by staff and is very committed to ensuring that the well-being of the young people is at the centre of its work. Internal audits are evident throughout, ensuring a management oversight of all	

plans. Supervision and appraisals take place regularly and by suitably qualified people. However, supervisions lacked direction and any reflective practice. They did not provide staff with opportunities to enhance their performance, impacting on the potential for each young person. The management team has identified this prior to inspection, and a new format is being introduced in the new year. Appraisals were very good at providing clear pathways for enhancing and developing practice to meet the specific needs of the young people placed at the home, as stated in the home's statement of purpose.

The staff are provided with a comprehensive mandatory training programme and, importantly, all of the staff have received training in autism level 2, which had been suggested at a previous inspection. Staff are all suitably qualified at the required level.

All wishes and views of the young people are taken into account whether they are able to speak coherently or not during their young people meetings every month. One young person writes specific requests to the registered manager as well as staff when he particularly wants to do certain activities. Young people make choices through the use of symbols or pictures which can be seen throughout the home.

Regular visits by an independent visitor take account of the home's performance, and although previously the reports have not been clear in expressing an opinion as to whether young people are effectively safeguarded or the home promotes their well-being, they have improved. Most importantly, they add to the overall monitoring of the service to ensure that young people are progressing and that their needs are being met.

The standard of the home is well maintained and, at the time of inspection, seasonally decorated, with careful detail to meeting the cultural and religious needs of the young people currently placed. Young people are enabled to follow their cultural, religious and dietary needs as specifically required for them as individuals. Management and staff have fulfilled this requirement exceptionally well. The young people have been provided with a sense of identity and belonging to their community, raising their self-esteem and resilience. Disability is no barrier to providing positive experiences within the home, and relationships are strong.

A shortfall was identified in the provision of accommodation, and at times there is a need to adapt bedrooms in respect of individual need. However, timely action is required to ensure that all young people have appropriate furnishings within their bedrooms, taking into account their specific sensory needs. Any delay could impact upon their ability to live there comfortably. Where possible, bedrooms were personalised to their individual tastes. This gives young people a sense of ownership and enhances their feelings of self-worth.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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