

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	24/11/2015
Unique reference number	SC405285
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	North East Autism Society
Registered person 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	Nick Murphy

Inspection date	24/11/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
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	Requires improvement

SC405285

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff provide a high quality of support to young people at all times. There are always sufficient staff on duty to attend to each young person's individual needs and keep them safe and happy. Staff ensure that barriers to young people's progress are challenged and minimised.
- Staff listen to young people, helping them to express their views and make choices. Young people do well in education and enjoy a wide range of activities. This gives them enriching experiences and ensures that they remain connected to wider society.
- Staff manage young people's behaviour well. They encourage young people to develop greater responsibility for their own care. The skilled work that staff do results in lasting improvements in young people's emotional resilience.
- Good partnership working with other services, for example, health professionals, helps young people to make progress. Some aspects of promoting well-being, notably healthy eating, require improvement.
- The inspection has identified shortfalls in the home's leadership and management. As a result, several statutory requirements and recommendations have been made.

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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard with particular reference to ensuring summaries of progress are accurate and kept up to date, the registered person must ensure that children: (1)(a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.	08/01/2016
10: The health and well-being standard In order to meet the health and well-being standard with particular reference to supporting young people to eat more healthily, the registered person must ensure that: (1)(c) children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles.	08/01/2016
With reference to the use of physical restraint, the registered person must ensure that within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so, has spoken to the user about the use of the measure. Regulation 35(3)(b)(i)	08/01/2016
The registered person must ensure that the independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44(4)(a) and (b))	08/01/2016

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))	08/01/2016
With reference to the statement of purpose, subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (6) Nothing in paragraph (5) or regulation 46 (review of premises) requires or authorises the registered person to contravene or not comply with— (a) any other provision of these Regulations; or (b) any conditions in relation to the registration of the registered person under Part 2 of the Care Standards Act 2000. (Regulation 16(5) and (6)(b))	08/01/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Ensure that the workforce plan fulfils the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, in particular that it includes clear actions and timescales for all staff to attain the appropriate qualifications by the required date. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 53 paragraph 10.8)
- Ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, in particular to ensure that staff receive training in whatever areas are necessary to support young people who have specific issues arising from their disability. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 53 paragraph 10.11)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This section should outline:

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

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/02/2015	CH - Interim	Improved effectiveness
29/08/2014	CH - Full	Good
10/09/2013	CH - Interim	Good Progress
24/06/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Staff respond to young people with care and compassion. They provide the right level of support to ensure that each young person's differing needs are met. As a result of the quality of support the home provides, young people are happy and make significant progress in all areas of their lives. Residential care plans set out the overall objectives of each young person's placement and how they will be achieved. Each young person's key worker records their progress in monthly reports. These reports are sometimes repetitive from month to month and do not always record information accurately. This means that the evaluation of the young person's progress is not as useful as it might be. In other aspects of monitoring how well young people are doing, staff have introduced some innovative practice. They video young people on activities and interacting with staff and others. They then email these to parents and social workers and play them back at looked after reviews. This is excellent work which conveys more effectively than words the impact that the home is having on young people's development. A parent said, 'My child has gone from someone who was confused and aggressive, with many sensory difficulties, to someone who is now so much calmer and happier in themselves. This is a testament to the work the staff have done over the years. The staff are just wonderful.' Young people clearly relish the attention of staff and love being with them. One young person spent a happy fifteen minutes dancing round the lounge with a member of staff doing the hokey-cokey. Most young people are unable to communicate verbally. Staff have an excellent awareness of each young person's ways of indicating whether they are happy, sad, anxious or distressed. This means they can respond quickly to provide comfort and reassurance. Young people are all in full-time education and making good progress. Daily home-to-school diaries enable information to be passed back and forth which helps in maintaining consistency for young people. Staff work closely with health professionals to maintain young people in good health. Some good work has enabled young people to overcome barriers in accessing health services. For example, a community dental team comes to the home to treat one young person with an aversion to visiting the dentist. Staff monitor specific health issues for young people. They feed this information into meetings with parents, consultant paediatricians and psychiatrists, enabling treatment programmes including medication to be reviewed. This partnership working results in improvements to young people's health, well-being and dignity. For example, one young person who	

was incontinent during the day is now able to use the toilet. Another has had a marked reduction in the number of night-time seizures.

Some young people have issues with their weight. Staff carry out regular height and weight checks but these are not consistently recorded. This information is not produced in a form which would enable clear targets to be set, for example, using body mass index. The home's menus are reasonably varied but do not provide sufficient vegetables. Some young people's plans state that their portion size should be reduced but not by how much. The home has links with the dietician service but not all young people who need it have been referred to it. These shortfalls mean that young people are developing eating habits which will not serve them well as they progress into adulthood.

Because of the young people's disabilities and limited communication it is not practical for them to express their views in a group setting. Instead, staff have monthly individual meetings where they review (using photos) what they have done that month. Staff record the young person's comments or reactions, using these to plan subsequent activities. Young people are therefore able to choose what they want to do, rather than have to go along with the group. Some enjoy more social activities, such as dance classes. Others prefer one-to-one outings with staff. All young people, whatever their level of disability, go out into the community. Such activities include visits to zoos, local shopping centres, and trips on public transport. This reduces the potential for young people to be isolated from society.

Staff are particularly good at meeting the cultural and religious needs of young people. Substantial physical alterations have been made to the home to enable one young person to practise their religion on a daily basis. Staff work closely with the elders of the young person's faith community to ensure that their diet is suitable, and that they can partake fully in religious festivals.

Everyday practice promotes the independence of young people. They are encouraged to do things for themselves, such as eating meals, dressing, and bathing. With the support of staff they bring their washing to the laundry. When young people indicate that they want staff to feed them, they are gently reminded that they are able to do that themselves. As a result, young people have made substantial progress in acquiring the skills that will help them to function better as adults. A parent said, 'The home has prepared my child well for moving on.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Staff assess risks to young people in all relevant areas and have plans in place to manage them. Young people cannot leave the building without staff, but this is appropriate given their lack of understanding of danger. The home has an enclosed garden and the daily trips to school, frequent activities in the community, and holidays away ensure that young people's liberty is not restricted. The home's policies in relation to management of allegations and reporting of unexplained injuries are sound and well understood by staff. The way in which the home recruits staff is extremely robust. Daily routines provide consistency and predictability for young people. This is particularly beneficial for autistic young people, reducing any feelings of anxiety with consequent behavioural outbursts. Staff treat young people with complete respect for their dignity. When a young person requires support with intimate personal care, staff provide this discreetly and without fuss. They are aware of the principles of safe care and apply them in their daily work. Good practice like this keeps young people safe. It is also evident from the young people's behaviour and the way they relate to staff that they feel safe. Staff are good at dealing with challenging behaviour. Each young person's behaviour management plan sets out what might cause them to become agitated or aggressive and what works in calming them. Staff use a variety of techniques to manage young people when they become upset or distressed, such as distracting them and helping them to focus their attention elsewhere. As a result of this work some young people learn to manage their behaviour more effectively themselves. A parent said of her child, 'We have noticed such a difference in them. They used to be confused and upset all the time, it made it difficult to take them out and about. Now they are so much better, for example, they now accept it when they are told no.' The skills of staff in maintaining a happy and orderly atmosphere are reflected in the very low number of physical restraints (two since the last full inspection over a year ago). The recording of restraint is incomplete. It does not include confirmation that a senior member of staff has spoken to the person who carried it out. This is an important safeguard for young people as well as enabling the member of staff to reflect on what happened and whether the restraint could have been avoided.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The registered manager is suitably experienced and qualified. The deputy manager is also undertaking the recognised management qualification which will enhance the overall capacity of the home's leadership. Managers provide staff with regular supervision and appraisal, and organise a programme of training which keeps their skills and knowledge updated. When they start at the home staff receive suitable induction which includes some training in autism, but currently there is no ongoing programme of training in this topic. This means that staff may not have the up-to-date understanding they need to provide the most effective support for young people with this condition. Most of the staff have the required child care qualification, the rest are undertaking a programme of study which leads to it. The individual learning agreements of these staff set a timescale for completion beyond that required by regulation. As a result, current plans do not ensure that young people will be looked after by staff who are qualified. At the previous inspection a recommendation was made to ensure that the home's statement of purpose was up to date and forwarded to Ofsted. This has been partly addressed, but there are still inaccuracies in the version on the registered provider's website. These include details which are important for anyone needing certain information about the home, for example, the name of the responsible individual. The registered manager undertakes regular monitoring of the home's performance. It takes good account of the views of parents and social workers, and also describes how young people indicate their satisfaction with the service. These reports evaluate the progress that young people make and confirm that their needs are being met. Regular visits by a person independent of the home also take place. Reports of these visits do not express a clear opinion as to whether young people are effectively safeguarded or that the conduct of the home promotes their well-being. This reduces the effectiveness and accountability of these visits. The home is currently accommodating two young people who have reached 18 years of age (and are therefore adults) in addition to two children. The plans for both 18 year olds are that they will stay here until they leave school in July 2016. The law requires that to be a children's home it must accommodate more children than adults over a certain period of time. There is some flexibility in calculating this, but even the most favourable interpretation will result in the home breaching its conditions of registration early in 2016. It will therefore not be operating according to its statement of purpose. Managers had some awareness of this possibility but had not undertaken sufficient enquiries to understand the legislation and take appropriate corrective action.	

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 looked after children 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 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 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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