

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 the children have an autism spectrum disorder.

Inspection dates: 24 to 25 September 2019

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 **outstanding**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 2 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/10/2018	Full	Outstanding
19/06/2017	Full	Outstanding
07/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/12/2016	Full	Good

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
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. (Regulation 12(1), (2)(a)(i)) Specifically, to review the bedtime monitoring arrangements at in accordance with children's emotional well-being and level of risk.	31/10/2019

Recommendations

- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(a). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

In particular, staff need opportunities to discuss safeguarding regularly and to reflect on their practice.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children and young people receive individualised care that meets their complex needs. The manager and staff ensure that placement plans are thorough before the children and young people come to the home, and these are reviewed with care. The individual detail is extremely specific to each child and young person. This enables a very purposeful package of care to promote safe care and continuous development.

The children and young people make exceptional progress. The staff invest a great deal of time in ensuring that children and young people are positively engaged. The deployment of staff is carefully considered, offering flexibility to ensure that children and young people receive the right response at any given time. For example, a change of face/staff member will often be used as a strategy to support children and young people. This helps them to regain their composure and is often a successful distraction. The well-being of the children and young people is always at the centre of practice.

High staffing ratios enable children and young people to enjoy activities and new experiences with both staff individually and with their peers. Key workers are skilled in gaining the views, wishes and opinions of children and young people. They use a variety of communication aids to help and support children and young people to make choices throughout their day-to-day experiences, thus developing their confidence and well-being.

The registered manager and her assistant work tirelessly to enable children and young people to settle into the home and to move on when the time is right. This has raised many challenges this year, notably in planned moves into adult placements. Children and young people with autism spectrum disorder often have difficulty with changes in routine. The registered manager and her staff have managed extreme changes in previously known behaviours with diligence to ensure that the positive outcomes were maintained for children and young people.

All staff work proactively and positively with other agencies and professionals. They develop effective, compassionate relationships with parents. A parent commented, 'I think they are outstanding.' Another stated, 'We are overwhelmed by the quality of care.' The staff work sensitively and with respect to ensure that families are supported to be involved in their child's life as much as possible on a day-to-day basis. Parents and professionals are frequently invited to the home, often taking part in seasonal events and parties for the children and young people. A full-family experience ensures that children feel valued and cared for.

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

The staff are experienced practitioners and knowledgeable about the characteristics shown by children and young people who have an autism spectrum disorder. This leads to personalised safe care. The risk assessment and positive behavioural support plans

are very good. They contain individualised knowledge gained through a variety of methods and from extremely good communication with parents and professionals.

There has been a slight increase in serious occurrences, which has led to staff responding in a skilled and professional manner to avoid any serious injury to children and young people. Unfortunately, the staff have suffered injuries, but they have continued to show a dedicated and sensitive response to children and young people regardless. The staff demonstrate consistency in adhering to individual children and young people's routines. This reduces the children and young people's stress and anxiety.

One significant incident led to an unauthorised absence late at night. This was not anticipated, as the young person had not previously left the home, and, due to their unsettled and anxious behaviour, the environment was not managed to the expected level. Thankfully, the young person was quickly returned by neighbours. The subsequent steps taken appear to have been thorough, nevertheless the incident could have been avoided.

Transitions into the home are managed extremely well. The staff maintain excellent communication with schools, social workers, health professionals and families to ensure that children and young people move in successfully. Transitions are always at the pace of the children and young people, and the staff endeavour to ensure that families, inclusive of brothers and sisters, are involved. A parent who spoke very passionately about the outstanding characteristics of the service stated, 'The transition went extremely well and I can say this was down to the preparation. They made sure everything was taken care of, especially his routines and the design of his bedroom. This has made a fantastic difference to our family life.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager and her assistant have a wealth of knowledge and experience. They are highly supportive of each other and the staff team. Collectively, they share a commitment to maximising children and young people's potential.

The managers lead by example. They are very much 'hands on', providing a homely and warm environment in which children and young people can flourish.

The managers provide staff with regular supervision that is reflective in its presentation, but it does not cover safeguarding as a stand-alone agenda point. This does not encourage staff to consistently use opportunities to learn and develop as an individual to consider and discuss the safe care of children and young people.

Team meetings, however, are thorough and provide scope for detailed and reflective discussion on practice and emotional well-being. This provides a useful platform on which to develop and support team togetherness and consistency in supporting children and young people with complex needs. Staff feel supported, valued and motivated, as a result.

The registered manager has implemented an independence skills booklet which records the progress and achievements of children and young people. This identifies a series of basic skills that enable children and young people to take small steps to achieve an overall task. This ensures that each step is celebrated, and it develops confidence and self-esteem in children and young people with a diverse range of abilities.

The statement of purpose is kept under review and updated when necessary.

The manager is skilled at gathering information for her required quality of care review. She ensures that the views of all relevant parties are incorporated in the development of the service. Specific detail is provided on the experiences of children and young people. This validates the high level of care and level of commitment by management and staff on a day-by-day basis.

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: 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

Michael Dack, social care inspector

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