

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC405285
Inspector	Steve Pearson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	North East Autism Society
Registered person address	Units 15 & 16 Lumley Court Drum Industrial Estate; Birtley CHESTER LE STREET County Durham DH2 1AN
Responsible individual	John Joseph Phillipson
Registered manager	Julie Dunlop
Date of last inspection	10/09/2013

Inspection date	29/08/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The home is effective at providing good quality care to young people and in enabling them to make very good progress. Huge improvements in children's development have been made, often in the short period of time since their admission to the home. Children become more confident, settled and secure and they gain important self-care skills to support them to live successfully in a more independent manner.

Plans for helping young people gain independence skills are not sufficiently well-developed. They do not have sufficiently clear assessments about their current levels of skills or ability associated with independence. This makes it more difficult for staff in their current placement and in any future placement to know how to help them develop further in these areas.

The children's home is clean, well-maintained and homely. The staff have a detailed understanding of the full range of children's needs. Young people are safe, secure and happy.

Monitoring of the quality of care is not sufficiently robust and a recommendation from two previous inspections remains unmet. This demonstrates a limited capacity for continuous improvement. New staff are not given induction training of sufficient foundation. This is because the home's own induction package, though significant,

has not been validated against the standards set by the Children's Workforce Development Council. New staff are also not sufficiently supported by regular one-to-one recorded supervision from a senior person.

The staff are well-motivated and are supported well by the Registered Manager and the deputy. The team strive to ensure children have consistency of staffing and they are successful in enabling young people to feel settled and secure.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a charitable organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/09/2013	Interim	good progress
24/06/2013	Full	good
05/02/2013	Interim	inadequate progress
08/08/2012	Full	adequate

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

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 Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at least once in every 3 months. In particular, the issues to be monitored must reflect those described in the amended Children's Homes Regulations 2001 (Regulation 34 (1)(a))	31/10/2014
34 (2001)	ensure that the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. In particular, this means recording their views about the quality of care in the monitoring reports. (Regulation 34 (3))	31/10/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people are supported to leave care. In particular this means maintaining an up to date assessment of the needs identified in this standard and making clear the expectations of residential staff in meeting these needs (NMS 12.1)
- ensure the result of all statutory reviews and reviews of Placement Plans are recorded on each child's file and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews are clearly identified (NMS 25.8)
- ensure information about each child is recorded clearly. In particular this means each young person's risk assessment should clearly explain how the risk of harm arising from each individual hazard is to be reduced (NMS 22.5)
- ensure no person works in a children's home unless they are at least four years older than the oldest child accommodated (NMS 17.11)
- ensure that new staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards, commencing within seven working days of starting their employment and being completed within six months. This includes bank staff and agency staff (NMS 18.3)
- provide in-service training to enhance individual skills of staff employed in the children's home. In particular this relates to the provision of training in the use of computers; and ensuring the record of training provided to staff is kept up-to-date (NMS 18.1)
- ensure staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. In particular this applies to bank staff and agency staff working regularly at the children's home. (NMS 19.4)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people make excellent progress as a result of the care they receive.

Children's physical and emotional health improves and there are excellent relationships between the staff and health professionals. Close monitoring of children's health and liaison with health professionals has helped to ensure any necessary changes in medication are made resulting in quick improvements.

The behaviour of all children improves significantly from their point of admission to the home. Behaviour that was of concern prior to admission reduces and is replaced by behaviour which is much more sociably acceptable. The staff are effective at addressing concerns about behaviour with children and teaching them how to behave appropriately. Young people also learn effective self-care skills to improve personal hygiene and life skills for living in a social environment with others.

Children learn how to become more independent. They have made huge progress in becoming more adept in self-care skills such as dressing themselves, meal-time routines, bathing and travelling in vehicles.

A social worker summed up the progress young people make, saying, 'I would place another child in this home in the knowledge they would help to support their development.'

Young people also make strong advances in their full-time education. The staff help them to learn how to count; recite the months in a calendar; and to advance in other cognitive challenges. Young people can also use their own computer and electronic tablet with access to the internet.

Young people are happy and stimulated because they take part in a variety of activities in the home. There are a range of indoor and outdoor games. They also take part in activities in the community such as dance classes or religious events. This helps young people develop their social skills, friendships and a sense of belonging.

Young people's emotional well-being is promoted because the staff fully support them in maintaining regular contact with their family and friends. Families are welcomed into the home and the staff help with transport arrangements to ensure young people go home as much as possible.

Quality of care

good

Young people are fully involved in the running of the home. This helps them to develop a sense of self-esteem and to feel valued. For example, a social worker said, 'The home is friendly and welcoming. The children and their needs are central to decisions.'

Children's needs are described clearly in booklets called 'All About Me'. These help the staff to be clear about important issues such as young people's daily routines, preferences and communication patterns. Children's needs are described more comprehensively in residential placement plans. However, staff are not sufficiently supported to be clear about children's changing needs. This is because when they attend a child's care review meeting they do not routinely record the outcomes in the plan for others to read afterwards. The impact is especially significant where the written outcome from the independent review officer is also late in arriving.

The staff help all young people to learn skills that are helpful for day to day living with others in the children's home. The staff help them to become as independent as possible and help them prepare for when they leave the home when older. However, care plans are insufficiently clear about young people's current skills and abilities in relation to independence. This makes it harder to plan effectively to help them improve skills further. When an older young person moves into supported accommodation at age 18 or 19, it also means that staff in the new placement are not sufficiently clear about their abilities.

Young people behave well and the staff are effective in helping them to develop socially acceptable behaviour. They get on well with the staff and with each other. The staff take advice from professionals from external agencies when necessary. For example, they seek advice from a speech and language therapist and a nurse who specialises in the treatment of epilepsy. When asked how they felt living in the children's home, one young person said, 'I'm happy' and another said, 'I like living here.'

Young people take part in a wide range of activities in the children's home and in the community. The staff help young people to play and to enjoy life. They also go on residential breaks with the staff in the school holidays. Young people are stimulated and they gain a great sense of enjoyment and fun.

The home itself is well-maintained, clean and in good decorative order. Any necessary repairs are carried out quickly.

The staff are adept at helping young people meet their cultural and religious needs. They take advice from people outside of the home when necessary and are very knowledgeable about such needs. The staff help young people have a rich variety of mementoes about their time living at the children's home. Each young person has a 'memory box' for storing memorabilia and they each have an album of photographs taken while they live at the home.

Keeping children and young people safe **good**

Young people are safe and feel safe. In surveys received from three young people, all of them said, 'I feel safe at the children's home.' Young people get on well with each other and there is no bullying. Staffing levels help to ensure young people are appropriately supervised to keep them safe.

The staff are effective in promoting safe behaviour. Occasionally they have to restrain young people if their behaviour is putting the welfare of the young person or others at risk. The staff record these occasions in full detail to a level that is fully compliant with legal requirements. Monitoring of these records by the Registered Manager also helps to ensure any concerns are addressed in a timely manner.

The staff all receive training in how to identify harm, abuse, neglect and how to report concerns to the relevant agencies. Young people do not go missing because appropriate supervision and safeguards are in place.

The premises are safe. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. Young people take part in regular fire drills and the staff test the bells and smoke detectors at regular intervals. The Registered Manager undertakes a full risk assessment of fire hazards once a year.

The staff also assess the risk of hazards that may affect each young person. These assessments are personalised and the documentation shows the staff have an in-depth understanding of each individual. However, the assessments are not sufficiently clear about what action needs to be taken to reduce individual risk. For example, the risk of a young person dropping to their knees is identified but the action to be taken by staff in this instance is unclear.

Appropriate recruitment arrangements are in place which help to ensure that staff employed to work with children are suitable.

Leadership and management **adequate**

The leadership and management of the home are not effective at monitoring the quality of care provided and addressing shortfalls. A recommendation made at the previous two inspections has not been met. This relates to young people's views being represented by the Registered Manager in monitoring reports. Therefore, it is hard to be assured that any shortfalls mentioned by young people are being identified and addressed.

Additionally, the Registered Manager's monitoring reports do not report on the range

of issues required by legislation. The regulations concerning the issues to be monitored changed five months ago and monitoring reports have not been updated to reflect this. This weakens the home's capacity for continuous improvement.

Several members of staff have left the home since the previous inspection 11 months ago. The home has relied on: current staff working overtime; employment of temporary staff; and employing a significant number of agency staff. However, staffing levels have been maintained and the Registered Manager has tried to ensure as much consistency of staff as possible. Four new permanent staff have also been recruited recently and the staff have been pleased with the quality of agency personnel.

The home also employs occasional staff from their register of temporary staff, known as bank staff. Agency staff and bank staff are not being given induction training of sufficient quality because the training does not meet the requirements set by the Children's Workforce Development Council. In addition, regular bank staff are not receiving sufficient support and oversight because they do not receive formal one-to-one, recorded supervision. This is contrary to the home's supervision policy.

The registered provider is not ensuring a wide enough age difference of four years between the youngest members of staff and the oldest young people. Without maintenance of this gap there is insufficient assurance that the staff will have the necessary maturity and experience to establish effective working relationships. There are no concerns about the practices of individuals working at the children's home. However, the expectation of the national minimum standards is not being met in this regard.

There is a wide range of training available and many staff have completed different courses. However, there is a lack of accountability for training provided to the staff. Training records are not up-to-date and do not accurately reflect the courses that have been completed by individuals. A significant proportion of the staff team are not sufficiently skilled in the use of computers. This is limiting their capacity to complete administrative and recording duties effectively.

The Registered Manager has been in post since the children's home opened in January 2010. They have the necessary experience and qualifications for their role.

Permanent staff are all appropriately qualified for their roles and many of the staff are very experienced demonstrating a detailed understanding of children's needs. This was summed up by one member of staff who said, 'we have a good professional team that is supported well by our manager. We are highly trained in order to meet all the needs of our service users.' A social worker said, 'the young people are settled there. There is continuity of staff and they keep me updated with any relevant information.'

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.