

# SC032154

Registered provider: National Autistic Society

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is part of a charitable trust. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to eight children or young people who have autism spectrum disorder. Children or young people in the home may have associated difficulties, such as sensory impairment and/or physical disabilities. The home is divided into two houses with a communal hub and garden. The home is part of a special school that provides education on site.

**Inspection dates:** 8 to 9 January 2019

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>outstanding</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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:** 18 January 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/01/2018	Full	Outstanding
15/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/01/2017	Full	Outstanding
01/12/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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

### Recommendations

- When establishing the home, the registered person must ensure that it is suitably located so that children are effectively safeguarded and can access services to meet the needs identified in their relevant plans (see regulations 12(2)(c)). Under regulation 46, the registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. Providers should refer to the non-statutory advice about the location assessment process: 'Children's homes regulation amendments 2014: Advice for children's homes providers on new duties under regulations that came in to effect in January and April 2014'. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)
- Registered persons have a key role in seeking to develop the home's effective working relationships with each child's placing authority and with other relevant persons which may include services, individuals (including parents), agencies, organisations and establishments that work with children in the local community, e.g. police, schools, health and youth offending teams (regulation 5 – engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met). These working relationships will also be key to success in delivering the care planning standard (regulation 14) ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52 paragraph 10.3). This is with particular reference to the manager ensuring that there is relevant parental consent in the children's records.

### Inspection judgements

#### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The staff provide excellent quality of care and fully understand the children's and young people's needs. This high-quality care helps children and young people to remain emotionally settled and to make excellent and sustainable progress. At difficult times, the children and young people are cared for by sensitive staff who understand them and meet their needs. Staff know the children and young people well, and are positive about their potential. The staff are focused on meeting the children's and young people's needs. A staff member said: 'We are helping the children and young people to function within the world. Building on positive routines, gaining new experiences and learning new skills enables their development into adulthood.'

The children and young people are making exceptional progress from their starting points. Despite some complex or challenging needs, the improvements that children and young people make are sustained. The ethos is to focus on what they can do, rather

than restrict their abilities and independence. The staff are aspirational for the children and young people and they all work towards future targets. Examples include making a sandwich, putting crumpets in a toaster or using the toilet independently. When targets are achieved, they are recognised through the 'assessment and qualifications alliance' and certificates are presented. In addition, photographs are taken which visually demonstrate the positive difference in the children's and young people's abilities and presentation. One parent said: 'I cannot believe my son performed on stage. The confidence they have given him and the change in him is marvellous.' The experiences that children and young people have in this home considerably improves their ability to develop their skills and well-being.

Because of the exceptional and consistent care, the staff are resolute and determined to support the children and young people through periods of crisis. Through reflection, the staff can identify the need behind the presenting behaviour and match the child or young person with the required additional support and specialist consultation. The staff respond to the guidance of professionals and will change and adapt their practice as required. This highly effective partnership working has enabled the children and young people to maintain stable care and as a result, their placement at the home. Additionally, the manager is insightful regarding the future needs of children and young people. She proactively works to create clear plans should children or young people experience crisis episodes which may mean that the staff cannot maintain their care or safety.

The staff value communication and substantial improvements have been made so that the views of the children and young people can be ascertained. The staff have researched alternative methods and tools so as to further develop effective communication in order to enable the children and young people to make greater choices. The children and young people individually chose what they wanted to eat on Christmas day and the activities for the day. Additionally, the garden fence is multicoloured as each child and young person picked a colour preference. Another child was supported to pick the colour he wanted his bedroom to be painted.

The children and young people benefit from having a staff team that is provided with the training it needs to meet their needs. The manager is proactive in ensuring that the staff achieve the relevant qualification as soon as possible. Essential specialist training is rolled out to all the staff and there is a strong focus on ensuring that the staff team members understand autism spectrum disorders and how best to care for the children and young people at the home.

The home is personalised, comfortable and reflects the children's and young people's differing needs. It supports their privacy and care needs and the staff work hard to make it a comfortable, secure home that promotes the children's and young people's emotional well-being. Ongoing decoration and maintenance mean that the home is well maintained, safe and comfortable. Commendably, the home is clearly structured, adapted, decorated and maintained based on the identified needs and preferences of the children and young people.

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

The rights and entitlements of the children and young people are at the forefront of the staff's care practices. Irrespective of the children's and young people's complexities, the manager ensures that they can participate safely in activities. For example, highly effective planning ensured that additional staffing hours were implemented to allow a child to complete community-based activities. This was a significant activity for the child and important that they were able to take part. A staff member said: 'We are trying to broaden the horizons of all the children and young people.' However, although the location risk assessment is good at covering the suitability of the wider social area, it does not assess and address some of the more obvious potential risks that arise as a direct result of the home's location.

The children and young people are safely cared for. The staff routinely supervise the children and young people in the home and in the community. With the good levels of supervision and the effective procedures in place, the risk of incidents of missing from home and exploitation of this vulnerable group of children and young people is minimised.

The staff have an excellent understanding of the children's and young people's behaviours and the individualised plans that they implement to identify measures to effect positive change and creatively reduce risk of harm. To ensure that children and young people remain safe, physical intervention has been used. The methods employed are the least restrictive, and are only used as a last resort. The records are transparent, and are reviewed to identify if opportunities were missed to take different action. The staff are open and reflective about their practice. The staff are highly supportive of one another, the children and the young people, particularly when negative behaviours affect the children and young people.

Medication arrangements are safe and well monitored. Medication is controlled and administered with sensitivity, taking the children's and young people's individual situations and needs into account. This means that the children and young people are protected from medication errors, and that they receive the medication they need safely and in a way that improves or maintains their health.

The children and young people are cared for with dignity and respect. The staff rightly communicate with the children and young people before, and while, they complete any personal care tasks. The staff routinely provide reasoning, reassurance and an opportunity for the child or young person to take control of this element of their care. Additionally, the staff are quick to remind the children and young people about appropriate boundaries. This was evident when one child tried to sit on the inspector's lap.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The manager is inspirational and has a wealth of skill and experience, which she shares through varying avenues to significantly strengthen the care provided for children and

young people. The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home. She continually seeks to improve the care provided by creatively drawing upon the good practice of others to identify and implement new ways of developing the home. This has seen the staff's skills and knowledge improve which has significantly advanced the ability of children and young people to experience new activities. For example, the staff have learned how to use a new picture exchange system during meals out which has considerably improved the experience for children and young people.

The manager's hands-on approach and rigorous monitoring arrangements continue to ensure that the children and young people enjoy an excellent standard of care. The manager has high aspirations for children and young people. She is ambitious and has similar high expectations of her staff team. Staff members meet with their managers and their peers regularly. Importantly, they discuss the children's and young people's needs, progress and experiences, and any practice issues to continually improve the quality of care. Meetings are outcome focused and if deficits are identified, changes are quickly implemented. This swift response ensure that actions improve the lives of children that they are responsible for. The manager feels that the staff have worked well at promoting the ethos of the home and this was evident during the inspection. The staff are proud of the children and young people and focus on their continued progress.

A sound and robust recruitment procedure helps to ensure that staff members are suitable to work with the children and young people. The staff members spoken to were highly motivated, felt very supported and enjoyed their roles. The staff can access various support services to maintain their own health and well-being. The manager has clear expectations of practice performance and will take immediate action to address any deficits. Importantly, the manager learns from these incidents and implements training and guidance for her staff.

Partnership working is effective and there is regular consultation with parents, carers and professionals. The excellent relationships ensure that the children and young people receive the best possible care and experiences. There is a high level of parental satisfaction. A parent said: 'The staff really care about my daughter. You can tell that because they go over and above what they need to.'

The staff team communicates frequently with all relevant parties to support the children's and young people's continuity of care, good health, education and safety. For one child, this joint working has created plans that have improved contact with his mother. However, current parental consent is not evident in all the children's and young people's files. The manager advocates for the children and young people, and will challenge professionals when the children's and young people's plans are not being implemented at expected.

## **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 differences 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:** SC032154

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** National Autistic Society

**Registered provider address:** 391–393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG

**Responsible individual:** Helen Evers

**Registered manager:** Lynne Taylor

## Inspector

Jennifer Fenlon: social care inspector

Stephen Smith: social care inspector



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