

1254555

Registered provider: Next Stage 4Life Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private company. The home provides care and support for two children who can no longer live at home.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020. We last visited this setting on 12 March 2020. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

The manager was registered with Ofsted on 15 May 2020.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/07/2019	Full	Good
05/03/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/05/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children said that they are happy and safe and enjoy living at this home. One child said, 'It is the best', and another said, 'We are like family.' A professional commented on the good progress a child has made while living at the home.

When children move in and out of the home, a good transition is planned. An impact risk assessment shows that the home considers the child's history and behaviour and the needs of the existing children in the home. However, the manager did not take into account the home's location area report as part of this process. As a result, she did not consider any identified potential risks and whether these would have any bearing on the suitability of the placement.

Children said that their views, wishes and feelings are taken seriously. They have opportunities to talk to staff and they are encouraged to comment on all aspects of their care. Records that are kept in the home show the progress that children are making. However, there is little information on how progress was achieved. Therefore, this does not show the child's journey throughout their stay at the home.

An outstanding area of practice is how young people are encouraged to attend education, how quickly education placements are sourced and the continuing support that children receive to remain in education. The manager has successfully challenged education providers when services have been slow or inappropriate. As a result, children's attendance is improving, they have taken examinations and they have ambitions for their future. One child said that they want to be a mechanic, and the manager has sourced a course to support them with this. The child said, 'It is fantastic, and I am learning so many new skills.'

Children are in good health because the staff work closely with health professionals. This means that the children receive the treatment they need. A therapist offers the children emotional support on a weekly basis. Children discuss ways of coping with their trauma, and the therapist offers them solutions. These are agreed and then discussed with the staff team. This means that children receive consistent care that is led by them. However, staff would benefit from training in bereavement, as some children have experienced significant loss. This would allow staff to recognise their own feelings, as well as enabling them to give informed support, when discussing this emotive subject with children.

Children have individual arrangements to see their parents or people who are important to them. Due to the good preparations and support from staff, children have gone from supervised contact to unsupervised. One child can now make their own arrangements and visit their family independently. This is important because the local authority's plan is for the child to return home.

Children enjoy a range of activities. They like to spend time with the staff team baking, playing board games and going out for walks. Previously, children have enjoyed going to the cinema, bowling and playing pool. The children have earned extra activities, for example, going to theme parks and out for meals. The children are excited that these activities can start again.

Children are encouraged to learn a range of practical skills, which will assist them when they are older. They are supported to keep their bedrooms tidy, plan, shop and help to cook their own meals. They live in a homely environment that is spacious and maintained well. The children have personalised their own bedrooms and proudly display pictures of their family and of their achievements. This gives the children a sense of belonging.

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

Children said that they are safe at the home. They said that staff are very clear with them about keeping themselves safe and always give good advice on how risks may affect them. For example, the children are aware of the risks of unsuitable adults contacting them through applications on their mobiles. Children said that this means that they can alert staff if they receive unsuitable material or if they are not sure about something or someone.

Staff complete regular training in a range of safeguarding topics. As a result, they understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting the children. When serious incidents occur in the house, the staff team is adept at managing them safely. However, the manager has not always informed Ofsted as part of this process. This reduces the regulator's oversight.

Good individual risk assessments identify each child's vulnerabilities, triggers and warning signs, and include strategies and actions for staff to take if an incident were to occur. This means that any potential incident is de-escalated quickly.

There have been a few incidents when children have left the home without permission. Staff have followed the child's missing from home protocol and searched the local areas for them. As the children have become more settled, the incidents of them being reported missing from the home have stopped. However, the return interviews with an independent person have not been completed. This means that the child has not had the opportunity to share the reasons why they went missing or whether they have any concerns. This impacts on the manager's ability to evaluate the circumstances and to make changes to practice, if needed.

Behaviour management plans show how children would like to be supported if they become anxious or distressed. Children are rewarded with extra money, clothes, trips out or personal items when they have achieved something or done well. For example, they have visited a theme park for improving their behaviour and making

progress. Children said that sanctions for unacceptable behaviour are not imposed often. Children have damaged property and have had to repay some of the costs or complete a reparation task. One child has made a table for the garden and is looking forward to making some cubed shelving. He said that he has learned several skills and that the manager said that these will help him when he moves into semi-independence. However, these events are connected to an incident sheet, but they are not recorded as a sanction or consequence. This does not follow the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 in terms of the information required when applying discipline. For example, the manager has not assessed the effectiveness of the sanction imposed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home has a registered manager and a clear management structure. Managers are working together to support one another and complement their skill sets, which has a positive impact on the staff team and the children.

Staff are experienced, and there is a clear plan for new staff members to progress onto their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 when they have passed their probationary period. One member of staff spoke positively about the proactive approach from managers in relation to registering him onto the NVQ level 4. There has been some staff turnover in recent months due to professional progression for staff members. However, the individuals have remained as bank staff for the home, which has had a positive impact on the children in relation to consistency and stability.

The staff team receives regular supervision that is reflective and is underpinned by development and individual strengths. Appraisals focus on the development of individual staff members, as well as the home overall.

Staff receive training to support their learning, and the manager has a clear system in place to make sure that staff have received mandatory training. Staff have a detailed induction, which identifies their training needs and is reviewed regularly. There is a plan for the staff team to receive further training specific to the children's needs that will be led by the commissioned psychotherapist. The staff team also benefits from informal learning and reflection by the psychotherapist, which are held on a weekly basis.

The managers are aware of the children's plans and make child-centred decisions to support their plans. They regularly advocate for the children and often challenge other agencies to make sure that the children receive the best care and support, which has had a positive outcome for one child's education plan. Relationships with partner agencies, family and the children are strong. One child said, 'You will only find the best in our home.' This is evident in the home's child-focused and aspirational culture.

Monitoring systems ensure that plans for children are in place and reviewed when required. However, the management team agrees that children's records do not include a thorough evaluation. Therefore, the monitoring report lacks reflection on the key themes that would assist in planning for the home's future development needs or improving staff practice.

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 the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(b)) Specifically, ensure that the location area report is used when considering whether the area is safe for a new admission to the home.	30 June 2021
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline, or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time, and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and	30 June 2021

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 ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	30 June 2021
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children;	30 June 2021

the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities, and the quality of care they receive in it; and

any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.

After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report").

The registered person must—

supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and

make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home.

The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered provider should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
In particular, staff should receive bereavement training to support young people.

- The registered provider should ensure that that the home's records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 1254555

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Next Stage 4Life Limited

Registered provider address: Regency House, 45–53 Chorley New Road, Bolton
BL1 4QR

Responsible individual: Richard Guy

Registered manager: Corinne Hartley

Inspectors

Pam Nuckley, Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Carly Quinn, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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