

1254555

Registered provider: Next Stage 4Life Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a private company. The home can provide care for up to two children who may be experiencing social and emotional issues.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2022.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2023

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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Date of last inspection: 5 May 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/05/2021	Full	Good
12/03/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/07/2019	Full	Good
05/03/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are currently two children living in this home. Both children say that they feel happy and safe in this home. One child said, 'I can speak to anyone [staff] if I've got something on my mind. If I'm worried, they always have time to listen to me.'

Children have good attendance and achievement in education. Staff understand the academic goals that children are working towards, and support their learning at home. Children make good progress in education.

Staff understand children's health needs. Staff ensure that children attend all necessary health appointments and access any specialist services that they need. Children's physical and mental health are promoted.

Staff work collaboratively with an in-house therapist. Children who have experienced trauma are supported through challenging emotional situations in a sensitive, trauma-informed way. This therapeutic approach allows staff to understand the reasons for children's behaviour and help children to develop effective ways to manage the underlying emotions.

Children are supported to have an active role in their local community. The manager is building links with the local community by helping the children to join the local neighbourhood watch scheme. She has also encouraged the children to engage in activities such as litter picking, which are positive for the local area. The children are currently being supported to start growing their own produce. Children are supported to have a sense of belonging.

Staff do not effectively challenge other services. There has been significant delay for one child in accessing an assessment of need. Regular discussions have taken place between staff and professionals in his multi-disciplinary team. However, staff have not escalated their concerns when it became clear that these discussions were ineffective. In addition, another child does not have up-to-date local authority documents in their file. Staff have repeatedly requested these but have not followed the complaints procedure when this approach was not successful. Children are experiencing delay in some aspects of their care.

The children benefit from a homely, nurturing environment. The children have been supported and encouraged to personalise their bedrooms. The communal areas of the home display children's certificates of achievement, photos and important mementos. One child said, 'This is the best home I've lived in. It's so nice here. It feels like my home.'

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

The support and care provided by staff help children to become safer. Children are enabled to better understand their own experiences and equipped with the skills to manage their own risks. As a result, there are few safeguarding incidents in this home.

Staff identify and manage children's needs and risks. Managers complete risk assessments, which are robust and provide staff with clear actions to keep children safe. Risk assessments are personalised to meet the specific needs of each child. This helps staff to understand how to keep each child safe.

When there are any incidents, such as when children go missing from home, leaders and managers undertake reflective learning. As a result of one child's placement ending in an unplanned way, managers developed better processes for assessing children's needs before they move in to the home. As a result, the children living in the home are very settled.

Staff provide children with consistent care. All staff use the same approach to rules and boundaries, allowing staff to effectively manage children's behaviour and prevent crises. This helps children to understand the expectations and to feel secure.

Children do not have unrestricted access to all areas of their home. There are locks on the internal doors in the property. On one occasion, a member of staff locked the door to a communal room as a consequence of unwanted behaviour. The manager has addressed this with further training and a team meeting. While the locks remain in place, children's freedom to move around their home could be inappropriately restricted.

Before an adult comes to work at this home, background checks are carried out. However, these checks do not currently include thorough consideration of gaps in employment. This is important to ensure that staff are recruited safely.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is an experienced and suitably qualified manager leading this home. She has an ambitious vision for developing the home and high expectations for the children and staff alike. As a result, children are receiving a high standard of care.

Leaders and managers actively promote tolerance, equality and diversity. The manager plans creative activities around equality and diversity themes to help the children to learn about this in a fun way. One child spoke enthusiastically about themed nights. As a result of this culture at the home, he had been very much interested and engaged in similar activities in school. This helps children to learn important social values.

Leaders and managers find creative ways to ensure that children's views and participation are consistently at the heart of the care that they are providing. Children's feedback is sought on all important aspects of care planning. When children raise any issues, their views are taken seriously and acted on. As a result, children feel listened to.

Managers have good oversight of children's files. Regular processes of audit allow managers to give staff useful feedback on their practice. The manager's comments on daily logs are particularly child-focused and provide children with valuable insight into their daily lives. However, information relating to one child has been placed in the file of another child. This could impact children's privacy.

Leaders and managers undertake thorough planning and assessment before children move in or out of this home. One child is reaching the age of living independently, and the manager has constructed a thorough support plan to help him with this transition. Staff have implemented this plan well, and focused key-work sessions have been useful in preparing this child to move. Before children move in, similar robust planning is undertaken.

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, the 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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that when issues are not resolved for children, problems are escalated through the appropriate complaints procedure.	30 May 2023
The registered person must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) In particular, locks on internal doors should be removed.	30 May 2023
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.	30 May 2023

The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children’s home; or if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(d)) In particular, the registered person must explore any gaps in the employment history of potential recruits.	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff keep children’s information in a way that maintains a child’s confidentiality. (Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: Maria Hope

Inspector

Nicola Shaw, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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