

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 by a private provider. It provides care for up to 2 children who may experience social and/or emotional difficulties.

Since the last inspection, 1 child has moved out of the home, and 1 child has moved in. There were 2 children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 May 2026

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: 29 July 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/07/2025	Full	Good
14/08/2024	Full	Good
31/10/2023	Full	Good
08/03/2023	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Children like living in the home and are cared for adults they know they can trust. Interactions between children and staff are nurturing and warm.

Children enjoy new experiences, their health needs are met, and they are making sound progress in education. Staff have an effective approach to safeguarding.

There is a new manager in the home who has applied to register with Ofsted and provides positive leadership for staff. Together with the area manager and the responsible individual, she has identified several opportunities to strengthen the care planning for children as well as areas of staff practice. Several positive changes have been made however, these have not yet fully embedded.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

External agencies and parents speak highly of the manager and her staff. One parent said that their relationship with their child has significantly improved thanks to the staff, and they feel like 'second family'. Children stay closely connected with the people close to them.

Staff support children to enjoy experiences together, such as free running and crab fishing, as well as pursuing their own individual interests. One child proudly shared with the inspectors that they are now a scout leader, and fully embracing the responsibilities this role brings. Children are building their confidence whilst developing important social skills for their future.

Staff embed routines for children which helps them to go to school each day. One child aspires to be a traffic officer for the police when they leave school. Another child who initially found it difficult to learn in a classroom, now arrives at school and sits with their peers to learn. Children enjoy learning while gaining the vital skills they need to achieve their future ambitions.

Staff respond with patience and kindness when children are upset which provides them with the reassurance they need. However, the use of negative consequences by staff to manage children's behaviour are not always fully aligned with the provider's therapeutic model, which at times leads to frustration for the children. This is something leaders and managers have already recognised and are addressing through staff training and coaching, supported by the home's therapist.

Children live in a home which is cosy and well maintained. They enjoy spending time with staff, chatting to them in the kitchen about their day while enjoying a home cooked meal. However, some areas of the home and some of the language used by staff are institutional in nature and do not always promote children's privacy. For example, one

child has a bedroom door alarm that is consistently activated without a clear safeguarding rationale. The use of terms such as 'contact' to describe time spent with family, and the display of children's personal information on the office wall, detract from the warm and nurturing environment that leaders and staff strive to provide.

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

Children's risk plans are regularly updated by managers and include clear guidance for staff to follow. Staff contribute to these plans by identifying new ways they can help to keep children safe. As a result, there has been a significant decrease in the number of incidents for one child since living in the home.

When children are missing from the home staff search for them immediately and contact the relevant agencies. This ensures that there is a rapid and robust response to prevent children from coming to harm when they are missing from home.

Staff are provided with frequent training opportunities by leaders and managers linked to the children's individual vulnerabilities. This ensures that the knowledge and skills of staff continuously reflect the children's vulnerabilities.

Staff focus on finding ways to help children sooth when they are distressed to avoid the use of physical interventions. When restraints are needed to be used, managers ensure that she has full oversight to ensure that practice is safe. However, although children are always provided with the opportunity to talk about the restraint afterwards, it is not always with a person who is independent of the incidents. This is a missed opportunity to support the child to voice any concerns about staff practice.

Leaders and managers have a robust response to managing allegations made against staff. They reflect on the causes of the incident and develop appropriate action plans to prevent a reoccurrence. However, leaders and managers do not always identify when children make a complaint and follow their complaints procedure. This means that leaders and managers do not investigate concerns and ensure that children are provided with a response.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has significant experience in residential childcare and models a therapeutic approach through her own practice. Staff say they feel supported and valued by managers and that they are happy working in the home. This is reflected in the low staff turnover and means that children are cared for by a consistent team who know them well.

Leaders and managers hold team meetings regularly and they are well attended by staff. Meetings are a space where the team identify strategies to help children to stay safe and make progress. Specialist training providers are frequently invited to update staff skills and help them reflect on incidents. Leaders and managers are embedding a progressive culture within the home.

Care planning for children by leaders and managers is not always effective. Prior to a child moving into the home, leaders and managers did not ensure that they fully understood the child's risks or whether these could be safely managed alongside the needs of the child already living in the home. Although this has not resulted in a significant safeguarding concern, there have been some incidents of physical harm between the children. Staff take immediate action when they occur and help the children to repair the relationship after the incident. Leaders and managers have acknowledged this shortfall and are working closely with the children's social workers and therapist for the home to address this issue.

Leaders and managers ensure that Ofsted are notified of significant incidents. This ensures that there is external scrutiny of the providers response to safeguarding children. However, reports following visits from the independent person have not been consistently sent to Ofsted. This is an issue the provider is aware of and has already acted by commissioning a new independent person.

Leaders and managers provide staff with regular supervision. Supervision meetings promote discussions on the progress of the children and areas of individual development for the member of staff. However, leaders and managers do not ensure that agency staff who care for the children on a frequent basis receive adequate supervision. Additionally, managers have not provided all staff with an annual appraisal. This is a missed opportunity to address shortfalls in staff practice and provide crucial feedback to staff on their performance.

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
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)) In particular, the registered person must thoroughly evaluate children's risks before they move into the home to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to care for the children, and that children can live together safely.	10 July 2026
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. The registered person must ensure that no child is subject to any reprisal for making a complaint or representation. The registered person must supply to HMCI, at HMCI's request, a statement containing a summary of any complaints made	10 July 2026

during the preceding twelve months and the action that was taken in response to each complaint. (Regulation 39 (1) (3) (4) (5)) In particular, the registered person must acknowledge and respond to complaints raised by children in line with the provider's policies and procedures. Complaints raised by children must be fully investigated and appropriate action taken. Children must be provided with a clear outcome.	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iii)(v)(viii)(ix)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that staff respond consistently to children's behaviours and in line with the provider's therapeutic model of care.	10 July 2026
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—	10 July 2026

understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; treat each child with dignity and respect; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect; make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice. ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i)(iii)(iv)(v)(ix)(c)(i)) The registered person must ensure that the use of door alarms on children's bedrooms are only used to safeguard children and when necessary. Language used by managers and staff should not be institutionalised. Additionally, children's information and legislation relevant to children's residential care in the main office is stored in a way which maintains children's privacy and ensures that there is a homely feel.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(c))	10 July 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any child who has been restrained is given the opportunity express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable, ideally within 24 hours of the restraint incident, taking the age of the child and the circumstances of the restraint into account. In some cases, children may need longer to work through their feelings, so a record that the child has talked about their feelings should be made no longer than 5 days after the incident of restraint ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.60)
- The registered person should ensure that visits to the home by an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. The report of this assessment must be provided to the regulator within one month of the visit. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)
- The registered person should ensure that they have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. This relates specifically to agency staff who are caring for children on a regular basis ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: 146 Bolton Road, Atherton, Manchester M46 9LF

Responsible individual: Jay Morgan

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Sarah Gilbert, Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Steve James, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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