

1270297

Registered provider: Next Stage 4 Life Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children and young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 November 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be 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	inadequate
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 15 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/09/2018	Full	Good

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
13: The leadership and management standard The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to their full potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(2)(a)(c)(d)(e)(h))	05/12/2019
45: Review of quality of care The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children at least once every 6 months. (Regulation 45(1))	05/12/2019
31: Staffing of children's homes The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation 32(1))	05/12/2019
11: The positive relationships standard The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to	05/12/2019

develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand how children’s previous experience and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour, and have the competence and skills to interpret those and develop positive relationships with children; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(ix)(xi))	
14: The care planning standard The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that arrangements are in place to— plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or move into adult care in a way that is consistent with the arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(2)(b)(iii))	05/12/2019

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- Children should be in full-time education whilst they are of compulsory school age, unless their personal education plan contained within the care plan or other relevant plan states otherwise. The home must aim to support full-time attendance at school unless the child’s relevant plan indicates this is not in their best interests. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 28, paragraph 5.14)
- The registered person should oversee the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with: each child; the home’s staff; each child’s family/carers where appropriate; and professionals involved in the care or protection of each child, including their social worker, independent reviewing

officer (IRO), teachers, clinicians and other health professionals. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.23)

- Those with a leadership and/or management role should be visible and accessible to staff and able to deliver their leadership and management responsibilities. Any registered manager employed in the home should have sufficient capacity to ensure that the Quality Standards are met for each child in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.7)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The home was judged as having sustained effectiveness in March 2019. Since that inspection, the home has experienced a significant period of crisis. This has had a negative impact on the overall progress and experiences of young people living in the home.

Relationships between young people and staff are unstable. This is because six staff members left the service or were redeployed to another of the company's children's homes. This resulted in young people frequently being cared for by agency staff and staff with whom they had no pre-existing relationships. Consequently, young people have struggled to form trusting bonds with the newly formed staff team.

Some young people make good progress in education. For example, they have achieved 100% attendance, made consistent progress in their studies and formed positive friendships. However, for one young person, there have been extended periods of educational non-attendance. Attempts by staff to address this concern have been ineffective. As a result, this young person does not have a clear educational pathway and remains uncertain about their future educational career.

Placement planning requires improvement. One young person with a plan for independent living does not have a local authority leaving-care plan or a dedicated leaving-care coordinator. This has resulted in the young person contacting private semi-independence services without the support or guidance of the placing authority. Staff have failed to escalate concerns regarding the lack of planning for leaving care. As a result, this young person is not being provided with the direction they require to make a positive and successful transition.

Recreational activities are consistently planned and promoted. One young person regularly plays rugby for the local team, goes horse riding and swimming, and is a frequent visitor to the nearby animal sanctuary. Likewise, staff promote positive friendships within the community. This helps young people feel included within their community, and develops their confidence and enhances their self-esteem.

Young people are provided with additional support by the company psychologist, who visits the home weekly. Although young people struggle to engage on a therapeutic level, they have built a trusting relationship with the therapist and enjoy her visits to the home.

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

Individual risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated by the registered manager. This ensured that during the time of significant staff changes, new staff and agency staff were suitably briefed on the safeguarding measures in place for the young people.

Young people rarely go missing from the home. In the past 12 months there have been two reported absences, which occurred as a result of a young person failing to return from visits with friends. With the guidance of the registered manager, staff take the appropriate action to ensure that young people are returned safely to the home.

There are occasions where some young people's behaviours can lead to the need for a physical intervention. Records of interventions clearly detail the measures implemented by staff, such as a friendly guide or the holding of a child's hand. A staff member said, 'We always try to de-escalate behaviours and most of the time this is successful. The use of any physical intervention is a last resort.'

Since the last inspection, there have been several allegations made against staff. Swift action is taken to address concerns, for example prompt liaison with the registered manager, the local authority designated officer, social worker and, where appropriate, parents. Records provide good evidence of robust investigations being carried out for all of these allegations.

As a result of significant staff changes during the summer period, behaviour management became inconsistent. This resulted in an escalation of behaviours, including assaults on staff and damage being done to the home. Redeployed staff and agency staff were not equipped to manage the behaviours exhibited by young people. This is because they did not have pre-existing relationships with the young people or have a thorough understanding of their individual life experiences and the underlying triggers for such behaviours.

Young people are now looked after by staff who have suitable experience in working with young people in a residential children's home. Young people are beginning to build trusting relationships, and this has resulted in a decrease in episodes of challenging behaviour. Staff are now focusing on developing a strong and consistent response to behaviour management, and this is being supported by the newly appointed quality assurance and safeguarding manager.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager is not in day-to-day charge of the running of the home. In the past 12 months, two managers have been appointed to the home, with a view to them becoming the registered manager. This is because the current registered manager wishes to step down from this position. However, both appointments were unsuccessful. Nonetheless, the registered manager is not consistently present in the home and has continued to take a back-seat approach to his management responsibilities. This means that the home has not been consistently managed by a registered manager for a 12-month period.

Young people are cared for on a one-to-one basis. This means that the continuity of staff is essential for young people to feel safe and secure. During the summer period, young people were looked after by agency staff and staff who had been deployed to the home from another children's home. The staff had varying levels of experience, which meant that some staff did not have the experience or skills to work with and manage the complex needs of the young people. As a result, young people began to disengage with the home and their behaviours deteriorated.

The registered manager maintains responsibility for the oversight of the safeguarding practice in the home. However, he does not have a consistent approach to the assessment and analysis of the care practice in the home. As a result, areas of poor practice are not routinely identified and addressed.

Internal monitoring processes are deficient. Contrary to regulation, the registered manager's six-monthly monitoring report has not been completed or submitted to the regulatory body for a period of 18 months. This report is essential for gathering the views of young people, parents and stakeholders, while also identifying patterns and trends and areas for practice development. Failure to complete such monitoring results in the unsatisfactory oversight of the care practice in the home.

External monitoring of the home provides a good level of scrutiny. Reports detail the shortfalls in practice and the actions required to address them. However, as a result of inconsistent management direction and significant staff changes, the majority of the actions remain unmet.

All new staff have completed mandatory training. However, they have not received specific training that is pertinent to the understanding of challenging behaviours. The registered manager must ensure that all staff employed at the home have the skills and knowledge to work confidently with the young people accommodated in the home.

A newly appointed quality assurance and safeguarding manager is working with staff to develop consistent practice in the home. She said, 'We have come through a difficult and challenging time. We are working together to improve practice and get the home back on track.'

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: 1270297

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Next Stage 4 Life Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Jeremy Alston

Registered manager: Richard Guy

Inspector

Maria McGranaghan: social care inspector

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