

2730493

Registered provider: Next Step Independence

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home was registered in July 2023 and provides care for up to two children who experience social and emotional difficulties and/or have learning disabilities. At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 9 December 2024.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 January 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: 3 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/12/2024	Full	Good
13/08/2024	Full	Inadequate
31/10/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The inspector spent time with both children during the visit. Children said that they feel happy and safe living in the home, that they have adults they can turn to if they are worried, and that they feel listened to. Staff take children's views seriously and advocate well on their behalf, helping them to feel confident sharing their thoughts and concerns.

Staff develop warm, nurturing and trusting relationships with children. They spend meaningful time with the children, and the children clearly enjoy being around staff often choosing to spend time with them in shared areas, playing games or doing homework, rather than staying in their bedrooms.

Both children are making progress across all areas of their lives. They benefit from a stable and predictable environment where staff understand their individual histories and needs. Staff are supporting children to establish positive routines, engage in education, and building secure relationships with staff. Their emotional well-being is improving, and they are becoming more confident, resilient, and able to express their feelings safely. They are also beginning to develop important life-skills. However, staff support in this area is not always consistent or realistic, which means their progress varies and may not be sustained as they move towards adulthood.

Children's health needs are managed well. Staff ensure that all routine and specialist appointments are attended, and they maintain regular communication with health professionals.

Staff provide thoughtful and sensitive support for family time, ensuring this is delivered in a way that reflects each child's individual circumstances. Staff help plan activities that everyone can enjoy together. They provide sensitive support before and after visits to help children feel settled and reassured. When needed, the manager has appropriately advocated for increased time with family to strengthen those relationships. These approaches help children maintain safe, meaningful, and positive connections with the people who are important to them.

Children enjoy a wide range of enriching activities that encourage fun, learning and a sense of belonging in their community. They take part in hobbies such as golf, attend groups like Scouts, and have opportunities for new experiences such as driving lessons and holidays. Staff capture and share children's achievements and positive moments in creative ways, giving children a personal record of their memories and experiences of living in the home.

The home feels warm, welcoming, and centred around the children. Shared spaces are inviting and clearly lived-in, with board games, books and children's belongings creating a homely atmosphere. The children's bedrooms are thoughtfully personalised with

photos, favourite items and decorations that reflect their individual personalities and interests.

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

Staff know the children extremely well and are attuned to early signs that they may be becoming upset or unsettled. Staff respond in calm, thoughtful ways that reflect each child's individual needs, helping to maintain the steady and predictable atmosphere that children rely on. Incidents in the home are infrequent, and when they do occur, staff use consistent and reassuring approaches that help children to calm quickly and feel understood.

Physical intervention is used very rarely in the home. Staff rely on their strong relationships, clear communication, and trauma-informed approaches to help children settle and feel supported. Confidence in physical intervention varies across the team, particularly among newer staff or those who have had limited opportunities to practise these techniques. As a result, some staff feel less assured in this aspect of their role than others.

When children raise concerns or make complaints, these are taken seriously. Staff listen carefully, respond promptly, and keep children updated about outcomes. This helps children feel heard.

Safety arrangements in the home are proportionate and effective. Staff use parental-control tools to support children's online safety and provide guidance that reflects each child's age and level of understanding. This allows children to use the internet safely without unnecessary restrictions.

Assessments completed before a child moves into the home are thorough and pre-admission work is thoughtful and centred on understanding how well the home can meet each child's individual needs. This provides staff with meaningful information from the outset and supports a well-planned and positive transition. For one child, this careful planning helped them settle quickly and feel safe from the start.

Children's plans are detailed and child-focused, providing a clear picture of their needs and the support in place. However, these plans are lengthy making it hard to identify children's progress and how the staff are contributing to children's development.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders, the manager and staff know the children well and have high aspirations for their progress. These expectations are reflected in daily practice and in the consistent support that children receive. The manager speaks with pride about the children's achievements and demonstrates a strong understanding of their individual needs. The team advocates effectively for the children and when necessary, they raise concerns appropriately.



Professionals and families report excellent communication from managers and staff. They describe the team as dependable and committed, working closely with others to ensure that children receive consistent support and experience positive outcomes.

Staff describe leaders and managers as approachable and supportive. Regular reflective supervision sessions provide space for staff to consider their practice and development, and annual appraisals are up to date. Staff training is current, with access to specialist courses alongside mandatory learning to ensure that staff have the skills to meet children's needs.

The manager has a balanced understanding of what the home does well and where further development would be beneficial. Strengths such as the nurturing culture and trauma-informed practice are clearly recognised, alongside areas that would benefit from continued focus, including communication within the team and more consistent and robust independence planning. This reflective approach contributes to a culture of continuous improvement.

The manager's oversight of the home is strong. Quality assurance processes are well embedded, and weekly and monthly audits contribute to improved practice. Staff are encouraged and supported to take ownership of their roles, to ensure that the care provided to children is well-organised and thoughtful.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult. (Regulation 6 (1)(a) (2)(b)(vi)) In particular, the registered persons must ensure that staff are being consistent in providing support with skills such as cooking, housework, realistic budgets, and personal self-care.	27 February 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that all staff, particularly newer team members, or those finding it challenging, have practical refreshers on physical intervention techniques and scenario-based learning should be provided to build staff confidence and ensure safe, consistent practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should have systems in place to ensure that staff and themselves have a high level of understanding of the needs of the children and to identify and demonstrate the progress children make. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.5)

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: 2730493

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Next Step Independence

Registered provider address: Wellington House, Queen Street, Taunton TA1 3UF

Responsible individual: Post Vacant

Registered manager: Kevin Derby

Inspector

Karen Hallam, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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