

# 1185828

Registered provider: Next Stage 4Life Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This children's home is one of a number of homes owned by a private provider. It is registered to provide care for up to four children.

At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home. They both spoke to the inspector about their experiences of living in the home.

A new manager has recently been appointed. He has submitted his application for registration.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,** taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 13 November 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
13/11/2019	Full	Outstanding
23/07/2018	Full	Good
10/07/2017	Full	Good
13/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children like living in the home. They benefit from trusting relationships with staff who understand their individual needs. These relationships help children to make significant progress in all areas of their lives. One parent told the inspector: 'Staff are brilliant. They are really good with [name of child]. They look after him really well. He is really happy there.'

The home has a strong family ethos and children know that the staff care about them. The staff use positive messages to continually promote children's self-esteem and support them to reflect on their emotions. Children benefit from helping to care for a staff member's dog and enjoy the responsibility of regularly having a pet in the home.

The staff are ambitious for children and promote outstanding education attendance and attainment. They advocate effectively for children, to ensure children's education provisions are able to meet their individual learning needs. Children's aspirations are nurtured and encouraged. One child has been supported to submit college applications and he is planning to go to university. The creation of a revision wall is helping him prepare for his exams.

Children's identities are promoted. Their interests are nurtured, with staff going above and beyond to enable children to attend sports clubs, structured activities and regular sporting events. These activities help enhance children's social networks and increase their sense of belonging and self-esteem. Activities in the home and events in the local community provide children with opportunities to continually develop their awareness and understanding of different religions and cultures.

Family relationships are well supported. Children are helped to safely keep in touch with people who are important to them. Healthy relationships are promoted, and staff engage children in age-appropriate discussions to help them make safer choices.

Children have access to routine and specialist health services as required. Their emotional and physical health needs are well understood. Regular therapy sessions with the home's therapist help children to better understand their emotions and to develop their self-regulation skills.

Children who are new to the home are welcomed sensitively and with careful and considered planning. Despite careful initial planning, complex and challenging group-living dynamics between children previously placed together resulted in one child being supported to move to an alternative provision in a planned way.

The home is decorated and furnished to a high standard throughout. Children are included in decisions about the home. A games room and gym have been created at

their request. Children's photos are proudly displayed in communal areas and bedrooms are personalised. This gives children a sense of belonging in the home.

The home's utility room is kept locked. This restricts children from accessing the laundry without staff. The manager is taking action to address this and is reviewing the presence and function of locks on all communal doors.

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

Children say they feel safe and are happy living in the home. Professionals and family members agree with this view. They are highly positive about the levels of communication and care provided by the team. One social worker said: 'I think they are brilliant. [Name of child] has had such an amazing placement. He is safe, tells me he is happy, and he loves it there.'

Staff are responsive to children's individual needs. They remain vigilant to group-living dynamics and implement clear and consistent boundaries to keep children safe. The routine use of bedroom door alarms as an additional safety measure to monitor children's movements does not consider children's individual needs. This is something the manager is taking action to review to ensure they are only used when necessary to keep children safe.

Risks are well understood and appropriately managed. Staff have access to children's individualised risk and behaviour management plans, which are regularly reviewed. However, it was identified during the inspection that some staff had locked the games room in response to negative behaviour. This is not part of a child's agreed plan and is something the manager has taken swift action to address.

Regular discussions with children about issues that are affecting them help them to make safer choices. Older children benefit from bespoke independence plans tailored to meet their individual needs. They are supported to safely spend time in the community with friends. As a result of the trusting relationships between children and staff, children rarely go missing from home. When they do go missing, staff are proactive in locating them and encouraging their return.

Positive role modelling is used by staff to encourage positive behaviours in the home. Strategies, such as ensuring there is always a male and female member of staff on shift, have led to a significant reduction in the frequency and duration of incidents. When incidents do occur, staff know how to respond and there is oversight from managers.

Staff holding children to keep them safe is only done as a last resort. However, strategies used to try and de-escalate situations prior to interventions are not always clear. Records would benefit from further clarity to avoid misinterpretation.

Any allegations and complaints are dealt with in line with safeguarding procedures, with clear oversight from managers. Safer recruitment practices are in place to ensure only those safe to work with children are employed in the home.

Consequences are rarely used. However, when they are used, they are not always clearly recorded or restorative. Discrepancies around the implementation and recording of consequences were identified during the inspection. This undermines consistency and potentially limits managers' oversight of practice in the home.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The current manager has recently submitted his application to register with Ofsted. He is in the process of completing the relevant qualification. He also manages another home nearby. The manager was previously the deputy manager and was appointed to the role following the promotion of the previous manager. His transition was well planned and has been well received by children, staff and other professionals.

The manager is supported by a newly appointed deputy manager and service manager. Together, they have strong oversight of the home and are committed to improving outcomes for children. They use internal and external monitoring systems to maintain good oversight of care planning and practice in the home. Regular consultation with children and stakeholders ensures practice is continually reviewed. The manager is taking action to address recording discrepancies identified during the inspection.

There have been a number of staffing changes since the last inspection. These have been well managed and have had minimum impact on children. The home is currently fully staffed, and the team is stable and consistent. The manager ensures that only staff who know the children work in the home. Any shortfalls are covered by staff who work in the other home managed by the manager or by regular agency staff.

Staff enjoy working in the home and say they feel supported and valued. They benefit from regular supervision, but records do not always reflect the detailed discussions that take place.

The organisation offers a range of training courses and opportunities for staff to progress. Input from the home's therapist provides opportunities to further develop practice in the home.

The home's statement of purpose has recently been updated but had not been sent to the regulator in line with regulation.

The requirement made at the previous inspection has been met.

## 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
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i))</p> <p>In particular, that children's plans reflect all strategies used to manage their behaviours.</p>	8 April 2022
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(b))</p>	8 April 2022

## Recommendations

- The registered person should review and risk assess the presence and function of locks on internal communal doors and the routine use of bedroom door alarms. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)

- The registered person should ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature, clearly recorded and maximise the opportunities for children to reflect and learn. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that staff supervision records reflect the detailed discussions that take place with staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.15)
- The registered person should ensure that staff record information in a way that is clear and not open to misinterpretation. ('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:** 1185828

**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:** Post vacant

## Inspector

Caroline Bertram, Social Care Inspector



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