

1159763

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately operated. It provides care for up to eight children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There were eight children living at the home at the time of the inspection, and three children were spoken with.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2025.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 August 2025

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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: 29 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/10/2024	Full	Good
06/03/2024	Full	Good
30/12/2022	Full	Good
15/03/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

The overall experiences of children and young people have been affected because of decisions made by leaders and managers. This means not all children have made progress. One child said that at times they have felt unsafe. This means children do not always have a positive experience of living in the home.

Staff do not always listen to the views of children. One child wanted to make a complaint about another child, and this was not followed through. Furthermore, staff do not always gather the views of children, such as when a room search was carried out by staff but children were not consulted. This leaves children feeling excluded and not listened to.

Children's records are not maintained effectively, and the language used by staff is not always child centred. The manager is aware that this is an area for development. This can impact on children negatively and leave gaps in information about important times and events in their lives. This means children will not have a true representation of their time in the home if they look back on their records in the future.

The home is mostly warm and welcoming. It is a large property that offers several communal spaces for children. This includes a games room that the children can freely access. There are pictures of the children throughout the home, which helps children to feel a sense of belonging. Children have their own bedroom and bathrooms. There is some damage across the home, including damage to walls and broken furniture. It is important that any damage in the home is resolved in a timely way, which would help children to live in a safe and pleasant environment.

When children come to live at the home, they are well supported. This is corroborated by a professional who commented, 'It was a positive experience for the child.' This helps children to feel more settled during a period of change. Some children have moved on from the home due to their placements being ended. When these decisions are made, this is done in consultation with all involved agencies.

Staff support children to take part in a range of activities, including trips away, days out and activities in the home. Some children attend clubs, such as football, and another child is supported to take part in a group for children in care. This means children can develop new skills and talents as well as developing their friendship groups.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

There are care plans in place for children. However, they lack important information regarding the individual needs of children. Some plans do not align with the information from the multi-agency group. This means children's plans do not reflect their needs and can negatively affect the care provided to them.

Shortfalls were identified in managing risks for children. There are failures in identifying patterns in children's behaviour, meaning children have been placed at risk of harm. Risk assessments are not clear, and strategies for managing individual risks are not reviewed.

There are high levels of supervision for children in the home. Children are unable to be alone together without staff supervision. The reasons for this level of monitoring are unclear, meaning this is not individualised to the needs of each child. This can lead to a risk averse culture in the home, where children are not given space by staff.

When children go missing from the home, staff follow the correct procedures. Staff search for children and contact the relevant authorities. When children return home, they are supported by staff. Return home interviews are arranged, which helps staff to understand the needs of the children and what the pull factors are to them going missing.

Some children in the home are vulnerable to self-injurious behaviour. When this occurs, staff respond appropriately by providing emotional and practical support to children. This helps children to feel safe and cared for.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There has been a high turnover of staff at the home, which means there are inconsistencies for children. Some children have been affected by this and found it difficult to adjust to the changes. Staff have raised concerns around staffing levels and the effect this has on meeting the needs of children. The manager has made attempts to cover shifts using staff from across the organisation. This helps to provide some familiarity for children.

Several staff working in the home are not qualified. This means staff do not always have the relevant skills and training to be able to meet the children's needs. This was particularly relevant in one incident where a member of staff held a child and had not had the relevant training to enable them to do so safely.

The manager has identified some areas that require further work in the home. An important area is staff development to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge so they can provide the best care to children. This has included

implementing routines for children and strengthening boundaries in the home. However, these are not clearly communicated to staff, which means inconsistencies with boundaries and routines prevail.

When important documents are missing from children's files, staff are not following the home's escalation policy to ensure they have the most up-to-date information for children. This means staff may be missing critical information from the multi-agency group to meet the needs of children.

Staff are supported with regular supervision sessions, and these are recorded on each staff's file. However, staff do not discuss the children during their supervision sessions. Supervision sessions lack meaningful discussions, which leads to missed opportunities to have important discussions with staff. This impacts on the quality of care the children experience.

The manager is qualified and experienced and speaks positively about the children. The manager advocates on behalf of children with the multi-agency group. An example of this is a child's phone usage and the manager challenging the local authority's decision-making. This led to changes for the child, which reduced the child's anxiety.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(v))	16 October 2025
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 fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;	16 October 2025

ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(ii))	
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare. (Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(iii)(v))	16 October 2025
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a))	16 October 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is maintained to a good standard. In particular, that the home is clean and well appointed. Unused and

broken items should be disposed of, and any items which are tired and worn should be replaced. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- The registered person should 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. In particular, supervision should be reflective in nature, enabling staff to explore any impact issues. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that staff record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('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: 1159763

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Registered provider address: Lupton Tower, Lupton, Carnforth, Lancashire LA6 2PR

Responsible individual: Tracy Nicholson

Registered manager: Danielle Cunningham

Inspectors

Kerry Chater, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Laura Roberts, Social Care Inspector

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