

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 owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to eight children who may have social and emotional difficulties.

Seven children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

There has been no registered manager since July 2024.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 October 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **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 provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 6 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2024	Full	Good
30/12/2022	Full	Good
15/03/2022	Full	Good
15/10/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children say they feel safe and are happy in the home. However, several staff have left, including the manager, and a new manager and staff have started. This has caused some disruption to children's relationships with those adults who care for them. The new staff are developing positive relationships with children, which helps them to learn to trust them.

Children experience positive moves into the home. Five children have moved into the home this year, within a short space of time. One child has moved out of the home. The manager advocated for this child to move after their birthday to allow the child to celebrate with people they know. This helps children to feel valued.

All children attend school, including one child who did not attend school before living in this home. Staff support the children well with their morning routines to prepare them for school. This approach ensures that children have opportunities to learn. Professionals say that children make good progress and are engaging with their education.

Children are supported well to explore their identity. Staff allow children to express themselves freely and safely. This helps children to feel respected. Staff help other children to understand the reasons for this. This helps to develop children's understanding of diversity and builds resilience.

Staff build relationships with those who are important to the children. This helps children to understand that the staff care about their family and friends. Staff also support children well when they experience loss. This helps children to understand that they have a safe adult who they can be emotionally vulnerable with.

The staff consult the in-house therapy team to support them in implementing behaviour management strategies to better meet the needs of each child. When a child's behaviour causes concern, they seek to understand if the behaviours are trauma-led or if medical care is required. This reduces the need for children to be unnecessarily medicated and helps them to learn strategies to manage their own behaviour.

Children cannot always freely access all areas of the home. For example, staff expect children to take jugs of water to their bedrooms, so they do not enter the kitchen at night. This limits the home's ability to replicate a 'family feel' and puts unnecessary restrictions on children's liberty.

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

Children's risk assessments and care plans do not include all the children's known risks. The quality of these assessments is inconsistent. They do not always provide the staff

with clear guidance or effective strategies on how they can help to keep the children safe. In addition, staff do not consistently follow the necessary procedures when children go missing from home. This places children at risk of harm.

One child's use of swear words was categorised as sexualised behaviour. This assessment misrepresents the child's behaviour and the motivation for their use of language, which influences how staff respond to keep the child safe.

Not all staff have the necessary skills or knowledge to manage children's risks. For example, on at least two occasions, staff did not have training to support children who are at risk of using ligatures. Staff have also not received training regarding one child's disability, which could impact on the child's behaviour. This prevents staff from being able to provide a safe and consistent approach to meeting the needs of children.

Staff record incidents when children are held. However, the records are unclear as to whether staff have been consistently supported to reflect on incidents or that children have been spoken to. The inconsistent management oversight means the manager cannot be assured that staff are acting appropriately, safely and in line with the organisation's policy.

The home's behaviour management policy states that consequences are not to be used in response to children's behaviour. However, staff have implemented consequences on at least two occasions, and these are not recorded. This prevents the manager from identifying staff who are not following policy and from being assured that the consequence imposed is appropriate and in line with the child's plan.

Staff complete bedroom searches to help to keep children safe. However, this is not always clearly documented. This prevents the manager from being assured that staff are acting appropriately and from evaluating whether children's risks are reducing or increasing. Staff do not always inform children of these searches or when they have removed an item from their room. This prevents children from being helped to understand that staff do this to help keep them safe.

Staff understand the whistle-blowing policy well. When allegations are made against a member of staff, senior leaders take effective action to address these concerns. This helps to improve children's safety.

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

The registered manager has left the home, and the new manager has not yet submitted an application to register with Ofsted. This change in management has resulted in an inconsistent standard of oversight of the care that children receive. The current manager is taking steps to address this; however, the monitoring and review processes are not consistently effective.

Staff feel well supported. When staff practice falls short of the standards required, the leadership team takes steps to address this. Staff are helped to improve and develop their skills to contribute towards a safe and nurturing environment for children.

Records kept relating to children are not child-centred and contain incorrect information. The description of some of the children's behaviours is stigmatising, and one child's record contained an incorrect name. This may be confusing and frustrating should children read these documents in the future.

Not all documents relating to children and staff are accessible. This includes staff supervision sessions. This prevented inspectors from establishing if supervision sessions are regular and in line with the organisation's policy. Those available were inconsistent in their quality. Some records did not reflect the practice discussions held. This prevents leaders from holding staff to account.

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 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; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(b))	16 December 2024
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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(h))	16 December 2024

The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and	16 December 2024
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within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure.

(Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)

(3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should ensure that information can be easily accessed by anyone with a legitimate need to view it and, if required, be reproduced in a legible form. This includes records of staff supervision sessions. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 14.2)
- 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)
- The registered person should ensure that children's bedrooms are not generally entered without their permission. Usually, rooms should only be searched if the child has been informed or asked for their permission. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.20)

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: Darrell Elsinor

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector
Natalie Clark, Social Care Inspector

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