

1244160

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is one of several children's homes operated by a national provider. The staff provide care for up to eight children who experience social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, seven children were living in the home.

There has been no registered manager in post since 4 May 2023.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 October 2024

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	requires improvement to be 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: 19 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/12/2023	Full	Good
10/01/2023	Full	Good
05/01/2022	Full	Good
09/10/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Substantial changes to the staff team, as well as to the leadership of the home, have resulted in mixed outcomes for children during this inspection period. Some children have successfully progressed in their education and independence skills, yet some have been unsettled.

The home is part of a larger organisation that provides therapeutic services. Some children engage in therapy and develop positive skills to assist them in self-regulating and managing their anxieties and emotions.

Children take part in a range of activities. Children also know who to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Some children have made friendships and time with their families is promoted.

Most children engage in education and their attendance is good. Two children were supported to sit their GCSEs in the home and another child has successfully enrolled in a local college. However, there has been a lack of urgency from leaders and managers to seek professional support and explore the reasons why one child has disengaged from education due to poor sleep.

Children can make choices, for example, regarding their free-time, meal choices and activities. However, the children are not always listened to, and meaningful ways to gain views have not been implemented. Furthermore, when children made suggestions to improve the home, these were not considered or actioned by staff.

One child proudly showed their bedroom and shared how they care for their pets with extreme love. However, some areas of the home require attention in terms of decor and maintenance. Furthermore, not all children are consistently encouraged and supported to keep their bedrooms clean and tidy.

One child has recently moved into the home. The move was planned well, and consideration was given to the needs of children already living in the home. The child has been able to settle well and make progress.

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

Staff understand their responsibilities of safeguarding and the process for recording and reporting concerns. The response from leaders and managers regarding an allegation made against a member of staff was thoroughly investigated and involved relevant external agencies.

There has been one complaint made since the last inspection. This was investigated robustly, and a detailed learning review was carried out. However, the learning from the shortfalls identified have not been actioned swiftly enough. As a result, there is a potential risk of recurrence, if staff do not fully understand the strategies detailed in children's behaviour support plans.

On occasions, staff have needed to physically restrain children to keep them safe. Detailed records of incidents are kept, and physical intervention is only used as a last resort. However, staff carry out their own debriefs following a physical intervention. This is a missed opportunity for leaders and managers to fully understand what occurred and reduces opportunities for staff to reflect on why a child was held and what could be done to prevent further incidents.

Leaders adhere to safer recruitment practice, and newly appointed staff are provided with a thorough induction to the home and its approach.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

There continues to be no registered manager in post for a significant period. The manager that had applied to register with Ofsted at the last inspection left the home in January 2024, and subsequently withdrew their application. A new manager was appointed following this. However, they remained in post for a short period and moved on from the home in February 2024. Following this, an interim manager was appointed to help stabilise the home while a permanent manager was identified and appointed. The current manager was appointed in June 2024. They have not submitted an application to register.

Following significant instability and change in the staff team, a period of rebuilding is underway. This is being led by the newly appointed manager. Senior leaders are providing additional support and guidance during this period of rebuilding as the new manager is not yet fully accustomed to all the management tasks and responsibilities.

The home has had considerable changes to managers and staff, with ten staff leaving since the home was last inspected. There has been no formal consideration by leaders regarding the impact this has had on children developing strong and trusting relationships with the staff who care for them. Furthermore, it undermines the potential for children to receive consistency of care.

Staff feel supported by the current management team and have received training to meet the specific needs of the children in the home. However formal supervision sessions are not regular or reflective. Furthermore, team meetings are not yet consistent to give staff space to reflect on practice.

Staff feel positive and motivated to engage in the process of improvement, and the manager is welcoming of the full support from the senior management of the wider organisation. The leadership of the home displays both insight into the extent of the

required improvements and have confidence that this will be achieved. Current efforts will, however, need to be sustained for the necessary changes to become fully embedded in the culture and day-to-day running of the home.

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 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— 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 the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(e)) In particular, ensure that the manager in day-to-day charge of the home registers with Ofsted.	15 November 2024
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; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure — understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff—	15 November 2024

protect and promote each child's welfare; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(i))	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(viii)(ix)(x)(b))	15 November 2024
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—	15 November 2024

develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and 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; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	
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 effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and 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.	15 November 2024

And 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 (3)(a)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) In particular, ensure that debriefs for staff are completed and learning from incidents are reflected on.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) In particular, ensure that all staff receive supervision in line with policy and provide time for staff to reflect meaningfully. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	15 November 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff support and enable children to resume full-time education as soon as possible. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)

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: 1244160

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Neil Hedges

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Hannah Cox, Social Care Inspector

Shaheda Dhandia, Social Care Inspector

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