

1259631

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and run. It provides care for up to seven children.

The home is without a registered manager. Interim management arrangements are in place.

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: 28 February and 1 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 **requires improvement to be 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: 14 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/01/2020	Full	Good
06/03/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
02/05/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive good care from a stable and committed staff team. Children receive a well-planned admission when they move into the home. This helps them to settle quickly, and they can engage in their care plans.

Children build trusted relationships with the staff. These relationships enable the children to develop their self-confidence and take part in new experiences that the staff provide.

Children's achievements are celebrated in their home and at school, and this gives the children a sense of pride. The school head commented, 'The staff team has gone to great lengths to ensure the children engage in physical activities alongside education. This has been really positive for the children's emotional well-being.'

Professionals are positive about children's progress from the point of their admission to the home. There is good collaborative working that contributes to the support and progress that the children make in all aspects of their lives.

Children develop a sense of belonging in the home. This is due to the stability of the staff team and the positive relationships that have been made between them. When children leave the home, there is good planning to support the children to have positive endings.

Staff have a depth of knowledge and experience which enables them to provide the children with a home environment, where the children can share any worries or concerns. This means that the children feel valued. Staff have adapted the home environment to enable the children to enjoy play in the home. This is in addition to activities such as horse riding, skating and going to parks in the local community. These activities help to improve the children's mental health and well-being.

All the children are making progress in their education. The staff work in partnership with the school staff to ensure that the children's educational needs are met. Staff support the children with homework and reading at home. This means the staff are aspirational for the children, and in return children are motivated to learn.

The home environment is very warm and welcoming. Children are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and have been consulted in the design of the playroom in the home. However, one child's bedroom needed some minor repairs in their en-suite bathroom, and old furniture and fishing equipment had been left on the grounds. This does not ensure a safe outdoor environment for the children.

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

Risks to children living in this home from going missing are low. Staff provide high levels of structure and support to children which helps them to regulate their emotions. On the rare occasions when children leave the home, staff proactively follow the home's protocols. Staff successfully help children to quickly return home.

There are risk assessments and positive behaviour support plans in place to support children to be safe and feel safe. These are reviewed and updated routinely in consultations with the in-house clinicians and other professionals.

Staff use physical interventions to manage children's behaviour when they become a risk to themselves or others. Staff use a range of techniques to help children to regulate their emotions. If holds are required, they are proportionate and short in duration. Staff help children to return to the group and re-engage in play after they have been held. As a result, the frequency of physical interventions is reducing. However, the manager has not always evaluated the effectiveness or given sufficient consideration to the impact of these interventions on children. The feelings and views of children are not always heard or responded to well enough when they say they have been hurt after being held. This does not promote ongoing improvement and harmony in the home.

Some children have been exposed to racist comments from other children in the home which has made them feel unhappy. On these occasions, staff complete key work and group work with the children to address this behaviour. However, the staff have been unable to prevent the children from using this language. This does not protect children from emotional harm.

When concerns about a staff member's practice and conduct came to light, leaders addressed this promptly. However, restorative work did not take place with the child.

Staff have generally responded swiftly and appropriately to concerns about children's safety. However, concerns relating to road safety when children have been travelling by car with staff have not always been well managed. One child accessed inappropriate television channels in their bedroom, and another has had contact with an unknown person through their electronic devices. This was not notified to Ofsted to allow the regulator to monitor how leaders have responded to keeping children safe.

One child has acquired mobile phones on numerous occasions while out on activities. This increases their risk of harm. Staff have responded through increased supervision and key work to help children to learn how to stay safe. In addition, staff attend child-focused sessions with the clinical team, which help them to develop strategies to care for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home has been without a registered manager for a considerable period. The provider has experienced difficulties in recruiting a permanent manager to oversee the running of the home. They have appointed managers who have not remained in post until registration. There are currently temporary arrangements for the registered manager of the sister home to oversee both homes. This arrangement is working well, but is not a long-term solution to the need for a registered manager.

The interim manager has ensured stability for the staff team since being in post. This means the staff are supported and therefore committed and motivated. There is improved staff retention as a result. This has provided continuity of care for the children.

New staff are appointed in line with safe recruitment practice. This process ensures that adults are safe to work with children.

The interim manager is aspirational and a good role model for the children and her staff. She is child centred and provides the children with positive experiences and opportunities.

The manager and staff advocate on behalf of the children and challenge decisions made that are not felt to be in their best interests. This ensures that the children have the best possible outcomes. Collaborative and partnership working is excellent across education, health, and social care and this further contributes to improved outcomes for the children.

The interim manager uses focus meetings with the home's in-house clinicians to enhance staff practice and support learning in areas such as therapeutic parenting, attachment, and trauma in children. This ensures staff have the necessary skills and experience, and understand their roles and responsibilities in providing a nurturing caring environment for children.

All staff receive regular supervision and twice-yearly appraisals. The reflective model of supervision used allows staff to feel 'valued' and 'supported' by the interim manager and senior management.

There are good systems of monitoring and auditing in place. These are used to inform practice developments and identify strengths and weaknesses in the home. However, gaps in the manager's oversight have meant they were not aware of shortfalls relating to children's documents and the timeliness of fire drills following new admissions to 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 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 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— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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)(v)(b)) This is with particular reference to leaders and staff having professional curiosity in respect of the impact of physical interventions on children.	30 April 2022
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. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)) In particular, ensure that staff continually address negative language and promote equality and diversity.	30 April 2022

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 staff work as a team where appropriate; 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— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and Use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(f)(g)(h))	30 April 2022
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure children's homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. This particularly refers to the manager ensuring that the bedrooms and garden areas are maintained to a high standard, to enhance the living experience of the children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- The registered person should notify Ofsted and other relevant persons if one of the situations specified in regulation 40(4)(a)-(d) occurs, or if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious (40(4)(e)). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10).

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: 1259631

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Graeme Cheyne

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Noel Cooper, Social Care Inspector

Joanna Warburton, Social Care Inspector

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