

# 2496627

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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 four children who may have social and/or emotional difficulties.

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.

We last visited this setting on 24 June 2021 in response to the providers application to change the registration conditions. Specifically, to increase the number of children who could receive care in the home from three to four. The application was approved by Ofsted.

All four children living in the home at the time of the inspection, were observed and consulted by the inspector.

### Inspection dates: 1 and 2 February 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:** 12 December 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** improved effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement   |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 12/12/2019      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness |
| 30/04/2019      | Full            | Good                   |

## Inspection judgements

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

Children are making progress in various aspects of their lives, for example with their health, emotional well-being, education, and relationships. When reflecting on their child's progress, a parent said: 'He's done amazingly. We need more places like this.'

A new extension to the home has increased the size of the property and added a separate lounge and another child's bedroom. Before the development, the children were consulted about the changes and what they would mean for them. They were also invited to share their ideas on the use of the new rooms. Children also made a permanent contribution to the building, by adding a brick to its foundations. The additional space provides children with privacy for appointments or space to enjoy their own company.

The staff provide children with a nurturing family environment. Children are encouraged to get along and to tolerate and understand each other. They enjoy family meals and activities together, and when there are disagreements, staff support the children to resolve the issues. A professional described the home as a 'calm family environment'. This helps children feel comfortable about where they live.

Children are making progress in education. Their attendance is very good, and they are well prepared for each day so that they are ready to learn. The staff have excellent relationships with school staff. They share relevant information about the child, particularly when there are any challenges that may impact on the child's education. In addition, the staff help the children to apply their learning in their day-to-day lives. For example, they budget and shop for cookery at home. Some children's progress in education has raised their aspirations for the future, and as a result, they are interested in further education, training and employment.

Children are supported to have good relationships with their family members. Some children have progressed to overnight family time. For other children, staff accompany them during family time or regularly keep in touch to ensure that the family time is going well. In addition, the staff support the children to talk about their families and encourage them to display their family photos in the communal areas of the home. This helps the children celebrate where they have come from and maintain links to important aspects of their identity.

Children are supported to develop their individual talents and interests. Children try new experiences and explore their world through a range of activities at home and during outings and holidays. The staff provide children with support and encouragement to join community clubs or to switch to others that are of greater interest. This helps the children to have fun, enjoy new experiences and build self-confidence.

Children have access to an independent advocate and are supported to attend these appointments when appropriate. Children are regularly consulted about their views. Children's meetings, questionnaires, informal discussions and reviews enable the children to have their say and influence their day-to-day care. However, in some examples found, there was no written evidence of how the manager had listened to and acted on children's views and feedback.

The staff support children to celebrate significant events in their lives, for example birthdays and achievements at school. Photos are taken to capture these events, and this helps the children to remember what they have achieved. However, these photos are not easily accessible by the children and do not form part of the child's life-story work.

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

Children say that they feel safe living in the home.

There has been a reduction in the number of significant incidents and physical interventions involving the children. On the rare occasion that serious incidents do occur, the staff respond well and inform the relevant professionals. The staff talk with the children about the dangers and offer the children help to increase their safety. The manager reviews this practice to ensure that it remains safe, appropriate and necessary.

Staff provide the children with consistent routines and boundaries. They help the children to communicate their feelings in a positive way. Children follow an incentive scheme, which is individualised and rewards them for their positive behaviour. This provides children with stability and helps them to manage their behaviour and responses in a positive way.

Children benefit from the in-house therapeutic support. Children feel confident accessing therapy and do so without fear of stigma or shame. Sessions are provided at the child's pace and in an environment that best suits the child, for example during an outdoor walk or cookery session. The progress that some children have made has been great. They can now identify their own stress triggers and will confidently ask for additional time with their therapist, particularly during times of stress.

Children's individual risk assessments detail most of their vulnerabilities and risks, and the strategies which the staff follow to reduce these. However, in some examples, information was missing or did not correspond to other sections of the document. This means that some sections were confusing and not thorough. The manager is aware of this and has a plan to address it.

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

The registered manager is experienced and has led the staff team since the home opened in 2019. She inspires the staff to develop their practice and provide the children with a high standard of care. She is committed and cares very much about the children, their progress and their experiences.

Changes in the staff team mean that the manager is now supported by a deputy manager. Together, they have a clear vision for the home and a plan to develop the staff and their skills. The staff speak highly of this support. They are enthusiastic and proud of their work and the positive contribution that they make to the children's lives.

The combination of the pressures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff absence and the challenges in recruitment has resulted in staff vacancies. Gaps in the rota have been covered by existing staff working additional shifts. New staff have recently joined the team. As part of a thorough induction, they have been allocated a mentor who has experience of working in children's residential care. This helps to ensure that the new staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities in caring for the children.

Staff receive regular training from the provider and external agencies. Staff speak positively about the quality of training and how this improves their practice. However, the inspector found that the manager has failed to ensure that all of the staff have the relevant training and qualifications needed to care for the children. For example, three out of 12 staff have not been trained to meet the specific health needs of one child. In addition, one member of staff has not completed the required residential childcare qualification in the specified time frame.

Staff receive supervision on a regular basis, which includes discussion on practice-related issues such as the children's needs, staff reflection, information-sharing and guidance. Discussions in supervision sessions are recorded. However, some of the dates recorded on documents are incorrect. In addition, the manager's monitoring tool for supervision is not accurate. Therefore, she cannot provide assurances that all staff have received supervision in the required time frame.

Children's records reflect their day-to-day experiences, and various documents are child friendly. However, some of the children's documents are not up to date, and others, relating to the children's health care and education, are not stored in the children's files. The manager had escalated this to the relevant agency; however, some documents remain absent. This affects the quality of children's records and the information available to staff to meet the children's needs.

## 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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.<br/>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c))</p> <p>In particular, the registered provider must ensure that all of the staff are trained to respond to the children's individual health needs.</p>                                                                                                     | 4 April 2022 |
| <p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p> <p>the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) (the Level 3 Diploma"); or</p> <p>a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.</p> <p>The relevant date is—</p> <p>in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a</p> | 4 June 2022  |

|                                                              |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| care role in a home.<br>(Regulation 32 (1) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)) |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--|

## Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that the staff work productively with the child's local authority and statutory social worker. The registered person should evidence what they have done to achieve engagement, including any actions taken to escalate concerns. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including, the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.3)
- The registered provider should ensure that the manager and the staff recognise the importance of understanding who we are and where we come from, as is recognised in good social work practice, for example through undertaking life story work or other direct work. The registered provider is responsible for ensuring that the staff play a full role in work of this kind. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including, the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.14)
- The registered provider should ensure that the children see the results of their views being listened to and acted on. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including, the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered provider should ensure that all of the children's case records are kept up to date. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

## 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:** 2496627

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** Lee Riley

**Registered manager:** Danielle Cunningham

## Inspector

Catherine Heron, Social Care Inspector



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