

2509300

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home offers care for up to seven children who may have faced adverse childhood experiences resulting in trauma.

The manager is experienced and has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 August 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 April 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/04/2022	Full	Good
11/01/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
21/04/2021	Full	Good
30/10/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

In recent months, children have been unsettled. There have been several serious incidents when children and staff have been injured. Managers have conducted learning reviews and increased their presence in the home to support staff. As a result, children are becoming more settled.

Seven children live in the home. Since the last inspection, five children have moved into the home and two have moved out. One child moved on because staff could no longer meet his needs. Managers and staff ensured that the child had a positive ending and a planned move.

Managers and staff support children to develop their skills for independent living. They give children who move out of the home a high level of support. Staff work with children to create a plan which includes supporting them to visit their new home and to move their possessions. Staff arrange to keep in touch and continue to support children. This means that children continue to feel loved and nurtured by adults who know them well.

The home is a homely place for children to live. Children are proud of their bedrooms, which are highly personalised. One child's bedroom is decorated with a superhero theme. Another child has their favourite soft toys prominently on display. Photos of children can be seen throughout the home and communal areas reflect children's interests and tastes. Children help staff to cook the evening meal, which they eat together in the large dining-kitchen. This welcoming environment increases children's self-esteem and their enjoyment of spending time at home.

The staff team is nurturing in its approach. There are warm and good-humoured interactions between staff and children. Children and staff go on bike rides and they have raised money for charity by taking part in a charity fun run together. Staff play board games with children, and they take them for days out and on holidays. Creating opportunities to spend time with children enables children to develop meaningful relationships based on shared interests with staff.

Staff actively promote and support children's education. All children attend the school belonging to the provider. Managers and staff work in partnership with teachers and are proactive in ensuring that children achieve good attendance. Consistent support for children's education has helped children to make progress from their starting points and, for some children, to exceed expectations.

Staff support children to attend routine health appointments and they prioritise children's emotional health needs. Children benefit from emotional support from the company's therapy service. Some children receive help through personalised sessions. Therapists also provide advice to staff to help them support the children's

emotional well-being. This tailored support meets individual children's needs and enables staff to support children to regulate their emotions during times of crisis.

Staff understand the importance of children maintaining family relationships. They ensure that children see their families and friends. This helps children to maintain a strong bond and positive cultural identity. A parent said, 'I just think everyone there is brilliant. They have always been available to me when I have had questions or concerns.'

Staff understand the importance of making positive memories for each child's life story. Children each have a book made by staff, with photos and comments charting their time at the home. Children will take these books with them when they move on. Positive memories like these help children to feel loved, to be happy and to be able to thrive physically, emotionally and socially.

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

Detailed risk assessments and behaviour management plans, reviewed with clinicians, promote the home's therapeutic ethos and guide staff to support children with their complex behaviours.

In recent months, children's complex behaviours have escalated. Incidents of staff using physical restraint to support children in crisis have increased. Managers have used monitoring systems to ensure that restraint was necessary and proportionate. Staff have consulted therapists to understand the triggers for children's behaviours. Managers have taken action to minimise potential risks by spending increased time in the home supporting and educating staff. At the time of the inspection, incidents were decreasing and children were increasingly settled. Children said that they like living in the home and feel safe.

Children who bully other children are supported to understand the impact of bullying on themselves and others. One child who was bullied by another child was given the opportunity to talk about what happened. In addition, staff held important discussions with the child who had targeted the other child and undertook educational work. As a result, staff helped the child to understand the impact of their behaviour on others.

Children learn about dangers. They engage with a range of topics to help them identify risks. Their learning equips them with skills that will help them to keep themselves safe. Children learn about risks online and how to stay safe. This positive work enhances their knowledge of risk and allows them to keep themselves increasingly safe.

When children make allegations, managers consult with social workers and the local authority designated officer. Where appropriate, they ensure that thorough investigations take place. However, managers do not always inform the regulator. This means that the regulator does not always have accurate information to enable them to monitor how children are safeguarded effectively.

Vetting procedures are usually good, supporting the safe recruitment of staff. However, on one occasion, managers did not ensure that information for a new member of staff was accurate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has recently left and a new manager is in post. Senior managers have ensured a planned transition to support a smooth handover. The current manager has applied to register with Ofsted.

Social workers are generally positive about the care their children receive. One social worker was impressed by the way managers and staff have worked with a child and their parent to support the child to move back to their parent's home. Another social worker felt staff had dealt with their child's complex behaviours well. However, social workers said that staff do not routinely share information about children's day-to-day care and are slow to share records of incidents. This means that social workers do not always have the most up-to-date information for effective care planning.

The responsible individual and the manager use a range of monitoring systems to maintain constant oversight of the home. These effective systems provide a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. This means that managers can quickly address issues and plan developments and improvements across the home.

Since the last inspection, 11 staff have left and nine have joined. Managers and staff acknowledge the impact of the changes on the children and have worked hard to ensure that children have consistent care. This has meant that staff have worked extra shifts and managers have also covered some shifts. When additional staff have been used, managers have ensured that they are known to children. This means that children continue to build trusted relationships with known adults who care for them.

Staff receive regular, good-quality supervision and annual appraisals. This helps them with their development and to reflect on their practice. Staff say an increase in the frequency and severity of incidents has affected staff morale. However, increased support from managers and therapists has improved staff resilience and morale is improving.

Managers ensure that team meetings are informative and child-focused. Therapists regularly attend meetings to discuss children and trauma-informed practice. These sessions help the staff to understand the children's individual responses to their trauma and how they can best support the child. A carer said, 'If it's a difficult time it reminds us that they come from a difficult place.'

Staff are provided with a wide range of training, which is specific and relevant to the needs of the children. Managers further promote a learning environment by

upskilling staff through additional workshops delivered by therapists in team meetings. Staff talk knowledgeably about the therapeutic model of care and the training. This means that children are supported by staff who are equipped with the skills and experience to promote the health, safety and well-being of children.

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 registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that the regulator is informed when a child makes an allegation.	10 September 2023
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)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that the child's social worker is regularly provided with information about the child's progress.	10 September 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they maintain good employment practice. They should ensure that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13)

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: 2509300

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Tamara Pearcey

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Karen Gillingwater, Social Care Inspector

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