

2594854

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private provider that operates other homes across the country. The home cares for up to five children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The registered manager has been in post since 12 April 2021.

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 inspection on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 18 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 January 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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
Not previously inspected		

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children said that they love living at this home. They are proud of their well-furnished and beautifully decorated home, especially their bedrooms, which they have personalised. The plentiful photos and canvases around the home demonstrate the fun children have during activities, celebrations and holidays.

Children are making good progress, particularly with their increased attendance and engagement at school. Children are also developing a better understanding of their personal circumstances, learning how their behaviours affect others and building their self-esteem. The development of children's independence helps them to learn skills for adult life.

Staff have a good understanding of each child's needs. This is supported by comprehensive care and support plans. However, records in children's files are not consistently signed and dated by staff.

Children's health needs are addressed well. Staff help children to develop a healthy and active lifestyle and to attend required health appointments.

Consultation with children is good. Children said that they feel staff take their views seriously and act on them. One child told leaders and managers that they wanted more male staff on the team. Leaders and managers took this into account when recruiting staff, leading to male staff being appointed.

Children take part in a good range of purposeful and fun activities both in the home and in the community. Staff encourage children to try new activities. Children benefit from having ample external space where they enjoy playing basketball and riding on their scooters and bicycles.

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

Safeguarding records require improvement as information is currently stored across several different systems. This makes it difficult to access records and understand the full picture. Senior staff do not demonstrate a consistently good understanding of how to record and manage safeguarding records. In addition, leaders and managers need to review the safeguarding notification process from the children's school to the home to ensure that these referrals contain all the required information.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of how to directly safeguard children. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in this.

Behaviour and risks are managed appropriately. Behaviour-support plans and risk assessments provide clear guidance for staff. Alarms on the children's bedroom doors are not currently in use. However, when they are used, there is no clear rationale or risk assessment to demonstrate why they are necessary. The use of such devices must be kept under review.

Restraint is rarely used. When it is, it is used appropriately. Meaningful conversations are carried out with the children involved and any child who witnessed the event. Leaders and managers also hold reflective conversations with staff after a restraint, which helps to develop staff's practice.

Staff manage missing-from-home events effectively. They work well with other agencies, which leads to a cohesive approach to managing risks and keeping the children safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers understand the home's strengths and most areas for improvement. They take actions to make improvements. The recommendation from the monitoring visit has been met.

The manager is appropriately qualified and experienced for the role. Staff and parents are very positive about the manager. They feel that the manager is supportive and approachable.

Leaders and managers continue to manage issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic well. At one point, this led to some staff moving into the home to manage a period of isolation.

Staffing levels are appropriate for the needs of the children. Since the monitoring visit, several staff have left and new staff recruited. Safer recruitment practices are followed to help protect children. When staff have left, exit interviews are carried out and information from these meetings is used to improve practice.

Leaders monitor staff training effectively. Training covers mandatory training as well as specialist training to meet individual children's needs. Additional training is provided for staff when practice issues have been identified. Staff feel well supported and trained for their roles.

Staff receive appropriate supervision. Leaders and managers provide staff with relevant policies and procedures to read. However, there is no clear evidence of managers checking that staff understand these documents. The quality of supervision notes varies. Some are very detailed and reflective, while others lack sufficient detail of the discussions held and actions to be taken.

The independent person does not routinely seek feedback from children, parents and social workers or check the quality of the children's bedrooms. On occasions, the independent person visits during school time, which means they spend limited

time with the children. Leaders and managers have raised this with the independent person.

Feedback from parents and other professionals is very positive, praising the staff for the quality of care they provide. Parents and professionals said that communication is excellent and they are always made to feel welcome when they visit. One parent said that the home was the best place for their child to be. Another parent said that this is the first time their child has been able to make and maintain friendships.

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
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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) In addition, ensure that safeguarding records are accessible and contain details of all actions taken.	28 February 2022
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person—	28 February 2022

if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and

to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.

A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced.

The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—

children are effectively safeguarded; and

the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.

The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.
(Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, when bedroom door alarms are used, there is clear rationale for their use, a risk assessment is carried out and the use of such devices is kept under review. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)
- The registered person should review staff's understanding of new or updated policies and procedures. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)
- The registered person should ensure that records of staff supervision sessions are of a consistently good quality. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- The registered person should ensure that each entry in children's case records is signed and dated by the author. ('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: 2594854

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Marcia McLoughlin

Registered manager: Katherine Allen

Inspector

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

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