

2594902

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to five children who may have social and emotional difficulties. The home is operated by a private provider.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 21 September 2020.

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 25 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 February 2022

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	requires improvement to be good
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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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Not previously inspected

Inspection judgements

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

Children have mixed experiences living in the home. Staff encourage children to lead an active, healthy lifestyle. Children enjoy a wide range of interests, including music, horse riding and swimming. Children decorate their own rooms to reflect their interests. Staff support children to see people who are important to them. Children retain strong links to family and other carers. Feedback from family is mixed. One family member feels that the home is supporting their child well. Another has concerns about the home not meeting their child's needs and is worried about significant staff turnover.

Children attend the school attached to the home. Staff encourage good attendance and help children to achieve educationally. Staff show pride in the achievements that children make. For example, staff described how one child has been supported to develop their reading abilities. Staff meet children's health needs. Staff supported children when they had COVID-19 and prevented further spread. The home continues to take appropriate precautions against further infection.

Staff support children to develop their relationships with each other. Children take an interest in each other's lives. During the inspection, two children went with another child to support them in their joining ceremony at a local club. However, interactions between children are not always positive. The manager identifies that there is bullying within the home and is undertaking work to address this.

Children see their peers being restrained. Debriefs completed with children highlight the impact that this has on them. For example, this includes comments about disrupted sleep and delays to planned trips out. At times, children become involved in restraints, trying to intervene with their peers.

The manager regularly seeks children's views about living in the home. The manager responds promptly to complaints from children, providing responses in a way they can understand. However, the content of the complaints further shows the worries some children have about living with each other in the home.

Staff create a warm and welcoming home environment that is decorated to a good standard. However, children are not able to access all areas of their home. The staff office is not accessible to children. Inability to enter the office can lead to unnecessary conflict between staff and children. Some food is locked away in a cupboard in the kitchen, meaning children cannot learn how to moderate their food intake in the same way as their peers would. The manager gives a reason for this but does not recognise the impact on children or how it will improve.

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

Children's experiences of living in the home are negatively affected through the approach to behaviour management. Although there has been a significant reduction in the number of incidents of restraint in the home, restraint continues to be used for all children. Staff records of restraints are of inconsistent quality, sometimes lacking details of which staff are involved and how. Behaviour support plans contain insufficient detail to identify which restraint techniques are appropriate for children. In addition, reduction strategies lack clarity of action for staff to take. Debriefs completed with children have improved and now contain their words. However, it is not always clear enough in the record who has conducted the debrief. Suggestions from children in debriefs are not always incorporated in their support plans.

Some children can not be safely left together without staff supervision. More work is required to ensure that children are well matched; that they do not harm each other and that they can live safely together.

The manager clearly records safeguarding concerns. The manager consults safeguarding authorities when allegations are made against staff. Risk assessments identify what actions members of staff can and cannot take while investigations are undertaken. However, this is only in relation to the child making the allegation. As a result, other children in the home are not protected should an allegation be upheld.

Recruitment processes are safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home is led by a qualified and experienced manager. Training for staff is relevant to their role. Staff receive regular supervision from the manager. However, supervision records do not always show that reflective discussions take place. In addition, they do not routinely contain information about discussions about all the children living in the home. Leaders and managers cover staff vacancies using staff from within the organisation, identifying continuity of staffing as beneficial for children.

Leaders and managers do not monitor use of restraint well enough to inform a plan for the reduction of its use across the home. The manager does not critically evaluate the necessity or proportionality of individual interventions or the quality of the recording. The manager does not comprehensively scrutinise restraint records to understand areas for staff development and learning. Most importantly, there is insufficient consideration of how incidents could have been managed differently to avoid the necessity of using a restraint.

Language in behaviour management plans, care plans and risk assessments lacks clarity, and terms used are sometimes vague. Authors of electronic versions of

documents are not clearly marked. The manager started to make changes during the inspection in response to inspector feedback.

External professionals report positive progress is being made by their children and that communication is good. Social workers feel their children are safe and that staff understand and meet their 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
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; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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)(iv)(b)) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that behaviour support plans are clear in terms of language and techniques used. The registered manager should undertake an ongoing assessment of the dynamics of children living together, to know that they are safe. They should ensure that risk assessments are clear about what staff can and cannot do when they are under investigation for an allegation, in line with the organisation's policies.	4 March 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	25 March 2022

promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h)) In particular, the manager should critically review behaviour management practices, and include the information obtained to inform plans to reduce use of restraint.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) In particular, the manager should ensure that supervision records contain reference to practice related discussions, including discussions about all children in the home to provide the opportunity for staff to reflect on their practice.	25 March 2022
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— details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and	4 March 2022

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)(iv)(vi)(vii)(c)(iv))

In particular, the manager should ensure that staff records of incidents of restraint are clear about the role of staff involved in the restraint and include clear evaluation of the suitability of the use of the measure in line with the regulations. In addition, the manager should ensure there is clarity about who has undertaken a debrief with the child.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that all children can access the shared parts of their home. Where restrictions are deemed necessary, this should be recorded clearly on all the plans of all children affected, including date of review and plans to reduce the restriction. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)

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: 2594902

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: Jackelyn Bradley

Inspectors

Clare Nixon, Social Care Inspector

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

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