

2594902

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a national organisation. The home provides care for up to five children with emotional and social difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, four children were living in the home.

There has been no registered manager since June 2022. A manager is in post and an application to register with Ofsted was received on 10 August 2023.

This home is on the same site as a school and two other children's homes which are all part of the same organisation. The inspectors only inspected the social care provisions of this home on this site. The other two children's homes on the same site were not part of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 July, and 20 and 21 September 2023

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: 14 June 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/06/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/02/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

Overall, children make progress and have positive experiences in the home and the community. There are warm and nurturing relationships between the staff and the children. However, weaknesses in the staff's and managers' safeguarding practices in relation to one child have the potential to undermine the safety and wellbeing of the children in the home.

Staff demonstrate care and affection for the children. Children are involved in planning their menus and choosing activities. Mealtimes are social events, and the staff encourage everyone to eat together. Staff sensitivity encourage the children to enjoy and maintain a healthy diet.

All children attend the school on site. Staff understand the importance of children doing well in education and support the children to improve their attendance. Staff involve children in educational activities at the home during school hours when children struggle to attend school. One child has just taken their GCSEs, which was celebrated by staff and children.

Staff understand the importance that each child places on spending meaningful time with their loved ones. Staff work well with family members and previous carers. This helps to ensure that children enjoy significant, valuable time with people who are important to them. For many of the children, this includes regular, safe overnight stays with their families and carers.

Staff support children to gain confidence and learn new skills. Children enjoy a varied range of recreational and social activities to help them build their self-esteem and social skills. Activities include attending ice hockey, rugby and boxing clubs.

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

Child protection concerns are not consistently managed well. A repeat allegation protocol in place for one child does not clearly state that all allegations should be reported to appropriate external safeguarding agencies. Consequently, although the child's social worker has been notified, several child on child abuse concerns have not been reported to the local multi-agency safeguarding hub or to Ofsted in line with statutory guidance.

The provider has considered the allegations made and concluded that at this point in time, the child has not suffered significant harm. Several allegations were not considered through a formal child protection strategy discussion. Considering these concerns in isolation, without the benefit provided by the engagement of an

appropriate range of statutory agencies, inevitably limits the ability to fully consider risk in an informed way and to formulate safety plans for all of the children involved.

Staff set clear boundaries and help children to develop strategies to manage their feelings. Since the previous inspection, there has been a notable reduction in the number and intensity of incidents. The use of restraint has also reduced, including the frequency and duration. Additional training from in-house specialists, such as the safeguarding, behaviour and inclusion team and the clinical team, has helped to strengthen the staff skill sets and understanding.

Staff take proactive action when children are missing from the home. They search, shadow and follow them, encouraging a quick and safe return.

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

The home has been without a registered manager since June 2022. This shortfall is reflected in the judgment made from this inspection. A new manager is now in post and has submitted her application to Ofsted.

Weak management monitoring systems have failed to identify shortfalls in safeguarding practice. Child protection record-keeping is disjointed and does not show all the actions taken, referrals and agreed joint strategies with other agencies.

Staff say they feel valued, have grown in confidence and enjoy working in the home. They spoke with genuine pride about how they are making positive changes to the lives of the children they care for.

Sufficient staffing levels are in place, and staff receive training and support to develop their skills and gain confidence in their roles. The manager uses supervision sessions and reflective practice to ensure that staff knowledge is updated, improved and sustained.

Children live in a welcoming and homely environment. There are lovely large photos of the children, printed on canvas and hanging throughout the home. This sends a positive message to the children of their value and belonging in the home. Leaders and managers ensure incidents of damage caused to the home are identified to the maintenance team, who resolve these issues quickly.

Leaders, managers and staff promote a respectful and inclusive ethos at the home. The statement of purpose reflects the care and support that the children receive. The previous requirements and recommendations have been met, other than the leadership and management requirement.

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 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— 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi)) In particular, inform relevant professionals without delay of an allegation about child on child abuse.	20 November 2023
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4) (e))	20 November 2023
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(h))	20 November 2023

This specifically relates to the registered provider ensuring good, clear child protection record-keeping.	
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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: Lupton Tower, Lupton, Carnforth LA6 2PR

Responsible individual: Leigh Bown

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector
Gary Turney, Social Care Inspector
Polly Soper, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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