

SC475697

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This private home is registered to provide care for up to seven children. The home's statement of purpose states that children may have a range of social and emotional difficulties or learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2017. He is appropriately experienced and qualified to manage a children's home.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 March 2022

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: 16 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/12/2019	Full	Good
10/07/2018	Full	Outstanding
16/10/2017	Full	Outstanding
14/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children feel happy at the home and make progress in all areas of their care. When children's progress is compromised, staff quickly recognise this and implement plans to help children move forward. Children and staff have respectful and trusting relationships. Children say that they feel listened to, well cared for, and involved in their care planning.

The matching of children to the home is effective. Pre-placement meetings and discussions with relevant professionals take place to carefully consider the impact of children moving into the home. Social workers reported that children who are new to being looked after are given additional support by the staff team to help them to feel comfortable in the home. The children currently living in the home are settled. They do not feel that bullying is a concern in the home, and they enjoy spending time with each other.

Staff have a good understanding of children's needs and provide them with lots of encouragement and praise. Key-work sessions are meaningful. They are focused on helping to improve children's life chances and developing children's ability to sustain positive relationships. Children also have effective 'speak out' sessions where they share their views about their individual progress and any changes they would like to be made in how they are looked after by the staff. These sessions are responded to and acted on, when appropriate, by the manager.

The staff team is responsive to children's individual health needs and makes referrals to additional health professionals when required. Children have access to weekly in-house therapeutic support to promote positive emotional well-being. Children are supported to engage in regular physical exercise and eat a healthy, balanced diet.

Children have good school attendance. When children have barriers to their learning, the staff team works with educational professionals to resolve concerns and agree plans to help children make progress.

Family time is prioritised for children. The staff team recognises the importance of family relationships being maintained. The team works with families to promote and facilitate regular family time for individual children.

Children engage in regular activities and hobbies, which helps to keep them occupied after school and at weekends and supports them to develop peer relationships away from the home. Children are encouraged to participate in regular charity fundraising events. This helps to raise awareness about current issues. Children develop their independence skills from an early age as part of their daily routines and through naturally occurring opportunities.

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

Children, their social workers and family say that children are safe in the home. Managers and staff understand individual risks for children and take swift action to protect them. Regular direct work sessions educate children to support them to make independent and safer choices.

Risk management plans and behaviour support plans provide staff with clear and individualised strategies to support children when they are struggling to manage their behaviour safely. During an unsettled period in the home, there have been some serious incidents requiring police involvement. However, the use of the police has been appropriate to safeguard children and staff in high-risk situations.

Restraint records evidence that intervention is minimal and proportionate. Staff use de-escalation strategies effectively and restraint is used as a last resort. The manager is thorough in his oversight of the records. He uses lessons learned from debriefs effectively to adapt staff practice and the support given to children to reduce the need for future restraints.

When children go missing from the home, staff have a good understanding of the procedures to follow. They take prompt action and are proactive in trying to locate and safely return children. The staff team works closely with missing-from-home coordinators to identify strategies to prevent or reduce incidents of children going missing from the home.

Allegations are managed effectively, with suitable action taken to safeguard children and staff. Managers work with relevant professionals to ensure that investigations are robust. There have been no complaints made by children. Complaints from others, such as family, are managed appropriately and feedback is provided regarding the outcome of any investigation undertaken.

Safer recruitment is not consistently robust. On one occasion, a staff member has carried out a shadow shift in the home without a suitable Disclosure and Barring Service check being obtained prior to their employment commencing. A good practice recommendation has been made.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is a positive role model for staff and wants the best outcomes for children. He challenges external professionals effectively to safeguard children and support their ongoing progress. His positive approach to the care of children is reflected in the nurturing interactions that inspectors observed between staff and children.

The manager is supported by a highly skilled senior team. Staff feel well supported by the management team. There are good lines of communication within the team to ensure that practice is consistent. Staff morale is positive. Staff said that there is

an open-door policy for them to report any concerns. The staff team has effective working relationships with placing authorities and other professionals.

Staff are given a thorough induction to the home and receive additional practice-related reviews during their probationary period. Appraisals evidence that targets set for staff are linked to continuous professional development. Staff are regularly supervised by the senior team. However, supervision records do not provide evidence that detailed and reflective discussions take place with staff regarding children's needs and progress.

Regular team meetings are used to review children's behaviour plans and strategies implemented to support children. Child-focused meetings have recently been introduced. These meetings support the staff team and the clinical team to review children's progress, explore and understand children's behaviours and identify any areas of support required. Staff receive a good level of training, including additional training that is specific to the needs of children.

On two occasions, the manager has failed to follow appropriate regulatory guidance in relation to notifying Ofsted of significant incidents. This relates specifically to a complaint from a child about a police officer and a referral to the local authority designated officer following an allegation made by a child.

The workforce development plan demonstrates that the manager recognises the impact of staffing shortfalls and evidences the action taken to resolve issues and strengthen the staff team. The manager carries out detailed monthly audits, which supports effective quality assurance of practice in the home. However, feedback from children, families and staff is not included in the manager's review of the quality of care report, to ensure that he provides a robust evaluation of the service that is provided.

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 registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(b)(c)(e))	5 May 2022
In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (2)(b) (5))	5 May 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the 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 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that systems are in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: SC475697

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Marcella Bird

Registered manager: Graham Burt

Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector
Dawn Parton, Social Care Inspector

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