

SC475748

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

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

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2022. He is suitably experienced and qualified.

Inspection dates: 28 February and 1 March 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: 15 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/03/2022	Full	Good
21/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
21/06/2018	Full	Outstanding
24/10/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have positive relationships with the staff team and their key workers. They feel listened to and trust staff to support them to deal with any concerns. Staff understand children's individual needs and provide them with nurturing care. Consequently, children are well supported during difficult times in their lives. One child said that the best thing about living at the home is the staff.

Social workers and children's families report positively about the care children receive from the staff team. They say that children make significant progress while living in the home, such as good achievements in school, making friends and confidence-building. Care planning is well informed. Children receive the support and intervention that is requested by their placing authorities and in line with their individual needs.

Children are regularly consulted about their experiences of living in the home. They engage well in house meetings, where they can confidently make suggestions about how their home life could be improved. Children's happiness is a focus of the meetings. The manager ensures that all children's requests are acknowledged and actioned when possible.

Children's health needs are monitored well by the staff team. External agencies are accessed when children require additional support to meet their health needs. The in-house therapist successfully engages all children in weekly sessions. She also undertakes regular consultation with the staff team and provides detailed reports for children's care planning meetings. She is integral to the therapeutic approach adopted by the wider staff team.

The staff team supports children to see their families regularly. They help children restore and sustain positive relationships with their family where possible. Out of school, children are kept active through gym memberships and outdoor activities, such as walking, cycling and football. Children are encouraged to develop safe and appropriate networks of friends outside of the home. This helps to develop their social skills and self-confidence.

Children's transitions into the home are planned in detail. The manager and therapist attend several introductory visits with the child, to provide support and offer them reassurance about their move. When children say that they are ready to move on from the home to be closer to family, their views are listened to, and planned transitions agreed with the placing authorities.

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

Children feel safe and secure in the home. On the occasions when children feel unsettled due to the behaviours of other children, the staff team responds effectively

to offer children reassurance and to resolve the issues, including liaising with the therapy team to provide children with additional support and guidance as required.

Children's behaviour management plans provide staff with clear strategies to support children when they are struggling to manage their emotions. They provide context for different triggers, including family loss and complexities, to ensure that staff fully understand children's behaviours. Staff are skilled in using a range of de-escalation techniques to calm children in crisis. Restraint is used only as a last resort, when children's behaviours escalate and they pose a significant risk of harm to themselves or others.

Children are given rewards for improvements in behaviour, significant achievements and meeting individual development targets. However, records of consequences are not always clear about the measures that staff have used, and some consequences given to children have not been recorded. Additionally, the manager does not always clearly evaluate the effectiveness of the consequence to determine whether it should be used again.

Staff are proactive in trying to prevent children from going missing from home and, if they are missing, to return them safely. The senior team works consistently with placing authorities and missing-from-home coordinators to agree strategies to help children to reduce their risk-taking behaviours. This includes reviewing the stability and safety of children's placements when they are frequently reported missing to the police. Consequently, incidents of children going missing from home have significantly reduced.

Managers have responded sensitively to allegations made by children about their peers or members of staff. Prompt action has been taken to ensure that children have been appropriately safeguarded and clear preventative strategies have been implemented for staff to follow. Direct work and therapy sessions demonstrate that following an allegation made by a child about a peer, both children have been supported to understand appropriate relationships and personal space.

All serious incidents are dealt with appropriately. The manager's evaluation of incidents is child-focused and he routinely discusses any lessons learned with staff. The staff team undertakes purposeful direct work with children following all incidents. Individual sessions provide additional opportunities for staff to talk through any concerns with children and educate them about making safer choices.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has developed confidence in his role since the last inspection. He has established positive and trusting relationships with the children. This is because he spends time with them, understands their needs and advocates on their behalf to improve their life chances. He embraces the therapeutic approach to care and models this well with the staff team.

Staff spoke about the improvements to the operation of the home under the new manager. They feel supported by the senior team and say that there is an open-door policy, where staff can raise concerns or share new ideas. The staff team is provided with clear guidance and expectations from the manager about how care should be delivered. This means that children are provided with clear routines.

Team meetings are well attended and are used to provide staff with additional learning. Staff all have access to regular practice-related supervisions. However, the records do not evidence that detailed and reflective discussions take place regarding children's needs and progress. A good practice recommendation has been made in relation to this.

The manager monitors staff training effectively. When required, he requests training that is specific to children's individual needs to better equip the staff team. The manager also seeks support from the therapy team to undertake specific work with the staff team to enable them to support children effectively.

The manager promotes multidisciplinary working. He ensures that the staff team communicates regularly with children's social workers and other key professionals involved in their care. The communication is appropriately balanced, keeping all professionals informed about children's progress and any safeguarding concerns.

The manager's monitoring of records has improved. When he identifies any gaps in recording or areas for development, he sets action plans with clear timescales for staff to work to. His plans for improvements are shared with the staff team and he closely monitors that his requests have been carried out. At the last inspection, a recommendation was made for the manager to include feedback from children, parents, staff and professionals in his review of the quality of care report. This has not been fully addressed and has been escalated to a 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, 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 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— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; 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 a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and	13 April 2023

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)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	
In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children. 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)(a) (5))	13 April 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive regular 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. Specifically, the supervision records should evidence that detailed and reflective discussions take place with staff regarding children's needs and progress. ('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: SC475748

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Natalie Bennett

Registered manager: Daniel Arnold

Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector
Lorna Schlechte, Senior His Majesty's Inspector

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