

# 1247559

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home. It is registered to provide care for up to five young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The young people admitted to Mere Fell will be placed for an assessment period to identify what medium- to long-term care they require. This is the home's first inspection.

**Inspection dates:** 30 to 31 May 2017

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,** taking into account

**requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because

- Leaders and managers are not clear about how they will deliver the aims and objectives of the service. As a result, young people do not benefit from a clear model of care.
- Leaders and managers do not always manage young people's transitions well. Shortfalls in care planning do not promote young people's welfare.
- Training is not tailored to the specific needs of the service. This leaves staff with some gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- Monitoring systems are not wholly effective. This does not help to maintain consistently good standards of care.
- Although young people know how to complain, they do not always know what has happened as a result of their complaint. One concern that a young person raised was not investigated thoroughly. This does not show robust safeguarding practice.
- Risk assessments do not contain enough information about all known risks. This does not fully protect young people's safety and well-being.
- Following incidents of restraint, managers do not debrief all those involved. As a result, staff do not have the opportunity to reflect on what has happened or raise any concerns that they may have.
- Staff do not administer medication to young people in line with the relevant prescription. Medication records are not completed accurately. This does not fully promote young people's health.
- Staff do not complete all relevant plans. Some children do not have a placement plan that sets out their day-to-day care needs. As a result, managers and staff do not understand each young person's individual needs. This includes issues about young people's identity, health and contact.
- Staff do not implement consistently good routines throughout the day. Some young people watch television into the night, including programmes that may not be suitable for them. Staff do not address this, and this does not show that staff provide consistently good care.
- Not all staff have completed a fire drill. As a result, they have not practised how to exit the home in such an emergency.
- The quality of record-keeping varies.

## The children's home's strengths

- Young people come to the home with histories of going missing and drug misuse. These risky behaviours have reduced.
- Staff help young people to develop ways of managing some of their feelings better. This helps them to deal with conflict differently sometimes.
- Young people develop positive relationships with staff. They report being happy in the home. Young people enjoy different leisure activities and have some fun times.
- Staff consult with young people and they have a say in decisions about their day-to-day life in the home.
- Young people's school attendance improves. Given that young people have not engaged well in education before, this shows some progress.
- Staff said that managers are approachable and accessible. They feel well supported and have regular meetings to discuss their practice and performance.
- Relevant partners, including the police and social workers, said that staff communicate regularly with them. Good working relationships with others keep young people safe and promote their development.
- Managers work proactively with the community to resolve some difficulties that have arisen. This shows that they take these concerns seriously.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
N/A		

## 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
<p>6: The quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person and staff— to understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; to promote each child's welfare. (Regulation 6(1)(a)(2)(a)(b)(i)(ii))</p> <p>Specifically, managers and staff must implement the statement of purpose. Furthermore, staff need to support young people to develop good night-time routines to aid their well-being.</p>	30/06/2017
<p>12: The protection of children standard</p> <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>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; the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a))(d))</p> <p>Specifically, risk assessments must contain sufficient information about all known risks. This includes the location risk assessment and young people's individual risk assessments. Furthermore, the registered person must ensure that all damage is quickly repaired, broken furniture is removed from the home, downstairs doors are repaired so that they close and all staff participate in a fire drill.</p>	30/06/2017
13: The leadership and management standard	30/06/2017

<p>The leadership and management standard requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(2)(c)(h))</p>	
<p>16: Statement of purpose The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ('the statement of purpose') which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>In particular, the statement of purpose must provide details of the home's ethos, the outcomes that the home seeks to achieve and its approach to achieving them. It must also provide details of any therapy provided and how the effectiveness of this will be measured. (Regulation 16(1))</p>	30/06/2017
<p>14: The care planning standard The registered person must ensure that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14(1)(a))</p> <p>In particular, meetings must take place at the required frequency following an emergency admission, and effective meetings must take place to plan for a young person's transition from the home. Furthermore, the registered person must ensure that each child has a placement plan, which sets out their individual needs and how these will be met. This includes, but is not limited to health, identity and contact.</p>	30/06/2017
<p>23: Medicines The registered person must ensure that medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed and a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23(2)(b)(c))</p>	30/06/2017
<p>34: Policies for the protection of children The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect. (Regulation 34(1)(a))</p> <p>In particular, managers must investigate all concerns raised by children about staff conduct and follow all recommendations made by the designated officer.</p>	30/06/2017
<p>37: Other records The registered person must maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4. (Regulation 27(2))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that managers</p>	30/06/2017

keep a copy of the staff duty roster of persons working at the home and a record of the actual rosters worked.	
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## Recommendations

- Ensure that staff record information about individual children in a way that is helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14)

This is specifically in relation to children's daily records.

- Ensure that, following an incident of restraint, all the staff and children who have witnessed the restraint, or been involved in any way, are given the opportunity to be debriefed about the incident by someone independent of it, to inform the strategy needed to prevent any recurrence. (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes, page 27, paragraph 2.102)

## Inspection judgements

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

Young people develop positive relationships with the staff. Young people identify the staff members whom they get on well with and talk to staff about some of their worries. Young people spoken to as part of the inspection described being largely happy at the home. They said that they did not want to leave, despite knowing that the plan was for them to stay at the home only for a short time.

Staff have introduced 'back to the future' forms. Young people complete these with their key workers weekly. This consultation allows young people to tell the staff what activities they would like to do and what meals they would like to eat. It also enables young people to talk about what has gone well for them and what has not gone so well each week. As a result, young people have a say in what happens on a day-to-day basis in the home and they talk about their experiences.

Young people enjoy a range of leisure activities. Particular favourites include geocaching, football, bike-riding, fishing, trampolining and going to the cinema. Young people enjoy ordinary childhood experiences. This helps them to develop confidence and learn new skills while having fun.

Young people develop skills in line with their age and development. Some develop better self-care skills and learn to cook simple meals for themselves. Young people enjoy cleaning the house car sometimes for financial reward. This teaches young people about the value of earning money.

Education outcomes are mixed. Some young people achieve 100% attendance, and this shows great progress given their starting points. However, young people's engagement in lessons varies and high levels of disruption impede their learning. Managers recognised that the on-site school arrangement was not working. As a result, young people now attend one of the organisation's other schools. Managers and staff report that this is working better and has brought greater stability to children's education.

Staff support some aspects of young people's health. They register all young people with a general practitioner (GP) and support them to attend appointments when health concerns arise. However, arrangements for supporting young people's dental health are not clearly outlined in their relevant plans. This inspection identified that staff do not administer medication to young people in line with how it is prescribed. Young people miss doses and staff do not record the reason why. This does not fully promote young people's health and well-being.

Not all young people have a placement plan. As a result, managers and staff do not

understand each young person's individual needs. For example, written plans do not include enough information about young people's religious, ethnic and cultural needs or how these are being met. Consequently, staff do not support young people with their identity. Relevant plans do not clearly outline the arrangements for supporting one young person's contact. This does not support safe and positive contact with his family.

Staff do not implement consistently good routines throughout the day. Some young people watch television into the night, including programmes that may not be suitable for them. Staff do not address this, which does not show good parenting. Furthermore, it shows that staff do not support young people to develop good sleep patterns.

Young people sometimes arrive at short notice and in difficult circumstances. Staff work hard to reassure young people and help them to settle in. Managers do not always ensure that meetings take place within the required timescale, when young people arrive at the home in an emergency. This does not show good care planning.

Staff support most young people well when they move on. For example, staff accompany young people on introductory visits to their new home so that young people get to know where they are moving to. One young person's transition plan was not robust. A lack of coordinated meetings resulted in important information not being shared. This had the potential to compromise his safety and well-being and that of others.

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

Young people said that they are able to talk to staff about their concerns and that they know how to complain. They also know how to escalate their concerns, if they are not happy with the outcome. Managers do not always follow this up to achieve a satisfactory conclusion. On one occasion, a young person did not know what happened when he escalated his concerns. Furthermore, the investigation was not robust and managers did not act on all the recommendations made. This does not show good safeguarding practice. It also gives young people the impression that their concerns are not taken seriously.

Risk assessments vary in quality. Some do not include enough information about all known risks. This prevents staff from developing a full understanding of all the young people's behaviours that they may have to deal with. The location risk assessment does not account for all potential risks in the locality. It does not include strategies to manage the proximity of the home to a complex road junction or some community tensions. These shortfalls have the potential to compromise young people's welfare and the welfare of others.

Three downstairs doors do not shut properly and so do not provide adequate protection in the event of a fire. Several staff have not completed a fire drill. As a result, they are not well versed in how to exit the building safely in such an emergency. Some young people have caused significant damage to the home. Repairs are not always carried out



quickly. As a result, aspects of health and safety require improvement to ensure that young people live in a physically safe environment.

Young people's behaviour has on occasion brought them and the home into conflict with some members of the community. For example, some young people shout and swear and have sometimes gone onto other people's property. This causes upset. Managers work with staff to develop different strategies to try to reduce this behaviour. Managers liaise well with community leaders to address concerns that have arisen. Proactive working enables people to work together to find a resolution. This work is ongoing and helps to safeguard young people and others.

Staff have introduced a system of praise and reward, as well as sanctions and consequences. This helps young people to begin to understand the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others. Positive regard builds up young people's self-esteem. It also ensures that negative behaviour does not become the sole focus of attention. One young person described being proud of himself for making good choices about his behaviour.

The staff get to know young people and help them to develop ways of managing their frustrations. For example, they discovered that one young person enjoys reflexology and that this helps him to relax and calm down. Another young person likes to have some space and time to calm down, when he is feeling angry. Staff update and review behaviour support plans to reflect these useful strategies. Because of staff support, young people start to recognise and manage their feelings and behaviour better sometimes. This work is ongoing.

Sometimes, situations escalate and staff use physical intervention to keep young people safe. Detailed records provide a good account of what happened. Not all those involved in an incident of restraint are debriefed afterwards. This does not give staff and young people the opportunity to reflect on what happened. Furthermore, it does not allow them to raise any concerns that they might have with someone who was not involved in the incident. This does not fully promote young people's welfare and safety.

Young people arrive at the home with histories of going missing and of drug misuse. These risks have significantly reduced. Young people do not go missing and no longer misuse drugs. When young people leave the home without permission and try to run away, staff respond diligently. They follow young people and remain with them. They encourage them to return, which they do. The staff's prompt action reduces risk and protects young people from harm.

Sound recruitment processes help to maintain a safe workforce. This prevents unsuitable people from working in the home.

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

Since the home opened in February 2017, there has been a change in manager. A new manager is in day-to-day charge of the home. She is suitably qualified and is in the

process of applying to register with Ofsted.

The home provides short-term care for young people who need an assessment to help inform their next steps. The statement of purpose contains contradictory information about the services that the home provides. Leaders and managers have not thought through how they will deliver on the home's aims and objectives. As a result, young people do not benefit from a clear model of assessment and care.

Leaders and managers understand that they need to review the service after its first three months in operation. They recognise that some aspects have not gone as well as they had hoped and that some things need to change. They are currently revising the statement of purpose and will forward this to Ofsted when it is completed. Managers have set time aside to plan the way forward. They have put a temporary hold on young people being admitted, while they do this.

Because placement plans do not set out what each young person needs when they arrive, it makes it difficult for managers to measure young people's progress. Managers do not review information or always ask follow-up questions. For example, managers do not know the circumstances of a significant event in a child's life. Furthermore, although teachers complete a baseline assessment with young people, managers do not seek feedback about this. As a result, information about young people becomes disjointed and is not used effectively to inform young people's plans and next steps.

Managers admitted three young people into the home in quick succession. This does not show careful and considered care planning. Staff did not manage the dynamics of the group effectively. As a result, the home experienced a period of disruption.

Staff said that managers are approachable and supportive. Staff receive regular supervision, which enables them to reflect on their practice and performance. This aids their development.

Some aspects of training are good. All staff have completed a full induction course as well as safeguarding training. Most staff have also completed training in behaviour management and understanding attachment. However, training is not tailored to meet the specific needs of the service. For example, staff do not receive training in assessment skills and in understanding how they contribute to young people's assessments. Furthermore, managers do not prioritise which training courses staff need to complete. Only a few staff have completed training in e-safety, exploitation, self-harm and equality and diversity. As a result, staff are not equipped with all the skills and knowledge that they need to meet young people's individual needs.

The quality of record-keeping varies. Detailed incident reports provide a clear account of events. However, staff do not write information in young people's daily journals in a child-friendly way. This is not helpful to young people who may wish to read these now or in the future to understand their care experience. Furthermore, managers do not keep a copy of duty rosters showing an accurate record of actual hours that staff have worked.

The new manager has developed some good monitoring systems. Each month she critically evaluates what has gone well and identifies actions needed. For example, she reviews consequences to ensure that these are proportionate. She has also introduced incentive schemes to encourage positive behaviour. However, the shortfalls identified on this inspection show that the manager needs to strengthen some aspects of monitoring.

External monitoring reports highlight good practice and areas for improvement. This will help the home to develop. The visitor also gives a clear statement that staff safeguard young people. One report contains inaccuracies, and the visitor does not seek feedback from parents or professionals. The responsible individual has plans to address this with the visitor and is taking steps to strengthen external monitoring.

Leaders and managers work well with partner agencies. Social workers and the police report good communication. Good collaborative working relationships promote children's welfare.

Managers ensure that they report significant events to Ofsted. This allows the regulator to carry out its monitoring function because it is appropriately informed. This promotes young people's welfare.

Eight requirements and two recommendations are raised to secure improvements.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** 1247559

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** Marcella Bird

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Jackie Line, social care inspector

Lisa Gregoire-Parker, social care inspector

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