

# 1244160

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This is one of a number of privately run children's homes and is registered for up to eight young people aged 7 to 17 years who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

**Inspection dates:** 3 to 4 May 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>good</b>
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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:** 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 is good because:

- The manager ensures that children are provided with a high standard of individualised care, which is given by a caring, consistent and well-trained staff group.
- Managers and staff work collaboratively with stakeholders and families to promote positive outcomes for children.
- All children have access to meaningful education opportunities and are engaging well with these.
- Children have access to a wide range of community-based activities, which promote their individual interests and contribute towards increased confidence and self-esteem.
- Children's health and well-being are promoted. As a result, children are experiencing improved physical and emotional health.
- Behaviour management is carefully planned and consistent, which enhances children's feelings of security.
- Staff support children to understand their own behaviour. This results in children's ability to make positive choices about their actions and increases their awareness of the impacts of their behaviour.
- Safeguarding arrangements are sound and staff continuously support children to become increasingly safe.
- Staff encourage children to express their views and wishes, and ensure that these are central to their individual care planning and to the design of the service.
- Children are making progress in all aspects of their development.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Some staff do not demonstrate an understanding of how children's previous experiences affect the expression of their emotions through their behaviour and lack the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children.
- Recording-keeping for each child does not include all of the details outlined in regulations, and is not written in a manner which could easily be understood by a child.
- Staff supervision records do not provide evidence of meaningful discussions that relate to the welfare and progress of children.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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First inspection		
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## 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>11. The positive relationships standard</p> <p>(1) The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on –</p> <p>(a) mutual respect and trust</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure –</p> <p>(a) that staff –</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(i) meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(vii) strive to gain each child's respect and trust;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(ix) understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children.</p>	01/07/2017
<p>13. The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that –</p> <p>(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to –</p> <p>(c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.</p>	01/07/2017

### Recommendations

- Case records must be kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information

about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The home is well cared for, warm and homely. Children say that they are involved in the decisions about decor and pictures. They feel that the home has been personalised for them.

Children overall enjoy positive relationships with staff, sharing good and positive interactions and experiences. Staff demonstrate passion and care, resulting in children developing increased value for themselves, and beginning to recognise their own strengths and abilities.

Staff have high aspirations for the children. They provide them with care, security and encouragement. They operate a meaningful consequences system which focuses on the celebrations of positive behaviour. Staff ensure that children hear the praise and the positives about themselves, ensuring that they are gaining in self-confidence and self-worth. Children are now beginning to regulate their own behaviour as a result and are able to express the things that worry or distress them. While this is occasionally expressed negatively, staff demonstrate an understanding of this and support the children to express themselves more constructively.

Children are making progress from their individual starting points. Staff ensure that children recognise their progress by celebrating small, but significant achievements, resulting in increased confidence and the motivation to achieve more. Staff understand that children may have experienced challenges as a result of moving into a new home. They are mindful of the children's need to settle and get to know each other and the staff. Children who have previously experienced difficulties in relying on others are beginning to build trusting relationships with the staff and are becoming more able to express themselves appropriately. One child said, 'The staff know me, and know when I want to talk and when to give me space.'

Children feel listened to by staff and each other. One child spoke in animated terms of how staff value her views and opinions in relation to managing her behaviour at times when she feels stressed. Another child spoke about the importance of daily meetings with the staff when children arrive home from school, and how helpful it is to hear about how other people's days have been. He spoke about how this enables him to deal with people more sensitively when he hears that they have had a bad day. Such naturally

occurring discussions frequently extend to wider topics such as bullying, homelessness, substance misuse and healthy relationships. Staff are creative in maximising opportunities to encourage children to think, ask and challenge. Through this approach, the children are developing a healthy interest in the wider world.

Staff ensure that children are provided with a wide range of community activities, which are also used as a means of engaging children in discussions about their views and wishes and to consult positively with them about the services provided. Staff actively seek children's views and ensure that they are helped to understand why certain things happen in their lives and why sometimes decisions are taken which may be contrary to the child's expressed views.

Staff ensure that children are involved in the decision-making process in relation to their own health. Staff successfully encourage them to take increasing responsibility for their health needs in preparation for their independence. One child was a smoker at the time he came to the home, and with the intensive and creative support of staff, he has now given up. This educative approach has had a significant positive impact on the child's health and well-being.

All children are in full-time education and are making significant progress. Some children who have experienced disrupted education due to school refusal attend daily and say that they enjoy learning. Communication and relationships between the staff and school are excellent, with daily feedback between the two establishments. This allows for a continuation of children's learning within the home environment, resulting in children benefiting from the interest in their education shown by staff.

Children are supported to develop independence and self-care skills commensurate with their age and ability. Each child has an individualised life skills plan and these plans are clear about their individual targets. Staff demonstrate creativity and enthusiasm for ensuring that the children are prepared early for their adult life. An example of this is a recent 'Come dine with me' event, in which all of the children participated. The winner received a gift voucher and staff took all of the children out for a meal to celebrate.

Relationships with parents and other professionals are good. Staff and significant others work together well for the benefit of the children. Contact with family members is promoted effectively by staff, who have developed good and positive relationship with parents. Parents are kept informed of children's progress and are consulted appropriately.

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

Children say that they are safe and feel safe. This starts with them feeling comfortable and secure with their peers. Staff carry out detailed impact risk assessments as part of the pre-placement planning process. These identify the individual risks for each new child, and provide an evaluation of the impact of these risks on the other children. The home's commitment to having a well-matched group of children is demonstrated by searching pre-placement questions and examples of refusing referrals, based on the potential impact on the current group.

Staff have a good understanding of the risks to each child and are familiar with the individual strategies devised to support and protect them. They are vigilant in supervising and monitoring the children when they are together as a group, resulting in reduced opportunities for bullying and negative behaviour.

Children receive high levels of supervision to ensure that they are safe. Staff do, however, allow children to take appropriate risks, and carefully monitor these. This practice enables children to learn from their mistakes – a valuable life skill. Risk assessments are thorough and reflective of each child's current situation. Staff understand and implement these appropriately.

Mutual respect is part of the culture of the home. Positive behaviour management strategies are implemented consistently and have made a difference to the children. One child whose presenting behaviour has been particularly challenging is now learning to recognise her own feelings and to regulate her behaviour. This has already resulted in a reduction in the number of incidents and the intensity of these. Staff embrace de-escalation techniques and are confident in conflict management and resolution. As a result, the use of physical intervention is reducing in frequency, duration and physicality.

Children are clear about whom they can go to if they have any concerns and say that they have a choice in this. Staff acknowledge that some children experience difficulties in expressing themselves and therefore staff members work hard to build trusting relationships between themselves and the children. Generally, children were observed to approach staff confidently; however, one child has a key-worker relationship which is strained. This factor reduces the likelihood that this child would approach their key worker in a situation of conflict or distress.

Staff are clear about the actions to be taken should any child be missing from care. Actions to be taken in such an event are detailed in each child's care plan, including the arrangements for the provision of return to care interviews. Staff are familiar with organisational and local protocols. There have been no incidents of children being missing from care since the home opened.

The safety of internet and social media usage is promoted and carefully monitored by staff. There are security systems in place which allow children to benefit from and explore the online world while being suitably protected. Where concerns about internet use arise, staff swiftly and proactively address these.

The recruitment of new staff includes gathering all of the required checks and references, in line with safer recruitment guidance. Staff are trained in and knowledgeable about the actions to take if they have a safeguarding concern about a child or if a child makes an allegation or disclosure. The registered manager has developed a good relationship with the local authority designated officer and seeks advice and guidance appropriately.

The house is safe and secure. There is due regard for health and safety without

compromising the warm and homely environment. The children also demonstrate an awareness of issues of health and safety, by taking part in fire drills and raising any concerns they have with staff, who immediately address these.

Professionals report effective liaison and partnership working. One social worker said, 'I feel confident in the ability of the staff team to meet my child's needs. I am impressed with the introductions process, the assessments undertaken by the staff and the resulting plans put in place. I receive regular updates and I am always kept aware of what is happening in my child's life, and I am appropriately involved in the decision-making process.' The social worker further stated that she feels that her child is safe and that staff have a good awareness of the risks in the child's life and actively seek to minimise these.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home is managed effectively and efficiently by a suitably qualified registered manager. He is child-focused and has considerable experience of working with children and young people in a residential setting. He has an in-depth understanding of the strengths of the service and areas for improvement. This is supported by clear development plans, arising from his oversight and management of the service.

The registered manager knows the children well and takes an active role in working with them. Consequently, he has developed strong relationships and a good understanding of each child's needs and the progress that they are making. This knowledge enables him to recognise when a child is distressed or not making good progress. He is proactive in ensuring that staff take the appropriate actions to address this. The registered manager also challenges local authorities to ensure that children are provided with the support they need in order to ensure that they achieve the best possible outcomes.

Children benefit from the permanence and stability of a consistent and committed staff team. Induction and training for new staff is thorough, operates to the organisation's core programmes and is needs-led. Staff access training easily and there is a creative approach to individualised training needs. For example, when specific training needs were identified in relation to meeting the particular needs of one child, access to the required training was timely, resulting in the increased ability of staff members to meet the child's needs. Staff have been provided with training in managing child sexual exploitation, identifying potential radicalisation and challenging gang cultures.

Staff value the support they receive. Members of the cohesive staff team are confident in challenging each other and value the importance of differences in opinion and debate. Staff receive regular supervision and report that they find this helpful and supportive. The process allows them to focus on their relationships with the children and to reflect on the children's needs and the impact of their own practice. One staff member described his supervision meetings as, 'An opportunity to help me to understand the importance of my practice and the impact which it has on the children.' Minutes of these meetings are, however, not sufficiently detailed, nor regularly sampled by the manager; management oversight of supervision is limited.

The standard of recordings about the actions taken with and on behalf of children are inconsistent. They are not always presented in a form that can be easily understood by the children, now or in the future. Some records are not always objective and do not distinguish fact from opinion.

External monitoring of the home is valued by the registered manager and staff, who use the reports of the independent visitor as a tool to reflect on the differences they make to children's lives and how this can be improved. An example of this is the redesign of handover discussions, which resulted from the quality assurance oversight. This now ensures more focus on the interactions between the children and staff and the importance of children's views about the preceding period.

The children's guide is given to children as soon as they arrive and staff spend time with the child ensuring that they understand the information contained within it. The guide is informative and presented in a manner which makes sense to the children for whom it is intended.

The registered manager works transparently with external agencies, for example, by notifying Ofsted of serious events when these occur. Such communication is timely and clear. This helps the regulator to monitor the home's practice in between inspections. The registered manager ensures that notifications to Ofsted are timely, appropriate and focus on facts and outcomes.

Practice is effective and is guided by a clear statement of purpose, which provides an accurate description of the purpose of the service and how this is provided. This document describes the value of mutual respect, in addition to the importance of promoting dignity, respect and choice for all children. Staff implement these ideals in their daily practice.

## **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:** 1244160

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

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** Howard Tennant

**Registered manager:** Matthew Dangerfield

## Inspector

Jacqueline Georghiou, social care inspector

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