

# 2509300

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This privately owned home offers care for up to seven children. These children may have faced adverse childhood experiences resulting in trauma.

The registered manager holds a level 5 qualification.

**Inspection dates:** 30 to 31 October 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** This is the home's first inspection since registration.

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

**Inspection date**

**Inspection type**

**Inspection judgement**

This is the home's first inspection.

## **What does the children's home need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

- All staff should strive to build positive relationships with children in the home and develop a culture of openness and trust that encourages them to be able to tell someone if they have concerns or worries about their safety. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.11)
- As outlined in 10.1, the registered person should plan staffing levels to ensure that they meet the needs of children and can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities. Staffing structures should promote continuity of care from the child's perspective. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.15)
- The registered person must have systems 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)

## Inspection judgements

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

This new, purpose-built home provides children with a well-designed, bright and welcoming environment. Children enjoy access to large lounges and dining areas, games rooms and ensuite bedrooms. Staff involve children when making decisions about the decor of the home. Shared and private areas of the home are adorned with children's pictures. This personalised approach helps children to settle and invest in their home.

Some children display challenging and complex behaviours as a result of past trauma. This behaviour is particularly heightened when they first arrive at the home. Staff provide patient, nurturing and individualised care to help children settle. For example, they wrote one child comforting and supportive notes when she was anxious and unsettled. Staff persisted with this nurturing approach despite the child's initial reluctance to engage. Over time, the child settled and built strong relationships with staff. This determined and child-centred approach has helped the child to make significant progress in a short period of time.

All children have made good progress with their learning despite some having disrupted education experiences prior to living at the home. All now attend school regularly, and staff and teachers work closely together to provide children with good support. This helps children to begin to value education and invest in learning. A teacher described one child's progress as 'remarkable'.

Staff work effectively with the in-house therapist. This provides them with specialist oversight of the care children receive. Some children receive direct therapy sessions. Other children benefit from indirect therapeutic approaches that enable them to build positive relationships with most staff and invest in their home. This support helps children to increasingly manage their difficult feelings and emotions. A child told the inspector, 'I feel like I have grown up a lot here. My behaviour is better. I feel more calm.'

Children attend frequent activities such as trips to the cinema, arcades and local theme parks. Staff support children to develop their hobbies and interests. One child is a promising athlete and is planning to join a local running club. Another child enjoys regular games of pool with staff. These experiences provide children with a sense of enjoyment and increase their self-esteem.

Staff ensure that children's views are kept at the heart of their practice. Children attend weekly meetings with their peers to discuss their day-to-day care. This includes discussion about activities, menus and setting targets for good behaviour. Children also participate in more complex discussions about aspects of their care. For example, they work alongside staff to review their progress and needs, using a range of child-friendly plans.

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

One child displayed significant challenging behaviour on arriving in the home. This resulted in a number of incidents of restraint. The registered manager scrutinised these patterns of behaviour to identify triggers. She used expert advice to provide additional oversight and learning from challenging incidents. As a result, aspects of staff practice were adapted and developed. This targeted approach helped the child to settle over time and significantly reduce incidents requiring physical intervention.

One child has become increasingly unsettled over recent weeks. This has resulted in her going missing from the home. The registered manager and staff are working hard to keep this child safe. They take appropriate steps to try to locate her and involve the police in a timely manner.

Staff undertake targeted key-work sessions with children to help them understand the risks that they may be exposed to. Sessions are bright and imaginative and in line with children's needs. This equips children with the necessary knowledge and understanding to keep themselves safe.

Staff reward children for positive behaviour. They work closely with children and teachers to agree behaviour targets. This consistent approach helps children to learn more socially acceptable ways of behaving. For example, one child is reducing his use of inappropriate language.

The registered manager has effective links with key safeguarding agencies, including the police and designated officer. When necessary, she initiates multi-agency meetings to share her concerns about children's welfare. This joined-up working provides additional oversight of risk and helps to create plans to keep children safe.

Children can identify trusted members of staff if they need to share concerns or worries. However, they do not feel that they could approach all members of staff. The registered manager is aware of this and continues to work to strengthen relationships when needed.

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

The registered manager has worked hard to develop the staff team and embed consistent practice. She knows children well and is keen for them to make progress. The registered manager's nurturing and child-centred ethos inspires staff to provide children with good-quality care.

The registered manager uses effective monitoring systems to identify strengths and areas of development. This includes spending significant time with staff, role modelling good practice and observing their interactions with children. When appropriate, the registered manager effectively challenges shortfalls in staff practice. This means that,

over time, practice is continuing to evolve and improve.

Continued reflection and development of staff practice are key themes in this home. Staff benefit from a healthy learning environment that equips them with the necessary skills to provide good-quality care. Staff meetings use learning from specialist internal and external sources to develop practice. Staff feel supported by managers. They benefit from good-quality inductions and appraisals. However, there are some gaps in staff supervisions, and the quality of these records is variable. This does not fully support all aspects of staff development.

Staff work well with a range of external agencies. They understand children's plans and work alongside social workers and schools to help children make progress. Feedback from professionals is complimentary. A social worker told the inspector, 'Their [staff's] communication is excellent. I receive regular emails and reports about her [child's] progress. Overall, we are astonished with the progress she had made.'

On occasions, staff feel that they require additional resources to consistently meet children's needs. This is due to the high level of supervision that one child requires. To date, this has not had a significant impact on the care children receive. The registered manager has plans in place to support staff when additional challenges present. For example, they can contact colleagues using an 'on-call' system or use staff from a neighbouring home. The registered manager is planning to meet staff to ensure that they understand and consistently use these additional supportive measures. Furthermore, recruitment of new staff is ongoing.

## **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 differences 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:** 2509300

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

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** James Barlow

**Registered manager:** Diana Mckechnie

## Inspector

Gareth Leckey, social care inspector

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