

# 1244160

**Witherslack Group Limited**

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this children's home**

This is one of several privately run children's homes in the Witherslack group and provides care for up to eight children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The registered manager has been in post since March 2018 and was registered by Ofsted in November 2018.

**Inspection date:** 20 November 2019

## **This monitoring visit**

The purpose of this monitoring visit was to review the actions taken in response to an incident which occurred on 13 November 2019. This incident involved children assaulting another child and a member of staff. Both victims required hospital treatment as a result of their injuries. The children who instigated the assault were arrested and questioned by the police. On release from police custody, the children returned to the home. The police investigation remains ongoing.

Following this incident, leaders and managers notified the placing authorities of the children involved. However, there was no clear audit trail of who was spoken to and what information was shared. In making the decision for the children to return home, leaders and managers acknowledged that they did not consult with professionals to ascertain their views or discuss the arrangements being made to safeguard and support the children's well-being.

In planning for the children's return, staffing was increased to allocate one-to-one support to the victim of the assault and additional support to the group. Verbal direction was given to staff about the arrangements for supervising children. However, the staff were not provided with any written guidance about measures that they should follow to safeguard the children. This means that there was the potential for inconsistency in how staff provided support.

Prior to the incident, there had been frequent conflicts between the children. This included verbal and physical altercations, episodes of bullying, and assault. It is unclear whether these risks are understood, and whether the strategies currently in place are effective in managing conflict and promoting positive relationships. The manager has failed to fully consider the significance of children's behaviours leading up to, and in connection with, this incident.

The children's risk assessments did not include a full detailed history of known behaviours or known triggers. These have not been regularly reviewed in response to incidents. The plans were also not reviewed for several days following this incident. The children's risk assessments lacked sufficient guidance in protective measures and what action staff should take to protect the children from harm should a further incident occur.

There has been a lack of professional curiosity in relation to this incident. While leaders and managers have identified the need for a 'lessons learned' exercise to be undertaken, they have failed to take immediate action to update records. This includes updating risk assessments, recording staff debriefings and discussions with the children.

The registered manager was not present in the home until the evening following the incident. No interim arrangements were made to provide on-site support from senior managers in the absence of the manager. This meant that the staff and children received limited support in light of such a serious incident.

Insufficient consideration has been given to the negative impact this incident has had on children's emotional well-being. There was delay in notifying the placing authorities of the children involved in the incident.

Leaders and managers had not considered the referral of this serious incident to external safeguarding professionals. Consequently, placing authorities were not involved in evaluating the risks or considering the children's support needs.

Insufficient consideration has been given to the impact of this incident on the other children's emotional well-being. Leaders and managers overlooked the need to notify the placing authorities. This meant that the children were not given the opportunity to talk to professionals outside of the home or offered independent advocacy to enable their wishes and feelings to be ascertained and considered. Throughout the inspection, the manager showed a lack of consideration and insight for the children's emotional well-being. In particular, he failed to acknowledge how traumatic events may have an impact on a child with additional or complex needs.

The home was inspected on 9 September 2019 where one requirement and three recommendations were made. These were not specifically looked at during the monitoring visit and will be reviewed in full at the next inspection.

The concerns identified at this monitoring visit are serious. The requirements made, under the positive relationships standard and the leadership and management standard, are subject to compliance notices. Furthermore, due to the risk of harm should a further children be admitted to the home, a restriction notice has also been served.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/10/2019	Full	Good
11/12/2018	Full	Good
14/12/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/05/2017	Full	Good

## 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.

<p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5(a))</p>	05/01/2020
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(v))</p>	05/01/2020
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph requires the registered person to—</p>	05/01/2020

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(1)(b)(2)(c)(h))

## Recommendations

- Staff should understand factors that affect children's motivation to behave in a socially acceptable way. Staff should encourage an enthusiasm for positive behaviour through the use of positive behaviour strategies in line with the child's relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.13)
- Regulation 19(2) details sanctions that are prohibited in behaviour management. Any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases, it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

In particular, ensure that impact assessments are completed, and sufficient consideration is given to assessing the risks associated with children coming to live at the home in relation to the risks associated with children already living at the home.

## **Information about this inspection**

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

## **Children's home details**

**Unique reference number:** 1244160

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

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** Howard Tennant

**Registered manager:** Dean Fuller

## **Inspectors**

Joe Davys, social care inspector (lead)

Ruth Coler, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2019