

2509300

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A private provider runs this home and provides care and accommodation for up to seven children who have experienced childhood instability, resulting in trauma and associated complex behaviours.

The registered manager's post is currently vacant. The company have recently appointed a suitably qualified and experienced individual to fulfil this role.

On 30 July 2020, Ofsted completed a monitoring inspection of the home in response to safeguarding concerns and incidents that occurred at the home. The inspector identified a significant number of shortfalls. As a result, Ofsted issued a suspension notice on 31 July 2020. This notice is due to expire on 22 October 2020. In addition, eight requirements were made. Four of these requirements were subject to a compliance notice.

During this assurance visit, the inspector evaluated the provider's progress in completing the steps outlined in the compliance notices.

Visit dates: 9 to 10 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 30 October 2019

Previous inspection judgement: good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Due to the imposed suspension notice, no children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

Leaders and managers have provided staff with an intensive and targeted training programme. This has given staff the knowledge and skills to ensure that children are well cared for.

Managers and staff have refreshed their knowledge on a range of child-centred plans. They have used best practice examples and scenarios to ensure that they understand and capture children's views. For example, staff plan to use targeted key-work sessions and child-friendly behaviour support plans to set targets and provide individualised care.

The home has been fully renovated since the last inspection. All areas of the home, including children's bedrooms, are exceptionally well presented. Managers have introduced a range of monitoring systems to ensure that staff keep the home to the required standard. In addition, external auditors have been commissioned by the provider to give further scrutiny of the home environment.

Internal door locks, that were previously in use, have been covered and disabled. The inspector found no evidence of locked communal areas. This means that children can access all areas of their home.

A therapist has recently been appointed to support staff and children in the home. They will play an integral role in overseeing children's day-to-day care and the quality of staff practice. In addition, the therapist will provide staff with regular consultation and will oversee and review children's progress.

The safety of children

Staff have completed safeguarding and risk assessment training. In addition, they have completed a therapeutic parenting training programme. This has provided staff

with the knowledge and skills to better consider the context of the behaviours children are presenting.

Staff have completed training in a new behaviour management model. This has equipped staff with the skills to de-escalate challenging situations. Staff told the inspector, that in preparation for children moving into the home, they feel able and well supported to respond to any child's challenging behaviours.

Staff can articulate their understanding of the indicators and impact of abuse and their role in responding to such information. As there are no children currently living in the home, it is not possible for staff to put this knowledge into action.

Managers will use a range of internal and external monitoring tools to assess the effectiveness of staff's safeguarding practice. For example, regular quality assurance visits will focus on key aspects of risk management and explore patterns and trends in children's behaviours.

Leaders have implemented a robust admissions process. This will support managers to make well-informed and considered decisions when admitting new children to the home.

Leaders and managers have taken effective steps to manage the risks associated with one of the provider's other children's homes, which is geographically co-located. In the short term, the other children's home will not be operational. However, should that home re-open, steps have already been taken to try to reduce any potential impact. For example, new fencing is in place and access points between the two homes has been blocked.

Leaders and managers

Following the last inspection, managers worked with staff to identify learning. This learning has driven the improvements seen during this inspection. Managers and staff are working hard to embed the principles of the home's statement of purpose. This will support staff to provide children with consistent nurturing care.

A suitably experienced manager and regional manager have been appointed. As part of their induction, both managers will have the opportunity to work alongside experienced colleagues. This will ensure that managers are able to provide staff with the guidance and support they need to safely care for children.

To enhance the leadership of the home, over the coming months, two experienced regional managers will provide staff with additional on-site support. This management structure will support staff to embed their recent learning and development.

Leaders and managers have worked hard to support staff and improve their morale. Staff feel invigorated and determined to provide children with well-informed and nurturing care.

The staff team have a range of skills and experience. They are adequately resourced and feel supported by leaders and managers. Supervision records are detailed and strike a healthy balance between addressing shortfalls and encouraging best practice.

The inspection found that good progress has been made in addressing the shortfalls identified at the previous inspection. As a result, the compliance notices are met. Ofsted has lifted the suspension notice. The other requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection will be considered at the next inspection.

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
If the registered provider is an organisation, the organisation must ensure that the responsible individual undertakes such continuing professional development as is necessary to ensure that the responsible individual has the skills needed for supervising the management of the home. (Regulation 29 (2))	26/10/2020
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1)(2)(a)(b))	26/10/2020
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	26/10/2020

Recommendations

- 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)
- 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)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2509300

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Howard Tennant

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Gareth Leckey, Social Care Inspector

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