

1254258

Witherslack Group Ltd

Monitoring visit

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. It is registered for four children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Children placed at this home can access the organisation's registered school and therapeutic services.

The manager was registered in February 2018 and holds the level 5 diploma.

Inspection date: 18 January 2021

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit took place due to increasing concerns arising from review of regulation 40 notifications and regulation 44 independent visitor reports. The concerns specifically relate to a serious safeguarding allegation of a child being sexually assaulted by another child, an allegation that a child was punched in the face during a physical intervention by staff and a very serious incident where two children went missing from staff and rode their scooters on the hard shoulder of the M6 motorway. There had also been late notification of a medication error where a child was given a double dose of his prescribed medication.

Children's risk assessments were reviewed due to increases in their risk levels. The inspector identified that the scoring system used to rate risks was not being correctly implemented. This led to risks being wrongly judged to be lower than they actually were. For example, a child who has a serious sexual assault alleged against him had a risk rating of 'low' for sexually harmful behaviours. Managers had not identified these errors through their monitoring systems. Not all risk assessments were up to date. This included the missing-from-care risk assessment for one of the children who had put themselves in extreme danger on the local motorway. Other information was missing from risk assessment documents. For example, one child had clearly been influenced by a peer to go missing but this was not recorded in the

'push and pull' section of his missing-from-care procedure. Another missing-from-care procedure did not contain any information about the child's most recent missing-from-home episode. Errors and omissions in risk assessments potentially leave staff without the relevant knowledge to safeguard the children.

The home has a location risk assessment in place. This has not been revisited since the two boys were found on the motorway. It states that the M6 is four miles from the home, however this is not the case. The children accessed the motorway in a very short space of time from going missing, via alternative quicker routes. This should have been recorded in the location risk assessment so that staff are aware of the significant risk of the proximity of the motorway to the home.

One child has recently been admitted to the home. The matching document for this child did not evidence that he had been visited by members of staff from the home, nor that he had visited the home prior to being placed there. Documentation from his previous care home showed that he had, in fact, been visited twice and had also had a visit to this home, but the home's record did not reflect this.

The admission of one child has caused disruption and resulted in another child displaying behaviours not previously seen. Incident levels have increased, as have physical interventions and assaults on staff. Managers state that not all staff have the skills to de-escalate or manage these more extreme behaviours. The home's manager and the deputy manager have, therefore, been spending time helping staff to care safely for the children. This has resulted in some managerial tasks being overlooked. Specifically, this relates to managerial oversight of documents.

Management of allegations has not been robust. The designated officer has not been informed when incidents have occurred. An internal investigation into an allegation that a child was punched in the nose during a physical intervention had an outcome of no further action. Neither the designated officer, nor Ofsted, consider this to be appropriate. This is because the child did sustain a burst nose. There were clearly some 'lessons learned' and further strategies needed to support both the child and staff. These should have been identified as actions in the outcomes section of the report.

There has been a medication error where a child was administered his dose of medication twice. This was entirely preventable had the member of staff followed the home's procedure for the administration of medication.

This inspection has resulted in several requirements being made. Managers at the home and senior managers within the company accept the shortfalls identified. They are keen to work with the regulator to ensure that the standards of care and safety are returned to their former high level. An action plan has been shared with the lead inspector detailing how each shortfall will be addressed.

This inspection did not examine the home's response to requirements made at the last full inspection. Therefore those requirements made have remained in place and will be considered at the next full inspection of the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
27/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
05/12/2017	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.

Requirement	Due date
<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—</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>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iv)(vii))</p>	19 February 2021
<p>Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4;</p> <p>ensure that the records are kept up to date; (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b))</p> <p>Schedule 4 Regulation 37 Other records with respect to children's homes Register of children A record in the form of a register showing in respect of each child— the date of the child's admission to the children's home.</p>	20/02/2020

<p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (d))</p>	19 February 2021
<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home.</p> <p>In particular the registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b))</p>	19 February 2021
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; and</p> <p>are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))</p>	19 February 2021
<p>The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard).</p> <p>When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1) (2))</p>	19 February 2021

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: 1254258

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Marcella Bird

Registered manager: Jerrard Charmer

Inspector

Charlie Bamber, Social Care Inspector

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