

2509300

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 9 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 April 2021

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 30 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

On 30 July 2020, Ofsted completed a monitoring inspection in response to safeguarding concerns and incidents that occurred at the home. As a result of the

visit, a notice of suspension was issued on 31 July 2020. In addition, compliance notices under regulation 6, 12, 13 and 14 were also raised.

On 10 September 2020, Ofsted completed an assurance visit. Good progress had been made in addressing the shortfalls identified at the previous inspection. As a result, the compliance notices were met and Ofsted lifted the suspension notice.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/10/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Four children are currently living at the home. Since the last visit, one child has left the home.

The home is decorated to a high standard and is homely. Children like their bedrooms as they have been able to say how they are decorated. For example, two of the children's bedrooms are decorated to represent their favourite football teams. This personalised approach helps children to settle and invest in their home.

One child has a pet which he is allowed to keep in his room. The responsibility for a pet has helped with the child's self-esteem and confidence and has allowed him to develop his sense of belonging in the home.

Children told the inspectors that they feel happy living in the home. One child said he would give the home an eight out of ten. Children have developed positive relationships with staff and feel that they can talk and share their worries with them. For example, a child told inspectors that, 'Staff listen and understand how I feel.' This support helps children to feel valued, safe and well cared for.

Staff know children well and are therefore able to provide personalised care to meet the individual needs of children. This contributes to children making progress in many aspects of their lives. One child's social worker told the inspector, 'I feel that of all the places he has lived, this is the best.'

Staff place a strong emphasis on educational success and support children to achieve this. As a result, all children are attending school and are doing well academically. This includes one child who, prior to living in this home, had not attended school for over two years. Children thrive because of the help staff give them.

Staff ensure that children's views are understood and listened to. Children attend and participate in regular meetings with their peers to discuss their day-to-day care. Their views are recorded and, where appropriate, they are acted on. For example, at the request of children new football goals, football kits and a new bicycle have been purchased. This means that children feel valued and listened to.

Children attend activities such as trips to the seaside and the local park. Staff support children to develop their hobbies and interests. One child is a promising footballer and is part of a local football team. Another child enjoys regular bike rides with staff. These experiences provide children with a sense of achievement and enjoyment.

Staff support children to maintain positive relationships with those people who are important to them. This helps children to maintain and develop their family relationships. The plan for one child is for them to return to their parent's care. Staff are successfully supporting this plan by working with the child's parent to share behaviour management strategies.

Children are given help from staff to learn the skills they need for their futures. This includes children developing their self-care skills and being able to spend time in the community on their own. This ensures that children are well prepared for leaving the home and more able to live independently.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

On one occasion, poor communication between staff resulted in a single member of staff being temporarily left in charge of four children. During this time, children became unsettled and one child was physically assaulted by his peer. The records related to this incident are unclear and do not identify that there was insufficient staff to provide appropriate supervision. The registered manager has identified learning for staff as a result of this incident.

A child has gone missing on two occasions. On one occasion, staff did not provide a robust response to locate the child. The child was missing for 12 hours. The child had remained in the home throughout this period, having chosen to hide in a spare bedroom. The registered manager has identified and implemented changes as a result of her review of this incident. However, the child's updated missing from care protocol does not accurately reflect the updated strategies. This recording shortfall is a missed opportunity to ensure that staff understand what they are required to do when this child goes missing.

Staff have mixed success in managing children's behaviours. In part, this is because some staff do not follow the agreed strategies to manage children's behaviours. This means that sometimes staff interventions cause children's behaviours to escalate rather than de-escalate. The registered manager is alert to this and is working with the staff to develop a more consistent approach to behaviour management.

Staff use rewards and sanctions to encourage children to make positive choices. Children respond well to this practice and enjoy receiving rewards for their good behaviour. This helps children to feel valued and to want to make positive choices.

Physical intervention by staff is used as a last resort to keep young people safe. Inspectors found that physical interventions were proportionate and appropriate.

The number of safeguarding incidents involving children is on a downward trend and has significantly reduced. The registered manager uses monitoring systems to review incidents and to identify patterns and trends. This typically results in timely action to improve the care and support provided to children.

In most cases, staff respond to safeguarding concerns well. For example, a child has recently displayed significant challenges in relation to his mental health. Staff have sought support and advice from a range of specialist health agencies to inform the home's safety plan. Staff understand and follow the agreed plans. However, the inspectors identified that one waking night member of staff was not appropriately trained to manage the risks associated with the child's behaviour. This has not had a

direct impact on this child and the registered manager took immediate steps during the inspection to rectify this shortfall.

Children know how to make a complaint. The manager responds to complaints promptly and ensures that children are involved in this process. This helps children to feel confident and reassured.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is caring and child focused. She knows the children well and is committed to helping them to make progress.

The registered manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas of development. The need for staff to be consistent in their approach is a particular area of focus for the manager. The registered manager is using supervisions and team meetings to develop staff practice and ensure that staff understand how best to meet the needs of children.

A new manager is due to join the leadership team imminently. This will further improve the oversight and scrutiny of staff practice. Planned internal meetings, led by therapeutic trained staff, to inform care planning have yet to commence. The impact of these meetings is not yet tested, but they are an example of the registered manager's drive to continue to develop the service and ensure that children's needs are at the heart of staff's practice.

The registered manager has developed positive working relationships with other professionals and agencies. The registered manager and the staff have recently worked with a specialist agency in order to support a child to receive the appropriate support for his mental health. This joined-up working has ensured that children receive well-coordinated care.

The registered manager makes well-informed and considered decisions when admitting new children to the home. For example, the registered manager takes the time to get to know children before they are placed at the home, she visits children in their previous placements and gathers key information from their social worker and previous carers. This means that children are only placed in the home when it is appropriate to do so. However, in one example, inspectors found that the registered managers had not detailed in full, her rationale for admitting a child. This recording shortfall did not have an impact on the child or the other children in the home.

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—</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>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.</p> <p>Regulation 12 (2)(a)(i)(iv)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that clear plans are in place to manage known risks and that staff understand and follow these.</p>	28 June 2021
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the managers and staff recording the actions taken by them to safeguard children and meet their needs.</p>	28 June 2021

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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 Limited

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

Responsible individual: Howard Tennant

Registered manager: Sarah Huddleston

Inspectors

Gareth Leckey, Social Care Inspector

Lydia Isaac, Social Care Inspector

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