

# 1244160

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This is one of several children's homes operated by this national provider. The staff provide care for up to eight children who have social and emotional difficulties.

There has been no registered manager since November 2020. The current manager is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 16 January 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

### Inspection dates: 5 and 6 January 2022

**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:** 9 October 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## 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

## **Inspection judgements**

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

Children are making good progress in this home. Children readily approach staff for affection, advice and guidance, and they speak positively of their experiences living in the home. Children describe a caring environment where they can safely explore their emotions openly. As a result, children and staff have sincere and trusting relationships that continue to develop.

Children have personalised their bedrooms. Murals and decor reflect what the children like. The children talked about their bedrooms with pride and with a sense of ownership. However, this contrasts with some other areas of the home. The lounges and hallways are sparse and not as welcoming. This does not provide the same sense of warmth and homeliness for the children.

Staff value and respect each child's identity. Staff and managers provide opportunities to discuss issues, such as racism. As a result, issues relating to culture, religion, or sexual orientation, are better understood by children. This supports children developing an awareness of the world around them. Children are helped and encouraged to embrace diversity. This has supported the reduction in incidents between the children living in the home.

All children are succeeding in education because staff have high aspirations for them. Staff and managers have a good relationship with the children's school. This means that there is a consistent approach to supporting the children's academic, social and emotional needs.

The organisation's clinical team provides timely, appropriate and skilled interventions to meet the individual needs of the children. Children can safely explore their emotions in a safe and familiar environment with support from care staff that know them well.

Professionals and agencies state that communication from the home is good, effective and informative. Children's progress reports are received regularly, as are records of individual achievements. Social workers state that the staff have been at the centre of the success of children being able to spend more time with their families. Consequently, as a result, the care planning outcomes for some children have been achieved.

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

Children rarely go missing from the home. Staff are well informed and alert to the risks posed to children via the internet or as a result of children spending more time in the community as part of their independence. Staff discuss this openly with children who, in turn, are developing an age-appropriate awareness of risks and how to make safe choices.

Staff and managers ensure that there is good planning in place to support the older children to further develop their independence skills. As a result, some children are now spending more time with their families and attend religious celebrations independently. One child has, up until recently, been volunteering at a local charity for homeless people.

Children moving into and out of the home is managed well. Care planning is child-focused and not risk adverse. As a result, children moving on to the next chapter of their lives are well informed and effectively prepared.

Managers and staff update risk assessments and necessary documents to reflect changes in children's behaviour. The manager has oversight of this and ensures updates are shared with all staff. This ensures that staff respond to children in a consistent and informative way.

The use of physical restraint is only used when safe and necessary to do so. Staff support children to understand their own behaviour and how this can affect others. The staff have a good understanding of childhood trauma; this helps children repair relationships and take responsibility for their actions. As a result, physical intervention for one child has significantly reduced.

The children's guide is clear, child-friendly and contains relevant information. Children say they know how to complain should they wish to. Staff have supported one child to make a complaint. Children know that their views and wishes are listened to and quickly acted on by staff and managers.

Recruitment processes are thorough and well-recorded, and they ensure that only suitably vetted adults work with children.

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

The manager is in the process of registering with Ofsted. The manager is supported by a dedicated and experienced deputy manager. The staff say that they are supported and able to fully explore issues, ideas and concerns with senior managers. This has created a stable team that provides consistency and routine for the children.

The senior managers are visible in the home and up to date on the progress made by children. Managers and leaders have a clear vision for the home, which is supported by the ethos of the home's statement of purpose. This is regularly updated to reflect any changes and shared as required.

There remain vacancies within the staff team. However, senior managers are actively recruiting to these posts. There have been occasions when the manager covers for care staff due to the staffing vacancies. This has, at times, affected the manager's ability to fully focus on his management role.

One serious incident has not been notified to Ofsted. The manager acknowledged this on inspection. The incident was managed well, and all other necessary actions were taken to ensure that children were effectively safeguarded. However, the failure to notify Ofsted means that the regulator was unable to fully assess the incident and subsequent actions taken at the time.

Leaders and managers are guided by the home's workforce development and action plan. The monitoring systems in place identify the strengths and weaknesses of the home and staff team. Senior leaders actively monitor the quality of care provided. This means that managers act swiftly to address any area of concern.

An additional layer of scrutiny is provided by the independent visitor. However, a lack of discussion with professionals and children does not evidence the progress made by children. Senior leaders have addressed this, and some improvement has been made.

Not all staff receive regular practice-related supervision. When supervision does take place, there is a lack of recorded timescales for actions to be completed. Regular informal meetings do take place; however, this does not provide the oversight needed to ensure staff development and well-being.

Staff receive a good induction that is supported by mandatory and specialist training. Staff have completed all necessary training and accessed additional training which enables them to fully meet the needs of the children.

Leaders and managers have embraced the learning from the serious incident which initiated the previous monitoring visit to this home. This has been embedded back into daily practice and, as a result, there have been no further significant incidents of children harming one another. The requirements made at the last inspection have all been met.

## 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
The registered person must ensure that all employees—  receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	31 March 2022

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a homely and domestic environment, in particular the communal areas of the home such as lounges and hallways. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping. In particular, staff and managers should sign and date all documents. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person to notify Ofsted and other relevant persons if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

### 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:** 1244160

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

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** Marcia McLoughlin

**Registered manager:** post vacant

## Inspector

Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector

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