

1159763

Registered provider: Witherslack Group

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to eight children who have emotional and/or social difficulties.

Eight children live in the home.

The manager's post is currently vacant.

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.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 15 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/10/2019	Full	Good
20/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
09/01/2018	Full	Outstanding
27/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make continued progress in all aspects of their lives. Staff get to know the children very well, which helps them to deliver bespoke care and support to the children. A professional said:

'The staff are amazing. Their biggest strength is that they really understand the needs of every child in the home. They have been fantastic in supporting [name of the child]. Because they know the children so well, they know how best to respond to them. The relationships between the staff and children are just fantastic.'

Children are supported very well to spend time with their family and friends. Staff support children to maintain key relationships with those people that are important to them. Clear plans and arrangements to facilitate the children's family time ensure that they are provided with positive experiences during this time.

Children's day-to-day care is enhanced because of the opportunities that they are provided with. Staff listen and respond to children's requests, and this makes children feel especially valued. Every child enjoys attending their chosen activity or club. Activities include football and rugby clubs, horse riding, music lessons, fishing, outings and much more. Children flourish because they have fun and enjoy the activities that they attend.

The children receive consistent care as the communication between the home and school is good. Staff ensure that the children are supported in line with their education plans, and the children engage well with these. As a result, children reach their learning objectives, and they are proud of their educational achievements.

Charitable events help children to make a positive contribution. Children get involved in a number of charitable events in their local community. This has helped children to feel better connected to their community and feel good because of their contributions and input.

The children's health needs are generally well supported. Some of the children have had their COVID-19 vaccine. However, poor planning means that one child has missed their annual health assessment. This could prevent them from accessing the health support that they require. This oversight is due to a misunderstanding of who would make the necessary arrangement. The child's appointment has been re-arranged.

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

Children say that they feel safe. Children's risks are identified, understood and managed effectively. Individual safety plans focus on the areas where the children

require help and protection. The staff consult with the team of clinical therapists to improve the strategies in the children's safety plans. The staff follow the detailed guidance that is in the children's safety plans. This helps to better protect the children.

Children rarely go missing from the home. When they do, the staff take swift action to ensure the child's safe return. Children are provided with an opportunity to speak to an independent adult on their return home. This helps children to discuss any worries and concerns that they may have with someone independent. Any relevant information obtained from these sessions is used to develop and improve the child's safety plans. This improves the staff's response when the children do go missing from the home, which promotes the children's welfare.

The staff provide the children with reassurance and a calm response when they are in crisis. This helps the children to regulate their emotions and their behaviour more effectively. Physical holds on children are used, when necessary, to safeguard the children. Following the use of a physical hold, the staff record the incident appropriately. However, there is an inconsistent approach to how the staff respond and speak to the child following the incident. For example, children do not always have an opportunity to speak to someone independent following the use of a physical hold. This is against the providers' policy. Furthermore, it prevents the child from having an opportunity to raise any comments or concerns about the hold with someone independent.

The children's medication is stored safely and securely. However, the systems to record controlled medication are inconsistent. When the recording error was highlighted, the manager took immediate action to address this.

When children make allegations against the staff, the provider takes action to safeguard the children. Children's placing authorities are notified in a timely manner. This allows the social worker to swiftly investigate matters to ensure that the children are safe. However, there are some incidents where the provider has not notified the local authority designated officer or Ofsted. Therefore, the provider has not followed their own safeguarding process. Additionally, this has delayed the local authority designated officer and Ofsted from being able to evaluate the safety of children when allegations against staff are made.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager's post is vacant. The registered manager left at the end of November 2021. A newly appointed manager started his post in January 2022. There is a deputy manager in post who knows the service well. He has provided some consistency in the leadership team between the manager leaving and the new manager starting.

The newly appointed manager is experienced and has aspirations to develop the service. He is very focused on improving the children's outcomes. He is in the process of reviewing the service and he has identified areas for improvement. The

manager has a clear plan in place to make the necessary changes to improve the home, staff and overall quality of care that the children receive. Children say that they are happy with the new manager and his approach to make improvements.

Advocacy for children is good. When children do not have access to the support that they require, or they wish to make a complaint, leaders have ensured that the staff advocate on behalf of the children well. Children's outcomes improve because of the advocacy support that they receive.

Leaders ensure that the staff are suitably supported in their roles. Regular team meetings, effective supervisions and training ensure that the staff are skilled and knowledgeable to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Children receive better care and support because of this.

Effective working relationships with professionals help to deliver good care to the children. Feedback from professionals has been highly complimentary. Common phrases used by professionals about the provider include 'excellent communication', 'supportive' and 'responsive'. External professionals spoken to say that they are satisfied that the children are protected and that the children do make good progress from their starting points.

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, and the 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>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi)(vii))</p>	17 April 2022
<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, that the registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(c))</p> <p>In particular, the registered provider must ensure that there is a consistent approach when they record in children's documents about administering medication.</p>	17 April 2022
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(c))</p>	17 April 2022

<p>In particular, the registered provider must ensure that when staff use physical holds on the children, they then provide the children with an opportunity to speak to an independent person.</p>	
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation;</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>a child protection enquiry involving a child—</p> <p>is instigated; or</p> <p>concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.</p> <p>A notification made under this regulation—</p> <p>must include details of—</p> <p>the matter;</p> <p>the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and</p> <p>any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter;</p> <p>must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))</p>	<p>17 April 2022</p>

Recommendation

- The registered provider should ensure that each child's attendance at the necessary primary and secondary health services are attended. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.11)

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: 1159763

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group

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

Responsible individual: Lee Riley

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Jacqueline Tate, Social Care Inspector

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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