

# 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 manager is experienced and holds a level 5 qualification. They have submitted an application to register with Ofsted.

### Inspection dates: 12 and 13 April 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:** 11 January 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** declined in effectiveness

### Enforcement action since last inspection:

On 11 January 2022, we carried out an interim inspection to address specific concerns received by Ofsted. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judged that the home had declined in effectiveness. As a result of that inspection, compliance notices under regulations 6 and 13 were raised.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement      |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 11/01/2022      | Interim         | Declined in effectiveness |
| 21/04/2021      | Full            | Good                      |
| 30/10/2019      | Full            | Good                      |

## Inspection judgements

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

At the time of the inspection, five children were living in the home. One child had moved out of the home sooner than anticipated. However, this was a planned and well-managed move, where staff supported the child to make the transition to another suitable accommodation. Children are settled and are making some progress from their starting points.

Relationships between the children have improved since the last inspection, which is having a more positive impact on children's lived experiences and progress. Children told the inspectors that they liked living at the home and staff provided a good quality of care. Furthermore, one child who had previously experienced bullying in the home, told the inspector, 'Staff manage incidents of bullying and keep me safe.'

Children's needs are considered sufficiently by staff when things are not going well. For example, one child was supported to have short-break care at the company's assessment centre to better support their emotional needs. As a result, the child's behaviour improved, and he was provided with alternative accommodation that better suits his needs.

Children have very good school attendance and are doing well at school. Staff have realistic and high expectations for children making progress in their learning and educational achievements. They support children by attending statutory meetings, as well as keeping in close communication with teachers. As a result, children make good progress. One child has been appointed as the school ambassador for reading, to support other children in school who find reading difficult.

Children's health needs are consistently met to a good standard. Staff ensure that individual health assessments are in place and recommendations from health plans are acted upon. Children attend regular appointments with the dentist, general practitioner and optician and specialist services. As a result, children's physical and emotional health are consistently promoted.

Staff work alongside their in-house therapist and other professionals to provide children with specialist and well-informed care. For example, staff receive bespoke training on the therapeutic model, which helps them provide good care which meets children's needs. This approach is being embedded in staff practice to help children with complex needs make progress. This is a positive change, for the staff to adapt and use strategies to meet children's individual needs. As a result, there has been a reduction in significant incidents in the home.

Some staff have positive relationships with children and know them quite well. These staff have a good understanding of the children's complex behaviours and vulnerabilities. They show patience and resilience, and this helps children to begin to develop trusting relationships.

Staff support children to maintain important and positive relationships with family members. They communicate with social workers to review the arrangements for children to spend time with their families. Staff show a good understanding of the importance of children spending meaningful time with their families. As a result, children benefit from this care and understanding.

Despite this positive progress, staff and managers do not always work closely and consult with children's family members who hold parental responsibility. For example, staff and managers had not sought consent from one child's parent when staff took a child to get a piercing. Managers acknowledged this shortfall and acted to prevent something similar happening again in the future.

The physical environment of the home is welcoming, comfortable and nurturing. Children take pride in their bedrooms and are encouraged to personalise them with different themes in line with their wishes. Children's photos and achievements are proudly displayed throughout the home. However, other aspects of the home need improvement. For example, a children's bathroom does not have window blinds for privacy and not all maintenance work on the exterior of the building is completed. Managers have a plan to address this.

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

Managers have improved how they assess risk and impact when new children move into the home. Staff ensure that all known risks are identified, as well as considering the impact of the risks in relation to the location of the home. When matching, managers have considered children's behaviour affecting other children in the home. This level of scrutiny has resulted in a positive experience for one child who recently moved into the home.

Staff show professional curiosity and vigilance to keep children safe. For example, staff ensure they carry out routine checks to monitor children's electronic devices when there is a potential risk of exploitation. This practice reduces the potential risk of vulnerable children being harmed.

Staff have improved consultations with children through regular key-work sessions and house meetings. This support helps children to express their views and feelings. Staff have been proactive and taken effective steps to support children to understand behaviours that are harmful to them and others. For example, one child who was bullied by another child was given the opportunity to talk about what happened. In addition, staff held important discussions with the child who had targeted the other child and undertook educational work. As a result, staff helped children to understand the impact of their behaviour on others and to maintain positive relationships.

Staff show a better degree of knowledge regarding children's vulnerabilities. They use the learning and support from the in-house therapeutic services well to identify emerging needs and risk to children. This learning improves their practice to protect

children in the home. This means that children receive good support to manage their emotions and make the right choices regarding their behaviour.

Staff are skilled in supporting children with their behaviours and know how to de-escalate any behaviour which may become challenging. Restraint is used proportionately when there is a risk or serious concern for children or staff. As a result, serious incidents are now fewer than before. Furthermore, staff ensure incidents are recorded accurately. This means that managers can review all physical interventions using records that contain all the relevant information.

Children rarely go missing from home. When they do, staff respond well and know how to follow children's missing-from-care protocols. They act quickly to escalate concerns by working in partnership with the local authority, local services and the police to ensure that children are returned home as soon as possible. This means that risks to children in the community are reduced.

Overall, staff ensure that risk assessments are detailed and include guidance about how to manage children's risks. However, managers do not always ensure that risk assessments accurately reflect the correct information. For example, one child's risk assessment had not been updated in relation to the child's challenging behaviour while travelling in the car. This shortfall has the potential to leave children vulnerable.

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

The home has not had a registered manager since May 2021. Managers have taken reasonable steps, through a recruitment campaign, to ensure that the post is filled. The current manager has applied to register with Ofsted.

The manager has been in post since January 2022. When they were appointed, they quickly identified the strengths and weaknesses in the home. An action plan is ongoing to address the shortfalls. This leadership approach means that shortfalls are acted on quickly, which improves children's progress and experiences. Compliance notices issued at the previous inspection have been deemed met at this inspection.

Staff and managers have worked hard to ensure that they engage with specific training to support children effectively. This has recently included training to improve the staff's understanding of bullying and responses to child trauma. This provides staff with additional knowledge and skills in how to keep children safe.

The manager has an in-depth understanding of the therapeutic approach used in the home. In the short time she has been in the home, she has demonstrated this successfully to the staff and she creates a positive culture within the home. This enables staff to support children to make progress physically, socially and emotionally.

Children, outside agencies and parents know how to make a complaint. Managers are quick to review information, act on complaints and investigate. They provide

feedback to children with the outcomes of investigations. As a result, children feel listened to and that their views are important. They also know that managers will take complaints seriously.

Managers now have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. For example, they have implemented good review and monitoring systems, such as more oversight of key-work sessions, individual support plans for children and daily staff debriefs.

Since the last inspection, managers have been very responsive to feedback and advice from the regulatory body. They have taken action to meet the compliance notices and requirements raised.

Staff provide positive feedback and confirm they are well supported by the managers. Staff benefit from regular team meetings. However, managers do not always use supervision effectively, to monitor staff progress and professional development. This does not promote staff development and improve practice within 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>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 for the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation.<br/>(Regulation 5 (1)(d))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that those who hold parental responsibility for children are consulted.</p>                                                                                                                                                      | 31 May 2022 |
| <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>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person.<br/>(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v))</p> <p>This particularly refers to staff ensuring that risk assessments are reviewed and kept up to date.</p> | 31 May 2022 |
| The registered person must ensure that all employees—                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 31 May 2022 |

undertake appropriate continuing professional development;

receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience.

(Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))

This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that all staff receive regular and reflective supervision.

## Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that home maintenance and repairs are reviewed and completed in a timely fashion. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

## 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:** Graeme Cheyne

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Patrick McIntosh, Social Care Inspector

Michelle Spruce, Social Care Inspector

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