

2494551

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private company. It provides care for up to seven children who may have social and/or emotional difficulties. Additionally, they may have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Six children were living in the home at the time of this inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2023.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 October 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 30 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/11/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
17/01/2022	Full	Good
27/11/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
01/05/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The poor experiences of one child who has lived at the home have impacted on the inspection outcome and judgements at this home. Most children are happy, but not all children have positive day-to-day experiences living at the home. Children come to live at the home in a planned way. However, when one child moved into the home, information about their needs and the impact on the other children were not fully assessed and understood. The number of incidents involving the children increased significantly, and the provider reports the relationships between the children became unmanageable. This had an impact on most of the children living at the home. For example, children who had not previously been missing from home were leaving the home and putting themselves at risk.

One child was moved on from the home in an unplanned way. When a notice period expired, the child was returned to their placing local authority before another suitable home could be found. Poor communication and decision-making between the provider and the placing local authority, on the day the child moved out of the home, led to a very poor experience, and ending for the child.

Staff talk to the children about their feelings when relationships between children become difficult. One child was discussed in a group meeting with the children, and the child whose behaviour was being discussed was excluded. This approach was not in the best interest of all children.

Children have high attendance at school, and they are making progress in their education. Staff help children to overcome barriers to their education, and they advocate for children to ensure that the right support is in place. For some children, this has meant that the progress they have made from their starting points has been significant.

Children are reported to be in good physical health. Staff support the children to enjoy physical exercise, positive routines and a healthy diet. When there is an identified need for therapy, children are supported to access the right support. Referrals have been made to local support services for some children, for whom smoking, alcohol and other substances have been identified as risks.

Staff talk to the children about a range of topics specific to the children's individual needs. They talk to children about risks and about how they are feeling. Records show that children's wishes and feelings are captured. However, some records are not dated, so it is unclear when the conversations happened.

Children enjoy activities that reflect their hobbies and interests, such as boxing, swimming, baking and football. Children are involved in the community. They have baked goods for the local emergency services and donated to food banks.

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

Staff understand the vulnerabilities and risks to individual children. They are clear about the steps to take to mitigate some of those risks. The risks to children are identified and assessed; however, the information in one child's risk assessment is inaccurate, and this has the potential to be misleading.

When children go missing from home, staff respond in line with the children's individual plans. This includes searching for children and reporting them as missing. Staff are clear about their responsibilities to children who go missing from home, and they ensure that children have an opportunity to speak to an independent person when they return home.

Some incidents result in staff holding children. When this happens, records show that the measures used are proportionate. Staff and children are provided with the opportunity to discuss the incident and any learning. There has been one incident of restraint that led to the child making a complaint. Steps were taken by the manager to address the complaint appropriately.

Allegations are taken seriously. Information is shared with safeguarding professionals and the appropriate steps are followed.

There has been an increase in the number of incidents where children have shown unwanted behaviours. This is because the relationships between the children have declined, and this has led to children feeling unsettled and the routines at the home being disrupted. Records show that staff respond to children when they are upset, and they talk to children about how they are feeling.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have not always made child-centred decisions about children coming to live at the home. Information about one child's needs, including the impact on the other children living at the home, was not fully assessed before the child moved into the home.

The systems in place to track and monitor the risks to children and the progress that children are making are not effective. Shortfalls in records, including children's risk assessments and when staff have discussed a child's behaviour with other children, have not been identified and addressed.

The manager has built positive relationships with other professionals, and the feedback about the home was mostly positive. However, the placing authority for

one child complained about how the ending for one child moving on from the home was an emotionally harmful experience.

Staff receive regular supervision that is reflective and supportive. They feel supported by the manager and say staff morale is high.

Staff are suitably trained to meet the needs of the children living at this home. When risks to children change or when new needs are identified, the manager sources additional training.

Team meetings take place regularly. They are reflective, child-centred and provide staff with opportunities for learning and development. Child-focused meetings are supported by the clinical team and provide staff with the support to gain a better understanding of children's behaviour. This better equips staff to meet children's emotional needs.

The home is well maintained, nicely decorated and homely. Children are involved in choosing the decoration of the home. Children's personalities are reflected in their bedrooms and around 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, 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>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(c))</p>	8 January 2024
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; and</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h))</p>	8 January 2024
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p>	8 January 2024

have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

that arrangements are in place to—

ensure the effective induction of each child into the home; and

plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i)(iii))

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children are supported to develop an understanding and empathy towards each other. Positive behaviour and relationships should be reinforced, praised, and encouraged; poor behaviour should be challenged and discussed. In particular, the approach should be individual to each child and not allow for one child's behaviour to be discussed with other children in a group setting, when the child whose behaviour is being discussed is excluded. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11)

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: 2494551

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Tamara Pearcey

Registered manager: Kirstie Robinson

Inspectors

Rachel Webster, Social Care Inspector
Joanna Beal, Social Care Inspector

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