

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC475697
Inspector	Gillian Walters
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Witherslack Group Ltd
Registered person address	Witherslack Group, Lupton Tower Lupton CARNFORTH Lancashire LA6 2PR
Responsible individual	Howard Charles Tennant
Registered manager	POST VACANT / Stephen Gerard Brown
Date of last inspection	25/07/2014

Inspection date	05/03/2015
Previous inspection	adequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection

This home was judged adequate at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **improved effectiveness**.

At the last inspection on 25 July 2014 the home was judged adequate overall with shortfalls being identified in the leadership and management of the home and with safeguarding practice. As a result four requirements and two recommendations were made to address improvement in the home's operation. These have been suitably addressed and a new Registered Manager has been successfully appointed by the provider. He has skill and experience in managing a children's home and is currently working towards a Level 5 diploma in Leadership and Management to achieve the qualification required for his position.

The home's Statement of Purpose now suitably address all issues required by regulation ensuring that staff, young people, their parents and placing authorities understand how the home operates and the services it provides. The home has taken action to strengthen arrangements for the effective control and monitoring of the home's finances. Revised arrangements provide clarity for those with a designated responsibility for the home's finance and activities such as spot checks ensure continued compliance with the established system.

The new Registered Manager has been proactive in reviewing notifications that were made to Ofsted prior to his appointment, making the regulator aware of progress and outcomes for each matter reported. Additionally, the Registered Manager has ensured that Ofsted has been promptly notified of all other relevant events in accordance with regulation schedule. In this aspect communication with Ofsted has improved, ensuring that the regulator is kept informed about all significant matters concerning young people and the home.

Young people on occasion go missing from this home and when such a situation occurs, staff act promptly following agreed protocols to ensure their swift and safe return to the home. The frequency of such events is now declining, indicating fewer

occasions when young people engage in risk-taking behaviour that compromises their safety. Since the last inspection the home has revised its missing child policy to include detail about the steps to be taken to prevent young people going absent from the home. The implementation of this new policy ensures that staff have a thorough understanding of the steps to take to prevent and reduce such behaviour as well as how to respond to such situations when they arise.

Since the last inspection there has been a significant change in the dynamics of the home. As well as the home having a new manager, there have been a significant number of staff changes and also changes in the occupancy of the home with some young people having left and others being more recently admitted. Overall, staff changes have made a positive impact on the home, with more female staff being recruited, addressing the gender imbalance that previously existed within the home. For most of those young people that moved on to other placements, their move was appropriately planned and handled sensitively to ensure a smooth transition from the home. The Registered Manager has successfully implemented the home's admissions protocol, seeking and reviewing appropriate information to assess the potential impact and suitability of each young person prior to their admission. As such, the home has achieved a good match between those young people placed, restoring greater harmony within the home.

Young people share positive relationships with staff and each other and understand that those relationships have developed on the basis of trust and mutual respect. One young person commented, 'I feel safe and happy here, things are not kicking off like they were before. The staff are good and the new staff seem ok.' Positive behaviour is well promoted with staff providing young people with frequent praise and encouragement. Although the home focuses on rewarding positive behaviour, sanctions are at times reasonably used to help young people understand the consequences of their actions. The home has made improvements in recording occasions when sanctions are given, providing greater detail to ensure that both staff and young people have a clear understanding of the consequence in relation to their behaviour.

Young people are consistently well supported by clear and thorough placement planning that takes good account of their individual needs and wishes. Individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans are sufficiently detailed and regularly updated ensuring staff have relevant and current guidance to provide for young people's care. There has been a decrease in the use of restraint; particularly a significant reduction in the use of ground holds that are known to increase risks for young people. Staff are effectively using planned de-escalation techniques to support young people's behaviour and all incidents are being closely scrutinised by the Registered Manager to promote learning and further improve behaviour management practice. This approach following every incident aims to assist individual planning and further reduce the potential for critical incidents that can compromise young people's safety.

Since the last inspection the home has amended its de-briefing practice with young people following a restraint to ensure that young people are clearly consulted about both their opportunities to communicate with their social worker and make a complaint. This reduces the likelihood of any confusion and ensures that young people have a clear opportunity to raise a concern about restraint practice and know that their voice will be heard and responded to. Young people have a range of opportunities and ways that they can raise issues and contribute their views and opinions. The home has developed additional child-friendly formats for young people to provide written feedback about the home and staff and new arrangements ensure that key worker sessions take good account of young people's views and wishes. Consequently, young people feel confident that their views are important and that there are good opportunities for them to have their say. One young person commented, 'I have no worries here and I know I can talk to staff if something is bothering me.'

Good arrangements are in place to regularly monitor the home's activities and the quality of care provided. This is proving effective in supporting the new manager to make improvements and develop his service. However, both internal and external monitoring reports have not been consistently forwarded to Ofsted within the prescribed timescale as required by regulation. This has some impact on the home's ability to consistently demonstrate transparency with the regulator between inspection visits.

Information about this children's home

A private organisation operates this children's home. The service is registered to accommodate up to seven young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities. Their education is provided as day pupils in two schools on the company's other sites.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/07/2014	Full	adequate

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
33 (2001)	ensure a copy of the independent person's report is provided to Ofsted. This specifically relates to the report being provided within the agreed timescale (Regulation 33(9)(a))	01/05/2015
34 (2001)	ensure the registered person supplies to Ofsted a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of paragraph(1). This relates specifically to ensuring that the report is submitted to Ofsted within the stipulated regulatory timescale. (Regulation 34(2))	01/05/2015

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.