

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	08/03/2017
Unique reference number	SC475706
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	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	Lee Riley
Inspector	Nick Murphy

Inspection date	08/03/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged outstanding at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. The home has not discharged any young people since the last inspection. This demonstrates the commitment of the registered manager and staff to maintaining placements. They do this even in the face of challenges from other professionals as to the viability of a particular young person's continuing residence. The young people therefore experience stability and consistency, and form meaningful attachments to staff which help them to progress. One young person said: 'I like it here, I like the staff, I'm doing well and I'd give the home 9 out of 10.' Another commented: 'It's okay here, staff are good, I'm happy. I've got no worries about being safe.' Staff maintain the premises to a high standard. They do this in spite of some particularly testing behaviour from some young people. The provider is imaginative in overcoming problems. For example, following an incident when the young people accessed the roof of the learning centre, anti-climb measures were quickly installed at some considerable cost. These measures managed to avoid looking unsightly and have proved effective at keeping the young people safe. The provider has also spent money in upgrading bedrooms, making them more hygienic and personalising them to the young people's tastes. This is done in consultation with the young people. One said he wanted a more 'grown-up' looking en suite shower room, and this has been completed, to the young person's delight. The home continues to be effective in safeguarding young people. The staff's good knowledge of each young person and detailed analysis of their needs are key to the home's skilled management of challenging behaviour. As a result, the use of physical restraint is low and is reducing further. There have been no incidents of young people going missing since the last inspection. The home works with other agencies to promote the safety and well-being of young people. Recently, professionals associated with the 'Prevent' duty have visited the home to work with young people on racism and stereotyping. Other work has centred on e-safety. Staff manage this complex issue with sensitivity, balancing their responsibility to be vigilant with the need to give the young people some control over access to social media. They gain the consent of	

the young people to monitor their online activity, and this has resulted in a recent threat to young people's safety being discovered and reported.

The partnership between staff and the onsite teachers and therapists ensures that care plans are implemented consistently. The staff use information from these other professionals to enable their strategies for supporting each young person to be continuously reviewed and updated. Communication between the disciplines is also important in addressing and overcoming difficulties. For example, one young person had an issue with school uniform, which threatened to disrupt their otherwise excellent attendance. A meeting between the staff and their education and therapy colleagues enabled a swift resolution to be agreed with the young person.

Staff also communicate well with parents. They support and facilitate contact between young people and their families, in consultation with placing social workers and with advice from the young person's therapist. This careful and considered approach has enabled some of the young people to re-establish contact after a period of estrangement. The home paid for one parent to stay at a local hotel to support a visit to their child.

The home's management is sound. Some innovative practice demonstrates the home's commitment to respecting young people's views. For example, when looked after reviews are held, managers put together a computer slide presentation consisting of photos of the young person in their day-to-day life in the home and school. These could be activities, going out for a meal or receiving an award. The presentation is played at the review meeting, giving a real flavour of how well the young person is doing and so enhancing their self-esteem.

The registered manager is proactive in challenging other services when necessary. For example, he has successfully advocated for a young person to be provided with a psychiatric assessment to gain a better understanding of their needs. Detailed and regular management monitoring enables staff to be aware of where improvement could be made. Monthly analysis of physical restraints means that managers can understand if there are any particular patterns with regard to the young person and staff involved, time of day and so on. As a result, plans for action are drawn up, helping staff to identify trigger points earlier and so avoid future incidents.

Of the two recommendations from the last inspection one has been addressed in full. The young people no longer have to sign documentation in their files, which promotes a less institutional feel in the home. The other recommendation is still outstanding and so has been repeated. The provider's complaints policy does not require the registered manager to send a written outcome of the complaint to the young person. This is not consistent with accepted practice in managing complaints by children and young people.

Information about this children's home

The home provides accommodation for up to seven children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/10/2016	Full	Outstanding
22/01/2016	Full	Good
06/08/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/01/2015	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation:

- Staff should encourage children to share any concerns about their care or other matters as soon as they arise. Children must be able to take up issues or make a complaint with support and without any fear that this will result in any adverse consequences. Regulation 39 sets out the requirements on the registered person to have a complaints procedure. Children must be aware of this procedure and be reminded of it as necessary. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.13)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection 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

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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