

Inspection report for children's home

---

|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC475706        |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Deborah White   |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full            |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home |

---

|                                  |                                                                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Registered person</b>         | Witherslack Group Ltd                                                  |
| <b>Registered person address</b> | Witherslack Group, Lupton Tower Lupton<br>CARNFORTH Lancashire LA6 2PR |
| <b>Responsible individual</b>    | Howard Charles Tennant                                                 |
| <b>Registered manager</b>        | Cristopher Alan Beattie                                                |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b>   | N/A                                                                    |

|                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| <b>Inspection date</b> | 29/01/2015 |
|------------------------|------------|

|                                          |                                       |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Previous inspection                      | N/A                                   |
| Enforcement action since last inspection | There has been no enforcement action. |

|                                        |             |
|----------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>This inspection</b>                 |             |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>           | <b>good</b> |
| Outcomes for children and young people | outstanding |
| Quality of care                        | good        |
| Keeping children and young people safe | good        |
| Leadership and management              | good        |

## Overall effectiveness

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Judgement outcome | <b>good</b> |
|-------------------|-------------|

Young people live in a high quality home that meets their needs. All young people are progressing and thriving as a direct result of living at the home. Young people are put at the centre of very good childcare practice; they are valued, consulted with and listened to. Young people have formed positive attachments and bonds with staff that are based on mutual respect. These positive relationships are instrumental in young people developing and achieving their maximum potential.

Highly innovative and creative care interventions support young people to overcome their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Good joint working with a range of professionals provides optimal, consistent holistic care. Positive progress in behaviour management has resulted in a reduction of restraints and an increase in young people's understanding of how their behaviour impacts on others. As a result, young people are learning, through the use of incentives, good socially acceptable behaviour.

All young people have significantly benefitted from increased, positive family contact that staff have been instrumental in supporting. This gives young people meaningful quality time with people who are important to them.

There are some very good examples of robust monitoring that include thorough checking and analysis of incidents and good practice outcomes. This shows that the Registered Manager consistently oversees the running of the home and outcomes for young people. There are also strengths in external monitoring such as regular checks on documentation and the home's premises. However, a significant shortfall identified at this inspection has resulted in a requirement. This is to ensure any concerns gained, by the external monitoring, are fully addressed without delay.

The overall quality of care is very good. There are improvements in young people's care planning and written residential plans, in particular, in making young people's plans more individualised and changing formats to a more age-appropriate child-friendly format. This is better engaging young people to actively contribute to how they are looked after. However, some plans are missing information about some minor needs and therefore a recommendation is made to ensure this aspect of the plans is improved.

There is one requirement and one recommendation arising from this inspection.

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This children's home provides care and accommodation for 7 children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is also a registered school on site that provides full time education. The home and school are operated by a private provider.

### 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<br>(2001) | ensure the independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the children's home. In particular, ensure any concerns raised during consultation are addressed without delay (Regulation 33 (10)) | 31/03/2015 |

### Recommendations

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

- ensure children receive personalised care in all aspects of their identity. In particular, ensure all children's needs and how these will be met are included in the home's written plans (NMS 2.1)

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people thrive as a direct result of living at the children's home. They are confident, resilient and emotionally secure. This helps young people grow and develop into mature, well-adjusted adults. Relationships with staff are very good and based on mutual respect. As a result young people have positive attachments with the people who care for them.

Young people are fit and healthy and their health needs are extremely well met. They live a healthy lifestyle and are meeting their developmental milestones. All young people are registered with local primary healthcare services and have regular health checks. This teaches young people the importance of good health and well-being. Where young people have additional, or complex, needs they have access to the services they need. This provides high quality holistic care. On-site health and psychological services ensure young people's emotional needs are exceptionally well met.

Young people benefit from attending the on-site school, which provides a wide range of traditional and creative bespoke educational packages. This gets the best out of each young person in line with their needs and wishes. Involving young people in how they are educated engages them. This has increased attendance and educational achievement. This prepares young people for later life and future employment or adult education. A social worker said, 'The home continues to be a positive placement for young people and gives them opportunities to progress and reach their full potential.'

Activities play a big part in young people's lives. All young people are involved in stimulating, purposeful hobbies and pastimes that fulfil their aspirations. Group activities encourage positive peer relationships and teach compromise and co-operation; whereas individual pursuits enable young people to explore their unique skills and identity. Young people have taken a further step by raising money for charity through activities. For example, young people had an open day that included a sponsored walk for 'help the heroes' charity. This involves young people in their local community and teaches empathy.

Increased family contact has significantly improved. This has happened as a result of exceptional staff support and young people receiving individual support from the provider's therapeutic services. Some young people have reconnected with extended family members they have not seen for a considerable length of time, which is exemplary. Other young people are learning about their life story and why they are unable to live with their family; and young people's family relationships have improved to such a degree they are having regular overnight stays for the first time in many months. This is an outstanding outcome for young people who are re-

establishing links with their family, siblings and carers.

## **Quality of care**

**good**

Staff are very skilled at engaging young people and have formed positive bonds and attachments. This has gained young people's trust and respect. Young people rate relationships with staff as a good thing about living at the home. Feedback from parents and social workers about relationships is very positive. A young person said, 'The staff are good here, they are bothered about us.'

Staff use a range of effective strategies to consult with and listen to young people. As a result, young people's feelings, wishes and views are very much taken into account. A staff member said 'building relationships with young people is very important' and a social worker said 'staff continue to give good quality care and provide a warm nurturing environment'.

All young people know how to complain and complaints are taken seriously. There is an open culture where young people are confident their worries will be dealt with. There is highly visible information placed around the home to inform young people about advocacy and other agencies that will help to support them. How to complain is discussed with young people at their meetings and in key worker sessions. This shows an open and transparent ethos is fully promoted. Good written records show the Registered Manager looks at all complaints and speaks to each young person about their complaint and what they want to happen. Complaint investigations are thorough and each child receives a written outcome. This is very good practice and re-enforces to young people that they are listened to.

Staff engage young people in how they are looked after and use a broad range of child-friendly documentation to engage them, which is in a format that is understandable to each young person's age and understanding. Written residential and support plans are individualised and provide a unique pen-picture that focuses on young people's strengths and achievements. This gives young people a positive starting point.

Overall the plans identify young people's needs and how these will be met. This provides good, consistent care. However, there are some residential plans that do not fully reflect all young people's needs. Whilst this has not had a significant impact at the time of this inspection; there is a potential risk that some elements of care and support may not be fully addressed.

The home and the provider place a high value on meeting young people's health needs; in particular their emotional and psychological needs. Staff work closely with

members of the provider's therapeutic team with good effect. This joint working to support young people has directly impacted significantly on young people's emotional well-being and progress. A social worker said, 'I did a placement visit with the home's psychologist and it was a very positive visit. My young person is self confident again.'

Education is provided at an on-site school operated by the provider. Educational programmes are varied to meet the individual needs of young people. Staff and teachers work with young people to ascertain their wishes, views and aspirations. As a result, school attendance is very good and all young people are achieving their maximum potential. Examples of imaginative curriculums include young people taking part in local environment projects; attending vocational studies and using skills such as art and music to enhance their education.

Young people live in high quality accommodation that meets their needs. The home is spacious and very nicely furnished and decorated. Each young person has their own bedroom that they can personalise to reflect their personality. Young people are relaxed, and see the home as, 'their home'. There are extensive grounds that provide a football pitch, tennis court and lots of open countryside for outdoor play and adventures. This gives young people a comfortable, homely environment where they can grow and develop in a positive atmosphere.

### **Keeping children and young people safe    good**

Since the last inspection there have been some notifiable events that relate to keeping young people safe. The Registered Manager has promptly informed social workers, parents, Ofsted and other safeguarding agencies of the concerns, and the home have taken immediate steps to keep young people safe. This demonstrates the home actively shares any concerns about young people and operates in an open and transparent way. This is a positive outcome for young people. Feedback from the local authority designated officer is positive and all social workers consulted say their young people live in a safe environment.

The Registered Manager, staff and the provider see young people's safety as being paramount.

Staff actively promote independent advocacy for young people. This ensures young people have a solid network of professional adults they know how to contact if they are worried or afraid. Young people say they feel safe and, 'know that staff care about them'. Individual risk assessments are thorough and regularly reviewed and updated. This reduces known risks. Young people know what is written in their risk assessments and actively contribute their views as to how they feel staff can help them stay safe. This includes young people and helps them to develop positive skills to keep themselves safe.

All staff receive regular child-protection training and know what to do if they are

concerned about a young person's welfare. Staff work closely with older young people to negotiate and understand reasonable risk taking activities, which is an important aspect of growing up. Older teenagers naturally want more freedom and fewer boundaries. In response, staff have worked around the home's routines, staffing levels and shift plans to accommodate supporting young people to have more flexible independence time. The impact of this has been fewer young people going missing or not returning to the home at an agreed time. Additionally, young people are learning to take responsibility for their own actions and are developing an understanding of how to compromise. This is very good preparation for later life when young people make the transition into adulthood.

Behaviour is managed positively, with an emphasis on incentives and rewards. Sanctions are very rarely used. Young people see this as 'great' and, 'this is the best'. Each young person has a bespoke incentive plan where they can earn a range or rewards linked to specific targets. This develops good behaviour in a fun, positive way. All young people are achieving good rewards and have enthusiastically engaged in their plans. This values young people and teaches them socially acceptable behaviour in a none-punitive way. An independent reviewing officer said, 'My young person's behaviour is excellent and proves that work completed by the staff is making a difference.'

Restraints are used in the home and are fully recorded in each young person's behaviour management plan. This ensures all young people and staff know preferred restraints and ensures that restraints are only used as a last resort. The behaviour management plans are fully individualised and very well written. They detail how young people's behaviour is known to escalate and what triggers potentially lead to challenging behaviours. Preventative and de-escalation strategies are listed and young people write, in the plans, what they think will help manage their behaviours. This fully includes young people. The impact of this bespoke planning is a significant reduction in the overall use of restraints in the home, which is a positive step forward.

Where restraints are used every incident is fully reviewed by the Registered Manager. De-briefing with young people and staff is robust and additional monitoring, investigation and analysis shows good reflection. This clearly identifies good practice and areas for development. The provider keeps month-on-month data of all physical interventions carried out in the home. Statistics show some peaks and troughs in the use of restraint and there are clear identified reasons where restraints have peaked. This shows the home takes seriously all incidents of restraint and young people are protected by a comprehensive oversight behaviour management.

Young people live in a safe environment. Health and safety and fire safety checks are regularly undertaken to keep the home free from hazards. All utilities are regularly checked and serviced. Staff safety checks are carried out and updated to ensure young people are cared for by people they can trust.



## **Leadership and management**

**good**

Leadership and management in the home is a strength. The Registered Manager has the right qualifications to undertake his role and is consistently robust in maintaining a stable environment for young people. The Registered Manager is experienced in caring for young people and he leads a committed, enthusiastic staff team. Feedback from staff during this inspection is very positive. Staff speak very highly of the young people and clearly care about their progress and well-being. Feedback about leaders and managers is also very positive. Staff feel 'leaders and managers are very approachable' and 'you can talk to the managers because they really listen to you'.

This is the first full inspection since the home was re-registered in May 2014. Therefore there are no previous requirements or recommendations.

Staffing levels are very good. Rosters show there is a good gender mix that provides young people with positive role models. Staff have the qualifications and experience they need to meet the needs of the young people and seek additional training where they identify a need. Staff receive good supervision and support and are actively involved in the running of the home and young people's care and welfare. This values and includes staff, which contributes to good staff morale. A social worker said, 'Staff are very committed to providing excellence to children and young people. This is a very good service.'

The Statement of Purpose reflects what the home sets out to do and provides young people, parents and social workers with an informative guide to steer appropriate placements. The children's guide is written in a format that is understandable and explains to young people how it is to live at the home. Young people say they receive good information about living at the home. This keeps young people informed.

The Registered Manager takes his role of monitoring the home very seriously. Since becoming registered with Ofsted, this area of the Registered Manager's practice has excelled. The home's monitoring is detailed, robust and systematic. The Registered Manager is not afraid to challenge practice and actively promotes improvement. This drives forward progress.

Incident recording is very good and clearly sets out what happened, what went well, and any areas for development. The Registered Manager regularly reviews practice and looks for trends and patterns of behaviour. This ensures consistently good care. Any failures, complaints or concerns are addressed promptly and safely and there is good, consistent working in partnership with other agencies and the host local authority.

The home's development plan is very comprehensive and links to areas for development that have been identified by the home's monitoring. The plan is regularly reviewed and updated to show actions are met. This ensures the home is efficiently managed and young people's outcomes continually improve.

The external monitoring of the home is good overall. There is good consultation and records and outcomes for young people are checked and evaluated. However, at this inspection there is a significant shortfall identified. The event is a failure to ensure a concern raised by a parent during consultation was identified in the report's action plan and passed onto the home and the provider to ensure the concern was investigated and addressed. As a result, no action was taken to contact the parent post the initial discussion to fully ascertain more details and seek a resolution to the concern. This potentially compromised a young person's welfare. The issue was addressed immediately during the inspection.

All young people's case files are stored securely to protect their privacy. Staff fully understand confidentiality and the home's information sharing protocols. Notifications about significant events are made promptly and the home fully share information with Ofsted about any issues at the home. This provides for the home to be monitored between inspections to ensure young people are safe and cared for.

## What inspection judgements mean

| Judgement   | Description                                                                       |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Outstanding | A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Good        | A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.                      |
| Adequate    | A service that only meets minimum requirements.                                   |
| Inadequate  | A service that does not meet minimum requirements.                                |

## 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.