

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC475748
Inspector	Ceri Evans
Type of inspection	Full
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	Lisa Claire Nobbs
Date of last inspection	N/A

Inspection date	11/12/2014
------------------------	------------

Previous inspection	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
-------------------	-------------

Young people receive excellent levels of care and support in this home and are making exceptionally good progress from their starting point at the time of admission. They are treated with respect and dignity and are central to all care planning decisions that affect their lives. Young people are offered imaginative opportunities to develop good life skills in a safe, caring and nurturing environment.

Staff have high expectations of young people in terms of their behaviour, presentation and achievement. These are clearly conveyed to young people by staff who help them to meet those expectations. Clear and appropriate boundary setting and established routines, such as getting up in the morning, mealtimes and bedtimes, help young people to feel safe, secure and valued. A key feature of the home is the positive relationship young people have with each other and with staff. This has played a central role in helping them become more confident and self-assured.

There is a very homely and relaxed feel within this home. This is promoted by the positive relationships that exists between young people and those who care for them. Staff actively encourage young people to express themselves, to make choices and to enjoy a full range of social opportunities and experiences. All of which promote outstanding outcomes. Staff are highly committed and demonstrate a high

level of skill and understanding. This enables them to effectively meet young people's complex needs.

The manager provides effective leadership to the staff team and demonstrates a strong commitment to driving forward improvements in the home. Very robust internal and external arrangements for monitoring ensure that leaders maintain a thorough oversight of the care that is given to young people.

As a result of this inspection one requirement and one good practice recommendation have been raised to ensure that: All concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of young people are appropriately escalated with the placing authority. The good practice recommendation is in relation to records and does not impact negatively on the wellbeing of young people.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This is a re-registration of an existing children's home, due to change of company name, all other matters remain the same. (previous URN = SC390201).

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for seven children with learning difficulties as well as children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is 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
16 (2001)	Where the registered person considers that a child who is accommodated in the children's home and for whom a care plan has been prepared is, or has been persistently absent without permission or, is at risk of harm, the registered person shall ask the local authority that looks after that child to review that child's care plan. (Regulation 16. 6 (a) (b))	28/01/2015

Recommendations

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

- A clear and comprehensive summary of any allegation made against a particular member of staff, includes details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of action taken and decision reached. This specifically related to ensuring allegation records take full account of the wishes and feelings of young people.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Young people make exceptional progress across all areas of their development. They present as relaxed and self-assured, and have grown considerably in confidence. Young people feel fully involved in decision-making about them and articulate their views with maturity. For example, young people participate fully in their Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews and are able to express themselves with confidence. Young people are also involved in the shaping of the service; they have their own development plan and are able to express their wishes and feelings with staff and senior leaders within the organisation. This demonstrates that young people have greater control over what is important to them. Furthermore, they are learning effective communication and negotiation skills which will stand them in good stead in the future.

Young people enjoy excellent attendance at their educational provision and clearly value the opportunities available to them. They make impressive progress from their starting points and have been successful in gaining work experience which will support their future career options. Since living in the home young people's attitudes towards their learning has significantly improved. They are extremely positive about learning and look forward to going to school or college. As a result, young people have clear ambition and aspirations for the future. One young person commented 'I currently attend a local college and after that I will be applying to go to university, I don't know which one yet, but I know I'd like to go'.

Young people benefit from regular contact with family and friends. The home also has excellent communication with families to ensure that young people develop and sustain relationships with those whom are important to them. Well organised and purposeful contact has strengthened the relationship young people have with their families. As a result, young people enjoy a positive sense of belonging and have a strong sense of personal identity

The home takes appropriate responsibility for the primary health care needs of the young people. Staff have excellent links with health care professionals such as LAC nurses, General Practitioners, therapists and sexual health professionals to ensure young people's emotional and physical health needs are met. Medication procedures, administration, recording and storage are extremely robust. All staff, as part of their core training, undertake a basic first aid course and only staff that have completed a suitable medication administration course are permitted to administer medication. This further promotes and protects young people's health.

Young people enjoy community based activities which enrich their understanding of wider society and help them forge meaningful and appropriate friendships. The progress young people have made in relation to their independence, self-esteem and

confidence is excellent. They are effectively prepared for successful adult life in line with their age and cognitive ability. They develop specific skills around shopping and money management and all young people are encouraged to prepare food with staff and take responsibility for setting the table and tidying up after meals. This level of engagement contributes positively to young people's social skills and enables them to develop the necessary emotional and practical skills, which is good preparation for adult life.

Quality of care

outstanding

A strong feature of this home is that young people are at the centre of all that they do. Young people enjoy considerable stability in their lives and those who have been deprived of positive childhood experiences now have the opportunity to shape happier memories. One young person commented 'the home has a friendly atmosphere and the staff are ace,' another said 'I'd give this home 9 out of 10, staff are pretty good'. Staff have high aspirations and expectations of young people in terms of behaviour and achievement. They are fully supportive of young people and understand how underlying trauma can impact on their emotional, social and physical development. They approach matters with a great deal of empathy and accept young people for who they are. Consequently, young people have forged positive attachments with those responsible for their care.

Relationships within the home are extremely positive and staff are excellent role models for young people. These supportive relationships help young people to develop confidence and gain trust. Professionals comment highly about the quality of relationships that exist within the home and state that staff 'go above and beyond' to secure positive outcomes for young people. One professional said 'a key strength of the team is their relationship with young people. They are extremely nurturing and have a good understanding of young people's needs. Young people in this home are given the same opportunity as their peers and are allowed to be, and enjoy their teenager years'

Young people's care is directed through highly detailed and comprehensive placement plans which are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they accurately reflect the current needs of young people. Cultural background and personal identity are identified and positively addressed in their placement plans and through daily living arrangements. Staff promote equality of opportunity for all young people, and are fair, open and honest in their approach. Staff ensure that young people are not victimised, labelled or discriminated against in any way and every effort is made to ensure young people are not marginalised.

Excellent communication is maintained between school and education staff which allows for achievements to be shared and celebrated. Staff have excellent knowledge of young people's current progress and the areas that require further support. The team encourage young people's individual characters, skills and talents through the

promotion of community activities and work experience. This enables young people to learn new skills and build on existing abilities and as a result young people are more confident and have real pride in their achievements.

Placing authorities express considerable satisfaction with the quality of care provided within the home. The feedback from an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) stated the following, 'I have been the IRO for a young person in this home for two years and to put it simply this has been one of her most settled periods of recent years and she has moved on greatly'. Another professional stated 'this is an excellent service and has made a real difference to the young person I work with'. This is testament to the dedication and commitment of staff within this home.

Young people live in a comfortable house which is suitably designed to meet their needs. The home is well maintained and decorated to a high standard. Several areas, such as the two lounge areas, dining room, kitchen and young people's bedrooms have been personalised to the individual tastes of young people. Young people feel a sense of belonging and are able to take ownership over aspects of their home

Keeping children and young people safe good

The home has stringent and robust safeguarding measures in place that promote the safety and wellbeing of young people. Young people say they feel safe, secure and well cared for. They are protected from harm by committed staff who fully understand their needs, risks and vulnerabilities. Consequently, young people's safety and welfare is promoted.

The home has a comprehensive safeguarding policy which is fully implemented in practice by staff. The Manager ensures that all policy updates are read and understood by the team. Furthermore, safeguarding protocols are discussed in supervision and team meetings. As a result staff demonstrate excellent knowledge of safeguarding practices and work effectively with other agencies to promote young people's safety and welfare.

Young people's behaviour is effectively managed by staff who know them well and understand how to support them when they become anxious, frustrated or upset. Behaviour management plans are detailed and reviewed regularly. Staff use behaviour management strategies that acknowledge and reward positive behaviour. Young people are also encouraged to discuss and reflect upon incidents, and consider better ways of expressing their emotions and feelings. This has resulted in young people making better, more socially acceptable choices which have led to a dramatic reduction in the use of sanctions. Physical intervention by staff has also reduced and is limited to ensuring that young people do not harm either themselves or others. Interventions are usually limited to staff safely guiding young people away from areas of high risk or from harmful situations.

Most young people do not place themselves at risk by going missing. Those who are in long term placements are extremely settled and are now making better choices in relation to their personal safety. The home has clear procedures for reporting and recording instances when young people go missing and staff have effective links with the local police and missing from care co-ordinator to ensure the safe return of young people. However, there has been at least one incident of a prolonged unauthorised absence whereby a young person's safety was seriously compromised. The home did notify the relevant professionals and completed all the relevant documentation. However, they did not sufficiently escalate their concerns with the placing authority through a formal review of the young person's care plan. This results in lack of clarity and direction in relation to his care planning.

Investigations into complaints and allegations are handled fairly and support both the young person and the member of staff. The home ensures that the relevant partner agencies are informed and appropriate action is taken to address the matter. Internal investigation records are clear in relation to the outcome. However, it lacks evaluation regarding the process that has taken place, specifically in relation to recording young people's views. This is an administration shortfall and is not detrimental to the well-being of young people.

Safe recruitment systems are in place to ensure that staff are carefully selected and vetted before starting work. Visitors are also appropriately checked and monitored. This helps prevent unsuitable people from having access to young people.

Leadership and management

outstanding

The home has a proven track record based on its inspection history, and continues to demonstrate the positive impact it has made to the lives of young people and how their outcomes have improved considerably since the start of their placement. The manager is suitably qualified and experienced and provides the home with visible leadership which promotes excellent quality of care and positive outcome for young people. The manager maintains a thorough oversight of care practices and has an excellent understanding of the individual needs of the young people accommodated in the home. Leaders have high expectations with regards to the level of care and support young people should receive and these expectations are fully understood by the staff team. As a result, the team maintain their enthusiasm and channel their efforts effectively.

There is a range of very effective monitoring measures which not only look at the operation of the home but provide a detailed and evaluative measure of progress the young people have made. This enables the manager to track the effectiveness of interventions and analyse the difference the home is making to young people's lives. Feedback from young people, social workers and other professionals is also used to identify strengths and areas for development. Feedback informs the home's

comprehensive development plan which clearly sets out how the service intends to improve the service it currently provides.

An independent visitor completes the Regulation 33 visit and report on a monthly basis. These reports are thorough and provide an extremely detailed overview of the home. These visits include appropriate consultation with young people, parents and other stakeholder who consistently report positive feedback. Actions raised as part of these visits are quickly addressed by the manager. This further demonstrates her commitment to continued improvement for the benefit of young people.

Staff regularly receive high quality supervision that effectively develops their professional practice. There is good evidence in records of staff meetings that information about new legislation, frameworks and policy is discussed with the team. This ensures that the team are fully informed of practice developments and legislation. Appraisals on staff performance are undertaken annually by the manager. The manager utilises the in-house performance framework to assess and evaluate the competency and skill set of staff. This enables her to evaluate staff competence to ensure they continue to put the best interests of young people at the heart of their work.

The Manager ensures that the staffing levels are sufficient in the home and adapts the rota in order to meet the individual needs of the young people. The strength of the home is the enthusiastic, competent and consistent staff team who are totally committed to young people. The manager clearly fosters determination, energy and motivation to improve the home, this is an ethos the team embrace. Young people are respected, valued and enabled to achieve their full potential by well-trained and forward thinking staff. This successful approach promotes an effective developmental and child-centred service.

Young people's records are well organised, structured and detailed. Monthly file consultation with young people ensures they have a say and understand what is written about them. When young people read their record, be it now or in the future they will clearly see the journey they have made through placement.

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.