

SC475748

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide care for up to seven young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since December 2019.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 January 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 21 June 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/06/2018	Full	Outstanding
24/10/2017	Full	Good
14/02/2017	Full	Good
26/10/2016	Full	Inadequate

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

Recommendations

- Where children placed in a home are not participating in education the registered person and staff must work closely with the placing authority so that the child is supported and enabled to resume full-time education as soon as possible. In the interim, the child should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)

- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

Specifically, individual risk assessments should detail the control measures and strategies in place to safeguard the young person.

- Staff should support children to be aware of and manage their own safety both inside and outside the home to the extent that any good parent would. Staff should help children to understand how to protect themselves. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.9)

In particular, staff should support children to stay safe online.

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

Specifically, additional training should be accessed in relation to supporting young people who may self-harm.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people live in a caring and nurturing environment. They are making excellent progress from their individual starting points. Young people receive personalised care from a staff team that knows and understands them well. One carer said, 'I cannot speak highly enough about the staff. They are brilliant, supportive and approachable. I am very impressed with them.'

Young people benefit from a consistent staff team. This means that young people can form positive and trusting relationships with staff over a sustained period. One social

worker said, 'The staff played a huge part in helping [young person's name] settle well and have most importantly kept him safe from any harm.'

Prior to their admission to this home, many young people had not been in school for considerable periods of time. Staff understand the importance of education and are persistent in their efforts to re-engage young people. As a result, most young people attend school regularly and are making good progress. One social worker said, 'Before coming here, [young person's name] was out of education and was excluded on numerous occasions. Now his attendance is brilliant. His attainment has increased, and he speaks positively of school saying how it is the "best school he has ever been to".' However, one young person is currently struggling to attend, and their day lacks structure. A recommendation has been made to address this matter.

Staff ensure that young people are supported to maintain contact with people who are important to them. For example, one young person was supported to have a short holiday with a sibling who lived a considerable distance away. Supporting young people to maintain these important relationships promotes their emotional health and well-being.

Young people enjoy accessing a wide range of activities in the local community. There is a structured programme in place to support young people to learn the skills they need to access the community safely with an appropriate level of independence. Staff encourage them to develop friendship groups, pursue their interests and try new hobbies. For example, one young person goes fishing and another enjoys walking dogs for a local charity.

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

Young people receive safe, effective and well-planned care. Most young people are settled in long-term placements. This helps them to develop a sense of security and belonging. A carer said, '[Young person's name] loves it there. He gets on well with all the staff and he is happy. The home has exceeded my expectations.'

Staff have established firm boundaries and routines, which young people are adapting to and responding well to. This was confirmed by one social worker who said, 'The staff within the home implement reward systems that appear to successfully work for the young people. They have fair rules and implement boundaries which my young person has never had before, which he appears to be thriving from.'

Young people are cared for by an experienced staff team. Staff have the skills required to manage in a calm and effective way the challenges that some young people present. Staff can anticipate potential triggers, plan their approaches and de-escalate situations. When incidents do occur, the manager has established effective arrangements for post-incident analysis. This means that lessons are learned and practice evolves to meet young people's needs.

Staff regularly use individual key-work sessions as informal learning opportunities to educate young people on the risks of their behaviours. These sessions provide a forum for young people to reflect on their behaviours and the consequences of the choices they are making. As a result, young people are empowered to make safer choices and are reducing their involvement in risk-taking behaviours, such as going missing from home. However, it was identified that insufficient information and support was available for young people to keep themselves safe online. A recommendation has been made to address this.

The manager has ensured that there are robust procedures in place for all young people in the event that they should go missing from home. These contain clear guidance for staff to follow, which means that they can respond swiftly and effectively to safeguard the young person. When young people do go missing from home, staff are proactive and liaise appropriately with other agencies to keep young people safe.

All young people have risk assessments, which are updated on a regular basis and after significant events. The manager is quick to respond to emerging risks to keep young people safe. However, risk assessments do not always sufficiently detail the control measures in place to manage these risks. A recommendation has been made to address this.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home benefits from excellent leadership. The manager is suitably qualified and experienced to undertake the role and is well supported by his senior managers. The manager is a confident and visible leader who has high expectations of his staff team.

The manager is passionate about providing a high-quality service that supports young people to fulfil their potential. He demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of young people's individual needs and the progress they are making. The manager takes appropriate steps to challenge other professionals and escalates issues appropriately to ensure that young people receive the services and support they require.

The manager demonstrates a commitment and enthusiasm for continuous service development. There are highly effective internal monitoring systems in place, which enable the manager to analyse trends, identify strengths and address weaknesses. He also encourages staff to be involved in the development of the service and is supportive of new ideas and approaches.

External professionals speak highly of the quality of care provided to young people at the home. They report good levels of communication and have had good experiences of collaborative working. One independent reviewing officer said, 'I have very positive experiences of working with [name of home]. I found the staff to be well led, which is often the foundation of a good service.'

Staff report that they feel supported and that morale is high. One member of staff said, 'The managers are approachable. There is always someone you can talk to. They listen and give you help and feedback.' The manager nurtures staff potential and seeks opportunities to support their learning and progression. New staff benefit from a comprehensive induction and a mandatory training programme. However, additional training is required to enhance the staff team's ability to support young people who may self-harm. A recommendation is made in relation to this matter.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

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: SC475748

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Marcella Bird

Registered manager: Terence Bowman

Inspector

Sophie Thomson: social care inspector

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