

SC1244160

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is one of a number of children's homes that are run by this private provider. This home is registered for up to eight young people aged seven to 17 years who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection date: 14 December 2017

Judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 3 May 2017

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 good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.

Children were not present during the inspection.

Children who are moving into the home are welcomed and settle in well. However, shortfalls in the pre-admission risk assessments mean that decision-making about placing a child in the home is weak. Children's needs are not fully assessed and planned for, and assessments are not undertaken in order to establish whether a child will fit in with the current group of children. Additionally, the staff team's experience and skills in caring for a child's specific needs are not assessed. There are no assessments made regarding whether the staff team will be likely to be able to keep all children safe. This shortfall has not had an impact on children currently living in the home. Children have formed friendships with each other and they get on with each other reasonably well.

When children are moving on from the home, staff and the other children make sure that the child moving out knows they will be missed. Staff arrange a leaving party and buy gifts for them to remember their time in the home by. This is the case even when a child has to move in an unplanned way.

The direct work undertaken with the children has contributed to the progress they make. Children learn to reflect on their actions and develop positive coping strategies. Children who used to isolate themselves in their rooms have begun to take part in day-to-day life in the home. Staff are successful in encouraging children to take up hobbies that they enjoy and they make sure that children can take part in these on a regular basis. Children make significant improvements in their educational attendance and attainment and some are now keen learners.

Children and young people are safe living in this home. Incidents are dealt with effectively. Relevant professionals and agencies are notified when there has been an incident and children get the support and protection they need.

Complaints made by children are dealt with effectively and efficiently. Investigations into complaints are thorough and decisive action is taken, when required, in order to achieve good outcomes for children. There are good working relationships with the local authority safeguarding officer, who reported that the manager and staff make appropriate referrals. She went on to say that the manager and staff always act in the children's best interests.

Children are supported to modify their behaviour. Behaviour management is based on an effective positive rewards system. When sanctions or physical interventions are used, the strategies applied are appropriate to the issues. Children have opportunities to make amends for things they have done wrong. However, the record-keeping, in particular the recording of sanctions, is not completed in line with regulations.

Incidents of children being missing from the home are low in number and no children have gone missing for nearly three months. There is however, clear guidance for staff on what to do if a child does go missing.

Children's views about their care planning and about the running of the home are listened to on a regular basis, for example through daily discussions with staff, regular individual key-work sessions and house meetings. This helps children to feel that their views are valued.

Currently, there is a door sensor on every child's bedroom door. None of the children has an individual risk assessment that shows the sensors are needed for safeguarding purposes. There are no plans to reduce, and eventually cease, the use of the sensors over time. The manager confirmed that currently, in his view, none of the children living in the home would pose a risk, or be at risk, if they left their room in the night.

The manager and deputy manager know the children and their needs well, and are proactive and involved in children's care planning. They have good working relationships with other professionals involved with the children.

Staff also have a good understanding and knowledge of the needs of each child, and their wishes and feelings. Staff get to know children well. There are staff vacancies; some new staff are about to commence working in the home. The impact of reduced staffing levels on children has been minimised by the managers, and staff from the organisation's other homes, working some shifts. This is an adequate arrangement in the short term.

The organisation provides a range of training opportunities for staff. Currently the training takes place in the north of England. This makes it difficult for staff in the south of England to attend. Consequently, not all staff are up to date with their training.

The arrangements for monitoring the quality of care provided for children are good. The manager and the independent visitor to the home identify areas for improvement in care practice. The manager prioritises these areas to ensure that the care provided for children is of a good quality. The requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/05/2017	Full	Good

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment	23/02/2018

administered, as a result of the measure. (Regulation 35(2)(a)(i) to (viii))	
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children (Regulation 24(1)(a)). In particular, ensure that children’s bedroom door sensors are only used if there is a risk assessment carried out in each case that shows there is a valid safeguarding need for these to be used.	23/02/2018
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33(4)(a))	23/02/2018

Recommendations

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child’s assessed needs as recorded in the child’s relevant plans, and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 56, paragraph 11.4)

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.

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.

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: 1244160

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Howard Tennant

Registered manager: Matthew Dangerfield

Inspector:

Rosie Dancer, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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