

1247559

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home. It is registered to provide care for up to five young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The young people admitted to this home will be placed for an assessment period in order to identify what medium- to long-term care they require.

Inspection date: 13 February 2018

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Date of last inspection: 30 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 requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness.

A suitably experienced and qualified registered manager manages the home. The manager is supported by an experienced deputy manager. Additional management support is provided by the responsible individual and a registered manager from another home within the group. Together they provide clear and effective leadership for the team. The management team leads by example and is very child focused.

Eight requirements and two recommendations were made at the last inspection. The management team has addressed all of these and practice has improved within the home. The team is focused, motivated and effective in improving outcomes for young people. As a result, young people make good progress living here and make positive transitions to their new placements.

Due to the purpose of the home, there have been a number of new residents since the last inspection. These have been planned admissions. The assessments, transitions and plans for young people coming to live at the home are clear. Despite some initial challenges, young people settle into their home well and on some occasions they do not want to leave. Young people speak positively about their time here. They say they are well looked after. One young person said, 'They look after me good... they don't need to do anything to improve. I would give them 10 out of 10.' A social worker expressed that she was satisfied with the care of another young person who lived here and said, 'He is really settled and doesn't want to return home which, in part, is a reflection of how well he is being cared for and how supported he is.'

Young people benefit from good support as they make the transitions to their new placements. Staff ensure that young people are given information about their new placements, so that they know what to expect when they make their transitions. Staff support young people to visit their new homes. If young people move to another home within the group, staff will accompany them to their new home and sometimes work with them there, while they settle in. In addition, there are good, clear transition reports and meetings. These ensure that everyone who is involved in a young person's life is clear on the young person's needs, and how best to support and help them to achieve positive outcomes. One social worker said, 'Thank you for taking so much time to help the new placement to understand [name of young person] and make recommendations for him.'

Young people receive good care that reflects their individual care plans. When young people arrive, they are often not engaged in any education. In some instances, young people have not been accessing education for a number of months. Very soon after young people arrive they start to access education, and achieve good levels of attendance and attainment. They are supported by experienced teaching staff who assess each young person's educational abilities. This information is used to inform the transition assessment and plan for the young person's next placement.

Staff are skilled in getting to know the young people quickly. They use effective strategies and techniques to engage young people at their own pace. As a result, young people develop positive and trusting relationships very quickly. For example, a young person had arrived the evening before the inspection. She had been supported to settle in. She was reassured, yet also given space to adjust to her new surroundings. During the inspection, the young person came down from her bedroom and was observed sitting in a relaxed way with staff and young people, speaking with them and laughing.

Young people benefit from effective behaviour management practices. It is evident that staff are aware of risks and triggers early into the young people's placements. They also offer a nurturing and calm environment. This very considered and nurturing approach helps to keep challenging behaviour to a minimum. There are occasions when staff use physical interventions to defuse and manage incidents. In these instances, staff follow clear policies and procedures, and use the accredited techniques that they have received training in. Staff record incidents well. Young people receive follow-up debriefs and key-work sessions to allow them time to reflect on the incidents. Staff also have debriefs.

The management team has oversight of physical interventions, and reviews patterns and trends. The registered manager has recently completed a report on physical interventions, as the number of them had increased. This enabled both the registered manager and the team to reflect on the incidents from another perspective. As a result, strategies were reviewed and altered. Staff also benefited from some additional training. Subsequently, the number of physical interventions reduced.

Risk assessments have greatly improved since the last inspection. They are now individual to each young person and the information in them is clear. Young people receive the support that they need to understand and manage their own risk-taking behaviour. Key-work sessions and the appropriate assessments, as well as interventions from specialist practitioners, have a positive impact on young people's progress. This holistic approach assists the team in understanding young people's historical backgrounds, and their needs, risks and presenting behaviours. As with the educational assessments, this information is used to help inform the overall assessments that help young people when they move on to their new placements. This gives young people the reassurance they need to feel safe, helped and supported.

Staff effectively safeguard young people. Staff work together with the young people and partner agencies to ensure that everyone understands the risks, and that these are managed both sensitively and appropriately. They follow procedures well and ensure that all relevant people have the required information in a timely way. For example, when young people go missing from the home, staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities, and execute these well. However, young people do not routinely receive return home interviews. Therefore, staff are unable to take account of the information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect a young person.

Young people have access to a range of activities. Staff support young people to try new experiences and to have fun. Where young people have specific interests, staff explore ways to help them develop these further. Young people speak fondly about the activities. It is evident that participating in these activities is supporting young people to grow in confidence.

Young people receive support that enables them to have regular contact with their families and friends. Staff are able to arrange contact that is helpful for the young people; for example, they will use activity-based contact visits to ensure that young people have fun and create positive memories. When contact arrangements are not working well, staff explore alternative ways to facilitate contact and support young people through this.

The quality of recording is good. However, this is not consistent throughout all of the documents that the home is required to keep. On occasion, key information is missing and as a result it is not always clear who has completed the records and when. In addition to this, while there is evidence of management oversight, this is not consistent and consequently the quality of practice is not routinely reviewed.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/05/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be 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.

Recommendations

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return to home interview. Homes should take account of the information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect a child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person should develop and implement an internal quality assurance monitoring and reviewing system to ensure that practice is consistently good and ensure the continuous improvement of practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4). Specifically, that records contain sufficient, accurate detail that is not ambiguous.

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: 1247559

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Marcella Bird

Registered manager: Deborah Woollams

Inspectors

Lisa Gregoire-Parker, social care inspector
Jessica Forshaw, social care inspector

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