

SC366343

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately run and managed.

The home benefits from strong and effective leadership provided by two registered managers.

**Visit dates:** 6 to 7 October 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 16 January 2020

**Previous inspection judgement:** Outstanding

## Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Findings from the visit**

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

### **The care of children**

Young people are well supported, and the care that they receive is making a positive difference to their lives. One young person is in the process of transitioning to independence and said, 'Staff have helped me a lot and I feel ready for independence.'

Young people are encouraged to build positive relationships with staff, who are on hand to guide them and support them. One young person who is new to the home said, 'I feel safe here and the staff have arranged for me to visit my sister and my mum after seven months of not seeing her.' When asked to rate the home, she said she would rate it '10 out of 10'.

The home continues to promote children and young people's education and employment. One young person was supported to continue to access her college work using video technology and maintain her employment as a key worker during the pandemic. Another young person who has recently moved into the home does not have an education placement. However, staff have been proactive in working with education professionals to ensure that a suitable educational provision is identified.

Young people have continued to enjoy fun activities during lockdown which have helped to keep their spirits up. Individuals can choose their preferred activities during young people's meetings. Key-work sessions enable staff and the young people to talk about social distancing and explore their feelings regarding the impact of the pandemic. A room in the home was set up as a gym during lockdown to encourage healthy living.

Young people's health needs are well addressed. There are regular opportunities to meet with the looked after children's nurse who visits the home every month. This supported one young person to access appropriate sexual health advice.

### **The safety of children**

Staff have a good understanding of young people's risks and vulnerabilities. They work hard to try and keep young people safe. However, some young people do not always accept the support and guidance offered by adults, and as a result, place themselves at risk.

The managers take a highly proactive approach to safeguarding the young people. This was confirmed by the missing-from-home police officer who said, 'I can't speak

highly enough of them. They went above and beyond for [name]. They are one of the best homes I've worked with.'

The quality of young people's risk assessments has not yet improved. This means that risk management strategies do not always provide clear guidance to staff, particularly in respect of young people returning home under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are understood by staff. However, on one occasion, staff gave advice to a young person following an incident of self-harm without first seeking the advice of a medical professional or the on-call manager. Records show that staff did speak to the on-call manager and sought medical advice, but there was a delay in them doing this.

The home was inspected by a fire safety officer on 2 September 2020, who identified areas of non-compliance. The provider has been issued with a letter requiring remedial action.

## **Leaders and managers**

The home benefits from strong and effective leadership provided by joint registered managers. Both managers bring a wealth of experience to the role and are suitably qualified. Professionals spoken to during the visit were overwhelmingly complimentary about the managers and staff.

Staff benefit from effective support and supervision. Staff said they feel well supported and valued. Staff have continued to access training in a variety of formats to help to improve their skills, knowledge and practice.

Young people benefit from a stable staff team. The staff team works hard to maintain stability during this COVID-19 pandemic. This ensures that young people are cared for by consistent staff who know them well.

External independent visits continue to monitor the welfare and safety of young people and raise actions for improvement. Visits were carried out via video link, which ensured independent oversight during lockdown.

The home has strong relationships with other agencies, including the police, local authority social workers and the complex safeguarding team. During lockdown, the managers and staff attended strategy meetings and risk management meetings via video link. This meant that any concerns about young people's safety and well-being were shared with the relevant professionals.

One recommendation from the last inspection has been addressed. Effective safer recruitment practices now ensure that all staff are suitable to work with the young people. The recommendation in relation to risk assessments has not been met and has been raised as a requirement to improve practice further.

## 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   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—<br/>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.<br/>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(i)(b))</p> | 30/11/2020 |
| <p>The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to the home—</p> <p>the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home.<br/>(Regulation 25 (2)(b))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 30/11/2020 |

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** SC366343

**Registered provider:** Maple Leaf Care Limited

**Registered provider address:** 16a Regent Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 1RP

**Responsible individual:** Morgiana Nazerali

**Registered managers:** Nicola Higham, Susan Murfitt

## Inspectors

Michelle Bacon, Social Care Inspector

Tracy Mese, Social Care Inspector

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