

2490938

Registered provider: London Borough of Hillingdon

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties. Most referrals to the service are for children in crisis who are suffering long-term placement breakdown. This is often due to behaviours that their current placement is struggling to manage and has served notice.

The statement of purpose states that the home should be considered as a long-term placement that can support young people until they are ready to return home or move on to post-16 accommodation.

The home registered with Ofsted in August 2018. A permanent manager has been in post since April 2023 and has submitted their application to register with Ofsted.

There was one child living in the home at the time of this inspection.

The inspector saw the child, but did not speak to them during this inspection.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 September 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 17 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: A compliance notice was issued under Regulation 27 at the assurance inspection undertaken on 14 December 2022. This compliance notice has been met as the manager has submitted an application to register with Ofsted.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/08/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/02/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
10/12/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Managers and staff understand that the child does not find it easy to trust adults due to their poor early childhood experiences. Staff are committed to helping the child develop positive and nurturing relationships and engage in meaningful communication and activities. Consequently, the child has formed positive relationships, particularly with established staff members, who know the child well. The social worker for the child wrote, 'I am aware that for one member of staff who has been there for some time [name of child] will let her cut [name of child]'s nails. This may seem small, but that is significant in that [name of child] will allow that.' The child experiences a highly individualised level of care.

Staff use key-working sessions, children's meetings, impromptu discussions within the home and activities outside the home to engage the child and seek their wishes and feelings. This has enabled the child to talk to staff about their wish to have their views heard in relation to the plans being made for them. As a result, the child is now supported by an independent advocacy service to ensure their views are heard.

Staff consistently promote and support the educational achievement of the child, who has not been in mainstream education for some time. A home tutoring programme is in place as part of a Youth Justice Order. Recently, the child received certificates in mathematics for the period they had engaged in college education. A major achievement for the child was the completion of three Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) units. This demonstrates that the child receives recognition for their achievements.

The child currently does not wish to attend health appointments; however, staff continue to raise the subject sensitively so that the child understands the importance of why they need to attend to their physical, social and emotional health. Staff persevere in their encouragement for the child to attend important health appointments, and they arrange health assessments to take place in the home and offer to accompany the child to visit the dentist and optician.

Staff encourage and support the child to engage in a wide range of activities, including trips to theme parks and bowling. Staff regularly consult the child about what food they would like to eat. In many instances, requests actioned by staff because of acting on the child's wishes and feelings are then rejected by the child. The independent visitor wrote in the most recent report, 'It feels to me that despite the challenges, ups and downs, staff are clearly sending a strong message to [name of child] that they are committed to [name of child] and are not giving up on them.'

Staff help children to move on from the home by supporting them to develop their independent living skills. However, one independence skills booklet reviewed was not completed fully by staff for a child who had moved on. This compromises

leaders' and managers' ability to provide evidence that children benefit from the programme.

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

Managers have created a solo placement for the child to safeguard the child and others living and working in the home. This will continue until the child moves on. Staff monitor the child on a three-to-one staffing ratio due to the assessed level of risk. Consequently, this has led to a reduction in the frequency and intensity of critical incidents.

When critical incidents or allegations occur, managers ensure that a thorough analysis takes place to identify any learning. The manager undertakes individual reflective discussions with staff and the child to consider what could have been done differently.

Staff talk to the child about the potential risks to them, such as the frequency of missing-from-care episodes. Staff and managers understand the protocol to be followed if the child is missing from the home. Staff encourage the child to remain in the home, and if the child leaves the home without permission, they follow to support the child to return. Currently, staff are supporting the child to adhere to the curfew imposed by a court order.

Risk assessments clearly outline the action that staff should take to safeguard the child and minimise the risk of harm. Staff know the risks for the child. However, the risk assessment for the child does not include details of the appropriate strategies for staff to take to manage a newly identified risk. Furthermore, managers failed to identify this shortfall. Despite this, appropriate action was taken to manage the risk.

Staff talk regularly with the child about their behaviour and help the child to think about the impact their behaviour has on others. The child's behaviour support plan is enhanced through consultation with the specialist psychological support service. The plan helps staff to understand how to communicate with the child during critical stages, for example by using precise bite-sized chunks of information when the child is heightened, allowing the child to process what staff are saying more easily.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the home. They have amended the statement of purpose to reflect a progression to a consistent and longer-term approach to the care of children. Ofsted has yet to receive the updated statement of purpose.

Leaders have provided stability for staff by the appointment of a permanent manager. Staff welcome this appointment and the changes that the new manager has made to promote more effective working practices. The manager has helped staff to improve key-work sessions by addressing relevant themes. Furthermore,

staff now record impromptu discussions with the child to inform the quality of care provided to the child.

Leaders and managers have a clear plan to develop the home so that it operates as a therapeutic living environment for children. Children contributed to converting an outside cabin into a safe, calm space for them to use. Leaders and managers have created a specific area in the garden where children can grow vegetables and plants. This helps children have positive experiences of growing and nurturing something of their own. Staff are to receive training on trauma-informed practice, which will enhance their understanding and responses to children living at the home.

Staff feel supported, valued, and listened to by leaders and managers. Staff have demonstrated an exceptional level of resilience due to the challenges they have faced during the past year. Leaders and managers provide regular supervision, training, reflective group sessions and end-of-the-day check-ins with staff. This enables staff to fully consider the impact that working with trauma has on them and to think about how they respond to children and voice their feelings.

Leaders and managers have good working relationships with a range of specialist agencies, services and local authority personnel. Consequently, the response to addressing the needs of the child is highly effective and coordinated, involving youth justice, family support, the virtual school and the responsible authority. Staff always ascertain the views of the child, ensuring that the child's welfare remains central within multi-agency discussions.

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, The 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(vi)) In particular, ensure that when new risks for children are identified, there is a clear recording of the risk and clear strategies to reduce harm to children. There should also be appropriate management oversight of risk assessments.	6 November 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home's statement of purpose is forwarded to Ofsted once updates have been completed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 4, paragraph 3.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff complete the home's independent skills booklet fully to support the child to develop emotional and mental resilience to cope without the home's support. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 2490938

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: London Borough of Hillingdon, Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 1UW

Responsible individual: Jenna Cowling

Registered manager: Position vacant

Inspector

Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector

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