

SC033919

Registered provider: London Borough of Harrow

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a local authority and provides a short-break service for up to five children with learning and/or physical disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in 2024.

At the time of this inspection, 23 children were using the service. Four children were staying overnight.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 March 2026

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: 4 March 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/03/2025	Full	Good
21/08/2023	Full	Good
12/10/2022	Full	Good
23/06/2021	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children experience well-planned transition arrangements in preparation for their short stays. Time is taken to speak with parents and to involve professionals to gain a clear understanding of each child's individual care needs. The manager carefully considers the child's health needs and identifies any staff training required before their first stay. Staff demonstrate insight into how children are feeling and advocate on their behalf, adjusting the pace of visits, either increasing or reducing them, according to the child's needs. This ensures that the child's feelings and voice are listened to and acted upon throughout the transition process.

Children experience predictable and enjoyable care in this home. On arrival from school, children show clear signs of being settled and familiar with the environment, quickly engaging in their usual routines with the help of personalised visual cues. Staff know the children well and use communication tools such as symbols, photographs and 'now and next' boards effectively so that children understand what is happening and who will be supporting them.

Children are consulted on how they are cared for. Staff use the children's communication preferences to engage them in shaping their own daily routines and environment. Staff share observations in team discussions to increase staff understanding of each child's behaviours and choices. Children are also directly consulted. For example, children have been involved in choosing the new kitchen design and going out with staff to select furnishings for the home.

Children are supported to take part in activities they enjoy. Staff check children's comfort and responses throughout interactions, whether supporting a child to enjoy outdoor activities, providing sensory time alone, or helping a child follow their mealtime routine. Across observations, staff are attentive, calm and responsive, enabling children to communicate using their own methods without frustration.

Children receive effective and timely help to prepare them for their futures. The manager begins to advocate for children while they are still in high school. The manager and staff challenge the placing authority to ensure that children and their families have access to services in good time. This promotes children and their families experiencing positive moves into adult provisions, where they continue to do well.

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

The manager's arrangements for managing medication and children's complex health needs are safe and effective. Audits are carried out that identify issues early and provide an additional level of scrutiny. This includes welcoming external services to review staff practice and adherence to procedures.

Children receive a well-coordinated response when they go missing from the home. Incidents of this nature are rare, but when a child went missing after exiting through a faulty door mechanism, staff took prompt action to search the local area, liaise with the police, and support the child's safe return within an hour. The manager took immediate remedial action to address the environmental risk, including repairing the door mechanism and installing an audible alarm. Staff also strengthened risk management through reflective team learning, updating the missing-from-care procedures, and scenario-based practice designed to clarify roles and improve response times.

The use of physical intervention is rare. When children are distressed or could cause themselves harm, staff use creative strategies to distract children and engage them in things they enjoy. The manager talks to parents and school to gain greater insight and promote consistency of care. As a result, those times when children could harm themselves are significantly reduced and children have a positive experience during those times that present greater risk for the child.

The manager shows professional curiosity and follows up on small pieces of information to keep children safe. This demonstrates a sound understanding of wider contextual safeguarding risks and an ability to advocate strongly for children's safety. However, when children arrive with bruises, the recording of information and the follow-up discussions with school and parents are not always clear. This has led to confusion about the cause of a child's injuries. Such errors increase risks for children who already face additional barriers in explaining how their injuries occurred.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers use feedback to improve the experience of children during their short breaks. The manager reflects on practice in staff team meetings and conducts observational competency training. Managers compliment this development through topic led supervisions to supporting individual staff.

The manager promotes a positive and open culture. Staff speak about the children in a warm and knowledgeable way and discussions show they understand the children well. The manager can shift conversations from light-hearted to focused and staff respond appropriately. This allows the team to share concerns and discuss improvements in a straightforward and constructive way.

Staff receive regular supervision. Staff say they are supported by their managers and colleagues. They are supported as individuals through any personal and professional issues they may have. Additional needs of employees are given a high degree of importance with technology and items placed around the home to make it easier to undertake their role and contribute effectively to the care of children.

Although staff know the children well, the quality of supported care planning is not as strong. Essential information is not consistently recorded in children's plans. As a result, staff who support 23 children with highly individualised routines are sometimes given

conflicting information. This places children at risk of avoidable and potentially serious harm, including choking, because staff may unknowingly follow incorrect instructions.

There are gaps in safer recruitment practice. The checks and vetting of new employees do not fully comply with Schedule 2 requirements. For one member of staff, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check does not correspond with the information held on the Update Service. In addition, the employee's references were not sufficiently explored to establish the reasons for leaving their previous role when working with children.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 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— have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(iii)(vii)) In particular, improve the recording of concerns about children's safety. This includes when children arrive for their short breaks with unexplained bruising.	16 April 2026
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(e)(h))	16 April 2026

In particular, the manager must improve the monitoring of the quality of care planning and ensure that there is no conflicting information that could put children at risk.	
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they maintain good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: SC033919

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Harrow Council Hub, Forward Drive, Harrow HA3 8NT

Responsible individual: Parmjit Chahal

Registered manager: Michalina Paszkowska

Inspector

Lee Riley, Social Care Inspector

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