

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 children's 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 experiencing long-term placement breakdown, often due to behaviours which their current placement is struggling to manage and they have served notice.

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

The home registered with Ofsted in August 2018. The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2023.

There were two children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 May 2024

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: 25 September 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/09/2023	Full	Good
17/08/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/02/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children experience good, individualised care from empathetic and committed staff. Children develop trusting and positive relationships with staff who know them well. Managers and staff work hard to ensure that children feel that where they live is their 'permanent' home. One social worker described staff as 'resilient'. Consequently, children experience care that is consistent and unconditional and helps them to make good progress from their starting points.

Staff help children to understand the importance of education. One child has 100% attendance at school and is doing well. Staff work hard to ensure that the other child engages in education, offering to take them to and from school. Managers offer academic unit awards as an alternative means of study for children to achieve qualifications. Despite staff's efforts, the second child's consistent attendance in school continues to be problematic.

Staff encourage children to engage in a wide range of social and leisure activities. Children can choose the activities they wish to do, for example, going to football, Scouts and trampolining. Staff understand the importance of these activities in promoting confidence, social skills, self-esteem, and independence for children. Consequently, when children decline such activities, staff persevere in identifying their interests and hobbies and working to support them to participate.

Staff provide children with a range of ways to express their views, wishes and feelings. Children have regular key-work sessions and access to a QR code in the home that enables them to provide feedback electronically. Staff promote attendance at weekly children's home meetings, where children can express their wishes regarding activities and food menus and say how they are feeling. One of the children has recently started to attend the local authority children in care participation group.

Staff support children in moving on positively from the home. Staff helped one child to prepare for a move to semi-independent living by the child taking exam modules focusing on demonstrating independence skills. Staff continue to support this child and there are clear plans for staff to take them to their upcoming GCSE exams. Staff celebrate endings as significant events in children's lives, with a party attended by friends and staff where children are given leaving presents. Consequently, this reinforces children's sense of belonging.

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

Children say they feel safe in the home. Children have staff that they can approach if they have any worries or concerns. One child disclosed information to staff that led to additional safeguarding measures being implemented. Managers and staff have ongoing concerns regarding the safety of this child in the community. One staff member said the

child felt comfortable to share this information now but had previously not communicated with staff in this way.

Staff ensure risk assessments for children are up to date. These assessments clearly identify vulnerabilities for children, with strategies for staff to follow to reduce the likelihood of harm. Managers have an appropriate overview of these assessments. Staff talk to children about the potential risks to them and use the exam modules to reinforce understanding of, for instance, online safety. Consequently, children's safety in the home and in the community remains a focus for staff.

Staff know the procedures to be followed when children go missing from the home. Staff follow children if they leave the home without permission or if there is an immediate concern regarding where they may be going. Managers and staff are proactive in alerting children's professional networks when they assess that strategies and protocols to manage children going missing from their care are not working. Managers have a clear focus on advocating for children to ensure that they remain safe.

When incidents occur involving children, the quality of recording and analysis of these events are good. Staff help children to reflect on incidents to understand what the possible triggers may have been. Behaviour support plans outline how staff can promote positive behaviour before situations escalate. Children and staff who were present at the time of incidents are appropriately debriefed. In one serious incident involving the police, staff were clear with the child that, despite what had happened, they held no grudges and still cared about the child. Consequently, children receive clear messages that staff will not reject them due to their behaviours.

Managers ensure that the home remains a safe place for children to live and staff to work in. Some staff have specific responsibilities for fire safety and health and safety matters. Staff diligently undertake regular health and safety checks. Staff encourage children to keep their bedrooms clean and tidy and take pride in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are highly effective. An experienced manager leads the staff team and is supported by an equally experienced deputy and seniors. The responsible individual is a visible presence in the home, regularly spending time with children and staff. Staff commend the manager for bringing clarity and direction in the form of clear processes and procedures.

Leaders and managers are progressing their plans to develop the home into a long-term therapeutic living environment for children. The manager is driving this initiative and is completing a therapeutic counselling course. The manager has plans to share the learning and practice from this course with staff to enhance the care and support offered to children. Leaders and managers have revised their admissions processes to ensure that emergency admissions are kept to a minimum. This means that children are less likely to have competing needs as leaders place a strong emphasis on considering the impact on children already living in the home.

The core staff team has been in place for many years. Staff receive appropriate supervision and support from managers to carry out their roles and responsibilities. Supervision files show evidence of reflective discussion and challenge. Staff undertake training and development to meet the needs of children. A recent six-week training programme on attachment and trauma had a significant impact on staff. Staff said the training helped them to appreciate how loss and trauma influenced children's responses. Children benefit from this supportive and reflective approach.

Leaders and managers acknowledge that the workforce development plan should be reviewed to ensure that staff are completing all relevant training as necessary.

Leaders and managers strive to improve the quality of care offered to children. Effective monitoring processes ensure that leaders and managers have an overview of the day-to-day activities in the home. Leaders and managers value the scrutiny provided by the independent visitor and feedback from external professionals in developing the service.

Leaders and managers work effectively with external and specialist agencies. Leaders and managers initiate contact with drug and alcohol services, sexual health services, child exploitation teams and counselling services as required. This ensures that children receive coordinated and targeted support to meet their needs and promote their well-being.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the workforce development plan is reviewed in line with the training available to staff, to confirm whether some additional training offered should be mandatory. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

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: London Borough of Hillingdon

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

Responsible individual: Jenna Cowling

Registered manager: Jasmine Johnson

Inspector

Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector

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