

# Observation Report

Hollybank Respite Centre, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022



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<b>Visit Details</b>	
<b>Service Visited</b>	Hollybank, 143 Chislehurst Rd, Petts Wood, Orpington , BR6 0DS
<b>Registered Manager</b>	Athena Vassie
<b>Date &amp; Time of Visit</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> July, 12:00 – 16:30
<b>Status of Visit</b>	Announced
<b>Authorised Representative</b>	Charlotte Bradford

# 1. Visit Background

## 1.1 What is an Observation?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to undertake observation visits.

Mandated by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the visits enable trained Authorised Representatives (AR) to visit health and care services – such as hospitals, respite centres, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries and pharmacies.

Observation visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service – but equally they can occur when services have a good reputation.

During the visits we observe service delivery and talk with service users, their families and carers. We also engage with management and staff. The aim is to get an impartial view of how the service is operated and being experienced.

Following a visit, our ‘Observation Report’ is shared with the service provider, local commissioners and regulators and outlines what has worked well and gives recommendations on what could have worked better. All reports are available to view on our website.

## **1.1. Safeguarding**

Observation visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with safeguarding policies. If at any time an AR observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about they need to inform their lead who will inform the service manager, ending the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

## **1.2 Disclaimer**

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date(s) set out. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

## **1.3 Acknowledgements**

Healthwatch Bromley would like to thank the service provider, service users and staff for their contribution and hospitality in enabling this visit to take place. We would also like to thank our AR who conducted the visit and produced this report.

On this occasion, one AR attended the visit. The AR acquired feedback from management and staff. Suggestions have been made on how to improve the service and good practice has been highlighted.

# **2. About this visit**

## **2.1 Hollybank**

On 20th July 2022 we conducted an in-person visit at Hollybank, a children's respite centre in Bromley.

Hollybank offer enjoyable breaks with the highest standard of care for children with disabilities and complex health care needs. The service is available to children, age range 5 to 17 inclusive, with disabilities, complex health care needs, autism, and challenging behaviours.

At Hollybank, they can offer an emergency overnight accommodation for disabled children who have a profile similar to those children who already come here for short breaks.

Service users must be living in the London Borough of Bromley or registered with a Bromley GP to come to Hollybank.

## **2.2 Feedback**

Hollybank received a few parental responses in 2022. Overall, the feedback shared was very positive. The only recommendation, from a parent, was more staff training.

*"I can honestly say they have been amazing."*

*"They look after the children in their care very well."*

*"Hollybank is a safe place."*

## **2.3 Focus of the Visit**

This 'observational' visit and report follows the style of our Enter and View (E&V) visits and reporting. Due to the nature of the service being visited, and the trigger sensitivities involved for service users, this visit had to be carefully planned and safely managed, and therefore deviated slightly from our standard approach.

Our AR arranged a pre-visit meeting with the registered manager who was very happy to welcome Healthwatch Bromley to visit Hollybank. We decided that the safest and most appropriate option for an observation was for our AR to attend with the Regulation 44 independent inspector as they know the service users and are familiar to them. This would help reduce service user anxiety and risk as they know their history and records. The independent

inspector would also be able to go with our AR anywhere and speak to any service user safely.

### 3. Summary of Findings

On 20th July 2022, we conducted an in-person visit to the respite centre. We received a warm welcome from Athena Vassie, the registered manager, and had a tour of the main entrance, the Poppy and Sunshine units, kitchens, the manager's office, the garden and outside play areas.

The registered manager was very polite and helpful. The staff were busy but friendly, relaxed and happy to have Healthwatch Bromley visiting the centre.

The entrance was a well-organised and welcoming environment. The decor is simple, with colourful illustrations and noticeboards on some of the walls; the overall space was bright and comfortable to walk around.

#### Entry and General Accessibility

##### Notes

- A sign in book is at the main entrance for visitors.
- Our AR was asked to do a lateral flow test (LFT) before entering the centre.
- There is a lift, as well as a staircase, to the first floor.
- The centre has two separate units: Poppy and Sunshine - the latter is a medical needs unit.

##### What worked well?

- The front door has effective security doors.
- Each unit has a separate bell to alert staff or management.
- The registered manager came to meet our AR at the entrance and checked that we had followed infection prevention measures.
- Parking is available.
- Fire extinguishers can be seen throughout the building.

##### What could be improved?

- Our AR rang the doorbells for both units twice but there was no response. She telephoned the registered manager to notify them that they were

outside the centre. The doorbell system could be checked to ensure carers or family are not left waiting outside for too long.

Service users were not at Hollybank when our AR arrived for the observation. For the first half of the visit, she had a tour of the centre and then spoke to staff and management. Service users arrived in the latter part of the day. Our AR was able to observe how they interact with the staff and management team. A quiet atmosphere prevailed throughout the centre as they began to arrive in the afternoon. They were offered drinks and snacks. Staff appeared genuinely warm and engaged with service users.

## COVID-19 and Visiting

### Notes

- Visitors are required to sign in and out at reception.
- The centre requests an LFT but it is not mandatory.
- All service users, visitors and staff know the evacuation plans.
- All service users, visitors and staff know how to raise a safeguarding issue. A children's guide is given to family and carers.
- All service users, visitors and staff know how to raise a complaint.

### What has worked well?

- If a staff member has had COVID-19, they must carry out daily LFTs.
- Instead of staff wearing ID badges, Hollybank has a board with staff photos and names in the main entrance.
- Many service users have been going to Hollybank since 2006. They know staff well and so ID badges are not always necessary. The registered manager and staff also pointed out that lanyards can be a safety hazard.
- Staff all wear Hollybank logo t-shirts that are easy to identify.
- Staff must wear ID if they are off site with children - and they must carry a work phone in case of an emergency.

### What could be improved?

- Staff said that wearing ID can be a physical problem as a child can fiddle with this and it can become a hazard. There are alternative ways of providing ID so that a service user, family or carer, can identify each staff member.

## General Environment

### Notes

- For one night, the centre can take up to six service users over both units. There is one emergency bed that is funded by the council.
- Bedrooms are available in both the Poppy and the Sunshine unit. They are all on the ground floor of the centre and easy to access.
- The communal areas in both the Poppy and the Sunshine unit are spacious with comfortable sofas, toys, and a television with a protective case.

### What has worked well?

- All windows in the centre have restrictors for service users' safety.
- Both units have an easily accessible emergency bag detailing information on each individual child – personal evacuation plans.
- The Poppy unit has one bedroom with Whiterock walls created especially for any service user who eats material not considered to be a foodstuff (PICA).
- All bedrooms in both units have a replaceable picture and the name of the service user on the door to show who will be using the room on a particular night.
- Bedrooms have hoists and high/low beds to support the needs of different service users.
- Bedroom furniture is intentionally heavy to avoid service users being able to pick it up.
- Floor beds have also been created in some rooms, with soft sides for service users' safety.
- The centre carries out a fire drill every month with staff and every third month with service users. All service users are supervised.
- There are multiple fire exits clearly marked around both units in the centre.
- The garden is simple but a good size and has swings, a trampoline, tables with benches and umbrellas. There are shaded areas, a large tent and matting on the floor for wheelchair users.
- There is a second outdoor space with concrete tiles and a sensory garden. This area is only used by the Sunshine unit. It is a good space for wheelchair users.



- There is also a courtyard which has been beautifully painted with murals and has an Astro turf floor.

### **What could be improved?**

- Bathrooms are of a good size but dated. The Poppy unit bathroom also has a damp issue. The centre wants to replace the bathrooms and putting in new floors is a priority to help prevent further damp.
- At the time of the visit, the Sunshine unit bathtub was not in use as it is dated, unsafe and needs replacing.
- The centre has requested better Wi-Fi as the internet is currently of poor quality.
- The centre has also requested that both units have a Netflix account to provide more varied entertainment for service users.
- Some of the curtains and curtain rails in the bedrooms are dated and could be replaced.

## **Activities and Personal Involvement**

### **Notes**

- The centre provides a range of activities to suit each service user's needs and offers a range of activities, testing out what works best for each individual.
- Provision is made for any service users, and family/carers, with English as an additional language (EAL).

### **What has worked well?**

- There is an arts and crafts room on the first floor and an IT room which is popular with many service users.
- The centre has IT protection on all computers to protect service users from inappropriate sites and viruses.
- Service users can suggest activities if they have the capacity to communicate and engage with staff. Most are non-verbal and the centre provides a book with pictures to assist them.
- Staff teach service users skills such as personal care to encourage them to be more independent. They help them to try new foods, and over time, they have noticed improvements with some of the service users.
- The staff monitor the service users' peer groups. They encourage and support them to build friendship groups.

- At the time of the visit, the centre had recently purchased a new bus to enable them to take service users to activities outside the centre. This means they can also take service users who need a wheelchair. The centre pays for the petrol. Family or carers can give the service users pocket money for any outdoor trips and pay for any entrance fees.

#### **What could be improved?**

- The centre has a garden with a trampoline and enough space for service users to play ball games. One staff member suggested that service users would benefit from having more facilities for outdoor physical activity, subject to the necessary funding being available.

## **Diet and Cultural Practices**

### **Notes**

- The respite centre provides a menu which is updated frequently to accommodate service users' needs and dietary requirements.
- The kitchens in the Poppy and Sunshine units appeared to be clean and well organised.
- Both kitchens have stable doors, as well as full doors, for service user safety.
- Allergens information is clearly indicated on kitchen signage.

### **What has worked well?**

- As part of a pre-assessment, the centre checks with the service user and their family/carer as to cultural identities or ethnic culinary preferences.
- There are lots of menu choices for service users. The staff are excellent at adapting meals to be culturally appropriate and enjoyable.
- Service users are encouraged to contribute to menu planning as much as they can. When new food has been a success with a service user, staff update their menu cards and share this with the carer /family.
- The centre logs allergies and food intolerance. This also includes service ware that should or should not be used for safety reasons.
- There was clear signage on the kitchen cupboards.

### **What could be improved?**

- We found no potential areas for improvement.

## Feedback and Complaints

### Notes

- All service users, visitors and staff know how to raise a complaint.

### What has worked well?

- All complaints are logged. The registered manager said that they do not receive many, but all comments and concerns are recorded.
- The centre must keep a record of any service user restraints and sanctions – there have been none since the previous inspection visit.
- A staff member said that they raised a concern with another member of staff. They called a meeting with a specific individual, and they were satisfied with the process and outcome.

### What could be improved?

- We found no potential areas for improvement.

## Staffing and Training

### Notes

- At the time of the visit, the centre had 22 staff: four managers, one administrator, two assistants, one nursing associate and the rest are support workers. The minimum staff ratio is four staff to every six service users.
- Our AR representative noted that the staff they spoke to on the day of the visit had all worked at the centre more than four years and some had been there since it first opened. They commented that there is a lot of loyalty to the service users, staff, family and the centre.
- Hollybank recently recruited two new staff members.
- At the time of the visit, Hollybank had one staff vacancy – for male support.
- Hollybank only uses their own team of staff. They do not employ agency staff.

### What has worked well?

- The registered manager said that the centre has a very small turnover of staff.
- There were examples of good practice found throughout the observation in relation to staff training, infection prevention and control, risk management and the respite centre's environment.

- The registered manager carries out regular supervisions with staff every two months.
- Staff are both monitored and supported in their work.
- The registered manager is in the process of setting up epilepsy training for all staff.
- There are regular staff training opportunities. People can apply for the NVQ3 Residential Childcare after a six-month probation period.
- They have begun face-to-face training again since lockdown eased earlier this year -although a lot of training continues online.

#### **What could be improved?**

- Last minute staff cover can be difficult. The registered manager said that every respite centre always wants more staff. They currently have a vacancy, and it would improve the service if that position was filled as they need another male on site to support some of the service users who are physically stronger and bigger than others.
- Staff said that they would like to do more face-to-face training as the delivery is much better for the work that they are doing. For example, safeguarding training would be better in-person as it is very time-consuming online.

## 4. Carers and Families Feedback

At the time of the visit, no carers or families were available to speak to us. We left questionnaires with the registered manager so that they could be distributed. We said that carers and family could either complete the form and post it back to us via our freepost address, or we would be happy to arrange telephone calls if it was more convenient.

Our AR followed up several times with the centre to see if family or carers had left completed forms at Hollybank for Healthwatch or if anyone was happy to speak to us over the telephone. We received one completed questionnaire, in the post, from a family member.

## General

### Notes

- Their child has used the centre for up to four years.
- The typical length of stay is a day and overnight.

### What, according to the family member, has worked well?

- The centre always lets them know what food their child enjoys, and that they are provided with enough food and drink during their stay.
- The centre handles dietary requirements well and takes into consideration food preferences. They also assist with helping them to eat and/or drink when needed.
- They think they are safe at the centre and that they are kept informed regarding concerns about their child, e.g. accidents, behaviour issues, ill health.
- There is good access to a GP practice or Urgent Care if needed.
- They are satisfied with the COVID-19 precautions from March 2020 to present and the arrangements made here to protect service users.
- They feel listened to if they raise any concerns or questions.

### What could be improved?

- The family member said that they are unsure if staff help with homework that is set by the school their child attends.
- They are unsure if there is a programme of activities available and if their child has a say on the type of activities offered to service users.

## Families' Selected Comments

*"My children are happy, we are happy."*

## 5. Staff Feedback

During the visit, our AR spoke to the registered manager and four staff members.

## Referral

### Notes

- On the day of the observation, the registered manager said the centre currently supports 48 service users.

## General

### Notes

- The registered manager said that they have been given a good supply of LFTs.

### **What, according to the staff, has worked well?**

- On the day of the visit, staff commented that they felt supported in their role by management. One staff member said that the managers are always willing to listen and help.
- Virtual meetings have worked well. The registered manager said that this is a new way of working and that they are becoming more efficient at attending 'children in need' meetings.
- The registered manager encourages employees to test frequently for COVID-19 and to stay up to date on their vaccinations.
- Masks and gloves continue to be used for service users' intimate personal care.
- The centre is currently satisfied with the provision level of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- A staff member said that management were very supportive when they had COVID-19, both during and after the illness.
- The centre reopened in October 2020, following the first lockdown, and has remained open since then. No service user missed their scheduled dates to access the centre.
- The registered manager said that the staff are dedicated and frequently change their shifts to suit the needs of service users and their family/ carers.
- Staff said that breaks are adequate. One staff member commented that children must not be left unattended to avoid any potential safety issues. They said that they "cannot leave a colleague on their own, vulnerable, for the sake of a break". The children are prioritised. Another staff member said that it can be harder having adequate breaks during the summer holiday period although in a normal week a 30-minute break is possible.

### **What could be improved?**

- One staff member commented that “children in the past weren’t as challenging as they are now. Over time, the work has become harder.” Following on from the previous comments, further staff recruitment could help to support the health and well-being current staff.

### **Selected Comments**

*“Been really lucky. Given lots of COVID-19 tests. ”*

*“Mask wearing was hard at times when communicating.”*

*“Virtual meetings are much easier.”*

*“[During lockdown] Because of my asthma, I was asked to stay home. I had to sign a disclaimer to go to work.”*

*“Sometimes we are short of staff. I know that happens everywhere. They are in the process of recruiting more staff. ”*

*“If I see anything that I am not happy with, I raise it and feel listened to. We are here for the welfare of the children. We should be their advocates.”*

*“You have to want to do this job.”*

*“All [service users] are individuals. You need to understand and communicate well with them. Most are non-verbal, but I can understand what they want.”*

*“Building relationships with the children is key. We have very good relationships, and they feel safe with staff they know.”*

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the analysis of all feedback obtained, Healthwatch Bromley would like to make the following recommendations.

### 6.1 General

6.1.1 The two doorbells were rung twice but there was no reply. The AR called the registered manager to ask for them to be let into the centre.

*Perhaps the doorbell system needs to be checked to ensure carers or family are not stuck waiting outside for too long.*

6.1.2. One staff member commented that children were not as challenging as they are now. Over time, the work has become harder.

*Following on from the previous comments, staff recruitment could help to support this need as people could take more breaks to ensure their health and wellbeing is also taken care of.*

6.1.3. Another staff member commented, "you have got to know the service users so well that they recognise your face". They said it can be challenging at times when new staff come in as they aren't familiar to the service users.

*Recruiting the right people is key and the NHS is currently facing staff shortages. We are aware that it is a difficult time for services, but Hollybank would benefit from further recruitment support to deliver its service effectively.*

### 6.2 Facilities

6.2.1. At the time of the visit, the Sunshine unit bathtub was not in use as it is dated, unsafe and needs replacing. There was also a damp issue in the Sunshine unit bathroom.

*At the time of the visit, the registered manager said that Hollybank wants to replace the bathrooms and putting in new floors is a priority to help prevent*



*further damp. They also are trying to raise the funds to replace the bathtub which is currently not safe to use.*

6.2.2. Some of the curtains and curtain rails in the bedrooms are dated and/or need repairing.

*It would be beneficial for Hollybank to replace curtains and curtain rails that need repairing.*

6.2.3. Hollybank staff want to purchase better Wi-Fi as internet access is currently of poor quality. They have also requested that both units to have a Netflix account to provide more entertainment for service users.

*Healthwatch Bromley encourage both better quality Wi-Fi and Netflix to be available in Hollybank to support its services and develop the activities programme that they offer to service users.*

### **6.3 Activities and Personal Involvement**

6.3.1. At the time of the visit, one staff member commented that it can sometimes be difficult to engage with service users in terms of healthy life choices.

*The centre has a garden with a trampoline and enough space for service users to play a ball game. Increased funding could allow the development of more outdoor facilities to support a wider range of physical exercise.*

6.3.2 A family member said that they are unsure if staff help with homework that is set by the school their child attends. They are also unsure if there is a programme of activities available and if their child has a say on the type of activities offered to service users.

*The centre could provide further information to carers/family members regarding activities that their child engages with during their stay. They could also include a note on what homework is/isn't completed whilst visiting the centre.*

## 6.4 Staff

6.4.1. Staff said that they would like more face-to-face training as the quality of study is better for the work that they are doing. For example, safeguarding training would be better in-person as it is very time-consuming online.

*Healthwatch Bromley agree that face-to-face training should be supported, when suitable, if it is more effective for staff.*

6.4.2. Last minute staff cover can be difficult. The registered manager said that every respite centre always wants more staff.

*Hollybank currently have a vacancy, and it would improve the service if that position was filled as they need another male on site to support some of the service users who are physically stronger, and bigger than others.*

6.4.3 Staff said that wearing ID can be a physical problem as a child can fiddle with this and it can become a hazard.

*Healthwatch Bromley advises exploring alternative ways of providing ID so that a service user, family or carer, can easily identify each staff member when using the respite centre.*

## 7. Glossary of Terms

AR	Authorised Representative
CQC	Care Quality Commission
LFT	Lateral Flow Test
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment

## 8. Distribution and Comment

This report is available to the public and is shared with our statutory and community partners. Accessible formats are available.

If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.

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Healthwatch was established in 2013 in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Within this legislation [Arrangements to be made by relevant bodies in respect of local Healthwatch Organisations Directions 2013] Healthwatch has a right to a reply within 20 working days to Reports and Recommendations submitted by Local Healthwatch to a service provider.

## Report & Recommendation Response Form

Report sent to	charlotte@healthwatchbromley.co.uk
Date sent	20.01.2023
Report title	Hollybank Observation Report
	Response (If there is a nil response, please provide an explanation for this within the statutory 20 days)
Date of response provided	12.1.23
Response:	
1.	On page 4, Hollybank is referred to, in the report as a 'child health centre'. Please can this be changed to Children's Respite centre
2.	Page 4 - the age range is 5 to 17 inclusive. We are not registered for anyone 18+
3.	Page 5 - With regards to the improvement required with the doorbells - it is acknowledged that there is sometimes a delay answering. This is due to the fact that once young people go to school, staff are often completing other tasks elsewhere in the building. The bell rings in the Poppy office and Sunshine kitchen. The service are aware that this needs to be addressed for unexpected visitors as well as planned visitors.
4.	Page 6 - It is Poppy unit that has the bedroom with Whiterock walls for children with PICA, not Sunshine Unit as stated in the report
5.	Page 7 - Poppy unit has the damp issue which is being reviewed by plumbers in January 2023 as previous efforts to control damp over the autumn/winter period were unsuccessful. Since the visit took place, the Sunshine bathroom has undergone a complete renovation including: New flooring; New bath which has the ability to tilt, rise and lower etc. This has not only improved any potential damp issue and general aesthetics, but the bath is now fully accessible. (It was not the Poppy unit bath that could not be used). At the time of the Healthwatch observation we were sourcing baths and delivery



times which were initially a 12-16 week wait. Soon after the visit the company who installed the new bath were given the contract as they had a 4 week wait. It was installed in September.

6. Page 8 - dietary section. The grab bag is not associated with children's dietary requirements, it is an emergency bag detailing information on each individual child - personal evacuation plans. There is a corresponding bag in Poppy unit too. This may be more appropriate in the general environment section
7. Page 12, section 6.2.1 This indicates the bathtub in Poppy Unit, however this is factually incorrect and should refer to the bath in Sunshine Unit
8. Page 12, section 6.2.2. There is a reference to curtains and curtain rails. For information, Poppy Unit uses Velcro to fasten curtains to the wall due to the risk of children pulling on curtains resulting on the rails being pulled off the wall.
9. Page 13 section 6.3.2 Contact diaries are filled in each time the child leaves Hollybank for either home or school and details of activities, food etc are recorded in them. This enables communication with the parent to make them aware of what activities/school work is completed. If the contact diary is not sent in with the young person, paper will be used. It is unusual for children to come to Hollybank with Homework to complete.

Signed  
Name  
Position



Athena Vassie  
Registered Manager