



**Quality Assurance Review Report
HOME-START Richmond, Kingston & Hounslow**

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1. About Quality Assurance in the Home-Start network

The quality of a Local Home-Start's practice is assured by the Home-Start UK Quality Assurance (QA) System for local Home-Starts. This robust system is based on a programme of self-assessment against Home-Start's Quality Standards and a process that focuses on the ongoing development and continuous improvement of all practice areas relating to the governance, management, and service delivery of Local Home-Starts.

Home-Start UK holds ISO 9001 accreditation and the Investors in People Award.

The Quality Areas

The standards fall into the following Quality Areas:

1. Family Support
2. Equality Diversity and Inclusion
3. Operating a Home-Start
4. Quality and Impact
5. Protecting Families
6. Money and Funding
7. Staff and Volunteers
8. Governance and Leadership
9. Brand, Communication, Data and Digital
10. Partnerships and Influence

QA Review outcomes

The purpose of a quality review is to assess whether there is appropriate evidence to demonstrate that a LHS meets the requirements of the HSQA standard. The LHS must meet all of the legal and mandatory requirements and show evidence of their work towards achieving the remaining quality indicators to achieve accreditation. LHSs which meet the quality requirements will be awarded the HSQA Quality Mark by HSUK. If the reviewer finds insufficient evidence, to show that the LHS complies with any particular quality requirements, the LHS will be required to carry out improvement actions in order to fully meet the standard.

Where there are indicators that are a 'must' or have a legal/regulatory dimension, these will be highlighted as a 'Requirement' and must be met before the LHS can be accredited. Where there is an indicator that is a 'should' or is advisory, these will be highlighted as a 'Recommendation' and can be part of an ongoing plan post accreditation. The QA team will diary in time for progress on improvement plans.

If the assessment indicates that the LHS has achieved the standards, it will receive a certificate and a logo from HSUK, which demonstrates that the organisation has met the standard of quality required. This will help them to promote and celebrate their achievement.

A member of the HSUK Quality Team will act as lead reviewer to undertake the HSQA review and will be responsible for co-ordinating and communicating with the LHS under review. HSUK guarantees that all reviewers are trained in the process and understand their role and responsibilities and each review will undergo an internal quality assurance exercise to ensure fairness and consistency is maintained.

LHSs which have been through the review process will be asked for feedback about their experience and this will be used to adapt and improve the process. Feedback will be shared with the Quality Reference Group. LHSs have the right to appeal against the final outcome of the review using the Home-Start 'Problem Solving and Dispute Resolution Procedure'.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Quality Improvement Plan excel spreadsheet.

2. INTRODUCTION TO HOME-START RICHMOND, KINGSTON AND HOUNSLOW

Background and context

Home-Start Richmond, Kingston & Hounslow (HSRKH) is a charity that has been supporting families since 1995.

Each of the three boroughs covered has its unique challenges and opportunities. Richmond and Kingston have, according to Trust for London, much lower rates of poverty than the London average, while Hounslow aligns with the London average. This translates into funding opportunities and service demand, with higher demand reported from Hounslow, with less funding. All three boroughs have become more diverse over the last decade, according to the demographics reported in the 2021 census.

At the time of the HSQA review, there were twelve active trustees and a staff team of fifteen.

HSRKH reported a total income of £647,139 for year ending March 2024 and continue to be financially sustainable thanks to sound financial management and dynamic leadership.

HSRKH provides services to families with levels of need up to and including child in need. The core service is volunteer home visiting and the provision of family groups in each of the three boroughs. In their annual report for 2023-4, HSRKH reported that they provided support to 290 families with 462 children, totalling 4344 hours of support.

Last QA Review

HSRKH was last reviewed in 2019 where they achieved 99% classed as 'achieving high-quality'.

Pre review checks

Notes and comments

Pre-review checks:

The list of trustees on @Home was mostly consistent with those registered on the Charities Commission and Companies House registers at the time of this review. One trustee was not listed on the Charity Commission website, but HSRKH have taken advice and addressed this within the review period.

Companies House: Home Start Richmond, Kingston & Hounslow is registered as a Private Limited Company by guarantee without share capital use of 'Limited' exemption', incorporated on 9th March 2005. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

Charities Commission: Home Start Richmond, Kingston & Hounslow (HSRKH) was registered on 11th April 2025: Standard registration. Recognised for gift aid. All annual returns and trustees annual report received on time for the past five years.

On Home-Start UK's Charity Log, there is one record of a reportable incident. In the past twelve months, we have records of contact to discuss fundraising, safeguarding, and training for trustees. HSRKH have accessed grants/resources from HSUK.

Summary of survey results (as of 13th March 2025 when the surveys closed).

Families and volunteers were not surveyed as both groups had recently completed surveys for HSRKH. Responses from these surveys were shared with the reviewer.

Staff survey:

Fifteen employees completed the staff survey. Asked how supported they felt in personal development and wellbeing, 11 staff answered extremely well and the remaining four responded with very well or somewhat well. All rated their confidence in identifying safeguarding concerns and taking appropriate action as strong (highest rating of 5).

Partner Surveys: Twelve organisations completed the partner survey, which is a very high response rate. Ten out of twelve responses rated HSRKH as excellent, with the remaining two rating HSRKH as very good.

HSQA REVIEW ACTIVITY

HSRKH submitted a well prepared and detailed self-assessment, along with supporting documentation, which was reviewed by the HSQA reviewer. The reviewer carried out file checks and interviews remotely. The reviewer spoke to five members of staff, two volunteers, the Chair, Treasurer, GDPR Lead and Safeguarding Lead. A feedback meeting was held with the Chair, the CEO and Impact and Operations Manager. The Reviewer thanks all the trustees and staff involved in the review for their commitment to the review process.

3. STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS EVIDENCED AT REVIEW

Family Support

HSRKH self-assessed this standard area as fully met. From reviewing the evidence available, all indicators in this area are met and is a strong area for HSRKH. There are no requirements or recommendations.

HSRKH offer services to families within early help and child in need as well as self-referrals. At the time of the review, there was not a significant waiting list, and families were usually waiting no more than 4-8 weeks to be matched with a volunteer. The reviewer was impressed by the allocation process, which is overseen by the Family Support Manager but led by a skilled Family Support Coordinator. The clarity of the allocation process ensures all families are kept in mind by the team and that each Coordinator is able to access the full pool of volunteers. Interviews with Family Support Coordinators (FSCs) confirmed that this process was valuable for families and volunteers but was also a valued point of learning for the team.

The referral criteria for HSRKH services are clearly defined on their website. The team have worked hard to ensure that self-referrals are easy for referring families and that the risks inherent in self-referrals are suitably managed. Again, a skilled FSC manages this process.

While staff that were interviewed highlighted the need to grow volunteer numbers, at present the team are able to balance referrals and volunteer capacity.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

HSRKH self-assessed this standard area as partially met at the submission as they did not have an approved EEDI action plan in place. From reviewing the evidence available, the reviewer agrees that this standard is partially met and acknowledges that significant steps are being taken to create a meaningful action plan. See improvement plan for detail.

Operating a Home-Start

HSRKH self-assessed this standard area as fully met. From reviewing the evidence available, all indicators in this area are met and it is a strong area for HSRKH.

The reviewer was impressed by the robust processes supporting the organisation's operations. HSRKH's CEO has brought agile ways of working to the organisation, which includes holding regular retrospectives to review what is working, what is not working, and to plan next steps. She has also brought a culture of learning, growth, and continuous improvement; staff who were interviewed reported that they are thriving in this environment! Everyone interviewed as part of this review talked in incredibly positive terms about the working dynamics, the skills of the team, and their joy in the work.

In this difficult economic climate, HSRKH have done well to grow and to remain financially stable. While the current funding climate is challenging, HSRKH are – as the Chair pointed out – in the best position to manage this, as they have a tenacious senior management team and are holding reserves slightly above policy level in order to run a planned deficit budget over the next 12-24 months.

HSRKH have the required mandatory policies in place and have submitted satisfactory evidence of how they manage model policies as required by the Handbook. All trustees leading on specific areas, articulated how they get assurance that policies are being carried out in practice.

Quality and Impact

HSRKH self-assessed this standard area as fully met. From reviewing the evidence available, all indicators in this area are met and demonstrate that HSRKH excels at understanding and demonstrating their impact. No requirements or recommendations are made.

HSRKH have developed a clear theory of change which underpins their work and is used throughout the organisation at various touchpoints. As such, the theory of change is a working document that guides strategic priorities and informs service design and development.

HSRKH use a range of processes to gather data, feedback, and stories to inform their understanding of the difference they make to families. This includes case studies, volunteer surveys, quantitative data that records changes in needs and wellbeing, a parent form, WhatsApp surveys after summer events and – recently – audio stories. While funders and potential donors will gain a powerful sense of HSRKH's impact by hearing directly from families that have received support, the reviewer was also encouraged to hear that families had found the opportunity to share their stories empowering and that it built their confidence.

The commitment to the HSUK quality process was evidenced from the detail of the HSQA submission, which was comprehensive and easy to follow, as well as through interviews with staff and trustees. Many of those interviewed as part of this review shared how they had used the

HSUK checklists to identify gaps in practice or process and take action. Trustees and staff have been forthcoming, engaged, and honest in their discussions with the reviewer.

Protecting Families

HSRKH self-assessed this standard area as fully met. From reviewing the evidence available, the reviewer agrees that all standards are met, that this is an area of strength for HSRKH, and that there are no requirements. One recommendation, however, is to review communication with referrers once families have been matched. This is based on feedback from referrers which – while very positive – noted that this might be an area for improvement. See improvement plan for detail.

HSRKH have worked closely with Cambridge University to better understand the “voice of the child” and to train volunteers to recognise what young children and babies are saying through their behaviour and interactions. This is an important piece of work for the whole sector and one that greatly enriches HSRKH’s work and the impact they achieve for families.

Through completing the HSUK Safeguarding Checklist, the Safeguarding Lead identified the need for file audits to be carried out and the Safeguarding Lead and Family Support Manager identified the need to build positive working relationships with local safeguarding partnership in each of the three boroughs. This has been achieved and is showing success.

HSRKH have a safeguarding taskforce which includes the Safeguarding Lead from the Board of Trustees. Among other things, the taskforce look for trends in ROCAs and the team were able to share evidence with the reviewer that showed how a trend of families living in hotels and houses of multiple occupancy was presenting a new risk and how this risk was being mitigated by the team.

HSRKH submitted their Child Safeguarding policy, which included local information. HSRKH has an established staff team and trustees with many years of experience working with families with young children.

The HSQA file checks of volunteer, staff, and trustee files showed that appropriate safeguarding training is in place and is relevant to the roles, supervisions are recorded, and DBS renewals are in place and monitored closely. File checks as well as interviews noted that risk assessments are carried out at appropriate points and that risk is actively discussed throughout the volunteer/family journey.

Money and Funding

HSRKH self-assessed this standard area as fully met. From reviewing the evidence available, all indicators are met. No requirements or recommendations are made.

HSRKH reported a total gross income of £647,139 for financial reporting for the year ending 31 March 2024. HSRKH are financially stable, and the treasurer prepares detailed reports for the board. The reviewer was particularly impressed by the financial reports submitted as the narrative provided by finance manager and the treasurer, which connected the financial situation of HSRKH with the number of families supported and the complexities of families being supported. In this way, the financial reports connect clearly to strategy and mission and enable all trustees to connect in a meaningful way with the data.

HSRKH has a reserves policy of between 6-9 months' costs and board minutes evidence clear discussion of the risks and opportunities of holding over 6 months' reserves. Currently, slightly more is being held on the basis of running a deficit budget over the next year to mitigate the impact of the loss of one funding stream.

HSRKH submitted an Ethical Fundraising policy. There are appropriate financial control processes in place, in line with policy, with suitable checks and balances at various touchpoints throughout the year.

Staff and Volunteers

HSRKH self-assessed this standard area as partially met. From reviewing the evidence available, all indicators are met. The fact that HSRKH identified HSQA9 as partially met is, perhaps, testament to their vigilance and routine assessment of staff and volunteer safety. The reviewer was satisfied that the current processes satisfy the standard.

HSRKH staff that were interviewed as part of this review consistently reported that HSRKH was a great place to work, where they feel supported by the team around them, where processes are enabling and helpful, and where they are continually learning.

One FSC that was interviewed has worked at HSRKH for nearly 20 years and said that throughout that time, despite all the changes they have experienced, they have always felt supported and valued. This is a real testament to the Home-Start ethos and all the teams involved!

HSRKH have a clear and helpful process for staff recruitment: using pie charts they visualise the percentages of a role's time and energy that should go to different aspects of the role. With these pie charts in place, HSRKH can constructively support if staff are overloaded or stretched in directions that aren't aligned with strategic ambitions.

Staff and volunteers go through a safer recruitment procedure and there is a robust administrative process underpinning this. Staff and volunteer files in the sample checked had the relevant documents and there was evidence of induction and training relevant to the role.

Personal safety and lone working arrangements are clear and in place for volunteers and staff. Risks around personal safety are part of weekly allocation meetings and, as the Family Support Manager reported, discussing risks as a team protects against bias and enhances the team's understanding and knowledge.

Fifteen members of staff completed the staff survey and provided detailed responses to the questions asked. Staff spoke positively about the supportive culture and supervision.

Governance and Leadership

HSRKH self-assessed this standard area as fully met. From reviewing the evidence available, the reviewer assesses that this standard is met and there are no requirements or recommendations.

The board have recently reviewed their governing documents and moved from an open to closed membership, acknowledging that the open membership was difficult to monitor and brought minimal benefits to the organisation.

Currently, the HSRKH board is at capacity with 12 trustees. However, some of these are nearing the end of their three terms, so the board will reduce in number over the next 12 months. All elected roles are filled and the reviewer noted that all board members who were interviewed

demonstrated a keen awareness of the organisation's financial position, risks, strengths, and opportunities – taking real ownership of their areas of responsibility.

While HSRKH are building on their processes for managing risk and it is acknowledged that the risk register is a work in progress, the quality of discussions taking place within the board provides assurance to the reviewer that risks are being actively assessed and managed.

As discussed elsewhere in this report, those on the board who have taken on specific responsibilities are actively using HSUK checklists to get assurance of compliance with policy and procedures. The dynamic between CEO and Chair was reported as being effective with adequate support and challenge.

Annual reports have been submitted to the Charities Commission and Companies House within timescales. The report for 2023-2024 was engaging, presenting a clear picture of HSRKH's achievements, challenges, and ambitions, and showcasing the forward-thinking approach of this Home-Start and commitment to continuously doing better for families.

Brand, Communication, Data and Digital

HSRKH self-assessed this standard area as fully met. From reviewing the evidence available, all indicators are met. There are no requirements made. One recommendation is made to include a link to HSUK in the 'about us' section of the website (HSQA14). See improvement action plan for details.

HSRKH has an engaging website with clear information for referrers, self-referring families, and volunteers.

HSRKH has an exceptionally high level of data maturity and uses technology to engage volunteers through webinars and lunch and learns. HSRKH has also worked with tech companies to develop an API for WhatsApp which enables volunteers and families to communicate without sharing numbers. HSRKH has shared their product and learning with the network as it enables compliance with the code of conduct and mitigates the risks of sharing contact details. HSRKH is working through the ethical implications of the technology.

Partnerships and Influence

HSRKH self-assessed this standard area as fully met. From reviewing the evidence available, the reviewer assesses that all indicators are met. There are no requirements or recommendations.

HSRKH consistently engages with the wider Home-Start network as is evidenced by the pro-active approach to building support within the London Home-Starts and willingness to share ideas and learning. The senior management and board of trustees noted that HSUK had been less engaged over the last year.

The HSQA partner agency survey response stated that:

"They go the extra mile for the families they support".

"I find them positive and refreshing to work with".

"Delightful, passionate team with excellent communication skills and empathy"

“Well trusted across the community and council”.

“It has always been a pleasure to award funding to Home-Start and be part of the work that they do”.

“The team are good at communicating the impact on the community so that we know our contribution is meaningful”.

Another London Home-Start described HSRKH as “open, approachable, and constructive”.

The Mayor of Richmond Upon Thames said “I am impressed by their professionalism and their commitment ... The quality of support to families seems to be very good. They communicate well and they are well-organised in fundraising.”

Areas of Good and Excellent Practice

Family Support (FSU)

HSRKH show a high level of commitment to supporting families. Working with Cambridge university to better understand the experience and perspectives of babies and young children evidences a deep commitment to improving outcomes for families across Richmond, Kingston and Hounslow. This could be a model of best practice for the Home-Start network.

Operating a Home Start (OHS)

HSRKH working practices owe much to the CEO's background in tech. Retrospectives and organisational structures that enable innovation, communication, and learning could be a model of best practice across the network.

Quality and Impact (QAI)

HSRKH provided a very clear and well-documented quality submission. Staff and trustees engaged enthusiastically in the review process and were able to cite examples of how they have used the quality assurance checklists over the past 18 months to improve their work. Continuous improvement is embedded in ways of working at HSRKH.

Protecting Families (PFA)

The Safeguarding Taskforce and concentric circles of safeguarding at HSRKH evidence a clear approach to safeguarding that minimises the chances of bias in decision making and drift in case management. This could be a model of best practice for other Home-Starts.

Governance and Leadership (GAL)

HSRKH currently has a large board but, as long-standing trustees come to the end of their 3 terms of 3 years, this will shrink. Ways of working, including taskforces and areas of specialism, ensure that all trustees are involved, engaged, and committed to HSRKH's continued success.

Money and Funding (FUN)

HSRKH have remained financially stable and resilient through the current cost of living crisis. The CEO has led an innovative and strategic approach to fundraising that is not often seen in the Home-Start network. While this is a difficult fundraising climate, HSRKH are well-placed to continue attracting funds and working with partners outside of statutory services, trusts, and grants.

Staff and Volunteers (VOL)

HSRKH have attracted a talented team of staff and volunteers that enjoy being part of the team and are committed to learning and improving. A dedicated Volunteer Coordinator brings energy and resilience to volunteer recruitment. Volunteers can access ongoing learning, lunch and learns, coffee mornings, and webinars. Some volunteers have also taken part in specialist training to recognise and understand the voice of babies and young children.

Brand, Communication, Data and Digital (BAC)

HSRKH has an engaging website with clear referral information. They use technology inventively, for example asking supported families to record voice notes that can be shared with funders. And, they have initiated tech solutions to communications between families and volunteers. HSRKH would be keen to work with network partners to test this technology.

Partnership and Influence (BRD)

HSRKH have a strong track record in working with partner organisations and this review has evidenced innovative work with Cambridge University and tech organisations working on a communications solution. Feedback from partners suggest that HSRKH is a valued partner for referrers, others in the network, and funders.

4. Development Plan

The requirements and recommendations outlined in the report, are summarised in the attached development plan for HSRKH (see excel spreadsheet). The development plan should be discussed with the trustee board, with a lead trustee and member of staff named for each area. Requirements should be addressed first, with recommendations forming a longer-term development plan.

All indicators were reviewed by the QA Specialist from documentary evidence and interview.

The presentation of the review findings relates to the evidence reviewed on the dates of the review.

This audit was undertaken on a sampling basis, as such, issues might exist that were not witnessed.

5. Review Result

Please see the highlighted requirements on the development plan (excel sheet). Those highlighted in red need to be met before accreditation. These will need to be met by the date given. HSUK would like to thank HSRKH for working through the QA process with high levels of commitment and cooperation.

Signed

Karen Bodger

Quality Improvement Specialist

On behalf of Home-Start UK Date: 26th March 2025

Moderated By

Helen Hyett

Assistant Director Quality and Safeguarding

On behalf of Home-Start UK Date: 31st March 2025

Home-Start UK Quality Assurance System