



HOME FROM HOME'S 'MODEL OF CARE' An Overview

Introduction

Home from Home (HfH) is a Cluster Foster Care Scheme (CFCS) organization providing supported and supervised foster homes in the Western Cape area of South Africa. Orphaned and vulnerable children are placed in our care and we endeavor to provide them with a second chance at having a positive family-style life. In total we oversee 36 foster homes with over two hundred children being cared for.

HfH has five key pillars to the model of care we provide children, which we believe gives them the best chance of eventually leaving our care and becoming happy and positively contributing people in society. A brief overview of these is seen below.

1. Loving Family-Home Programme

This programme is the foundation of all of our work with children at HfH. This is where HfH creates a second chance for our children to experience family-style life.

We do this by providing a comfortable and safe home in the communities from which the children originate and employ staff that speak the childrens' language and understand their culture. Also, Foster Mothers are carefully screened at employment and further trained and supervised during their employ, to ensure they provide a loving caring home that upholds strong family values. We have a team of Social Workers (SW) and Social Auxiliary Workers (SAW) who provide the foster mothers with this support, supervision and training and are also tasked in accessing additional support services for the numerous special needs that foster children often require. We believe that this 'Loving Family-Home environment' is essential to the care of our children so they can have the foundation of belonging to a family where important values for life are actively taught. This foundation of a loving and caring environment where positive relationships with 'brothers', 'sisters' and foster parents is created, is what enables other programmes below to be effective in remedying some of the other disadvantages our children come to us with.

2. Education Programme

Famously the great Nelson Mandela was often quoted as saying, "*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world*". HfH believes strongly in this statement and has been committed to striving for improved

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educational levels for the children in our care. This education begins at home with Foster Mothers being able to, as indicated above, teach 'loving family' to our children. There are however three main additional areas of focus under the Education Programme, i.e.

i. Early Childhood Development Centre

Home from Home runs The Lizo Nobanda ECD in Khayelitsha, which provides high quality care and education to 40 children in the local Harare community. The vast majority of the children are from the local community. Our teaching and support staff ensure that the children who graduate from Lizo Nobanda each year are well prepared to start 'big school' the following year. Volunteers, as well as Home from Home Tutors, have had the use of our resource centre in Khayelitsha. This includes a new library and renovations to the Lizo Nobanda Early Childhood Development Centre. Our younger children have a new and exciting learning space while the resource centre has created the potential for many after school support opportunities.

ii. Basic Educational Programme

This includes establishing each child in a school or appropriate education facility, supplying uniforms, stationery and transport to and from school. These basics allow our children to receive the basic standard of education expected within the country. Where our children are able to attend regular government schools, the cost of the basic educational needs is not too expensive. Many of our children do however, require specialized interventions, or private educational facilities and this comes at substantial cost.

iii. Educational Support Programme

All foster children come with some form of neglect, abuse and trauma and whether they are intellectually strong or weak, these experiences significantly impact on their ability to participate in education. At HfH we believe that in order to take full advantage of their education, our children need more than the basics of education provided, but that additional support programmes are necessary. To this end we employ an Education Support Coordinator who is a specialist in education. She provides a programme of education support, as well as, advice to our staff team and academic assessments of children in supporting our very varied childrens' needs. Currently our additional support programme involves the following aspects:

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- a) **Tutoring support:** HfH has an established relationship with a tutoring company (Preeva) that provides this to all the children that need this added support.
- b) **Virtual Reading Gym:** This is another organization that HfH has a working agreement with to provide support to our children with Reading for meaning in English.
- c) **Extramural activities/Outings:** HfH strongly believes in the value of exposing our children to sports, games, cultural activities, music appreciation and outings to places of interest. This is where social engagement happens outside of school and is essential in appropriately broadening academic education. Where most schools our children attend do not provide this opportunity, HfH sources service providers to offer these important opportunities.

3. Therapeutic Intervention Programme:

By virtue of the fact that our children are in need of foster care, they all have experienced some form of abuse and/or neglect and therefore often carry scars that need therapeutic intervention. While we believe the 'Loving Family-Home Programme', can achieve great outcomes in remedying some of these scars, there is also the need to provide some of our children, specialized therapeutic services. The Social Workers in our team (one per Metro with eight homes in each) are tasked with coordinating these therapeutic plans for each of our children. They are able to provide some of the therapeutic interventions, either through group work or individual sessions with the children, but also need to rely on outside service providers. Here we make use of psychologists, counsellors and occupational therapists to provide these additional services to our children.

4. Evelyn Connolly Transitional Support Programme

There are many transitions that need to be navigated throughout our lives, but for children there are many more that happen in a relatively short time. Foster children that come into our care inevitably have to leave our care between ages 18 to 21, if they have not been reunited with biological family. This means that it is crucially important that while they are in our care, we ensure that they are adequately prepared for these stages and especially for transitioning out of our care. The various aspects of this support are:

i. iBhabhatane (Butterfly) Programme

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Looking at the metamorphosis of a butterfly HfH has incorporated this process into our different developmental age groups: 'The Littlies' (0 – 8 years – The Egg), 'Tweens' (9 – 12 years – Caterpillar), 'Teens' (13 – 15 years – Pupa), 'Ageing Out' (16years+ - Butterfly). In partnering with specialists in the field of transitions with youth, (Mamelani), we design camps, workshops, outings and activities for each of these age groups in order for them to experience their necessary transitions.

ii. Staff Transitions Training programme

Here all our foster mothers and Programme team members are trained and supervised to become skilled at preparing our 'Aging Out' youth to be adequately prepared for this big step in their lives. Our partnership with specialists in this field, Mamelani, coordinates this training.

iii. Transitional Home Programme

We have established a home for those of our young people who need additional support when they leave our care. So especially for those who do not have any family placements to go to after their foster care expires, this is our way of supporting them. This home is importantly run on a different model from the foster care homes and for this we have relied on another specialist partner (Echo) to provide training and oversight in guiding us. Echo has been establishing numerous transitional homes around the country for the past ten years and will be working closely with us especially in the pilot phases of establishing this first home.

5. Reunification Programme

Although our care of our children can form a significant part of their lives, i.e. up to the age of 21 years, the first prize outcome in our work, is to reunite them with biological family or an adoptive parent. Achieving this outcome is often not possible, thus the need for all our in-care programmes above, but does not diminish the importance of a reunification programme. Here our Programme team staff are required to follow a clear process in attempting to achieve reunification for our children. This involves firstly, trying to locate biological family or potential adoptive parents, then assessing for suitability, having initial visiting and trial placements, and finally, making the actual placement and offering HfH support for the initial 6 month to a year.

Conclusion

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At HfH we believe that these five pillars of our Model of Care (Loving Family-Home, Education, Therapeutic Intervention, Transitional Support and Reunification) are critical to providing a full circle of support to our children. Providing these programmes gives them the best opportunity of rising above their previously disadvantaged circumstances, to become happy and positively engaged citizens in their communities.

More detailed information on each of our programmes, including the costing of these are also accessible.

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