

**REPORT FOR THE
INDEPENDENT VISITING
SERVICE**

April 2023 – October 2023

*Written by Regulation 44 visitors; Fiona Watters, with
contributions from Kim Murray, Amy Beacham and Julie Adams.*

Basis of report

This report is being prepared to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an update of the work undertaken by the Independent Visitors. This report covers the period from 25.03.23 to 04.10.24.

Introduction

The Children's Homes Regulations 2015 (Part 6, Regulation 43) makes provision for the appointment of an Independent Visitor. There remains an expectation that the appointment of an Independent Visitor will continue to be the responsibility of the Local Authority, with clear guidance being offered as to the criteria, which must be met in terms of ensuring the Visitor's independence. The visits continue to be a monthly requirement.

Within the regulations it is expected the Independent Visitor will report on the quality standards in specified areas. These can be summarised as follows:-

- (a) the quality and purpose of care standard (see regulation 6);
- (b) the children's views, wishes and feelings standard (see regulation 7);
- (c) the education standard (see regulation 8);
- (d) the enjoyment and achievement standard (see regulation 9);
- (e) the health and well-being standard (see regulation 10);
- (f) the positive relationships standard (see regulation 11);
- (g) the protection of children standard (see regulation 12);
- (h) the leadership and management standard (see regulation 13);
- (i) the care planning standard (see regulation 14).

The Independent Visitor continues to provide a report following each visit. The Regulation 44 report has maintained its format, providing a succinct summary of how the individual homes are meeting each of the care standards. There is also a section of recommendations to ensure there is clarity in prioritising areas for immediate action where these are identified during visits. The report format continues to include a section for the Home's Manager's to add their comments on the findings of the visits. This is to ensure the Independent report is unchanged, whilst giving the Home's Managers the opportunity to provide additional information, context, or details on how any changes are being implemented.

The Independent Visitor

Since March 23, Regulation 44 visits have been undertaken by Independent Visitors: Kim Murray, Fiona Watters, Amy Beacham and from August Julie Adams. The visiting duties to Lincolnshire County Council's eight residential homes and two supported living provisions are shared between the Independent Visitors. Home inspections are rotated regularly throughout the period and are currently undertaken to: Albion Street, Eastgate, The Beacon, Haven Cottage, Northolme, Robin House, Lincolnshire Secure Unit and Strut House. The semi-Independent homes are in Grantham (Denton) and Gainsborough (Rowston) and they provide accommodation for young people aged 16 to 18 years old. Both homes are inspected under the Regulation 44 process every 4 months, this visit is carried out by Ildiko Kiss. This is currently not mandatory however the Local Authority commits to this as part of their quality assurance process.

The Independent Visitors have continued to maintain positive working relationships with residential home managers, staff, and young people. The team manager for the Independent Visitor periodically attends homes manager meetings to ensure that feedback on the service is shared and fed back.

As part of the visits, the Independent Visitor seeks feedback from a range of key stakeholders including the young people, parents, social workers, health, education partners and other relevant individuals to gain a holistic view of the homes.

There has been no need to implement the dispute resolution procedure since the last report was completed.

Home Manager Updates

There have been some changes to the Homes Managers over recent months.

Albion Street

The Registered Home's Manager (Cheri Blackamore) is moving to a new post and the Assistant Manager (Samantha White) was also successful in her application for the new Homes Manager position of Riverhead in Louth when it opens. We understand that a new homes manager has

been recruited and an RCO3 has been successful in his application to become the Assistant Manager, this will give the children some continuity of management.

The Beacon

There has recently been a significant change in leadership at The Beacon. The Registered Home's Manager (Gemma Hart) left the Local Authority in September 2023 after securing alternative employment outside of the Local Authority. Both Assistant Managers Nicola Chambers and Peter Hesketh have also left the Local Authority. The Interim Assistant Manager who was seconded from the Secure Unit has been managing the home as Interim Home's Manager whilst the positions are recruited to.

Following interviews an RCO3 within the home has been successful in gaining one of the positions of Assistant Manager, alongside an external candidate. Both are yet to commence their new roles. Interviews took place for the position of Registered Home's Manager in September we are awaiting the outcome as to whether the post was appointed to.

Eastgate

The Registered Home's Manager (Katie Sansom) has been successful in gaining an appointment as second Service Lead for Residential Estates, the Registered Home's Manager post is yet to be appointed to, however Katie remains in post to support the home with this transition. The Assistant Manager (Kelsie Tyrrell) remains in post.

Haven Cottage

The Registered Home's Manager (Vicky Cooke) and Assistant Manager (Kelly Hutson) remain unchanged.

Lincolnshire Secure Unit

The Registered Home's Manager (Dave Clarke) and two of the Assistant Managers (James Guthrie and Debbie Norton) remain unchanged. One of the Assistant Managers Jenny Marshall has now retired. There are no current plans to replace Jenny's position.

Northolme

The Registered Home's Manager (Gemma Benson) and Assistant Manager (Lauren Batty) have remained in post.

Strut House

Strut House's Registered Home's Manager (Maggie Nowland) and Assistant Manager (Heidi Harris) remain unchanged.

Robin House

The Interim Homes Manager is Helen Wallis. The Interim Assistant Manager is now Amanda Noble.

Rowston and Denton

Dean Johnson is the Manager for both settings. Andy Morris, who is now the Head of Service for Leaving care, Semi-Independent living and Unaccompanied children, continues to have oversight of the homes.

The Voice of the Child

There is evidence across the homes that the young people's voices are captured and listened to.

For example: – Strut continue to use a range of communication aids to gather the voice of the child such as PEC's, social stories and they do very well in capturing the voice of the child in photos which they have displayed on the walls, which they change each month. This gives clear evidence of the children being happy and joining in with the activities that they provide for those young people on short breaks. They have worked with Haven Cottage and an Independent Chair in designing a booklet to help collate young people's views with pictures, widget symbols and photos. This will also be used within Haven Cottage. This booklet was seen and was very child focused and should prove a good resource to help secure feedback from children attending the service.

At Eastgate the home has regular chill and chat session where the young people discuss their thoughts and feelings, it was during these meetings that the young people expressed their wishes about what activities they wanted to participate in over the summer. The chill and chat sessions also discuss any concerns in the home and have recently discussed how they can be respectful to each other and their thoughts around a new young person joining the home.

The young people at Northolme participate in Pow Wow's on a monthly basis where they are able to express their views. They are also seen by their social workers regularly and participate within their reviews. The young people have been observed in their home environment and appear happy with the staff and comfortable in their presence. There has been a change in

young people in the last 6 months and the home are working hard to develop peer relationships that are healthy.

Robin House has only recently opened to young people, the Interim Homes Manager is keen for the young people to decide upon the name of their meetings, how they are held and how often.

Within the Secure Unit the young people can complete an issues form where they challenge situations, they are not happy about, the management team respond to these issues in a timely manner to ensure a resolution is reached for the young people. The unit also completes an exit questionnaire with the young people, to ascertain their views and experiences on their stay within the unit and highlight anything they would like to change.

VoiceAbility continue to visit the homes regularly to meet with the young people and advocate for them where possible. The name of the VoiceAbility worker is displayed within the home, there is evidence of the visits, detailing when they have visited who they have spoken to, and any activities undertaken.

Staff continue to encourage the young people to complete their consultation documents in preparation for their Children in Care reviews. There is evidence seen within the young people's files of staff attending reviews with the young people and supporting them within these to express their views. Often this is the young persons keyworker or another member of staff in line with the young persons wishes.

Some of the homes use display boards that celebrate the young people through 'Voice of the Child', 'You said we did' or creative displays. There is also continued use of photographs to evidence the young people's input and some of the homes are using monthly newsletters and summaries to share information, including any successes the young people may have had. These monthly summaries are sent out to parents/family members, social worker and other relevant professionals including Independent Reviewing Officers.

The homes continue to advocate on behalf of the young people, this has been observed by the Independent Visitors during visits. For example: One child at Albion Street is currently on a 'reduced timetable' which at present amounts to being in education for 1.5 hours per day. He has stated that he is unhappy with this and that he feels that he is missing time with his friends and doing activities with them, such as football. He has told Homes Manager CB, that he is upset that his friends are playing without him. CB meets every Monday with school and has discussed with them that the young person wants to be in school full time. This is something that has

frustrated Homes Manager as she feels that his behaviour is exacerbated by not being in school. School have stated that they will not increase his attendance whilst his behaviour is unsettled. CB has worked with the Virtual School Head and SEND Team manager to try to uphold the young person's right to a full time education.

Each of the homes has a nominated elected member whose role is to visit the homes and meet with the young people and staff. None of the mainstream homes have had a visit for some months in some cases years. This is a shame as the homes welcome these visits as an opportunity to showcase the work being completed with the young people. The LSU, Strut, Beacon and Haven have all had visits this year, the Homes Managers have spoken of these visits as being a positive experience enabling them to build upon the relationships with the elected members, as well as sharing challenges and problems, such as the recruitment and retention of staff.

Quality of care

Three of the homes have had Ofsted inspections since the last Corporate Parenting report, these being Northolme, Albion Street and Lincolnshire Secure Unit. The children within the homes generally continue to receive a good, and in some homes excellent, quality of care. However, It has been a challenging time for Northolme with the Ofsted Inspection rating the home as, **Requires Improvement to be Good**, *The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.*

Whilst the homes management team and care staff were understandably upset and dejected at the outcome, they have been resolute in their resolve to make the necessary improvements in line with the Ofsted recommendations and implementing an action plan. The Independent Visitor had highlighted within the reports following visits some concerns as to the change of the young people at Northolme and the challenges this was bringing in terms of the impact on the structure of the home and relationships within the home. One of the main focuses of the home is to build relationships between the young people, whilst being realistic that some of the young people are unlikely to remain there as they will move on in line with their age and care plan, this results in some young people having little investment in the home and relationships within it.

Albion street have achieved an Ofsted rating of **Outstanding** this is an achievement worth celebrating and indicative of the work the Independent Visitors have observed during their visits. That is not to say that the home is completely settled as there has been some concerns more recently relating to some of the relationships within the home. However, the staff continue to work through and resolve issues using a therapeutic approach with the young people. The Independent Visitor reported: Albion Street continue to work closely with the Play Therapist Zoe O'Conner who is providing support to staff regarding strategies to support them managing the behaviours that are displayed by a number of young people. They are also working alongside the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention trainers for consultation following difficult incidents.

The Secure Unit inspection was an Interim inspection they continue to be **Good** with no enforcement notices. The Secure unit has recently cared for a young person in their welfare bed for a period of some months. The young person had particular needs that the staff within the unit were not experienced in caring for. The staff stepped up remarkably so, developing new ways of working with the young person, whilst caring for him in extremely difficult circumstances. The young person was noted by health professionals to have made significant progress whilst at the unit. The unit held a team meeting to reflect on and celebrate the achievements and adaptability of the staff in meeting the needs of the young person, who has now moved on to a residential home.

Robin House opened its doors to the first young person on the 21st of September, this was a much awaited opening. There had been some issues following the Ofsted visit regarding planning permission, this has now been successfully resolved. Staff seen during the Independent Visitors last visit were enthused and excited regarding the new young people due to arrive. Extensive planning and preparation has taken place, the home is well decorated warm and welcoming. The first young person was able to choose the bedroom he wanted and have it decorated how he would like. The second young person arrived on the 27th of September, again, chose his room and décor. It is obviously early days for the young people, the staff had arranged a party for their arrival. Initial observations of the files and plans for the young people show them to be comprehensive up to date and informative. The home is also reaching out to the families of the young people to ensure they are fully aware of the young people's progress. There is also a therapy dog who will visit the home with his carer, he even has his own file and risk assessment in place.

Family time remains an important focus for the homes. All of the settings promote family time, working with families and partner agencies in a variety of ways, be that supporting young people

and their care givers who may be having home visits, transporting and facilitating visits with family and friends, meeting siblings and friends within the community for days out and trips.

Haven Cottage continues to organise and hold community events/activities with a recent 'Barn Dance' taking place towards the end of the school summer holidays. These events are organised by staff at the home with posters advertising the event being placed around the home as well as invitations being sent out to parents and carers. The dance was reported to be a success with staff at the home taking the opportunity to gain feedback from the attendees on ideas for upcoming events etc. The home has already planned the Christmas event which is due to take place on 10 December at a local community centre in Wyberton.

Eastgate, like Albion Street and Northolme have had difficult times with some of the young people, with an increase in incidents over the summer in particular. The Independent Visitors have remarked on the impact to staff morale: Staff have been tired and at times feeling exhausted over the summer when managing incidents and restraints in particular. Management recognises the stresses and have supported staff effectively during this time. It is to be celebrated that they have had one young person move successfully to semi-independence. This followed a transition plan tailored to meet his needs and was completed at the end of his exam time so as not to disrupt him.

Staff at Strut House report that supervision is good, and that management are very supportive. The Handy person has worked hard on creating child friendly spaces outside in the garden and barbeque area, seating, steppingstones for children and sand pit. The young people enjoy tricycles, go karts, and the basketball net. The outside space is functional and used regularly. Staff have been provided with radio alarms for communication with one another as the home has different 'areas' or 'wings' and it is difficult to hear when they are in need of assistance with young people.

Training continues to be a priority for the homes, the homes have a training Matrix to ensure that staff are aware of the mandatory training that must be undertaken. In discussion with Managers, staff are afforded time in the shift rota to allow them time and opportunity to attend training events.

The Secure unit is transitioning to a new restraint intervention technique called MMPR (Minimising and managing physical restraint) this training has been a massive undertaking for the unit as all staff attend the training for a period of two weeks. Staff spoken to who have attended the training speak positively about the changes it will bring. The theory element of the

training is extensive in helping staff to understand trauma and its impact on the young people they support. The restraint review continues to be carried out by a member of the LADO team.

The homes continue to actively engage with schools and their education partners. A positive emphasis is placed on school attendance, as we can see from above with Albions Streets attempts to advocate for their young person to be in full time education.

Robin House has spent sometime with an education provision prior to their first young person arriving at the home. The key worker had been into school to ensure that the school had a clear idea of his needs. Unfortunately, communication within the school appeared to fail, resulting in them being ill prepared for his arrival and leading to a delay in his start. Robin house staff were seen to communicate well with the school to resolve the issues as promptly as possible.

The Independent Visitor attending Northolme noted: There are three children not in education at the home. One who has recently joined the home was not attending his previous school and a school closer to the area is being sought, during the visit he was doing work and the staff have developed his timetable. During handover they talked about how good his artwork is and they are also looking at creating the erupting volcano for science. The staff are clearly trying to make sure all parts of his timetable/education are covered.

Two of the other young people had also refused education on the day of the visit. The staff were able to engage one in completing some wordsearches around wishes and feelings and also printed some sudoku activities off. Her key worker describes how creative she can be and how good she is at customising items which includes most recently a t-shirt, the key worker was surprised that she requested word searches but is pleased because arts and craft can be completed any time and with young people.

The other young person was observed to be engaged in a cookery session weighing ingredients and working through the recipe.

Observations of the staff encouraging informal/indirect education through prompting to ensure personal hygiene is completed, rooms are tidy, cleaning up in kitchen, observing safety plans and staying in contact with the home. The Spring/summer Northolme news also offers opportunities for informal education by learning about online internet safety which includes a test your knowledge quiz and wordsearch amongst other activities and the impact of smoking and vaping on the body.

Whilst the home would wish for these young people to be in formal education, they are ensuring their day is structured and informative.

Across the 6 months of this financial year at the point of inspection across all homes (excluding Strut due to being short breaks only and the Secure Unit due to having education on site) 96% of young people had a formal educational placement in place overall.

Feedback continues to be sought by the independent Visitors the following are some examples:

During a recent visit to the Beacon Parental feedback was gained from a child's mum who had come to the home to visit her son and take him out in the community. She was happy to talk to share with the Independent Visitor that she couldn't believe he has now been living at the home for over a year and that she is really pleased how settled he is, she feels he is making progress and is developing. She had no concerns or worries regarding the care or treatment that her son is receiving whilst he is living at the Beacon. She enjoys coming to see him and always feels made welcome by the staff. She is provided with regular updates and feels that staff would contact her if there was anything she ever needed to know.

From LSU, I spoke to one of the parents for a young person currently in the unit, she was positive about the time he has spent there, whilst she would not wish her son to be in a secure unit she felt he was in "safe hands" and that if he had to stay in secure she would rather he be in LSU, she feels he has settled routines which is important for him. She receives weekly updates along with invites to all of his meetings. She was pleased with his progress in education and that while he is in one place, he has made progress. She stated that when she has visited the unit, it has been clean, and that staff have been welcoming of her. There were no issues of concern for her and her son's care.

The following is feedback from a YOS worker and SW for a young person in LSU:

"The excellent quality of relationships with all of the staff at the unit from the front door to the back offices. There is warmth and professionalism, and I am aware that the welfare of the young person I am supporting is held in high regard".

Social Pedagogy and Direct Work

Social pedagogy continues to be embedded across the majority of the homes. It has been noted by the Independent Visitors that the staff at the Beacon continue to be on a journey regarding

implementing Social Pedagogy into their direct work with children. Specialist training has been provided as well as working group being implemented. The Secure Unit applies a Trauma Informed approach as well as using Restorative Justice.

Social Pedagogy assists the young people to engage in direct work/activities and conversations about the important things that have happened within their lives. It supports social and emotional learning, developing resilience, social skills and positive relationships. Young people have direct work files and there is evidence of work being completed with them around current risks and incidents, or concern.

The Independent Visitors have found that when speaking to staff at the Haven Cottage, they have been able share the difference between the different models in Social Pedagogy and how they determine which method to use when writing up observations or direct work that they have undertaken with a young person. A positive that has been noted is when reviewing the majority of the write ups that at the end they provided next steps linking the activity to the young person's targets including what they were achieving by undertaking the task.

When visiting Strut House, the Independent Visitor noted that in relation to Social Pedagogy she observed evidence of the use of this is displayed within the home using models such as; the Diamond Model, The Zone of Proximal Development, Head Heart Hands and the Learning Zone.

Given the needs of the young people this is kept at a level for which they are able to complete direct work however they use communication aids such as PECs and Widgets and use a lot of photographs to evidence work with young people.

The display boards had been updated and highlighted the use of Social Pedagogy; the Common Third had been used with work that had been completed with young people for World Elephant Day, other boards displayed use of Head, Heart, Hand model again demonstrating with photos. There were also picture of young people enjoying a recent trip to the park.

As well as Social Pedagogy, evidence has been seen of the home's embracing Restorative Practice, implementing restorative conversations with the young people following any incidents.

In relation to the Secure Unit, as mentioned above, direct work is completed in line with any orders from the Courts and using the Trauma Informed model, rather than Social Pedagogy.

The majority of homes have Social Pedagogy champions to ensure that staff are confident in completing work and using a variety of models. One of the champions will attend team meetings at various homes to discuss how Social Pedagogy continues to be implemented within the home

and support with new ideas and approaches. It is recognised that the Social Pedagogy full training takes place over six days, which is a big commitment in relation to staff availability.

All of the young people in the mainstream homes have a direct work trajectory that is stored within their files. Within Eastgate it has been noted that: the direct work trajectory for the young people is updated each month and outlines the aims of the direct work to be completed, this can be cross referenced to their ICSP's/risk assessments. The Independent Visitor has seen examples of Social Pedagogy work within the young people's files including using the learning zone model to build a young person's confidence getting the train. Restorative work is ongoing between the young people and the young people and staff when necessary.

Challenges

The Ofsted inspection of Northolme is a challenge for the management team, they have a clear action plan that they are working with and being supported by the Service leads to evidence progress. The management team and the staff group as a whole are determined to evidence the positive work that they carry out on a daily basis with the young people in the home. They recognise there are changes that they can make and a recent Independent visit found files had improved. It has to be recognised that the home had undergone significant changes in the young people residing at Northolme due to the positive rehabilitation home or to foster care of several young people. It is fair to say that one young person was unhappy and some of his actions had upset the younger children, however with support he has now moved on. It is expected with time and patience that the young people will gel and the home will unite together.

Staff recruitment and retention continues to be an ongoing issue for all of the homes, however, as highlighted in the last report it is recognised that this is not specific to Lincolnshire with their being shortages of care staff nationally. The homes have recommenced promoting the role by visiting local universities and colleges, presenting to students on social care courses about the positions and the progression opportunities available. There has not been any evidence of shortfalls in staffing due to staff members being flexible in their shifts and management continuing to undertake shifts as required. However agency staff are having to be utilised by some homes, which is not ideal for the children. It has been noted that at times due to staff sickness and vacancies, short stay care breaks have been disrupted, on some occasions care having to be cancelled and rearranged. However, it is worth pointing out that the care staff do

attempt to be incredibly creative when faced with these challenges and will offer care in the community as an alternative to support the families.

Robin House is now open with another home Riverhead, in Louth due to open towards the end of this year or early in the new year. There are obvious challenges in staffing all of the homes adequately with appropriately experienced staff.

Conclusion

There is evidence of ongoing high quality care being observed by the Independent Visitors. Observations of the relationships between the care staff and the young people is positive across all homes, the young people will search out staff for support and reassurance. There is very much an open door policy within the homes. The Staff are seen to be invested in the relationships with the young people to ensure positive experiences and outcomes.

There are a variety of ratings from Ofsted across the homes. The Outstanding inspection relating to Albion Street should be celebrated and is reflective of continuous hard work and dedication, from all the staff. The Requires Improvement rating for Northolme is being addressed, the management team and care staff have met the challenge head on and are working creatively to address the issues. The independent visitor has seen an improvement in the case files and recordings.

In the Inspections, the Independent Visitor must specifically confirm whether the two elements are met;

Regulation 44.4 (a) the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded.

And

Regulation 44.4 (b) the independent person's opinion as to whether the conduct of the home promotes Children's wellbeing.

In all homes at all visits the Independent Visitor has confidently stated that both these requirements are being met.

The much awaited opening of Robin house is seen as an exciting opportunity to develop the therapeutic parenting model within the Local Authority, with the aim being to move the young people either back to family or into a foster placement. It is obviously early days for the home and the young people accessing it, however the enthusiasm of the staff is positive.

There continues to be issues with staffing across many of the homes, whilst these shortages are being managed by the flexibility and commitment of the management team and the care staff, retention of staff is a major issue that the senior management team are looking to resolve.

There continues to be joint working across the homes with regular peer audits being completed by the management teams. This enables reflection and constructive feedback, it also enables a learning culture as to new ways of working and positive practices across the homes.

Management audits continue to take place regularly within the homes, therefore providing management oversight and guidance.

APPENDIX A

Ofsted inspections

All the children's homes are subject to Ofsted inspections. Each home has twice yearly inspections, ordinarily there will be a full inspection annually followed by an interim inspection approximately six months later.

Albion Street

Inspection dates: 9th and 10th May 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, Outstanding

taking into account,

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

The Beacon

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of the children and young people Good

Taking into account:

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

Eastgate

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people **Outstanding**

Taking into account:

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Outstanding**

Haven Cottage

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 May 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people **Good**

Taking into account:

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

Lincolnshire Secure Unit

Inspection date: 6 June 2023

Date of last inspection: 10 January 2023 Judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Northolme

Last Ofsted inspection dates: 26 and 27 June 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, **Requires improvement to be good**

taking into account,

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Requires improvement to be good**

Strut House

Inspection dates: 24 & 25 January 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people **Outstanding**

Taking into account:

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Outstanding**

Robin House

Awaiting Inspection

Children Homes Regulations 2015 (Part 2)

Quality standards for children's homes

5. The following standards ("the quality standards") are prescribed for the purposes of section 22(1A) of the Care Standards Act 2000 in relation to children's homes—

- (a) the quality and purpose of care standard (see regulation 6);
- (b) the children's views, wishes and feelings standard (see regulation 7);
- (c) the education standard (see regulation 8);
- (d) the enjoyment and achievement standard (see regulation 9);
- (e) the health and well-being standard (see regulation 10);
- (f) the positive relationships standard (see regulation 11);
- (g) the protection of children standard (see regulation 12);
- (h) the leadership and management standard (see regulation 13);
- (i) the care planning standard (see regulation 14).

Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met

6. In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—

- (a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans;
- (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs;
- (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and
- (d) seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation.

The quality and purpose of care standard

6 .—(1) The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—

- (a) understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;
 - (b) use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—
- (a) understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;
 - (b) ensure that staff—
 - (i) understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;
 - (ii) protect and promote each child's welfare;
 - (iii) treat each child with dignity and respect;
 - (iv) provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background;

- (v) help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect;
- (vi) help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live Independently as an adult;
- (vii) provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably;
 - (viii) provide to children personal items that are appropriate for their age and understanding; and
- (ix) make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice;
- (c) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—
 - (i) meet the needs of each child; and
 - (ii) enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home; and
- (d) ensure that any care that is arranged or provided for a child that—
 - (i) relates to the child's development (within the meaning of section 17(11) of the Children Act 1989) or health; and
 - (ii) is not arranged or provided as part of the health service continued under section 1(1) of the National Health Service Act 2006(a),
 satisfies the conditions in paragraph (3).
- (3) The conditions are—
 - (a) that the care is approved, and kept under review throughout its duration, by the placing authority;
 - (b) that the care meets the child's needs;
 - (c) that the care is delivered by a person who—
 - (i) has the experience, knowledge and skills to deliver that care; and
 - (ii) is under the supervision of a person who is appropriately skilled and qualified to supervise that care; and
 - (d) that the registered person keeps the child's general medical practitioner informed, as necessary, about the progress of the care throughout its duration.

(a) 2006 c.41. Section 1 of the National Health Service Act 2006 was substituted by section 1 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (c.7).

The children's views, wishes and feelings standard

7 .—(1) The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—

- (a) develop positive relationships with them;
 - (b) engage with them; and
 - (c) take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—
- (a) ensure that staff—
 - (i) ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare;
 - (ii) help each child to express views, wishes and feelings;
 - (iii) help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child;
 - (iv) regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care;
 - (v) help each child to understand how the child's privacy will be respected and the circumstances when it may have to be limited;
 - (vi) help each child to prepare for any review of the child's relevant plans and to make the child's views, wishes and feelings known for the purposes of that review; and
 - (vii) make each child aware of and, if necessary, remind them of each of the matters in sub-paragraph (d)(i) to (iii);
- (b) ensure that each child—
- (i) is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives;
 - (ii) has access to the home's children's guide, and the home's complaints procedure, when the child's placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child's stay in the home; and
 - (iii) is given appropriate advocacy support;
- (c) keep the children's guide and the home's complaints procedure under review and seek children's comments before revising either document;
- (d) ensure that an explanation is given to each child as soon as reasonably practicable after the child's arrival about—
- (i) the children's guide;
 - (ii) how to make a complaint or representations in relation to the home or the care the child receives and how any such complaint or representations will be dealt with; and
 - (iii) what advocacy support or services are available to the child, how the child may access that support or those services and any entitlement the child may have to Independent advocacy provision; and
- (e) ensure that the views of each relevant person are taken into account, so far as reasonably practicable, before making a decision about the care or welfare of a child.

The education standard

8 .—(1) The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.

- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—
- (a) that staff—

- (i) help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans;
- (ii) support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop Independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete Independent study;
- (iii) understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;
- (iv) help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment;
- (v) promote opportunities for each child to learn informally;
- (vi) maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement;
- (vii) raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority;
- (viii) help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible;
- (ix) help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment;
- (x) help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans; and
- (b) that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning.

The enjoyment and achievement standard

9 .—(1) The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills.

- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—
 - (a) that staff help each child to—
 - (i) develop the child's interests and hobbies;
 - (ii) participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences; and
 - (iii) make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community; and
 - (b) that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies.

The health and well-being standard

10.—(1) The health and well-being standard is that—

- (a) the health and well-being needs of children are met;
- (b) children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and
- (c) children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—
 - (a) that staff help each child to—

- (i) achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child’s relevant plans;
- (ii) understand the child’s health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child’s health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child’s age and understanding;
- (iii) take part in activities, and attend any appointments, for the purpose of meeting the child’s health and well-being needs; and
 - (iv) understand and develop skills to promote the child’s well-being;
- (b) that each child is registered as a patient with a general medical practitioner and a registered dental practitioner; and
- (c) that each child has access to such dental, medical, nursing, psychiatric and psychological advice, treatment and other services as the child may require.

The positive relationships standard

11 .—(1) The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—

- (a) mutual respect and trust;
- (b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and
- (c) positive responses to other children and adults.

(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

- (a) that staff—
 - (i) meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans;
 - (ii) help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;
 - (iii) encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;
 - (iv) help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;
 - (v) communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;
 - (vi) help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful;
 - (vii) help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship;
 - (viii) strive to gain each child’s respect and trust;
 - (ix) understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;
 - (x) are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same;
 - (xi) de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;
 - (xii) understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and
 - (xiii) have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and

- (b) that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others.

The protection of children standard

12 .—(1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.

(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

- (a) that staff—
 - (i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;
 - (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe;
 - (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;
 - (iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;
 - (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;
 - (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and
 - (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies;
- (b) that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm;
- (c) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded;
- (d) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health; and
- (e) that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly.

The leadership and management standard

13 .—(1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that—

- (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and
 - (b) promotes their welfare.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—
- (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose;
 - (b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;
 - (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;
 - (d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;
 - (e) ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child;
 - (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;
 - (g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—
 - (i) research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and
 - (ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and

- (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.

The care planning standard

- 14.**—(1) The care planning standard is that children—
- (a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and
 - (b) have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—
- (a) that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose;
 - (b) that arrangements are in place to—
 - (i) ensure the effective induction of each child into the home;
 - (ii) manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and
 - (iii) plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority;
 - (c) that each child’s relevant plans are followed;
 - (d) that, subject to regulation 22 (contact and access to communications), contact between each child and the child’s parents, relatives and friends, is promoted in accordance with the child’s relevant plans;
 - (e) that the child’s placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child’s relevant plans is requested, if—
 - (i) the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child’s needs;
 - (ii) the child is, or has been, persistently absent from the home without permission; or
 - (iii) the child requests a review of the child’s relevant plans; and
 - (f) that staff help each child to access and contribute to the records kept by the registered person in relation to the child.

Children's Homes Regulations 2015 (part 6)

Independent person: visits and reports

42.—(1) The registered person must ensure that an Independent person visits the children's home at least once each month.

(2) When the Independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the Independent person—

- (a) if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the Independent person requires; and
- (b) to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the Independent person requires.

(3) A visit by the Independent person to the home may be unannounced.

(4) The Independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the Independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the Independent person's opinion as to whether—

- (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and
- (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.

(5) The Independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.

(6) If the Independent person becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest (whether under regulation 43(3) or otherwise) after a visit to the home, the Independent person must include in the Independent person's report—

- (a) details of the conflict of interest; and
- (b) the reasons why the Independent person did not notify the registered provider of the conflict of interest before the visit.

(7) The Independent person must provide a copy of the Independent person's report to—

- (a) HMCI;
- (b) upon request, the local authority for the area in which the home is located;
- (c) the placing authorities of children;
- (d) the registered provider and, if applicable, the registered manager; and
- (e) the responsible individual (if one is nominated).