

Subject: Business Management Plan for a Proposal of a Lawful Development Certificate for a C2 Care Home for Children Ages 7-17 in Reading

Dear Sir/Madame

I am writing to submit a comprehensive Business Management Plan in support of our proposal for a Lawful Development Certificate for a C2 care home catering to children aged 7-17 in Reading. The proposed care home is registered for children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) and will accommodate up to 2 children at any one time. This plan outlines the operational, management, and regulatory aspects of the proposed care home.

Introduction:

Brief overview of the proposed C2 care home.

The application relates to 7 Glennon Close, Reading, RG30 3HT. A semi-detached, five-bedroom dwelling located on a large irregular wedge-shaped plot not listed or in a conservation area within the settlement boundary of Reading. The location of the house is at the head of the cul-de-sac so this element will not be readily seen from the wider area.

The property does not have any restrictions or whether permitted development has been removed from the site.

The surrounding properties are of similar design, style. The location of the proposed development does not appear to be in a conservation area or property being listed nor have an article 4 Direction. The site is situated over two floors with accommodation providing open plan kitchen, two living spaces, rear garden, and driveway with parking for up to 3 vehicles and cycle storage. To the ground floor; A WC, two living spaces, Kitchen/Breakfast room and dining room. To the second floor, five bedrooms, and two WC, one with a shower.

Purpose of the Lawful Development Certificate application.

This Application seeks approval for the proposed change of use from dwellinghouse (C3) to Residential institute Housing with care (C2) 7 Glennon Close, Reading, RG30 3HT. This document outlines the proposal's compliance with change of use of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As amended) and (Under Section 192 of the Town & Country Planning Act)

Please find attached the following information in support of this application:

- Site plan
- Block plan
- Existing and proposed elevations
- Floor plans
- Elevations

The General Permitted Development Order was adopted in 2015 (2021 amended) and is relevant to the Proposal. This supporting Business management plan will assess the Proposal against key policies of the change of use of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As amended) and (Under Section 192 of the Town & Country Planning Act) and to try and demonstrate its compliance.

Ownership and Management:

Details of the ownership structure.

Kamaal Ahmed is the sole Director of the company.

Names and qualifications of key management personnel.

Amina Begum is our home manager who holds 15 years' experience in working in care homes. She has completed her level 3 and 4 in Health and Social care and is currently completing her level 5 in Leadership & Management for Children and Young People. Amir Abbasi is our Senior Support Worker. He has worked as a Brokerage Officer for several years and has completed his Level 3 in Health and Social Care. He will support Amina with the day to day running of the home.

Experience in operating care facilities.

We currently operate 4 homes in the London and surrounding area. We have a well-established team with vast experience working with children and young people.

Care Services:

Description of the specialized care services to be provided for children aged 7-17 with EBD.

Staffing levels and qualifications required, including a manager and two additional staff members on duty at any one time.

2:1 staffing at most at any one time. See training matrix.

Compliance with relevant regulations and standards for children's care.

Nxt Step Care currently employs a consultant who is experienced in auditing care homes. We are familiar with Reg 44. visits and take great consideration towards safeguarding our children/young people and employees of the organization. Our home has been designed to provide a breath of fresh air to our residents. An open plan layout allows free movement inside the home and various safe spaces for service users. Our aim is to provide a safe and nurturing environment by employing qualified staff through the safer recruitment process, to employ thorough planning for transitions with new residents, both entering the service and when moving on. Nxt Step Care works closely with a range of local authorities and can provide references upon request in relation to the positive work we have carried out with our current service users.

Shifts and Operational Hours:

Scheduling of staff to ensure continuous care and supervision. Details of the operational hours:

Morning Shift: 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM

Evening Shift: 9:00 PM to 9:00 AM

Child Age Range:

Confirmation that the care home will cater exclusively to children aged 7-17.

EBD Registered Home:

Confirmation of the care home's registration as a facility specializing in Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) care.

Safety and Security:

Security measures in place to ensure the safety of the children.

The home will comply with the GDPR act and have CCTV covering the front and rear end of the property. CCTV will also be used in communal areas only to ensure that any incidents that take place and any safeguarding concerns can be investigated and evidenced. There are curfews in place for children that will be enforced, and the door will be locked after these times. Glennon Close is a quiet neighbourhood and we expect to keep it that way by respecting those around us and keeping good relations.

Emergency procedures and evacuation plans.

There is an emergency evacuation plan and fire safety plan on the notice board in the home. All residents are informed of the process upon their induction. Staff are also first aid trained in the event of an emergency. Staff induction also consists of a tour of the emergency procedure.

Fire safety precautions and equipment.

Home is equipped with fire extinguishers and fire blankets. there are signposts for emergency exits location of fire blankets etc. This is accessible throughout the home.

Staffing and Training:

Staff recruitment and vetting procedures, including background checks.

Enhanced DBS checks are carried out prior to employment. Safer recruitment practice is followed. Home manager has up to date training.

Training programs for staff members, emphasizing EBD care.

Staff supervision is carried out monthly and training is reviewed. We operate using a staff training matrix. Staff are trained in behavioural challenges, Autism, Adult Care, Fire Safety, Food Hygiene, Childrens Safeguarding, DOL's, PMVA etc. Full list can be provided upon request.

Protocols for supervision and behaviour management.

Nxt Step care provides monthly staff supervision. Behaviour management of residents is managed by a verbal warning, then three written warnings, followed by termination of their residency. In cases where there is an immediate risk staff are PMVA trained and/or police will be notified.

Child Protection and Safeguarding:

Policies and procedures for child protection and safeguarding.

The Home is committed to providing specialized care services for children aged 7-17 with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD) while prioritizing their safety, well-being, and development. Our policies and procedures for child protection and safeguarding are designed to ensure that every child entrusted to our care receives the highest level of protection, support, and care.

Our Commitment:

- We recognize the unique needs and vulnerabilities of children with EBD and are dedicated to creating a nurturing and secure environment in which they can thrive.
- We adhere to all relevant local, state, and national laws and regulations governing child protection, and we work closely with the local authority planning department to meet our obligations.
- Our staff members, including specially trained caregivers and support personnel, are committed to upholding the highest standards of child protection and safeguarding.

Key Components of Our Policies and Procedures:

- Robust recruitment processes that include thorough background checks and screening for all employees and volunteers who interact with the children in our care.
- Comprehensive training programs that equip our staff with the knowledge and skills to recognize signs of abuse, neglect, or harm and to respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of children with EBD.
- Clear and confidential reporting procedures for staff to voice concerns or suspicions of child maltreatment, ensuring that information is shared responsibly and acted upon promptly.
- A commitment to collaborating with relevant authorities and agencies, including the local authority planning department, to ensure the best interests of the children are upheld.
- Ongoing monitoring and review of our policies and procedures to adapt to changing laws, best practices, and the evolving needs of the children we serve.
- A child-centred approach that prioritizes the emotional and psychological well-being of each child, providing them with the support and care they need to develop to their fullest potential.

We are dedicated to maintaining a culture of child protection, where the safety and happiness of the children in our care are paramount. Our policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that they continue to meet the highest standards of child protection and safeguarding.

Reporting mechanisms for concerns and incidents.

We work with the safer neighbourhood teams, we report incidents and concerns to social work teams and hold planning meetings, disruption meetings and weekly update meetings. Incident reports are logged and filed in the home.

Cooperation with local child safeguarding agencies.

As part of our location risk assessment, we comply with keeping in touch with MASH and other agencies.

Regulatory Compliance:

Commitment to full compliance with local and national regulations for care homes.

Commitment to regular inspections and audits.

Procedures for addressing any regulatory issues.

The following general procedures can serve as a guideline:

1. Identification of Regulatory Issues:

- Regularly review and stay updated on the latest local, state, and national regulations that apply to EBD care homes.
- Conduct internal audits and assessments to identify any potential regulatory issues.

2. Reporting and Documentation:

- a formal process for reporting and documenting regulatory issues when they are identified.
- Assign responsibility for reporting to a designated individual or team within the organization.

3. Immediate Corrective Actions:

- If a critical regulatory violation is identified that poses an immediate risk to residents, take immediate corrective actions to mitigate the risk.
- Document all actions taken, including any changes in procedures or staffing.

4. Internal Review and Investigation:

- Conduct a thorough internal investigation to determine the root cause of the regulatory issue.
- Identify the individuals involved and interview staff members and residents if necessary.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the investigation.

5. Remediation Plan:

- Develop a remediation plan that outlines the specific steps and timeline for addressing the regulatory issue.
- Assign responsibility for implementing the plan and ensure accountability.

6. Notification and Reporting:

- Report the regulatory issue to the appropriate regulatory authorities as required by law.
- Notify any relevant oversight agencies or accreditation bodies if applicable.

7. Communication:

- Maintain open and transparent communication with residents, their families, and legal guardians regarding the regulatory issue, corrective actions, and progress.

8. Staff Training and Education:

- Providing additional training and education to staff members to prevent future regulatory issues.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of and understand the relevant regulations and the organization's policies and procedures.

9. Monitoring and Follow-Up:

- Continuously monitor the implementation of the remediation plan and the effectiveness of corrective actions.
- Document ongoing progress and any adjustments made to the plan.

10. Documentation and Records Management:

- Maintain detailed records of the regulatory issue, the investigation, and all corrective actions taken.
- Ensure that all documentation is organised and readily accessible for future reference or audits.

11. Audit and Compliance Review:

- Regularly conduct internal compliance audits to proactively identify and address potential regulatory issues.
- Engage external auditors or consultants if necessary to perform independent assessments.

12. Continuous Improvement:

- Use regulatory issues as opportunities for continuous improvement in care home operations and compliance efforts.
- Update policies and procedures as needed to prevent future occurrences.

13. Legal Consultation:

- If the regulatory issue involves legal matters, seek legal counsel to ensure the organization's rights and responsibilities are protected.

14. Closure and Reporting:

- Once the regulatory issue has been fully resolved, report back to regulatory authorities as required, providing evidence of compliance.

15. Preventive Measures:

- Implement measures to proactively prevent similar regulatory issues in the future, such as ongoing staff training, policy reviews, and quality assurance processes.

Community Engagement:

Plans for engaging with the local community and neighbours.

We have an open-door policy and would like to meet with neighbours monthly to address any concerns. We also have a suggestions and complaints box. We hope for our children to engage with neighbours and share their positive experiences and develop a relationship to help each other.

Channels for addressing community concerns and feedback.

Monthly meetings will be carried out with neighbours and a close relationship will be adopted with safer neighbourhood teams.

Contributions to the community's well-being.

We take full accountability for looking after our space around us. We aim to take children litter picking as an activity to earn some extra pocket money. We have a contractor for gardening and

cleaning of the outside of the home who will be at the home monthly. Our support programme involves keeping community ties and looking after our community. This involves educating them on public safety, engaging in community events and exploring the local youth and cultural centres available depending on their beliefs.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Systems for ongoing monitoring and quality assurance.

We are implementing a system called ClearCare to monitor and quality assure.

Data collection and reporting mechanisms.

We are using the automated platform ClearCare.

Continuous improvement strategies.

we employ the following strategies:

- 1. Regular Evaluation:** We routinely assess our programs, services, and policies to identify areas where enhancements can be made.
- 2. Resident Feedback:** We actively seek input from our residents, Staff, Neighbours, and local authority to understand their needs, preferences, and concerns, using this feedback to drive positive changes.
- 3. Staff Development:** We invest in ongoing training and development for our staff, ensuring they are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to provide the best care.
- 4. Quality Assurance:** We maintain rigorous quality assurance processes to monitor and improve the quality of care, addressing any issues promptly.
- 5. Collaboration:** We collaborate with professionals, specialists, and relevant stakeholders to stay updated on best practices and emerging trends in EBD care.
- 6. Data-Driven Decision Making:** We utilize data and analytics to make informed decisions and measure our progress toward achieving our care goals.
- 7. Adaptive Policies:** We are flexible in adapting our policies and procedures to reflect changing regulations and the evolving needs of our residents.
- 8. Innovation:** We encourage innovative solutions and approaches to enhance the lives of our residents and optimize our care services.

Conclusion:

The applicant seeks for a Lawful Development Certificate for Change of Use from C3 to C2

For the proposal of a change of use from dwellinghouse (C3) to (C2) Residential institution Housing with care, for two Options under consideration of the local authority (Option 1) for mothers and children staying for long periods, a maximum of 3 mothers and children. Home manager - up to 6 members of staff two full-time sleeping for the night and 4 part-time.

and (Option 2) Alternatively, to house vulnerable children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (EBD) within the age bracket of 7 – 17, 2 at any one time with 3 staff members at any one time including the manager upon consideration from the Local Authority.

The core objective of this scheme is to create an environment for families and children that closely resembles a traditional family home, complete with everyday amenities, while also incorporating an element of care and supervision. Currently, families under court direction face the arduous task of traveling hundreds of miles to find suitable accommodations for a 12-16-week assessment period, often marred by difficult and traumatic experiences as they strive to keep their families intact while safeguarding vulnerable children and parents.

Our applicant's heartfelt desire is to offer support to these families in their time of need. The ethos of this service revolves around establishing a secure environment where we can assist parents, provide guidance to help them achieve their objectives, and ensure the safety of vulnerable children facing emotional and behavioural challenges. The premises are carefully designed to allow for structural assessments in a natural, everyday living setting, augmented by a robust support network.

Within this nurturing environment, families can bond, care for one another, and develop essential parenting skills, all within surroundings akin to a typical dwelling. The composition of households may vary, reflecting the unique circumstances of each family. Additionally, there will always be two dedicated staff members on hand to support parents and children, with other professionals visiting by appointment as needed.

This centre's overarching mission is to conduct family assessments for Local Authorities and the family courts while simultaneously empowering families to gain confidence and develop effective parenting skills. Importantly, the existing property's layout, facilities, and services already resemble those of a "normal" residential dwelling house. The proposed use will not alter the external appearance of the building but will, instead, provide a much needed and invaluable service to our community.

Statement made by Rachael Maclean Minister of state for housing and planning on 23 May 2023
Planning for accommodation for looked after children. Statement ref: UIN HCWS795

Planning permission will not be required in all cases of development of children's homes, including for changes of use from dwelling houses in Class C3 of the Use Classes Order 1987 where the children's home remains within Class C3 or there is no material change of use to Class C2. An application to the local planning authority can be made for a lawful development certificate to confirm whether, on the facts of the case, the specific use is or would be lawful. Where a Certificate is issued, a planning application would not be required for the matters specified in the certificate.

Considering the parliamentary debate in Volume 566 on Thursday, 11 July 2013, which favours the need for care homes and the planning application for a change of use from C3 Dwelling to a C2 Residential institution process, it is evident that this residential Family Centre Service is a crucial resource in short supply within Berkshire and across the UK. The Planning Guidance (Children's Homes) emphasizes the significance of such local family assessment services, particularly in Reading and Reading Borough Council, where Brighter Futures for Children is in dire need of such a service.

The necessity of this service becomes even more apparent when considering the significant distance families currently must travel to access it. Therefore, this supporting statement underlines that, despite the proposed use not falling within the same Use Class as the property's current authorized use, there exists no substantive distinction between the two uses. Consequently, no additional planning permission should be required for this essential resource.

This Supporting Statement should be closely examined alongside the accompanying drawings and supplementary documentation to fully appreciate the comprehensive rationale behind this proposal.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal is fully compliant with the GPDO. We, therefore, see no reason for the council to withhold our request for a Certificate of Lawfulness in relation to the proposed scheme and kindly request for a timely decision to be made, in line with guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework.

We stand ready to work in partnership with the local authority planning department and other stakeholders to provide the best possible care and support for children with EBD within our community.

We believe that the proposed C2 care home, specializing in care for children aged 7-17 with EBD, will provide a vital service to the community. Our dedicated team and commitment to compliance and safety ensure that children will receive the highest level of care and support.

If you require any additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,