

Supporting Document to accompany
Full planning Application on behalf of
Oasis Care Solutions Ltd.

Planning and Purpose

- This application is not an application to intensify the existing use as it is for only for 2 childrens. It is believed that there will be little or no difference in the nature of the property when compared to the residential use by a family with children. It should be noted that, although there may be a material change of use involved, this does not mean that it is an unacceptable change, or that there would be any significant effect on adjacent properties.
- The proposed use here is as a care home for children in need of care. There would be two children being looked after at the premises. This is a type of use that is generally accepted to be best located in the community. It is, in reality, very similar to a dwelling house used as a family home.

Oversight of Service

- All Children's Homes in England cannot legally function without registration with Ofsted (the Regulatory Body). Registration is a rigorous process in which providers must demonstrate they are fit and proper persons to carry on the business, are financially viable to be able to meet the costs incurred by any placement. Additionally, changes to legislation introduced a requirement for Managers of existing children's homes and prospective providers to undertake a location risk assessment to ensure that premises used for the purposes of a children's home are appropriately and suitably located so that children cared for by the home are effectively safeguarded and able to access services to meet the needs identified in their care or placement plans.
- The applicant believes the location of the premises would not set the service apart or advantage/disadvantage from any neighbouring property the majority of which already accommodate families in an established cohesive community and is a testament to the suitability of the location.
- This home will have a Statement of Purpose which will identify the purpose of the home and identify how it will achieve good outcomes for children, functioning within the current Quality Standards and Children's Homes Regulations.
- Ofsted has a Regulatory and enforcement responsibility which allows for scrutiny and oversight of the home. This includes Inspection visits, Quality Assurance Visits, and unannounced visits when concerns are raised. The home will also have a responsibility to appoint an independent person to visit the home monthly to assess care, progress, and compliance. Similarly, the home will have a responsibility to furnish Ofsted with information including self-analysis.
- The Responsible Individual Mark Kelly will have oversight of the home along with the Registered Manager.

Placement of Children

- It is our expressed preference to accommodate children within their local authority boundary where possible, although it is recognised that some children do have to be placed out of the area for short periods for their own care and protection needs.
- All children considered for placement will be referred by a Local Authority.
- All referrals will be scrutinised and subject to a 360° robust impact assessment process before an offer of placement is made. This will include compatibility of any child already in placement and the potential positive or negative impact the proposed placement may have in terms of the smooth running of the home and its immediate and wider environment

Supervision of children

- Children will not be left alone at the property.
- Children can leave the property as part of pre-arranged 'free time' as part of their ongoing Care plan, but staff members would have to be informed and would, as a matter of course, be made aware if a child has left the property.
- There is no curfew, and children are treated as they would be in a family with agreements reached between adult and child in terms of reasonable "home times". These would also be agreed with the placing authority and be an integral part of the child's Care plan.
- Children would be expected to be present at mealtimes, spend time in the home, attend education, and go to bed in the normal way and at normal times.
- Timings will vary depending on the age of the children.
- Home security would be as for a normal dwelling house and there would not be access controls on doors. If younger children are being cared for attention will be paid to gates at the front or rear of the property to ensure safety from cars on the main road.
- CCTV would not be installed internally unless recommended as a part of the planning application. A security camera will be installed on the outer part of the building to monitor the driveway only. This is for safety and security reasons only and will be inline with that of a family-dwelling house.
- Friends and relatives of the children can visit, normally by prior arrangement and subject to the objectives in their care plans

FAQ's

What would be the needs of the children to be placed in the home e.g. Would they suffer from physical disabilities, mental health issues, established behavioural problems, or would they simply be vulnerable young people?

The children would indeed be vulnerable young people by virtue of their Looked After status. The only criteria are that they are accommodated because the Local Authority has a Corporate Parenting responsibility for them. This could come about purely because they have had to be removed from their family care, have no alternative carers, and cannot function in a foster home.

Some children may exhibit behavioural problems, but this is almost always linked to previous trauma and/or parenting issues. Removing them to a home in which they can be cared for and nurtured will play a large part in addressing any behavioural problems and in some cases prove to provide immediate relief.

Would the children attend local schools or be educated within the home?

We would endeavour to ensure our children had access to the most appropriate local educational provision and it would never be a long-term ambition for children to be educated at the home. It may well be that this is a very temporary solution whilst external provision away from the home is identified. However, one of the main priorities during the referral and introduction process, is to identify an appropriate local education provision prior to placement.

What about noise and the impact on the adjoining property

We anticipate noise could potentially be less than that generated within the context of a dwelling house. For example, we would not be holding or hosting large gatherings – such as family parties etc. We would hold appropriate celebrations in the home, but they would be limited in time and numbers attending.

Our children will have agreed on home times and agreed settling down and bedtimes. Shift handovers will be at a minimum and will not take place in the early or late hours.

Would there be an excessive increase in traffic or issues around parking caused by visitors to the home or staff attending to look after the children?

Note on Vehicular Movements of Typical Residential Home for 2 Children in Need of Care

Introduction

1. This note has been produced to address a particular aspect of the operation of homes for young people in need of care. The basic model of care with which it is concerned is a small home for up to 2 children, with no more than two carers present overnight.
2. The home would operate very much as it had done as a private dwelling, and those traffic movements would be very much the same as per private a private dwelling, in fact, considerably less in some instances.
3. In order to address this in more detail, and on an objective basis, this note has been prepared with specific reference to typical traffic generation.

Anticipated Traffic generation

4. It should be noted that the home operates with one dedicated vehicle for the property, but with access to other vehicles as necessary.
5. **Vehicular Movements** – projecting normal activity through a 24hr weekday period there would potentially be 2 main arrival and departure times for staff working in the home. Largely these would be at 08.30 a.m. and 10.30 pm.
6. Supplementary to the above during the week there is the potential for the arrival and departure of Senior Management, during assumed office hours.
7. Children would have statutory visits from their Social Worker on a 4 - 6 weekly basis. This would be anticipated to take place on a weekday and within the normal assumed range of office hours.
8. Unless prohibited, families may visit the home for contact with children. The frequency would be determined by each child's care plan. In some cases, there may be no contact at all.
9. Other professionals may visit the home on an ad-hoc basis. This would include visits from Ofsted Inspectors, independent visitors and those representing other agencies engaged with the children.
10. **Parking** – there is sufficient parking space on the driveway to accommodate up to 3 vehicles. We will also look to create additional space in the front garden area to allow easier access and ensure that any vehicles can be parked within the parameters of the home, without impacting on the local community.
11. All visitors to the home would be advised of parking arrangements before arrival and would be encouraged to be respectful to the neighbours and their parking needs.
12. The reality here is that there is only actually a need throughout the weekdays for there to be parking for up to 3 cars, however, this will reduce at weekends as no senior management will be at the home and there will be no other statutory professionals visiting at weekends.
13. It should **not** be assumed that because the children are in receipt of care there will be very significant vehicular movements or demand for car parking. That is simply not the case, and that is why the applicant consistently explains that the home will operate in very much the same way as would a dwelling house with a family in residence.
14. It is also useful to note that the children accommodated will not be of an age to have their own cars and therefore the car owned by the home and the cars used by staff would not exceed the parking needs of the majority of family homes
15. Weekends would see a diminution in traffic arrivals and departures as the "business" aspects of the function of the home are not on-site at the weekend
16. **Staff Turnaround** - Staffing is in the form of three teams of two persons.
17. The Registered Manager would be present at the home daily during the week, and if an emergency dictated, although we would hope this not to be the case.
18. Staff work for a 14hr period commencing at 08.30am and finishing at 10.30pm. One member of staff remains in the home to "sleep in". The 2nd member of staff leaves for the night and is replaced by one night staff, commonly known as waking watch, who remains awake overnight in the home: Waking watch – 10.30pm – 8.30am.

Conclusion

19. For the above reasons, the applicant considers that this additional data, applying to vehicular movements, addresses one of the potential key areas of concern in terms of impact on the neighbours. We have adopted the start time as being a little later than a lot of other providers, who would generally commence shift at 08.00 am. This decision has been made to consider the neighbours.
20. However, standing aside from the issue of the actual data, there is a particular reason why the applicant is confident in asserting that there will be no material change of use, and that is because it is fundamental to the operation of the care home use provided by the applicant, that it provides a home which is as similar to a family home as is possible. It is right and proper that each case is treated on its own merits, but when that principle is applied the applicants believe that the issue of vehicular movements and parking should not give rise to a reason for refusal.

Is there a local need for a Childrens's Home?

It is acknowledged across the country that there are not enough suitable placements for children who need to live in residential settings. Furthermore, choice locally has become limited due to some of the barriers facing new providers setting up homes. This is now leading to the expansion of providers who are owned by Private Equity Houses or Venture Capitalists.

The Competition & Marketing Authority were commissioned to carry out a Market study and a full report was published in March 2022. The report identified that:

Overall, our view is that there are significant problems in how the placements market is functioning, particularly in England and Wales. We found that:

- *a lack of placements of the right kind, in the right places, means that children are not consistently getting access to care and accommodation that meets their needs*
- *the largest private providers of placements are making materially higher profits, and charging materially higher prices, than we would expect if this market were functioning effectively*
- *some of the largest private providers are carrying very high levels of debt, creating a risk that disorderly failure of highly leveraged firms could disrupt the placements of children in care*

First, and most importantly, it is clear that the placements market, particularly in England and Wales, is failing to provide sufficient supply of the right type so that looked-after children can consistently access placements that properly meet their needs, when and where they require them. This means that some children are being placed in settings that are not appropriate for their own circumstances, for instance where they are:

- *far from where they would call 'home' without a clear child protection reason for this, thereby separated from positive friend and family networks: 37% of children in England in residential placements are placed at least 20 miles from their home base*

- *separated from siblings, where their care plan calls for them to be placed together: 13% of all siblings in care in England were placed separately, contrary to their care plan*
- *unable to access care, therapies or facilities that they need: we were told consistently by local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales that it is especially difficult to find placements for children with more complex needs and for older children. We were also told that some children are placed in an unregulated setting due to the lack of an appropriate children's home place, and so cannot legally be given the care they need. We also understand that in some cases children are being placed in unregistered settings, notwithstanding the fact that this is illegal.*

Planning Application

Rather than apply for a "Certificate of Lawfulness" Oasis Care Solutions Ltd has elected to submit a Full Planning Application in good faith that the application will be considered in the round and enable us to establish an excellent service, responsive to the needs of the host authority and give a chance for Lancashire children to maintain links within their home county until such time they are safely able to return to their families and own communities. We firmly believe that we will become a part of the local community and add to it in a positive way.