



post outline: **Independent Person** Children's Homes

the background

dialogue provides independent person services to registered children's homes under [regulation 44 of the Children's Homes \(England\) Regulations 2015](#). Some visitors also undertake training or consultancy work for dialogue. These pieces of work are specified separately.

dialogue

dialogue was created by **John Woodhouse**, a social worker and former residential manager who also has senior management experience in local authority and private sector. He has direct experience of managing and turning around safeguarding teams, recently rekindled the Cornwall Council Safeguarding Children Board training programme and re-designed much of the South West Child Protection Procedures.

dialogue has a broad team of consultants with a depth of knowledge and practical experience. Our aim as an organisation is to facilitate the cycle between learning and practice.

We are currently providing:

- consultancy on a wide range of projects, from a DfE innovation project to merge children's social care, CAMHS, youth and YOT provision to improvement projects within individual children's homes.
- training across a range of local authority, health, 3rd sector and multi-agency settings, including the majority of the safeguarding

training provided by the Devon Safeguarding Children Board and MCA & DoLs training for an NHS trust.

- independent persons for four residential providers for young people with significant additional needs, and one set of adult services' residential homes
- film-making, elearning, young people's participation in training, a comprehensive safeguarding magazine and range of other innovative work to find the right solution for young people and the staff working with them

description of the role

the **independent** person

dialogue provide experienced and effective managers and senior managers with residential management experience to residential homes requesting this role. Our independent people will hold a Level 4/5 qualification in Health and Social Care or be a Qualified Social worker or previous OFSTED Inspector and have experience in a management capacity.

Independent Persons are selected on a track record that demonstrates their focus on the needs of vulnerable people, a willingness to ask difficult questions and to identify, share and build on effective practice.

Our independent visitors are truly independent. They author the report and professionally stand by the views. All reports are quality assured by **dialogue**, and the findings shared in draft with the home, but ultimately the independent person decides what is in the final report.

In addition to monthly quality assurance and associated discussions the independent person has supervision at a minimum of termly. **dialogue** work closely with our visitors to weigh up the balance of strengths and concerns together.

visits to the home

In our first visits to a home we typically provide an intense service as part of a 'getting to know you' exercise. Following this, for a 3 bed home, we typically spend about a day each month undertaking visits, providing feedback, reading files, contacting other agencies and family, then drafting and finalising the report.

The visits to the homes will take place at different times of day, including evening and weekend visits and will be a mixture of announced and unannounced. They will comprise:

- observations of **setting, staff and residents**,
- listening and talking to **young people**,
- discussions with **staff and managers**, individually and when convenient together
- reading of relevant **records** including case files

Where a resident has a specific communication model (such as Makaton) the home will provide such necessary support to the young person to facilitate their full involvement.

People's records are confidential. Each home must obtain the permission of the resident (where possible) and the placing local authority for **dialogue** to access the file. The visitor is expected to ensure this is in place.

wider **consultation**

dialogue will also make contact with **health, social care and other staff** associated with or providing services to people living at the home about their perceptions and views of people's experience while living there. We will also contact the **placing authority** of each resident to advise them on our role and to consult with them on their analysis of people's experiences.

Where relevant, dialogue will also contact **family** of the people who live there about their experience of visiting the home, how it makes a difference and suggestions for continuing development.

recording of visits

A monthly report will be produced summarising the themes and issues raised across contacts made with agencies and visits to the home. The views of residents will be given precedence in this report, together with an analytic overview of the progress the home is making. Actions previously identified will be followed up the following month.

The monthly report will include:

- how people living at the home enjoy their time there and how it helps them achieve their goals
- communication from residents on their experience, wishes and feelings
- evidence of the stability, safety and security of the care provided and the practice of staff and managers
- how staff respond to residents, including any use of restraint or people going missing
- compliance with the regulatory framework

- the physical standard of the home and how it meets the needs of people staying there
- any disciplinary measures and use of restraint and records of missing person's reports
- how progress against issues previously identified can be evidenced

The report will be structured to provide an overview of the home's progress and actions required to improve the standard of care further. Visits and contact with agencies or family will be recorded separately as background information to support the report.

The report will be completed at the end of each month and provided to the manager of the service in **dialogue** by the 5th of the month, and by the 7th of the month directly to the registered manager and responsible individual, together with any actions recommended (to be followed up at subsequent visits). The registered manager and responsible person will be asked to comment on the report. We are keen staff at the homes see the report and have the opportunity to respond to issues and good practice identified.

Each home must respond to the report within 7 days.

dialogue will maintain the confidentiality of the report unless the home agree otherwise, there is a court order or there is reason to suspect residents may be at risk of abuse or neglect. In this situation dialogue will endeavour to work through the management of the home to raise concerns, but reserves the right to escalate concerns if the level of risk warrants this.

action identified and escalation

The independent person will set out recommended timescales for any action required in consultation with the homes and follow up all actions either at the next visit or in the interim if required.

Where actions have not been completed this will be drawn to the attention of the manager and responsible individual. Where a problem persists or a significant recommendation has not been followed up the independent person will raise this with those with governance responsibilities for the home, placing authorities or ultimately with the regulator.

responsibilities of each organisation

We share the following framework with homes we visit:

dialogue will:

- be friendly and positive in its approach
- be honest, objective and clear in its appraisal
- explain its view, with clear evidence for any view reached
- always act in the best interests of service users
- be timely in its reporting and ensure all agreed parties receive the reports
- follow up actions recommended
- respect the confidentiality of service users, staff and the organisation
- ensure any staff with access to information have been properly vetted

the **home** will

- encourage staff and service users to value this opportunity for discussion and development
- advise residents, relatives and professionals about **dialogue's** role
- routinely provide the home managers' monitoring reports, together with any other relevant information requested by **dialogue**
- highlight any worries arising at an early stage
- notify the visitor within 24 hours of a significant event in the life of a resident including, for example,
 - the death, serious illness, notifiable disease, or serious accident of a resident,
 - any concern a resident has committed a serious offence, is being exploited or is missing, any involvement of Police or safeguarding services
 - allegations of abuse or neglect involving about any staff member
 - Any serious complaint about the home or persons working there
 - A notification to the regulator
- provide a space in the home for private conversations with staff and/or residents
- satisfy itself there is no connection between dialogue's independent person and each home
- provide any support or interpretation if required for any specific communication needs (e.g. sign language or Makaton) with young people or parents

complaints or other issues with the independent person service

Any issues should be addressed with John Woodhouse directly. Should there be a problem that cannot immediately be resolved a meeting will be arranged between dialogue and the home.

John Woodhouse

Managing Director, Dialogue

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