

# INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

## REPORT

Netherclay Home Care Ltd.

Presented by Jane Roberts

Investors in People Practitioner

On behalf of Investors in People South of England

**September 2015**

**14-04808**

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## 1. Introduction

Netherclay Home Care Ltd. was established in 1994 to provide home care in the Taunton Deane and Wellington area. Netherclay have had an Approved Strategic Partners contract with Taunton Deane council since 2004 for the delivery of quality care and support services throughout Somerset, working in partnership to deliver home support, a Sitting Service, Children & Families Services, Supporting People Services and Initial Response throughout Taunton Deane and surrounding villages.

Current focus within the organisation is to look at staff retention, identifying reasons behind people leaving the organisation with a view to improving incentives to remain at Netherclay Home Care Ltd.

Netherclay Home Care Ltd. first gained Investors in People recognition in 2002 and was subsequently re-assessed against the Core Standard in 2005, 2008 and 2011.

## 2. Executive Summary

Firstly, I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who took part in the assessment. Everyone's open & honest feedback was greatly appreciated.

Secondly, congratulations – Netherclay Home Care Ltd. meets the requirements of the Investors in People accreditation.

Netherclay has a clear, overarching business goal, set out in their *Philosophy of Care* - that of providing the highest quality service for clients, where individuals are treated with respect, dignity and compassion by a well-trained, motivated and professional team of people. This sentiment is clearly fully understood by everyone working for the organisation and furthermore is fully taken to heart by everyone.

The strong sense of pride that people take in their work at Netherclay, across all roles, was clear to see and truly inspirational. It is gratifying to meet a group of people who are so intent on improving the lives of the service users and ensuring that they have every opportunity to see out their twilight years with respect and dignity.

It is good to see that you have begun to look at succession planning, and building capacity for the future. It appears that this sector will continue to grow for the foreseeable future and preparation now is crucial to continued growth for the organisation.

The business has become very busy and things can get hectic. This can result in some processes, such as appraisals or feedback, slipping as priorities change. The introduction of technology (i.e. smartphones) has been a boon for the organisation and communication but care should be taken to ensure that this does not become the only contact that people have. It is important to ensure that the personal contact that people have benefitted from in the past is not left behind.

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There follows a summary of good practices in evidence as well as opportunities for further development.

### What you do well

There were many examples of good practice and I believe the following are particularly worthy of mention:

- **Business Strategy** – You have a clear business strategy, with targets and Key Performance Indicators which are regularly reviewed, ensuring the business stays focussed and reactive.
- **Drive / motivation** – seeing the level of pride and motivation people have in their work is inspirational. In addition it was evident that people who are newer to the organisation still have the same zeal and vigour that they had when first joining Netherclay and this is gratifying to observe. People not only understand the importance of providing clients with care and respect, but strive to live up to the promise.
- **Culture / Team-work** – it was evident that a great deal of knowledge sharing, coaching and peer support takes place. People indicated that if ever there are problems they know that help is always available; either through telephone advice or someone coming out to help and this is much appreciated.
- **Flexibility** – While it is difficult to arrange meetings that everyone can attend you have demonstrated flexibility in changing times of such meetings so that more people will be able to attend. It is also very good to hear people say that help is always available if help or support is required.
- **Training & Development** – There is a strong commitment to the ongoing development of people. People at all levels are encouraged to develop their skills and it was clear that people are motivated to do so. There was a real sense of team-work with much knowledge-sharing in evidence.
- **Induction** – New employees are provided with a structured introduction to the organisation which helps them settle in and become effective members of the team. People who have undertaken this induction following return to work from maternity leave etc. have confirmed that this has improved further since they first went through the process.
- **Performance reviews** – Although there were instances where appraisals have slipped, in general appraisals are found to be very useful. Improvements to the process (such as 2 people conducting, with one taking notes) have been recognised by people, with the process feeling more structured and beneficial as a result.

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## Opportunities for further development

The following are suggestions for further developing the good practices within the organisation and are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement as you are an organisation that believes in furthering good practice:

- \* Going forward I would recommend that you look at succession planning as a priority in order to build capacity for the future. To this end it would be useful to identify and clarify the key skills, knowledge and behavioural requirements for all roles within the organisation but particularly managerial roles. This should cover soft-skills (people management, time management, delegation, assertiveness etc.) as well as the more sector-related technical skills. This would help to identify any development needs required for people to move into managerial positions in the future. I understand that work has begun in this regard.
- \* As part of the drive towards succession planning it would be useful to extend the use of competency checklist for all staff rather than just part of the induction. This would help to ensure that key competencies are maintained. Further extending this to managerial roles would help to identify the traits and experience people need to move into these positions in the future. Discussions of career aspirations during appraisal processes would enable you to *map* people against these competencies and plan development activities with this in mind.
- Some development activities, while very useful, are for skills that are not necessarily required on a day to day basis (e.g. nebulisers, lifting / hoist etc.). For this reason, it is all too easy to become rusty or forget key learning points. To this end it may be useful to include notes & diagrams for such topics as a matter of course so that people can refer to them as necessary.
- You may find it useful to update the induction process to include some form of evaluation at the end of the probation period to gain feedback from new employees as to any aspects of the induction that could be improved upon or additional information they may have picked up themselves which could have been included to make things easier. This is not to say that there is currently any information missing from the induction but is a very useful way of ensuring that the induction is kept up to date.
- I would encourage you to ensure that 1:1's and appraisals are conducted regularly. In addition, it is important to ensure that people receive regular verbal feedback, thanks and recognition for their efforts. Many people do not respond well to utilising technology for this (i.e. the smartphones), feeling that it loses the personal contact and impact.
- Where people change roles within Netherclay it is important to set aside time to recap and gauge people's progress in the same way as new employees. Netherclay are very supportive of new starters, providing coaching and regular progress reviews. It is important to ensure that the same support mechanisms are in place for job changes too.

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- \* As discussed during the planning meeting the Investors in People UK is currently introducing the 6<sup>th</sup> Generation Framework. Netherclay's next assessment will be based on this framework so going forward it would be beneficial to begin looking at this with a view to making any preparations ahead of time so that any new supporting practices are fully embedded when you are next assessed. We can discuss this in more detail during the Improvement Planning Meeting.

\* We would be happy to provide additional consultancy support to help with the development of these recommendations. I will discuss the possibilities with you further as part of the forthcoming Improvement Planning discussion.

### **3. Feedback on specific areas for assessment**

As set out in the assessment plan, we agreed that the assessment would focus on providing feedback against the following business objectives:

- a) Gain feedback on employee perception of the effectiveness of the management team.
- b) To gain an insight into why people leave the organisation with a view to improving employee retention rates.

#### **a) Gain feedback on employee perception of the effectiveness of the management team.**

Netherclay Care Home Ltd. has a Philosophy of Care setting out their mission statement. There is an annual development / business plan on top of this, setting out key organisational objectives and goals for year. This is primarily people-focussed rather than business goal orientated. While the proprietor obviously has a broad plan of business direction I would suggest that the business plan be extended to document this, perhaps incorporating future goals targets. Having said that the focus on the people side reinforces the importance of the staff population in providing the quality of service to clients.

The registered manager is seen to be friendly and approachable, treating people with respect and felt comfortable approaching the manager with any problems, work and personal alike and this was very much appreciated. Furthermore, people confirmed that they felt able to put forward their ideas and suggestions in the knowledge that they would be listened to, and given due consideration.

There is a strong commitment to ongoing development, with regular refresher training to maintain regulatory requirements. Additional development activities are undertaken and the management

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team actively looks to provide extra support where necessary, and values feedback from people in this regard.

An example was provided whereby training in the use of nebulisers was provided. This is a more specialised skill that may not be needed on a strictly day to day basis and as with any under-utilised skill, will not always be fully remembered. Following feedback a diagram has been included with notes for people to follow when necessary. This demonstrates an active intent to listen to people and provide the additional support required to ensure the provision of quality – and also that the organisation listens to what people need.

Support is always a phone-call away – particularly important with people working individually within the community. People confirmed that if they had a problem or needed any help, a phone-call to the office would always provide the help they needed – either having someone to discuss matters with, or someone coming out to help or even coach people. Another example was provided in the form of training on lifting / sling operation. Following training on this subject if people were having problems out in the field, the trainer would be available to observe and provide encouragement, help and advice. This kind of support is invaluable and is very much appreciated by people.

There was a mixed response regarding communication, although the generally consensus was that communication is good. There are various meetings at all levels, although the regularity of these can evidently be sporadic at times - particularly when things get busy. The management team has obviously gone a long way to try and ensure maximum attendance to the area meetings, changing the timings to help more people attend. People who have attended these sessions found them to be very interesting and useful, providing opportunities to network with their peers and share ideas etc.

Smartphones have been introduced to help with communication and this appears to be an effective method of keeping everyone up to date, particularly since people are working out in the community rather than being office-based.

While people perhaps initially saw this as 'big-brother', with the organisation looking to keep closer tabs on everyone, but now that the system has had a chance to settle in people can see the positive impact this has made, confirming that they are well utilised to keep people informed of changes to routes/breaking news on service users etc. They are also useful in send out information - Emails, newsletters etc.

However, some people found this to make them feel more isolated. Since paperwork has been reduced there is less need for people to visit the office. This has resulted in some perception of more distance between staff and the management team, with less opportunity for direct communication and feedback.

There was a mixed response from people with regard to feedback. With the business being very busy / hectic supervisions can sometimes be missed. Thank-you's are sent on the smartphone and, while it is good to have your efforts recognised, such notifications can be seen as impersonal, and could even be sent automatically and so do not have the same impact for some.

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While newer employees just see this as 'how things are done', to longer-term employees this can be seen as losing the personal touch compared with previous years. In part this may be due to the outlook of the individual, and looking at ways to encourage greater attendance to the area meetings may help to bring increased communication between peers but I would recommend that care be taken to avoid over-use of this technology to pass on feedback and not to lose that personal touch.

There was also some indication that communication can be a little hit & miss depending on the day-to-day workload. It has evidently been a very busy period for everyone and I would say that people are in need of some TLC. It would be useful to focus on ensuring people know that they are doing a good job and that management care about them.

There is an appraisal process in place, supporting the supervisory meetings / 1:1's and this is a good practice, providing an opportunity to speak to people about their overall performance, career aspirations and development needs. During the assessment it was evident that some appraisals were outstanding due to workload. This is obviously understandable but I would recommend that you make every effort to conduct appraisals in a timely manner. Appraisals can be invaluable in providing feedback on overall performance and recognition – particularly if time does not always allow ad hoc thanks and praise.

#### **b) To gain an insight into why people leave the organisation with a view to improving employee retention rates.**

There are many reasons that people can decide to leave an organisation and it is difficult to identify any single key driver – particularly when the workforce is fairly evenly split between long-term employees and new starters as this indicates that there is nothing intrinsically *wrong* with Netherclay's people management processes.

The care sector is obviously a difficult sector to work in and is not for everyone. What seems to be a good fit initially could potentially change when the inevitable realities of the work are encountered and this could be one of many potential reasons for people moving on.

Another potential (and I suspect more likely) causal effect is the level of work involved. It has become extremely busy for the organisation, with an ever growing client-base and the management team are fully aware of how stretched staff are feeling with the workload.

As in any business sector, finance can also be a key driver for people choosing to move employers. To this end there have been a number of changes recently. An pay / finance review has been conducted this year and in addition to a wages increase there have also been some changes to travel policies, incorporating changes to payment for travel time. This now utilises the RAC journey-planner website to calculate mileage. This financial review was carried out with full consultation with staff, which is good to hear as all too often these processes are conducted behind the scenes, causing concern among the affected people-population. Consultation helps to allay these concerns and can also be useful to have people put their views forward within the process. Not only do people feel that they have had their say, but also gives them an opportunity

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to gain an appreciation of the employers viewpoint, with greater exposure to practical problems and business realities that may not be known.

It is good to see that you are looking to introduce exit interviews for people who decide to leave the organisation. This sits well with the interview and induction practices to compare people's initial views on their roles with the reasons for leaving. Comments made during the exit interviews should provide some useful insight that can be fed back in to the interview / induction processes in order to address problems at an earlier stage, or perhaps alleviate the issues altogether.

There is comprehensive 3-month induction process in place, with monthly interim progress reviews in addition to supervisory reviews. This appears to provide a detailed introduction to working at Netherclay. In addition to the office-based *theory* induction providing overviews of Netherclay's *Philosophy of Care* as well as key aspects of care (Dementia, personalisation, care planning, medication, food hygiene and nutrition, health & safety etc.). There is a 2-week *buddy system* of shadowing / observation which is a very effective way of getting people up to speed in their role. The reviews also explore what people think of the role in comparison to what they expected and this is a very good practice, both in terms of seeing how people's expectations are being met (and identifying improvements that could be made in this area) as well as helping with future recruitment activities (attracting the right people through more specific description of requirements / activities at the advertising and interviewing stages).

It is good to see that you are continuing to provide the induction for people returning from maternity leave, and also where people have left the organisation and returned. Where people have not been working in the sector for a while, this provides a beneficial refresher. It is also all too easy to overlook changes that have happened within the organisation over time and undertaking the induction programme provides an opportunity for people to pick these changes up at the start rather than having surprises later.

I was also pleased to see that there is some supporting documentation for recruitment interviews, with hints & tips on how to lead discussions, as well as scenarios to see how people would react to specific situations. In addition to helping gauge a candidate's suitability for the role it also helps those people conducting the interviews, providing pointers for people new to these activities and enabling them to be more effective in the task. This kind of support is beneficial for supporting the development of people for more responsible managerial roles with a view to career progression and succession planning.

## 4. Recommendation and next steps

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for Investors in People Practitioner by Investors in People – United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills, the Investors in People Practitioner is totally satisfied that **Netherclay Home Care Ltd.** meets the requirements of the Investors in People National Standard.

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Investors in People accreditation is granted indefinitely, with a proviso that an interaction is undertaken within 18 months of accreditation and a full assessment takes place no greater than 3 years apart. Assessments can be undertaken at any time and more frequent assessments are recommended to maintain levels of good practice and continuous improvement.

The Improvement Planning Meeting has been tentatively scheduled to take place on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015, where we can review the report findings and develop an action plan to move forward.

The organisation should discuss the timing of the next assessment with their Investors in People Practitioner, using the Improvement Planning Meeting to agree the best strategy for future use of the Investors in People framework.



Jane Roberts

Investors in People Specialist  
On behalf of Investors in People South of England.

## 5. Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire

Both the Investors in People Practitioner and Investors in People South of England would welcome your feedback on this assessment and you will shortly be supplied with a Client Satisfaction Questionnaire from Investors in People to complete. Particular importance is placed on the feedback given by client organisations on Practitioner's; therefore we would very much appreciate it if you would complete the questionnaire.

## 6. Promoting continuous improvement

We support organisations at every stage of the Investors in People journey, helping them to realise the power of their people, optimise their performance and achieve their full potential. We see Investors in People as the People Partner for sustainable people solutions.

Please contact your Account Manager Veronica Parsons, on 020 7728 3102 or email [Veronica.Parsons@iipsouth.investorsinpeople.co.uk](mailto:Veronica.Parsons@iipsouth.investorsinpeople.co.uk) to find out more about Investors in People and how we can help your organisation.

Details of the support available to you can be accessed by contacting Investors in People South of England via: -



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**T:** 020 7728 3456

**E:** [enquiries@IIPsouth.investorsinpeople.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@IIPsouth.investorsinpeople.co.uk)

**W:** <http://IIPsouth.investorsinpeople.co.uk>

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## 7. Outcomes table - evidence requirements framework matrix

<b>Core Standard</b>										
Total number of core evidence requirements assessed - 37										
Total number of core evidence requirements met - 37										
	<b>Indicators</b>									
<b>ERs</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>10</b>
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	
5	n/a		✓						✓	
6	✓									

<b>Wider Framework</b>										
Total number of additional evidence requirements assessed - 6										
Total number of additional evidence requirements met - 1										
	<b>Indicators</b>									
<b>ERs</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>10</b>
4	Core	Core	Core		Core				Core	
5	Core		Core						Core	
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