

MERRYWOOD HOUSE

Statement of Purpose

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1 Overall Aims and Objectives

Merrywood House is one of four communities run by the charitable organisation Childhood First. Our work is based on our Integrated Systemic Therapy (iST) model, which has evolved over 40 years. This is a holistic group-based approach founded on the twin traditions of milieu therapy and systemic psychotherapy.

Merrywood House is a specialist residential therapeutic community for psychologically traumatised young people. We offer an integrated systemic programme of care, therapeutic work and education for up to eight young people of mixed gender, aged 10-18. Placements are for 52 weeks a year with facilitation of all necessary arrangements for contact and work with families and significant others.

Merrywood House provides a safe environment designed for group living and learning. Staff enable and support young people to work through their experiences of past trauma and help them engage as members of a group who are valued collectively and individually. We meet each young person's needs through both individual and group work; how we do this is described throughout this document.

Our aim is to help the young people to develop the ability to create and sustain meaningful and trusting relationships with others; an ability that can be transferred when the young person moves on to another placement or leaves care.

Specifically, for all young people placed at Merrywood House we aim to achieve the following positive outcomes:

- to be safe in the present and to develop ways of relating and skills which will help ensure future safety
- to have a positive experience of being well cared for
- to become healthier, physically and mentally
- to benefit from the experience of play
- to experience positive relationships with reliable adults
- to develop the capacity for making healthy relationships
- to develop emotionally, educationally and socially
- to be able to engage in verbal communication, and that this should be developed as an alternative to acting out difficult feelings in the form of anti-social behaviour
- to develop internal resources (with support) to cope with everyday situations which initially may have caused a great deal of stress
- to develop internal personal boundaries and a sense of autonomous self.

2 Care, Education and Treatment

2.1 Ethos and philosophy

The Childhood First booklet, 'Integrated Systemic Therapy for Traumatized Children & Young people,' describes in some detail the ethos and philosophy on which the care, education and treatment at Merrywood House is founded. Our booklet on iST is held in the home for reference purposes and additional information regarding our approach is available on request. What has been difficult for the young people who come to us is in their relationships with others, and in relationships between those around them. It is by attending to both these aspects that the capacity to relate can be recovered and outcomes in all areas of life are then seen to improve.

Our therapeutic expertise is located in a systemic and psychoanalytic thinking and practice which offers transformative insight, particularly in a group setting, to young people suffering profound emotional or mental trauma.

Robust theory and organisational structures together provide the setting within which the art of healing can take place, and traumatised young people can learn the ability to make healthy attachments, process feelings and relate to others.

Our family systems-based approach allows healthy relationships to develop across the group of young people and adults. The group experience powerfully counters the dangerous sense that many young people have formed that they do not matter to anyone, and nobody matters to them.

In addition our facilities present a warm, creative, extended family home. The environment is of a high quality, and care is taken to ensure it represents security, wholeness and warmth at all times. The young people's participation in thinking about all aspects of living together, including the environment, is a significant part of the group work and treatment.

Where appropriate young people will have the option to engage in individual therapy, this will be identified on an individual basis and in consultation with the young person, placing authority and other professionals.

2.2 Admissions Policy and criteria

Following a referral from a placing authority the Registered Manager will consider young people who are ten or over who meet the following criteria: inadequate early attachment and sufficient intellectual capacity to benefit from the treatment philosophy regardless of their educational attainment. The final decision on suitability will be made by the Registered Manager after further consultation with the senior group, taking into account the specific needs of the young person and their ability to function within the existing group.

We would ask the social worker for a selection of the following documentation:

- a detailed social history

- an educational psychologist's report
- relevant school reports
- a Statement of Educational Needs
- a history of previous placements (including an assessment of their success and/or failure)
- a current statement of needs
- Social Services Care Plan.

We would also invite involved professionals to visit Merrywood House to view the home and discuss the young person's needs and the professionals' expected outcomes for the young person, if placed. Where appropriate, parents would also be invited to meet us prior to admission; working with families and the young person's network whenever possible is central to our model. We require that each young person who comes has a sufficient intellectual capacity to respond to what it is we offer and we therefore cannot consider anyone who is diagnosed as psychotic or suffering from significant learning disabilities; nor can we consider those who are significantly physically disabled due to the nature of the premises.

We will undertake a matching summary (also known as a group risk assessment) to identify the potential risks around the placement of the new young person both in terms of their impact on the current children's group and vice versa.

We will also carry out an impact assessment to ensure that a placement is in the interests of the young person and the existing group of young people. This is part of our APTT Framework (Assessment, Planning, Treatment, Transition.)

2.3 Age range, gender and numbers of young people

Merrywood House can accommodate eight young people of mixed gender aged 10 to 18 years who are unable to live in their own family setting. Young people aged over 18, dependent on individual circumstances and in consultation with statutory agencies, may on occasion remain at Merrywood House for an agreed period of time if this supports the young person in their transition process.

2.4 Any special needs of young people accommodated

The young people who come to Merrywood House have been severely traumatised or psychologically deprived; therefore, they will have special needs relating to their own individual life experiences and circumstances. Some have suffered the extremes of neglect, physical emotional and sexual abuse. Their patterns of attachment are often disordered due to interruptions in early care. Some are dealing with the consequences of overwhelming events from which they have been unable to recover.

These early experiences have had the most serious effect on their ability to function appropriately, either with respect to their own lives, or in relation to others.

2.5 Range of needs the home is intended to meet

Young people who have suffered in this way interact with their environments within the extremes of fear and anxiety, or overconfidence. Some are unable to cope with the demands of almost any new challenge, however small. Others have developed a certainty that any interaction or investment will have a painful outcome.

This is likely to result in young people who come to us being overwhelmed with feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem, being unlovable and the inevitability of failure. They find it difficult to enjoy themselves, play creatively, learn, make friends, or share in any group activity. They cause concern in others and, while desperate for the reassurance of an adult who will love them, they are unable to trust or to invest in any emotional attachment.

The range of difficulties might include eating disorders, borderline personality disorders, school refusing, self-harm and violence towards others, ADHD, ASD, Asperger's Syndrome, oppositional defiance disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders, together with a variety of attachment disorders.

Young people with disabilities and special needs outside the criteria as set out above can be considered, as long as the criteria for admission are met and we feel we can adapt the care plan to meet the individual needs. Young people with a disability or special need would need to be able to engage in the therapeutic process.

2.6 Specific therapeutic techniques used in the home

Merrywood House offers an integrated programme of care, treatment and education based on psychodynamic and systemic principles. Our document 'Integrated Systemic Therapy for Traumatized Children and Young People' describes in detail the framework and range of groups and facilitators used to support this therapeutic methodology.

All aspects of the programme are regarded as part of an overall living-learning experience from structured education and small discussion groups, through to informal trips out, buying new clothes, interacting with peers and staff, spending time with a link worker, or playing in the grounds. Each young person who comes to Merrywood House is given the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities in both individual and group situations which will challenge all that they have experienced in the past. There are many ways the key elements of the "treatment process" offered by our community could be described. It is the integration of the care, treatment and education offered which constitutes the totality of what we feel is necessary for the successful development of each individual child.

It is through the interaction of each individual with the social and physical environment of the community that the experiential and cognitive levels of the treatment process occur. It is our belief that real psychological change can only be facilitated through addressing the early life trauma experienced and

redressing the emotional and psychological imbalances that have occurred as a result of their early years.

We endeavour to create a social and physical environment which will create a sense of hope from the moment a child first arrives; something different to what they have experienced before. This provides each young person with the possibility of an experience that will challenge their conscious and unconscious assumptions about themselves and their expectations of others.

It is also our aim to continuously strive to create a total environment in which each young person will have a compensatory primary experience; this may go some way to redressing the imbalance of their past experiences.

Our treatment model enables us to keep detailed records which inform individual Placement Plans outlining how the needs of each young person will be met. There is a monitoring process in place to ensure plans are fit for purpose and accurately reflect their individuality as well as their ability to function within the group. Incorporated into the iST treatment model, is a comprehensive and robust assessment framework (Assessment, Planning, Treatment and Transition – APTT). In addition to this, there is ongoing monitoring, evaluation and measuring of outcomes for the young people and the service provided.

2.7 Evaluation of the placement

Childhood First belongs to the CAMHS Outcome Research Consortium (CORC) and Merrywood House has an Assessment, Evaluation and Research process through which we conduct standardised measures (or questionnaires).

- CGAS - Children's Global Assessment Scale
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires
- Goal-based Measure
- Experience of Service Questionnaire (CHI-ESQ)

These assessments are conducted every six months. The information collated is shared through the LAC Review process. The information can be accessed in line with data protection guidance and our internal Childhood First Data Protection Policy. In addition there is a tailor-made questionnaire cross-referenced with Ofsted's domains for evaluating outcomes for children, to ascertain children's opinions about the impact of the Childhood First community on them.

This work is overseen by Childhood First's senior clinician. Where appropriate each young person placed at Merrywood will receive a psychotherapeutic and education assessment. This shapes the work and ensures a baseline to enable us to demonstrate progress and improvement for the young person. Any concerns that arise will be investigated and further assessments requested; e.g. educational psychologist assessment. The psychotherapeutic assessment and CORC data enables all the staff to be aware of the young person's state of mind and informs the placement plan, risk assessment, behaviour management plan and their interactions with young person.

3 Consultation with Young People about the Operation of the Home and Quality of their Care

In keeping with our therapeutic approach, the culture of Merrywood House is imbued with the need to listen to, value and think with the young people. Young people are encouraged and supported in expressing their thoughts and feelings regarding all aspects of their lives, experiences and the quality of the care they receive at Merrywood House.

There is a full Community meeting every Tuesday for all staff and young people, and a daily meeting for young people and staff on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. These meetings are a place to share with the young people plans for the day, any visitors to the home, wishes and feelings; they are a place for young people and adults to think together about the impact of the past, experience support to manage the present and develop a sense of hopefulness for the future. Other meetings can be called by anyone at any time to address an issue which they feel may be undermining the well-being of the community or any individual within it. Young people are encouraged to chair and minute their own meeting on a Wednesday.

In keeping with our treatment methodology, young people at Merrywood House are enabled to participate in all aspects of their lives and to consciously contribute to activities, daily groups and discussions and, as appropriate, decision-making and complaints. The culture is one of openness, where all opinions are listened to and young people are valued and respected by the adults and are helped to value and respect each other and themselves. This programme of group and individual work helps young people build on their strengths and identify difficulties.

These systems promote and encourage open communication about all aspects of the young people's lives including everyday living together. Staff teams encourage, listen to and respond to both 'minor' and major complaints and are trained and experienced in remaining alert to young people's welfare at all times. Young people are encouraged to raise concerns and make suggestions for changes and improvements.

It must be understood that the young people at Merrywood House are young and very troubled. It is essential that the adults know when it is helpful for young people to be consulted and when it is necessary to make decisions for the young people.

Young people have a range of opportunities to communicate their thoughts wishes and ideas for development and change. This might be in day to day conversations with the adults or via "I want you to know" forms to the Registered Manager. We also seek their views through our consultation questionnaires; the Registered Manager and another member of staff will meet with young people to discuss their comments and to look for opportunities to improve the service. There is opportunity for young people to have a voice about their care, education and treatment.

3.1 Children's wishes and feelings

Staff at Merrywood House listen attentively to young people's wishes and feelings. Young people can help make decisions about how they want to be looked after and how things should be in the home. Young people can let staff know about their wishes and feelings by talking to any of the adults, talking in community meetings or using children's 'I want you to know' forms. They can also ask staff to talk in staff meetings about the things that are important for them individually.

Each young person's right to be listened to is paramount. Staff are therefore highly skilled in responding to children's individual wishes and feelings, whether these are communicated verbally or in more subtle ways. This is evidenced through the attuned relationships staff develop with children. The children, their social workers and schools complete a CHI-ESQ (experience of service questionnaire) every six months which enables us to monitor and develop the quality of service that we provide.

4 The Group Environment

Outcomes from Merrywood House and other Childhood First communities demonstrate that the wide mix of young people and the group work we offer presents significant opportunities to the traumatised young people who come to us, which they are unlikely to find in a less group-oriented setting.

The importance of the peer group in our treatment model is an essential aspect of what makes a placement at Merrywood House so effective a form of treatment.

Young people who come to Merrywood House have been damaged within their relationships with adults and through their experience of witnessing adults' relationships with each other. The consequence of this is that they find themselves unable to relate to others in a productive way. The group environment offers three channels of repairing these problems, which are inextricably linked through a programme of supervision and consultancy.

Firstly, the staff teams work together in a way designed to offer young people healthy experiences of adult interactions, and new forms of dialogue.

Secondly, the adults are supervised in relation to their management of the young people including the impact of the young people on them. They are encouraged in this forum to link their personal experience with the impact of the work, so that they can bring this material to the staff group to work on with others. This enables fruitful exploration for the young people of their impact on others - both peers and adults.

Thirdly, formal and informal groups with the young people concentrate on their communications and relationship with adults and young people. Throughout the process of psychotherapeutic change, young people are offered the opportunity to learn new skills and acquire knowledge of the world outside their own emotional spheres and immediate preoccupations. The aim is for them

to eventually become responsible for their own lives in a practical, as well as psychological sense.

The work undertaken at Merrywood House focuses on the young person's emotional development and helping him/her to understand the feelings that lead to destructive and anti-social behaviour. This takes place individually with the young person through the provision of one-to-one experiences with an adult and a young person's individual therapy sessions and also in a variety of group settings, including the community meetings and psychodrama sessions.

For some young people the severity of the abuse experienced within a family environment severely impedes their capacity to function in similar settings. Many of the young people who come to Merrywood House have experienced multiple foster-placement breakdowns, which we are anxious not to repeat. We aim to equip young people placed at Merrywood House with the internal emotional resources to be able to eventually live in a family setting, either with their birth family (if this is in line with the young person's care plan), with a foster family or independently.

Merrywood is by its nature a very nurturing environment but also one in which over time young people can develop self confidence, resilience and every day living skills.

Some young people will be at Merrywood through to 18 years and then (or shortly afterwards) move on to a more independent setting. As this time approaches, we provide them with opportunities to learn and practice skills such as laundry, cooking and budgeting along with coping with relationships with others. We do this individually, in consultation with the child's placing authority. Placing authorities use different formats for this process (for example, 'Passport to Independence', 'Transition to Adulthood') and we tailor our plan to fit their particular model.

We expect to remain in contact with young people when they move on – this would be in consultation and agreement with the child and the placing authority. This may be informally, they may wish to continue to attend groups such as psychodrama or join us for Sunday lunch. We may also be commissioned to provide a more formal support package to help them settle in and manage their new environment.

5 Equality, Diversity and Young People's Rights

Merrywood House is committed to equality, diversity and young people's rights. Young people are treated with dignity and respect at all times. Staff demonstrate the principles of dignity and respect for others throughout their professional relationships, offering good role models for young people in their care. Over time this enables young people to develop a positive self view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background.

Staff aim to mitigate and repair the effects of stereotyping and discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, age, gender or level of ability or understanding. Staff are proactive in making sure that neither they nor the young people are ever treated other than fairly.

The promotion of equality and diversity is intrinsic within the culture of the community at Merrywood House, incorporating acceptance and understanding across all protected characteristics and individual differences.

Staff actively promote a culture of openness and acceptance within the day-to-day life of the community; this includes role modelling in a parental manner, being open minded and challenging others where there may be differences in attitudes. This is consistent both in one-to-one work with the young people and within the group as a whole.

Young people are encouraged to develop close relationships with staff over time, where they can feel safe to explore their personal beliefs, views, values and attitudes. These relationships also provide a forum for young people to be appropriately challenged and supported with their attitudes or behaviours where necessary.

Ensuring each young person's individual needs are met is part of the planning process prior to placement at Merrywood House. This is then reviewed in consultation with the young person and others, where appropriate, to ensure the young person feels safe in the knowledge that their individuality is embraced and supported. Prior to the admission of a young person their specific ethnic, cultural or religious needs are considered and we endeavour to ensure the resources within the home are sufficient to accommodate these needs, alongside researching local cultural groups or places of worship as appropriate should the child wish to access these at any point.

Merrywood would access support from partners where appropriate to ensure the young person's needs could be met; for example if a young person or their family members did not have English as a first language we would access local translation services in consultation with the placing authority and we would expect this to be built into the overall care planning for the young person.

We give additional consideration to the impact of moving to the Norfolk countryside and support young people with adjusting to a different area, for example moving from an ethnically diverse major city. Whilst we appreciate the importance of ensuring we are adequately prepared to meet a young person's specific needs, we work to ensure that the details of their care and treatment at Merrywood House are ultimately determined by their needs as a young person foremost and in line with their individual wishes and feelings.

We regularly mark a culturally diverse range of festivals and celebrations through activity evenings linked with the experience of new foods. This ensures that all children develop an understanding and appreciation of a diverse range of cultures alongside traditional UK celebrations.

5.1 Anti-discriminatory practice

Every effort is made to ensure that Merrywood House is welcoming to all young people, their families and others significant in their care and well-being. The Registered Manager monitors the range of children placed within the community in terms of ethnicity, gender and disability, to ensure the service provision is reaching all and not creating barriers to particular groups.

Young people are offered opportunities to try out new experiences, which are not restricted by traditional gender options. Young people have the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and staff are expected to challenge attitudes, behaviour and language that are non-inclusive and discriminatory, in a positive way.

5.2 Young people's rights

Young people are encouraged and supported to understand their rights and ways of challenging any form of discrimination. They are enabled to express their views about the services and if necessary to be supported by an independent person should they wish to complain.

6 Health

Although particular significance is given to a young person's emotional health we believe a young person's physical well-being is no less important.

Each young person who comes to Merrywood House is registered with our local doctor's surgery, dental practice and optician. It is our practice that young people have an annual health assessment and regular medical, dental and optician check-ups. Their wishes in terms of whether they are more comfortable with a male/female practitioner are always respected. Where appropriate, young people are consulted about their health and can contribute to their health plans.

We have written procedures relating to the storage, recording and administration of medication, both prescribed and non-prescribed (for example, cough linctus), and staff receive medication training to ensure best practice.

The young people are encouraged to discuss openly and frankly all aspects of their health and well-being, although young people are also accorded their right to privacy and confidentiality.

In relation to wider health education issues, such as sex education, smoking, alcohol and substance abuse, there are links with the LAC professionals in the area and individual programmes will be discussed as and when required with both the young person and others as appropriate.

Where appropriate, and following a risk assessment, some young people may on occasion self-administer medication. This will be based on a range of factors and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

6.1 Exercise

Every young person is encouraged to take exercise in a way that they enjoy. Adults are available to join in and organise games and sports. There is a wide range of informal and formal opportunities to exercise including individual activities (e.g. walking, bike-riding); group games (e.g. football) and organised classes and team sports (e.g. dance, football training) through to pursuing more specialist hobbies like horse riding. These are provided for their physical health benefits as well as their contribution to emotional development and well-being.

Relaxing, resting and being able to sleep well are essential parts of young people's lives and part of our treatment programme is to help young people use opportunities to rest and relax and give their minds and bodies opportunity for quiet and replenishment. All young people are supported at bedtimes with individual attention based on their personalised needs to best enable them to make the transition into sleep and being on their own.

6.2 Diet

Eating well has a critical impact on physical health. All young people are provided with a balanced diet and helped to develop healthy eating patterns. Young people are encouraged to become involved with menu planning, the preparation of meals and to engage in conversations and meetings about what they like to eat and about the food provided. The provision of good food and the ability to accept it is also recognised for its contribution to development, identity and emotional health.

Therefore attention to detail in the way food is prepared is essential to maximise this contribution. Young people are also helped to attend group mealtimes together as a social occasion; cultural differences in food are attended to and celebrated and all young people are encouraged to try different foods so they have experiences of a range of cultures. Young people with different dietary requirements are supported through their individual plans and in consultation with health professionals.

6.3 Smoking

Merrywood House has a non-smoking policy for young people, staff and visitors. Should it be planned for a young person who was nicotine dependent to join the community, medical advice would be sought to manage the impact of nicotine withdrawal. Young people of over 16 years might choose to start smoking but we will always attempt to dissuade them from doing so and ensure that they have access to medical information about the risks to their health and how to stop.

6.4 Alcohol, drugs and illegal substances

No form of alcohol or recreational drugs will be allowed on our premises. Social workers and families would be informed if any young people attempted to access these substances and consideration given to police involvement where appropriate.

7 Education and Facilities for Private Study

Our Integrated Systemic Therapy considers that alongside the care and treatment it is essential that young people receive education which is similarly adapted to their emotional state and which can deliver the best possible educational outcomes.

Specifically, we aim to help each young person 'catch up' educationally, as far as possible, before they leave us; to help each young person achieve as much as their abilities and time permit; to provide the opportunity for the acquisition of formal, nationally recognised qualifications whenever possible, to provide a range of creative and sports studies and wide range of practical skills, all of which help the young person achieve a true sense of worth.

When a young person is placed at Merrywood House, particular attention is paid to their educational needs to ascertain whether the young person can be maintained in mainstream education with or without a classroom assistant; if they have a statement of educational needs or other educational assessment, this will be built into the overall planning for the young person.

Young people are encouraged to use the library and visit places of interest related to their individual interests and school projects. We aim to develop a culture of reading for enjoyment. We offer one-to-one support while young people complete their homework whilst encouraging independent study; a separate quieter room is available for this purpose.

We are committed to liaising closely with schools about young people's individual needs. We are regularly informed about young people's educational progress and work in partnership with schools and social workers to meet particular needs; we also do this through attending PEP meetings and parents' evenings.

7.1 The education structure

Where possible, all of the young people at Merrywood House are in full-time education. Their educational placements are assessed on an individual basis to suit their needs. We have good links with local schools and where attending school is not appropriate for a child, we may, in some cases, be able to arrange for a home tutor.

A good understanding of the young person's experience of education is essential to enable us to help them to engage with the process of attending and learning.

A gradual introduction back into education may be necessary for some young people. There may be, on occasion, good reason to authorise an absence from education. (A young person may not be physically or mentally well enough to attend.) Where a young person refuses to attend without good reason, staff will reinforce the importance of education and may use sanctions to emphasise our expectations. If the young person's needs cannot be met in their current provision and they have been or are in danger of being permanently excluded, we will work with education colleagues to identify a next step.

8 Young People's Participation in Recreational, Sporting and Cultural Activities

Activities form an important building block in a young person's life. Young people benefit enormously from individual and group activities in terms of social interaction with their peers and building their self-esteem. Young people resident at Merrywood House are encouraged to experience a variety of activities and, after a period of settling in, to choose to follow an activity for which they show special aptitude and interest. This is considered in line with their placement plans.

There is a wide range of choice including horse riding, dance classes, swimming, gymnastics, canoeing and football, as well as more community-based activities such as Cubs, Scouts and Guides. There are also opportunities for group excursions to places of interest and activity parks.

Discussions are held between young people and staff to establish an activity framework which benefits each young person and is reflected in individual placement plans. Whatever the activity, young people will be supervised as needed by appropriately trained staff.

As the young person progresses they are encouraged to join groups. This enables links to community and developing relationships outside of the Merrywood community that also supports young people in their transitions and to develop their independence.

9 Promoting Appropriate Behaviour, Control, Restraint and Discipline

It has always been the policy at Merrywood House that the foundation to achieving the task is the fostering of positive relationships between the adults and the young people within a clearly defined set of boundaries. These in turn are established only by the existence of good, and appropriately professional, interpersonal relationships between the adults and the young people.

These provide a sense of containment, through a consistent but appropriately flexible understanding of the many different situations they must manage on a daily basis.

This is approached always through a sense of personal concern and commitment to each young person.

The histories of the young people with whom we work are such that the focus of their personal development is inevitably taken up through the interplay of their past conflict and trauma in the present. The crossing of community boundaries is an inevitable part of the work with our young people, while they struggle to begin to establish a more trusting and co-operative partnership with those around them.

The management of difficulties is often the focus of small groups, personal meetings with link workers and staff, and community meetings. Young people are encouraged and supported in raising matters which concern them. Each young

person is helped towards a sharing of the responsibility for group and individual well-being, and to have a voice which is heard and treated seriously. Acknowledgement and understanding are generally the main aim of such a task, but occasionally a sanction may be seen as an appropriate response.

Individual risk assessments enable staff to make informed judgements, in conjunction with each young person's individual behaviour management plan which details the methods of control that are used and states the young person's preferred method.

There is a systematic process of assessing risk, determining strategy and informing practice around a young person. The use of this process ensures that everyone concerned is aware of the steps that may become necessary to keep the young person safe. A copy of our behaviour management policy is available on request.

9.1 The creation of positive relationships

Our therapeutic approach is formulated on the creation of positive relationships. Young people are helped to understand the impact of their behaviour on others, and to express their feeling about others' behaviour. High levels of supervision and guidance are offered to encourage behaviour and relationships which have a beneficial impact for themselves and others. Achievements and participation are celebrated and rewarded. Where behaviour is unacceptable or has a destructive impact, it is responded to with consistency and clarity within a context of understanding the particular young person's history as well as the group dynamic.

Relationships between staff and young people at Merrywood House are based on honesty, mutual respect and understanding. The staff teams are expected to maintain clear, safe, consistent and understanding boundaries for the young people.

Rewards and sanctions are part of the mechanisms for care and control within the context of thoughtful consistent relationships and will be monitored by the leadership team within Merrywood to ensure that rewards and sanctions are proportionate to the event.

Where a sanction has been the appropriate response, there will be opportunity for young people to reduce or indeed lift the sanction dependent on the individual circumstances, creating a positive outcome for the young person.

9.2 Restrictive physical intervention

Physical restraint is permitted only in circumstances when a young person may be intent on causing harm to him/herself or to another person, or causing damage to property, and has lost control. In all cases where a restraint occurs, the need for minimum necessary force is underlined, and that it is done in a way which emphasises the sense of being 'held' and not punished, and in being looked after and not humiliated. It is emphasised that a young person should be held only for the time it takes them to regain control.

Our physical intervention procedure is available in the home or can be accessed via Childhood First Procedures Manual

<http://childhoodfirst.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>

At Merrywood House we use Norfolk Steps, which is the preferred method of physical intervention in schools and residential homes in Norfolk. We have our own fully-trained instructors who themselves attend regular refresher training for instructors. Written descriptions and photographs of each of the holds are available in the staff office for reference; further details can also be gained by contacting Norfolk Steps admin: diane.leamon@norfolk.gov.uk

9.3 Rewards

Rewards for thoughtful and acceptable behaviour are most often in the form of praise and encouragement within individual conversations and the group forums. Contribution to and participation in the group is noticed and encouraged. Small achievements are praised and noticed in the context of young people's own difficulties, struggles and efforts in this area rather than relative to each other's. Evidence of some of these can be found in the notes of community meetings and specific rewards are recorded.

9.4 Sanctions procedures

Sanctions are used as part of establishing positive relationships with young people to maintain boundaries and control. When used, the aim is to encourage thought around restitution and reparation; the notion that mistakes or wrong-doing can be repaired and things, (including people) can be 'made better'.

The sanctions we impose are usually related to a particular incident and are designed to help the child understand, when they are unable to do so through conversation, that there is a consequence to their behaviour.

Managing communal boundaries in the community is a good indication that a child will manage group outings in an appropriate way. Therefore, 'grounding' may follow a serious incident but this will never apply to any educational or family visit.

Fines are not used at Merrywood House and pocket money is only ever deducted in the context of reparative payment for damage caused.

We invite young people to give their views of any sanction imposed and the Registered Manager will review the effectiveness of any sanction.

The following are permissible sanctions:

- Restitution – 'making good' or 'putting things right' – can be financially through pocket money contribution
- Reparation - helping to repair damage
- Limitation of leisure activities
- Time out - space away from the group (with/without staff)
- Grounding

Increased supervision or restrictions on the availability of transport are used as a tool for safe management but not as a sanction.

9.5 Prohibited methods of control

None of the disciplinary measures prohibited under Regulation 8 of the Young People's Act 1989 have ever been permitted at Merrywood House. No resident is allowed to be subjected to corporal punishment, deprivation of food or drink, restrictions of visits or communications with family and friends (except where young people need protection from a particular communication or visit), the wearing of distinctive clothing, physical restrictions imposed by accommodation, deprivation of sleep or intimate physical searches.

9.6 Deprivation of liberty

By the very nature of our work at Childhood First in providing a service to psychologically traumatised children and young people we may on occasion adopt practice that could constitute a restriction of liberty (The Law Society) such as the physical restraint of children and increased monitoring and supervision that would be normal and good practice in a range of circumstances. Failure to monitor and supervise children and young people dependent on their age, understanding and vulnerability would be negligent.

The best interests of children and young people are best protected by open, transparent and honest practice. Therefore individual practice with children and young people will be undertaken in consultation with placing authorities and, where appropriate, with children and young people and their families. All interventions with children and young people including any practice that may constitute deprivation or restriction of liberty will be subject to regular review and consultation with the placing authority to ensure legal permission is sought if required.

10 Safeguarding

Childhood First is committed at every level to safeguarding and child protection in particular in order to promote young people's welfare. We take seriously our duty to protect every young person from abuse and maltreatment and to prevent impairment of health or development.

Our Safeguarding Policy is available on request and underlines our commitment to interagency working. We have established a good relationship with our Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the LADO. All concerns of a child protection nature will be referred by the Registered Manager/Director to the local authority. In any circumstances where Safeguarding procedures are undertaken, the young person's social services and parents, where appropriate, will be kept closely involved and informed as required by Working Together to Safeguard Young People 2018.

Child Protection matters are directly dealt with by the Registered Manager.

On admission the risk assessment undertaken for each young person will cover all aspects of safeguarding and will be regularly reviewed to ensure that any new behaviours or historical information disclosed can be factored into our response in the safeguarding of the young person.

All staff receive regular safeguarding training together with support and guidance in safeguarding and promoting young people's welfare on an annual basis. Additional safeguarding training can be implemented if felt appropriate or linked to a specific area such as "child sexual exploitation."

10.1 Radicalisation of children

Staff at Merrywood House have an awareness that children can be drawn into violence or they can be exposed to the messages of extremist groups by many means, including the influence of family members or friends, direct contact with extremist groups and through the internet. Staff understand that this can put a child at risk of being drawn into criminal activity and has the potential to cause significant harm. The high supervision levels of the children at Merrywood and careful risk assessment in relation to children spending time off site independently or attending clubs/groups significantly reduces the risk of radicalisation. Staff seek to remain vigilant to potential indicators to radicalisation.

10.2 Preventing bullying

Merrywood House does not tolerate any form of bullying and is committed to developing a culture within which all individuals are supported in confronting both the external bully and the potential to bully themselves.

We strive to create and maintain an environment where young people are treated with dignity and respect at all times. All staff are vigilant for signs of bullying and any concerns are brought to the attention of the Registered Manager and other senior staff. There is a clear system for reporting, tracking and responding to incidences of bullying. If bullying occurs, a young person will be encouraged and supported in expressing their concerns through open communication. Internally this could be either in the community meeting or to an individual member of staff.

All young people are given information regarding appropriate external contacts should they feel that the internal route is inadequate for any reason. Any incident of bullying would be reported to a young person's social worker via an incident form. The Registered Manager and senior team review any such incidences and take these back to the community for processing and resolution.

10.3 Child sexual exploitation

Staff have attended training in the risks associated with child sexual exploitation and several of the current service user group have also participated in training. This will be considered for future placements dependent on need, the vulnerability of our children's group and potential behavioural indicators of a child being groomed/exploited. The management team ensure the assessment of associated risks is integrated within each child's individual risk assessments e.g.

arrangements for taking children to/from schools, arrangements enabling older young people to go out independently. The close partnership working ethos within the staff team, alongside the expectation for open communication in relation to all areas of the children's care, helps to minimise the risk of exploitation from within the home.

We undertook a thorough Location Assessment in May 2019. The assessment concluded the location of Merrywood House is suitable for our purpose of residential therapeutic childcare. Additionally the high supervision levels of the children at Merrywood House minimises risks associated with our location.

10.4 Internet safety

Staff have completed e-safety training ensuring they are well informed as to the risk associated with use of the internet. Due to the vulnerability of the young people placed at Merrywood House their use of the internet is fully supervised until they reach the age of 16. There are exceptions if it is felt that somebody younger can use the internet safely and appropriately – this will be a decision made in consultation with the child's local authority. Similarly, when a child reaches 16, we consider whether they may be able to sign up to a 'safe use of the internet agreement' – again in conjunction with the local authority. We support young people to understand the risks associated with the internet and how to keep themselves safe, as appropriate to their age and level of understanding.

Childhood First uses an IT surveillance system called "Securus" which enables the Registered Manager to pick up key words that staff and children input into the Childhood First system through emails, reports, etc. This provides an early alert to any potential safeguarding concerns about staff practice and enables similar monitoring of children's use of the internet.

10.5 Significant events

Events and Notifications under Regulation 40 of the Children's Home Regulations are sent to the required authorities as well as to the Chief Executive (Responsible Individual). Notifications are held confidentially within the home and are cross-referenced with other systems such as referrals to LADO or LSCB. These are monitored by the Registered Manager and through the Regulation 44 process.

10.6 Female genital mutilation

Staff are aware of the issues associated with female genital mutilation (FGM) and in particular of our legal duty to inform Children's Social Care should we suspect or know of any child who may have or has been subjected to FGM.

10.7 Searching Children/Bedrooms

It may be appropriate to conduct a search of a child or a child's belongings, including the searching of a child's bedroom, if there is reasonable cause to believe that the child has concealed weapons, illegal drugs or other items which may place the child or others at risk of significant harm. If there is suspicion that such items

are concealed staff will attempt to obtain the items with the child's cooperation and give the child the opportunity to hand over the suspected items. In the event where the child does not wish to cooperate, our Searching Children/Bedrooms procedure will be followed, in consultation with the Director/ Senior Management Team and child's social worker, unless in extreme circumstances, where it is felt the child is in immediate risk.

11 If a Young Person goes Missing

It is unusual for a young person to go missing; however if they do, our Missing from Care Procedure is followed alongside the individual child's protocol as set out in their placement plan.

The senior member of staff is immediately informed and co-ordinates the search for the young person while also ensuring that the rest of the young people's group is properly supervised. There are occasions when staff will be able to keep the young person in sight and encourage them to return to the house. Where this is not possible, Merrywood House would work with police and placing authorities to locate the child and ensure their safety.

During normal office hours, the young person's social worker would be contacted. If unavailable, information would be passed to the duty social worker. At evenings and weekends, relevant emergency duty teams would be contacted. Details would be passed to the Registered Manager immediately.

Merrywood has, as required, an agreed protocol with the local police to ensure partnership working.

11.1 Action taken when the young person returns

The young person is always welcomed back to Merrywood House in a non-punitive manner; space being given by staff to reassure them and assess any immediate needs, e.g. for medical treatment, food, drink, blankets etc.

If possible, the staff would determine where the young person has been and with whom, although this would be approached with sensitivity, recognising that they may be tired and frightened, depending on their experiences while absent. Other agencies/persons involved in the search for the young person would be informed as soon as possible that he/she has returned.

The young person would be seen by an independent person as soon as is practically possible to explore the reasons for their absence and check on their well-being.

12 Contact between Young People and Parents, Relatives and Friends

It is our policy to work in partnership, and facilitate, where possible, positive contact between any young person and his or her family and friends, or with

significant other persons who have been important in a young person's background. For those young people with little or no family contact we endeavour to support their local authority in identifying significant external contacts.

Staff at Merrywood House promote and support appropriate contact with parents and significant others. We support young people in their contact with parents and relatives, and work with parents and Children's Services to ensure this contact is beneficial to the young person. Contact and visits to Merrywood House by parents and significant others will be by arrangement between the young person's social worker and staff. These arrangements will be in accordance with the young person's care plan.

We wish to foster a normal home environment for the young people who live at Merrywood House. This policy includes the ability to promote positive and normal friendships within their peer group. Young people will be encouraged to invite friends to visit and to visit friends within their homes. We have a separate space where family and friends can spend time without intruding on the rest of the home and to offer some privacy to the young person and their visitors.

13 Cultural, Linguistic and Religious Needs

Merrywood House does not follow any formal religious observance, but young people who wish to practise a particular faith are supported in doing so on an individual level.

We consider that fostering a young person's growth in understanding this world, including their cultural and any religious inheritance, is an important aspect of a young person's well-being and we take the need to nurture this growth seriously.

Merrywood House makes sure that young people are supported in their wishes and the wishes of parents and guardians regarding their particular cultural and religious inheritance. We would, however, challenge an understanding of any culture or religion which was disrespectful of others.

Young people, who wish to maintain a religious observance, or to attend a religious institution, are helped to do this with the support of staff and are encouraged to explore and develop their own beliefs. This will be built into the young person's individual care planning process and access to religious institutes will be facilitated as required. Dependent on the individual needs of the young person the home will ensure that suitable quiet areas are established to enable a young person opportunity to practise their religion for example identifying a space and area that is suitable for those young people who observe the Muslim religion.

As mentioned elsewhere, if a young person or their family members did not have English as a first language we would access local translation services in consultation with the placing authority and we would expect this to be built into the overall care planning for the young person.

14 Complaints

14.1 Complaints by young people

If young people feel that they have been treated unfairly or inappropriately in any way, they can complain to their link worker, to any member of staff with whom they feel able to speak, or to the Registered Manager.

The designated Complaints Officer at Merrywood House is the Registered Manager; if the young person's complaint is about the Registered Manager the young people can access more senior staff at Head Office, or indeed use an external agency to express their concerns/complaint.

If any young person wishes to make a complaint to a person outside of the community, they may do so directly to their own social worker, Ofsted, Childrens' Rights Director, Regulation 44 visitor, parent or other person with whom they feel they can speak. They may also contact directly, either by telephone or by letter, the Complaints Officer for their individual placing authorities.

A leaflet is available to all young people at Merrywood called "I want you to know" and telephone numbers are available to the young people to contact external agencies such as 'Childline', Ofsted etc.

It remains our policy that we endeavour to resolve complaints internally where possible but where complaints need to be taken up at a formal level, Merrywood House's complaint procedure or local authority complaints procedure may be invoked.

Complaints from young people are recorded in the complaints book and young people can sign to say they are satisfied with the outcome.

14.2 Complaints by employees

It is the policy of Childhood First that, wherever possible, complaints and grievances shall be resolved in an informal manner, firstly by the establishment of a climate in which staff are encouraged and expected to address issues of concern and conflict at source. This informal framework and culture is supported by a formal procedural framework, which guarantees that any complaints shall be addressed appropriately where informal means have failed; this is undertaken in consultation with HR.

14.3 Complaints by third parties

Where an external agency or other third party has a concern or complaint about any aspect of the work of any part of Childhood First, of its directors, staff or clients, then it would be our wish that any such complaint shall be raised at the earliest opportunity.

It would be the directors' aim that the concern or complaint should be resolved, where possible, in an informal way, unless of course where the complaint is of a

nature or seriousness where more formal action is appropriate or necessary, and in which case it shall be the directors' responsibility to support such action.

Our complaints procedures are available in the homes or can be accessed via Childhood First Head Office.

14.4 Data Protection

In compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (2018) Childhood First is committed to being transparent about meeting its data protection obligations and how it collects and uses the personal data of those in our care, their families and wider networks as well as our workforce. Our policies relating to data protection and records management can be accessed via the Childhood First Procedures Manual (<http://childhoodfirst.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>).

15 Facilities and Services

Merrywood House is a detached house with accommodation on two floors. It provides a warm and friendly environment that is furnished and decorated to a high standard; it is a spacious home that provides areas for group work as well as allowing for individual space. The home is located in a rural setting but is in commuting distance to the city of Norwich and the market town of Dereham. This enables ease of access to resources often found in city and town locations that can provide support to young people in meeting their individual needs and interests. There is a local bus service to both locations. There is a large, safe garden that is laid to lawn and young people are encouraged to use the garden to play. Particular emphasis is placed on resourcing young people's play activities. In the communal lounge there is a mural on one wall. The children who live at Merrywood choose something that they would like added to this mural. This has become a focal point for the children and visitors to Merrywood. There is an additional cosy space outside which we call 'The Hut' where young people can watch TV or play on games consoles.

There is a fully-equipped kitchen and dining room, quiet areas and recreational areas within the home.

Staff have an individual sleeping-in room.

16 Accommodation and Room Sharing

A young person's bedroom is his/her own personal and private space. Therapeutic staff help young people to take care of their rooms as necessary and being aware of the state of young people's room's gives insight into their state of mind and well being. Wherever possible, young people are actively involved in making decisions regarding their bedrooms. This may include the purchase of furnishings, colour and presentation. All bedrooms are furnished and decorated to a high standard taking into account the individual needs of the young people. During their stay at Merrywood young people are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms. This will

include observance of diversity and recognition of a young person's history, cultural, religious backgrounds etc.

Each young person has a private lockable drawer or cupboard in their room solely for their use. Young people do not share bedrooms.

All furnishings and fittings conform to health and safety regulations.

17 Surveillance within the Home

There is a buzzer system connected to each child's bedroom door which alerts staff if it is opened. During the night this allows staff to respond promptly to a child in need. This provision is to safeguard the young people and allows staff to manage the risk of children being able to gain access to one another's rooms or leave the building without staff being aware.

18 Fire Precautions and Emergency Procedures

Merrywood House has written statements in relation to fire precautions and evacuation procedures, which are known to both young people and adults and which are reinforced by regular, and recorded, fire drills.

Staff are aware of our health and safety policy and regular risk assessments are made which cover all aspects of the home and specified excursions beyond our community.

Our Fire Safety Policy details responsibilities, recordings, drills, procedures, training and assembly points.

Merrywood House has in place a continuity plan which would be followed in the case of an emergency.

19 Registered Provider and Registered Manager

Merrywood House is leased and managed by Childhood First.

Registered Office: Childhood First, 210 Borough High Street, London SE1 1JX

Registered Provider and Responsible Individual: Stephen Blunden, Chief Executive
Registered Manager of Merrywood House: David Pound

The Registered Manager is accountable to the Chief Executive of Childhood First.

20 Qualifications and Experience

Registered Provider

Qualifications:

Stephen Blunden

Dip Acc, BA (Hons), MA (Cantab) Theology and Religious Studies, FRSA

Professional Experience:

Chief Executive, Childhood First
 Director of Fundraising and Communications, The Young people's Society
 Director of Development, Cambridge International, University of Cambridge

RM/Director

Qualifications:

David Pound

Advanced Diploma in Psychosocial Care, NVQ4 Care Management, Professional Certificate in Management, Child Psychotherapeutic Counsellor

Professional Experience:

Seven years mental health practitioner, five years Learning Disabilities Registered Manager.

Consultants to Merrywood House

Staff Group Facilitator:

Qualification:

Mike Tait

B.A. Diploma in Teaching (NZ), Diploma Drama Therapy, Member of Institute of Group Analysis, Member UKCP

External Therapist:

Qualification:

Marilyn Sher

Consultant Clinician & Forensic Psychologist

21. Staff

Staff are recruited through a rigorous selection process which involves Warner, informal and formal interviews, together with the views of the young people at Merrywood. All appropriate checks are carried out according to current guidelines before any prospective member of staff begins employment with us.

Position	Relevant Qualifications	Experience
Deputy Director	NVQ 3&4 Health and Social Care (Children and Young People), NVQ4 in Leadership and Management. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2012 Prior: Registered Manager of residential home for young people, Team Leader, Senior Care Worker.

Position	Relevant Qualifications	Experience
Assistant Director	Advanced Diploma in Psychosocial Care. Leadership & Management Level 5 Diploma. Child Psychotherapeutic Counsellor	Commenced 2008
Assistant Director (acting) - Statutory Compliance	Extensive administration qualifications	Commenced 2011
Team Leader	Advanced Diploma in Psychosocial Care. Child Psychotherapeutic Counsellor. Studying iST MA.	Commenced 2012 Prior: 6 years therapeutic care experience. Health and Community Carer.
Team Leader	Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2012 Prior: Manager of Indoor Play Centre
Acting Team Leader	BA Drama & Spanish. iST Certificate. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced August 2016 Prior: Respite Carer
Deputy Team Leader	BSc (Hons) Psychology. iST Certificate, iST Practitioners Diploma.	Commenced 2014 Prior: Day Therapy Host
Deputy Team Leader	NVQ Level 2 in Hospitality & Catering. iST Certificate. Studying iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2015 Prior: Chef
Deputy Team Leader	BA English Language and Linguistics. iST Certificate. iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2016 Prior: Youth Pastor
Waking Night Staff	Certificate in Psychosocial Care, City & Guilds in Catering	Commenced 2003
Waking Night Staff	Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care.	Commenced 2012 Prior: Registered Childcare Provider.

Position	Relevant Qualifications	Experience
Therapeutic Care Worker	BA Hons English Literature and Philosophy. iST Certificate. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2016 Prior: Pharmacy Advisor
Therapeutic Care Worker	BSc Psychology. iST Certificate. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2016 Prior: Support Worker
Therapeutic Care Worker	NVQ Level 3 – Health & Social Care. iST Certificate. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2017 Prior: Healthcare Worker
Therapeutic Care Worker	NVQ Level 3 - Health & Social Care. iST Certificate. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2017 Prior: Support Worker
Therapeutic Care Worker <i>Norfolk Steps Tutor</i>	BA Hons (English with History of Ideas). iST Certificate. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2017 Prior: Helpline Support Officer
Therapeutic Care Worker	BTec Diploma in Health & Social Care Level 3. iST Certificate. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2017 Prior: Care Support Worker
Therapeutic Care Worker	BA Hons Childhood Studies. iST Certificate. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2017 Prior: Teaching Assistant
Therapeutic Care Worker <i>(part-time)</i>	iST Certificate	Commenced 2017 Prior: Support Worker
Therapeutic Care Worker	BSc Sports & Exercise Science. iST Certificate	Commenced 2017 Prior: Multi-activity instructor
Therapeutic Care Worker	BSc Hons Psychology. iST Certificate	Commenced 2017
Therapeutic Care Worker	Studying iST Certificate	Commenced 2018 Prior: Residential Support Worker

Position	Relevant Qualifications	Experience
Therapeutic Care Worker (part-time) <i>Norfolk Steps Tutor</i>	iST Certificate. Studying for iST Practitioners Diploma	Commenced 2018 <i>(current role)</i> Prior: cleaner (2013) / voluntary TCW (2016)
Therapeutic Care Worker	BA Joint Hons degree in Education Studies and Psychology. PGCE. Studying iST Certificate	Commenced 2018 Prior: primary school teacher
Therapeutic Care Worker	Advanced Diploma Health & Social Care, BA Hons Health & Social Care, MA Public Health Studying iST Certificate	Commenced 2018 Prior: Support Worker
Waking Night Staff	Started iST Foundation programme	Commenced 2019 Prior:
Therapeutic Care Worker	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma Uniformed Public Services. Started iST Foundation programme	Commenced 2019 Prior: prison officer
Therapeutic Care Worker	BSC Psychology with counselling (Hons). Started iST Foundation programme	Commenced 2019 Prior: Support Worker for disabled adults
Therapeutic Care Worker	BA (Hons) Graphic Design. Started iST Foundation programme	Commenced 2019
Therapeutic Care Worker	Level 3 Diploma in Health & Social Care (Adults). Started iST Foundation programme	Commenced 2019 Prior: Support Worker

Administration and Auxiliary Staff

Position	Relevant Qualifications	Experience
Receptionist / Administrator	Extensive administration qualifications	Commenced 2016
Cleaner (part-time)		Commenced 2018
Cleaner (part-time)		Commenced 2019

Position	Relevant Qualifications	Experience
Maintenance Assistant (shared with Earthsea)		Commenced 2015
Maintenance Assistant (shared with Earthsea)		Commenced 2018

22 Staff Supervision, Training and iST

22.1 Supervision

Central to Childhood First's Integrated Systemic Therapy is that staff work within a comprehensive framework, which emphasises a thorough understanding of the young people and of themselves in relation to the task.

Our staff receive individual supervision. This is usually given by line managers, all of whom are experienced practitioners. This is to facilitate reflection and thinking about the overall task. Staff also participate in small team dynamics and group dynamics meetings. This work is supported by a group analyst who is employed by Childhood First. These meetings offer a range of ways of understanding the history, inner world, current functioning and impact of the young people as individuals and as a group, as well as exploration of the impact of the adults on the young people.

22.2 Training and iST

Childhood First has a commitment to in-depth staff training. We have developed a work-based training programme in partnership with the Tavistock Clinic and the School of Social Science at Middlesex University.

This programme together with our Integrated Systemic Therapy underpins our care and treatment and the professional development of the staff. The training requires staff to understand and articulate the links between theory and practice in the context of their day-to-day work with young people, with one another and the outside world. Initially all staff undertake the iST Foundation course and IST Certificate, which has been agreed by the regulator as equivalent to the mandatory Diploma 3.

The aim of the Integrated Systemic Therapy (iST) programmes is to provide a practice-based training for professionals caring for children and young people with complex emotional and psychological needs. iST training is professionally accredited by United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) via the College of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapies (C-CAP) and academically accredited by Middlesex University. Childhood First received formal approval with UKCP in 2015 becoming registered as a Training Organisation. Staff who have successfully completed the training are registered as UKCP-accredited child psychotherapeutic counsellors while staff who are currently working towards accreditation will take five years post-probation to reach this stage.

The programmes are particularly aimed at group-based care settings (e.g. residential therapeutic communities, residential children's homes and special schools and smaller units) where the assumption is that the core of staff training and development needs to be practice-based, with the essential aims of developing the individual, the team and organisational practice.

The main purpose of the Certificate, Diploma and Practitioner's Diploma is workforce development for the staff who work within our own therapeutic communities. This training provides the basis for the staff to learn the theoretical and practical application of Childhood First's unique iST model, within which the whole organisation works.

We also encourage staff to undertake further training which benefits both the individual and the community enhancing our overall practice

23 Organisational structure

There are 38 members of staff at Merrywood House. There is a Director, Deputy Director and two Assistant Directors (one of them acting.) Three Team Leaders (one of them acting) head up the residential teams which include three Deputy Team Leaders, 19 therapeutic care staff and three waking night staff. These staff provide a 24-hour, 365-day residential rota based upon a repeating three-week system. Number of staff on shift is adjusted according to need. Annual leave is planned enabling rotas to be predictable both for staff and young people. A waking night member of staff works during the night with a colleague from the day shift who sleeps-in. The waking night member of staff arrives at 9pm and leaves at 9am the following day.

We have a Receptionist/Administrator, two part-time cleaners and two full-time maintenance assistants (shared with Earthsea House). Childhood First also employs a part-time consultant group analyst.