

# WELCOME TO MERRYDALE



Statement of Purpose

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Merrydale is a local authority children's home providing residential services for children and young people with severe learning difficulties.

It supports children and their families through the provision of short breaks enabling young people resident the opportunity to play and mix with friends and peers in a safe and secure environment.

Good supervision and opportunities to explore and develop social and life skills are provided via a range of activities both on and off site, enabling parents, siblings and carers the opportunity to take a break from caring.

Merrydale forms part of the overall services provided in Hampshire to support children with a severe learning disability and their families.

Staff at Merrydale work closely with parents, carers, other family members and associated professionals and colleagues to ensure that the most appropriate support is available to young people and their families.

In this way we aim to:-

# Aims

1. To provide a high level of social, emotional and physical care.
2. To provide a safe, stimulating and comfortable environment for those receiving care.
3. To value and respect the children/young people as individuals.
4. To respect the children's/young peoples right to privacy and dignity. This includes being sensitive to those children who depend on adults for personal and intimate care.
5. To remember that children with a disability should be treated as 'children first' and that they have the same basic needs as all children.
6. To work closely with the child/young person, their family and other professionals to ensure the delivery of a high quality service.
7. To consult and co-operate with professionals in other agencies in order to meet the assessed needs of the child.
8. To maintain a high level of confidentiality within the boundaries of legal and statutory requirements.
9. To support and manage children who may present challenging behaviour in a positive way, and in accordance with Hampshire County Council and Merrydale policy. Key

workers will complete Team Teach intervention plans, moving and handling risk assessments, care plans and individual risk assessments to ensure that individual children are cared for safely and appropriately.

10. To meet the cultural and ethnic needs of children/young people in our care.
11. To introduce children to new situations offering positive experiences and opportunities to widen their horizons.
12. To offer an enjoyable and stimulating environment and enable children to move and play with their friends and peers in a non school setting.
13. To gain the confidence of parents and carers ensuring children are cared for in a safe setting supporting families in the care of their children.
14. To promote the rights of children and their families to enjoy 'ordinary lives'.

# Objectives

In order to ensure we achieve our aims and best possible practice with the children we look after we will follow these agreed objectives:

1. To work within Hampshire County Council guidelines for admissions and have a written admissions procedure.
2. All children/young people who are placed at Merrydale will have individual care plans, Team Teach intervention plans, moving and handling and individual risk assessments. These care plans will outline assessed needs and expectations and will assist staff to effectively care for children on a day to day basis. These plans will be subject to regular review.
3. All children/young people placed at Merrydale will have a Keyworker.
4. Children/young people placed at Merrydale will be encouraged to exercise choice and decision making wherever possible.
5. Whilst staying at Merrydale, all children will have access to the appropriate medical services.
6. All staff at Merrydale will have individual performance plans (IPP) to ensure that they receive the appropriate training, supervision and support to enhance and develop their skills further for working with children and young people.

7. Merrydale will work within the set policy for health and safety directed by both Hampshire County Council and Merrydale guidelines.
8. Merrydale will provide all staff members with clear guidelines on all work practices and routines, in order to provide a high quality service to the children and their families (see separate staff guidelines document).
9. Merrydale will operate and promote anti-discriminatory practice by providing equal opportunities for children and staff in respect of culture, ethnicity, gender, special needs and disability.
10. All staff at Merrydale will adhere to Hampshire County Councils Child Protection Policies.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND FACILITIES

Merrydale was built in 1974 as a residential home for 16 young people. Its purpose has changed greatly over the years and it is now a respite centre for children and young people with learning disabilities.

Merrydale is situated in the village of Kingsworthy, three miles north of Winchester in spacious grounds with trees, lawns and gardens.

There is easy access to local amenities and it is on a frequent bus route to Winchester. The village has shops, a post office, community halls, several public houses, a play park, numerous interesting walks, a social club and small health centre.

A mini bus and people carrier provide opportunities for more adventurous outings.

Merrydale has four separate living areas, each with their own style and homely atmosphere each providing lounge area, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom facilities.

The fourth unit provides up to four places funded by Health with more profound and multiple disabilities living in Hampshire.

Due to the high dependency needs of the young people in the Health Unit and procedures surrounding moving and handling, the minimum staffing ratio is 2 staff to 3 children unless otherwise stated in individual children's risk assessments.

In the Social Care units the ratio is 1 staff member to a maximum of 3 children again, unless additional support is required and identified in individual children's risk assessment.

All units are decorated and furnished to high standard and are equipped with their own TV's, DVDs, books, toys and games. Our aim is to provide a warm welcoming and secure environment for the children to thrive in.

The main building comprises of an admin block, staff offices, sleeping-in rooms, playroom, bathroom, toilets and a large kitchen where the main meals of the day are prepared and cooked.

The garden is spacious and secure offering privacy and security and has always proved popular with young people enabling free imaginative play to be enjoyed.

NAME AND ADDRESS OF RESPONSIBLE BODY

**HEADQUARTERS**

Director of Children's Services - John Coughlan  
Hampshire County Council  
Social Services Department  
Trafalgar House  
The Castle  
Winchester  
Hampshire  
SO23 8QU

Tel: 01962 847208

Responsible Individual  
Area Director - Stuart Ashley  
The Castle  
Queen Elizabeth 11 Court East  
Winchester  
Hampshire  
SO23 8UG

Tel: 01962 846370

# STAFFING COMPLIMENT

## **Manager**

Christopher Dean (37hrs)  
Certificate in Social Service  
Certificate in Personal Social Services Management  
Professional Development Certificate in Management Studies

## **Deputy Manager**

Stephen Crawford (37hrs)  
Bsc  
NVQ 111 in Child care

## **Senior Staff**

Keith Ray - Senior Residential Social Worker (37hrs)  
Certificate and Qualification in Social Work  
Certificate in Counselling  
Certificate in Education

Sharon Shinn (37hrs)  
NVQ III in Child Care

## **House Staff - Residential Social Services Officers**

David Bull (37hrs) - DSW  
Patricia Kelly- Blyth (19.5hrs) - NVQ III in Child Care  
Justin Tarrant (37hrs) - NVQ III in Child Care  
Nicky Chapman (37hrs) - NVQ 111 in Child Care (on maternity leave)  
Janice Lipscombe (37hrs) - NVQ 111 in Child care

Danielle Buckingham (37hrs) - NVQ 111 in Child Care  
Simon Beaton (37hrs)  
Karen White (37hrs)  
Pam Holbrook (37hrs)  
Deborah Kingston DSW (Temp 25hrs covering maternity)

Rosie Smith (20hrs) - NVQ III in Child Care  
Karen Small (20hrs) - NVQ III in Child Care  
Penny Neale (18.33 hrs) - NVQ 111 in Child Care  
Elaine McQuire (18.33 hrs) (Currently undertaking NVQ 111)  
Alida Cassar (18.33hrs)  
Kayleigh Lunnon (18.33 hrs)

#### Night Supervisors

Jackie Stevens (19 hrs)  
Caroline Dicker (19 hrs)  
Vicki Mansell (12.05 hrs)  
Janinna Scarrott (12.66 hrs)  
Keeley Duncan (12.66 hrs)  
Jeremiah Murvura (15.83 hrs) - NVQ 111 in Child Care

#### Administrative Assistant

Laura May (22hrs)

#### Cook

Vacant (25hrs)

#### Domestics

William Clayton (Temp 15hrs)  
Vacant (20hrs)

#### Kitchen Domestics

Vacant (25hrs)

#### Laundress

Maureen Kemp (25hrs)

## STAFF SUPPORT

It is recognised that working within a residential setting can be demanding and at times a difficult job. Providing a responsive, innovative and high quality service to children and their families requires a committed and resourceful staff team. The independent nature of the work also relies upon having mutual trust and respect within the staff group.

The Department acknowledges the importance of having a well trained valued and supported staff team. In other words a culture that recognises the value of each employee.

Merrydale currently has four members of staff (including the manager) who hold a professionally recognised Social Work qualification and we are currently committed to ensuring that all staff attain NVQ III at the earliest opportunity and will ensure that we have staff in each new intake until this is achieved.

Performance Development Reviews are held each year and should link in to the process of staff supervision and IPP. At its simplest, supervision is a process in which one worker is given responsibilities to work with another to meet organisational, professional and personal objectives.

Supervision values staff, supports good practice and enables the delivery of high quality services. Responsibility for the supervision of all staff members at Merrydale is shared between the Manager and Senior staff. All staff have a right to regular, planned supervision which should :

- Support continuing professional development via the ongoing performance development process

- Plan & evaluate the effectiveness of training and development activities
- Facilitate a climate for good and imaginative practice
- Explore the audience base, reflect upon, guide and improve practice
- Develop breadth and depth of professional perspective
- Build confidence and enhance competence
- Oversee induction, probationary and appointment support arrangements
- Discuss development

The department also offers an employee support line that all staff can access. It provides a confidential counselling service delivered by trained, experienced counsellors, face to face and is available throughout Hampshire.

It can provide support for a wide range of situations including:

- Stress at work/home
- Personal problems/relationships
- Violence/aggression/harassment
- Financial worries
- Bereavement/loss
- Alcohol/substance misuse

Guidance is also offered in such areas as equal opportunities, race policy, violence to staff and staff conduct.

Within the unit all team members are given a copy of the staff guidelines which includes information regarding child protection. New staff are subject to a six month probationary procedure during which time they are introduced to the procedures and protocols of the unit as well as linking with other key agencies, local resources and other parts of the department.

# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

All staff at Merrydale are provided with a responsive rota that enables forward planning both in and out of the workplace. The rota'd shift patterns and deployment of staff are designed to maximise staff effectiveness and quality of service to young people resident.

Staff work a combination of 'early' and 'late' shifts plus a pattern of weekend working. A flexible approach to staffing is required and at times staff may be directed to work in any of the houses depending on circumstances.

Senior staff, when the full staffing compliment is available provide 'floating Senior cover'. They are not required to work directly with a group of children in a house but are supernumerary offering support where required to both staff and children, maintaining and monitoring standards of care. They are a point of reference for staff, parents, carers and other social work staff and any visitors to Merrydale and are responsible for the running of shifts during their allocated hours. In the absence of senior staff other RCW`s will be asked to act up and take on designated senior responsibilities for particular shifts.

All staff are allocated Keyworker responsibilities and specific other responsibilities in relation to the home.

The manager has overall responsibility for the running of the establishment and directly supervises the senior team and other staff. The senior team and the manager are the only staff with direct supervisory responsibilities within Merrydale.

# CHILDREN ACCOMMODATED

Merrydale is a 13 bedded respite centre for children with severe learning difficulties in Hampshire. There are three children services units providing accommodation for up to three children (nine in total). Each house is self contained with its own bathroom, kitchen/utility area and lounge.

An additional four beds are provided in the Health unit, all on the ground floor. There is an adapted bathroom. This unit is currently open at weekends and school holidays only.

Wheelchair access is only available in the health unit. Due to the layout of the accommodation in the three social services houses, respite services can not be offered to children who rely on a wheelchair for mobility neither can accommodation be offered to those children/young people who's mobility is restricted to such an extent that they can not safely negotiate stairs. Careful consideration will also be given (prior to offering accommodation) to those children who's needs are such that accommodation at Merrydale would cause difficulties to other children or require a level of specialist care not possible within the present structure or staffing levels.

Services are provided for children of either sex between the ages of 0 - 18 years although in practise it will be rare for children under the age of 5 years to be referred. However we accept that at times there may be exceptional circumstances and following a detailed assessment of need it may be considered in the child's best interest for a referral to be considered.

# ADMISSIONS PROCEDURE

All the children/young people admitted to Merrydale will have a named Social Worker. If the child or young person has an identified social care need, the social worker will need to forward an up to date assessment of the child or young person, and their family / carers needs, for presentation at the monthly Hampshire County Council Allocation Panel.

Should the child/young person meet the criteria for admissions a programme of introduction may be initiated including the following points/actions:

1. Manager and senior team decide on most suitable house unit for child/young person to be resident.
2. Senior team member contacts Social worker/Care manager to arrange visit for Social worker/Care manager, Parents/Carers and siblings.
3. Senior team member identifies key worker.
4. Senior team member/keyworker together with parents/carers fill out Merrydale/Carers assessment form and Care plan.
5. Keyworker compiles working file including key information, care plan and risk assessment etc.
6. Programme of introductory tea visits arranged.
7. Respite dates to be agreed with Social worker/Care manager in consultation with Parents/Carers.

The admission procedure will be sensitive to the feelings of children and their families and introductions will be arranged at a pace that allows parents to build a confidence in the service and in the staff caring for their children.

Merrydale operates a key worker system. A key worker will act as a focal point for all those involved with a child, will ensure that all information is included on the care plan and that regular liaison takes place between themselves, parents, schools and social work staff.

Respite is allocated on a six monthly basis and all requests should come via the allocated Social worker. Any disputes i.e. the suitability of any placement may be addressed via the District manager.

Merrydale may consider requests at short notice for extra respite due to crisis situations where the child young person and family/ carer are already receiving a service.

Other unplanned admissions are rare and would only be considered if all other options had been explored, and it is felt that staying at Merrydale would be in the best interest of the child or young person.

Placement of a child or young person at Merrydale for a short term placement would only happen after discussions with the Registered Manager, Disabled Children's Team Manager and Integrated Disability Services Manager with final agreement from the Area Director.

Ofsted would need to be informed of the potential placement.

If a child or young person is placed at Merrydale a full assessment of need is required before the placement commences. This assessment would include how we would meet the individual needs of the child or young person whilst staying at Merrydale with emphasis on how we can ensure contact with

family is maintained, disruption to education is minimal and social activities continue. Risk assessment planning will be an integral part of the assessment process.

As a team at Merrydale we would need to ensure that the appropriate staff skill mix is available to support the child or young person.

# PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

The care offered at Merrydale is guided by the philosophy that the children's welfare is of paramount importance in all decisions and planning. That children are children first and should be provided with opportunities to mix and play with friends, to develop life and social skills in a safe and secure environment.

Our aim is to work in full partnership with families and fellow professionals. The services provided are based upon the understanding that within all families there are usually opportunities for children and parents to have breaks from each other. As children mature they assume more responsibility for their own actions and the ability to occupy themselves, pursue interests and become more aware of personal safety. This is all too frequently not the case in relation to children with severe learning difficulties. Merrydale seeks to balance the needs of the child with the needs of the parents, siblings and prime carers. Great emphasis is placed on ensuring in the first instance that children feel safe and enjoy positive experiences whilst away from home. At the same time we want parents to feel confident in the quality of care provided and to feel that the service is able to respond to their needs and the needs of their children.

## HEALTH CARE

Merrydale believes that children have a right to the best health care available and to be given sufficient information and opportunity to develop a healthy lifestyle.

Children/young people looked after will retain their own GP's and will have as part of their care plans details of any medication to be administered. Details of all administered drugs are recorded and form part of the medical records retained on file.

Unless children/young people are subject to care orders when responsibility is shared parents and carers remain responsible for all aspects of health care.

Whilst children are resident, staff will encourage and support young people in the daily tasks that promote hygiene and healthy living.

Parents will be required to ensure their children arrive with the necessary personal items to assist in this process e.g. toothbrush, flannel, comb/brush, shampoo, deodorant, sanitary towels etc.

Staff are able to consult with the community nursing team if concerned with regard to a child/young persons health and have excellent relationships with staff at the children's ward of the Royal Hampshire County Hospital so advice can be sought if required around the clock. Parents/carers will be informed and consulted at all stages but if a child is clearly unwell parents may be requested to collect them. Although this is not a common occurrence we feel that when a young

person is unwell the best place for them is at home in more familiar surroundings with the people closest to them.

Staff will promote positive health care through education and opportunities for the children utilising the resources and expertise of health colleagues i.e. community nurses and community learning disability teams.

Merrydale has a no smoking policy.

# EDUCATION

It is important to the success of any respite programme to ensure that the ordinary routines of each child and family experience minimum disruption.

Education is a vital part of every child's life. All children who access Merrydale have school placements and attend school as normal when in respite. Staff liaise closely with teachers and parents on specific educational/social skills objectives set for individual children.

## RECREATION

Merrydale has a range of toys and play equipment and we place great emphasis on providing opportunities for children to learn through play. Each child has an allocated keyworker who will identify particular games and equipment appropriate to their keychildren and if possible these may be purchased for use whilst at Merrydale. This information will form part of individual children's care plans and will be available to all staff. Merrydale has a large and secure garden where children can involve themselves in supervised games with staff and children or enjoy opportunities to partake in free play in a safe and monitored environment. There are several large trikes, bikes and a sandpit is available for use in the garden that is very popular with children.

Merrydale also has a playroom and sensory room. Access to these rooms is with staff supervision and can be arranged for small groups or on an individual basis. We are constantly looking at ways to provide improved facilities and equipment for the children's use.

Our mini bus has wheelchair access and is available to staff and children to provide opportunities to access a variety of community resources e.g. Paultons Park, Finkley Down Farm, Marwell Zoo, local recreational centres and many other venues. All staff are trained to agreed county standards before being allowed to drive the mini bus and transport children. We also have a people carrier (7 seater) which is also available to transport staff and children.

## COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN

At Merrydale we believe that children and young people should be involved and encouraged to have a say on issues which may affect them as far as practically possible.

Individuals are encouraged to raise issues and will be supported to voice concerns or complaints which will be taken seriously.

The staff team are fully committed to offering a range of alternatives and responding to individuals wishes and feelings. Some children will have particular communication needs which will be identified and addressed during the introductory/admission process. To aid this process Merrydale has a children's guide/leaflet which is tailored to support and assist with the children's understanding of Merrydale and what is on offer during their stays. This can be used by both staff and parents with children who have been referred for a service.

The majority of staff have undertaken Makaton training and are supported and encouraged by our in house "Makaton Champions" to use this form of communication with children at all times.

It is hoped that through the development and maintenance of good relationships between staff, children, parents and carers that issues or concerns for residents can be identified and quickly resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Key workers will remain in close contact with families to support this process and will facilitate and encourage the views of children and other family members to be heard and acted upon.

# CONTROL AND DISCIPLINE

At Merrydale we believe that the routines and existence of individually tailored care plans will effectively minimise the need for reactive control or discipline.

Through consistency, continuity and the development of positive relationships with children and young people we aim to support individuals to develop self control and enhance socially acceptable behaviour. Relationships are built based on honesty, mutual respect and recognised good professional practice.

Behaviour management strategies will be discussed and agreed with parents and included in individual children's care plans. Staff are aware of prohibited methods of discipline (for example, physical punishment or the withdrawal of food). Time out is a usual way of helping a child/young person understand that certain behaviours are unacceptable. Importance is placed on recognising and rewarding positive behaviour. All sanctions are recorded, signed and counter signed by the manager.

At times it may be felt that for the safety of individuals and others that there is no other alternative but to have to hold on to a child. 'Team Teach' is the county approved approach to safeguarding both staff and children at times when physical intervention is deemed necessary to avoid injury to a child, other children or staff members.

It provides staff with a flexible framework of responses stressing a holistic approach moving from the least intrusive to a more restrictive hierarchy and the use of positive handling is a last resort.

Importantly the emphasis is on equipping staff with the confidence and skills to utilize non verbal and verbal strategies first. The key message being that 95% or more of all incidents should be managed without resorting to physical interventions.

All staff involved in direct work with children receive a 4 day accreditation course in Team Teach and yearly re-accreditation training. The unit currently has two Team Teach instructors who provide ongoing refresher training.

Each Key worker will take responsibility for identifying the children and young people they judge may because of their behaviour, at times require physical interventions. They will complete a form offering the potential trigger behaviours, strategies for de-escalating situations and finally the Team Teach interventions that may be used. These will be shared and agreed with the Team Teach instructors, parents and school.

More information and staff guidance can be found in the staff handbook.

# UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

No children/young people are allowed off site unsupervised unless this were to form part of an individually tailored care plan.

The garden and grounds are secure with 6' fencing around the boundary.

Should a child or young person be unable to be located staff should:

1. Remain calm
2. Notify the senior staff on duty and co-ordinate a search of the building and grounds
3. Notify the police immediately should a child not be located
4. Notify parents
5. When the child is found notify parents and police
6. Try to ascertain where the child has been
7. Inform the manager at the earliest opportunity.

## CHILD PROTECTION

All children have the right to be safe and protected irrespective of their disability and staff at Merrydale have a key role in identifying abuse when it occurs and bringing it to the immediate attention of the responsible authority.

All staff are aware of the units protocol on Child Protection that makes clear their responsibility if concerns exist for a child and offers information on possible signs of abuse, disclosures of abuse and self protection.

Training on child protection issues is also available as a 'core' course and will form part of the personal development programme for each team member.

Merrydale also has a protocol on intimate care which aims to balance the need for respect for individual privacy and dignity and the need to protect both children and staff.

All staff members are aware of the process to follow should they have concerns about any aspect of a child's welfare.

The policies on Child Protection, Intimate Care and Guidelines in relation to bullying are all contained in the staff handbook.

## FIRE PRECAUTIONS

As a staff team great importance is placed upon ensuring that we all show due vigilance at all times to ensure that the risk of fire is kept to a minimum. The unit is equipped with a comprehensive range of fire safety equipment including alarms, detectors and extinguishers all of which are regularly serviced by outside contractors. The unit also conducts its own checks, fire drills and gives all staff practical instruction on fire procedures and evacuation.

The unit has a team of waking night staff that ensures that the building is actively monitored 24 hours per day when children are resident.

The unit policy and procedures can be found in the staff handbook.

## SECURITY AND DOOR OPENING AND MONITORING SYSTEMS

Merrydale's garden to the rear and sides of the property is contained via a six foot fence. There are two gates each kept secure via a magnetic locking system that can be disengaged manually with the appropriate key from the inside or that will automatically disengage should the fire alarm sound allowing staff and children to leave the premises.

The front door is also linked to the same system. All staff are issued with a fob/key which when presented to the 'reader' by the door will disengage the magnetic lock for three seconds allowing access. The same method is used to exit. This door is connected to a time lock that will only allow access until 10pm, after this time all visitors/staff must ring the door bell to gain access.

Within the building several more readers are installed in all house areas and in upstairs hallways. Should staff experience difficulties or require support for any reason they can present their fob/key to the reader. In doing so they will alert a pager carried by senior staff who will go to assist.

Guidelines for house staff and night staff can be found in the staff handbook.

If a child or young person requires monitoring overnight e.g. if they have epilepsy, complex health needs or challenges around behaviour, especially at night, this can be accommodated by the use of digital alarm systems.

These will only be used if agreed by parents / carers and there is a signed risk assessment in the child or young person's This Is Me care file.

The Social Worker will be informed monitoring is in place.

All monitoring systems will be turned off during the day, to ensure the privacy and dignity of the children and young people using their rooms during the day.

## RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

The Children Act 1989 requires that we take into account the religious applications and beliefs of children. All children in Merrydale will be supported to follow their chosen religion and beliefs. Where necessary staff will actively seek any information/advice which will help the child/young person follow their chosen faith. Children will be guided by staff and their parents wishes when making decisions on this sometimes sensitive subject.

## CONTACT ARRANGEMENTS

The services provided at Merrydale are for respite and children are usually taking a break from parents or carers. The issues of contact should not therefore generally arise. However with prior arrangement and to support individual care plans children can be visited by their family or friends.

A room may be made available where a young person can take a visitor i.e. the playroom where arts and crafts can be enjoyed or a quiet room where they may sit privately with a guest. The individual needs, rights and wishes of the child will always be taken into account when supporting contact with families.

## REVIEWS

Short Breaks: Statutory guidance on how to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children using short breaks, identifies that short breaks can be provided by local authorities under either section 17(6) of the 1989 Children Act or section 20 (4) of the Act. Those children receiving short breaks under section 17(6) of the Act will be reviewed by the child's social worker as children in need. Those accommodated under section 20 (4) where regulation 48 does not apply will be considered as 'looked after' with in the meaning of the 1989 Children Act and as such subject to full looked after child planning arrangements and six monthly multi-agency statutory review of arrangements chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer. A child who receives a service under Sec 20 (4) where regulation 48 does apply will be considered as a child looked after but with lower planning requirements. It is recognised that the children will also be part of a review process from other agencies providing support e.g. Health and Education. As far as is possible every effort should be made to co-ordinate such meetings to cause least disruption and maximum benefit to the child and family. All Children's Services review arrangements are co-ordinated by the child's social worker.

Keyworkers from Merrydale will attend all reviews.

## REPRESENTATION AND COMPLAINTS

Section 26 of the Children Act 1989 requires Social Services Departments, voluntary organisations and registered children's homes to establish procedures for considering representations and complaints about services.

At Merrydale we believe that children, young people, parents, carers and family members should be involved and encouraged to have a say on issues which may affect them or that concern them as far as is practically possible.

Children/young people are encouraged to raise issues and will be supported to voice concerns or complaints which will be taken seriously.

It is hoped that through the development and maintenance of good relationships between staff, children, parents and carers that any problems or issues for young people can be identified quickly and resolved to everyone's satisfaction at a local level through open communication.

Keyworkers will remain in close contact with families supporting parents/carers to voice concerns where they exist and offering solutions after consultation with senior staff members.

All stages of a complaint will be brought to the attention of the manager, recorded and parents/service users will be kept informed of progress and proposed resolutions.

Should parents wish to make representation or complaint regarding any matter they may do so by contacting the manager directly at Merrydale or via the departments central complaints team either in writing or directly at;

The Complaints Team  
Children's Services  
Elizabeth Court 2

The Castle  
Winchester.  
SO23 8UG  
Tel 01962 847484

Alternatively direct representation can be made to OFSTED  
by telephoning 08456 404040.  
e-mail [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Web [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## ACCOMMODATION

Merrydale has in total capacity to look after a maximum of 13 children at any one time. Nine beds are provided in the 3 Social Care houses (house 1,2 &3) and a further 4 in the health unit (house 4).

Houses 1,2 and 3 each accommodate up to three children. Each house is self contained with separate bedrooms and bathrooms on the first floor (accessed via stairs). Downstairs is a lounge and kitchen/utility room.

There are no cookers in the kitchens for safety reasons but breakfast and simple meals can be prepared via the microwave, toaster and kettle. Each kitchen is equipped with a fridge.

Main meals are prepared by the cook in the main kitchen and brought via a heated trolley to the houses.

Although self contained a lot of mixing, socialising, visiting and joint activities take place between the staff and children in the houses. Each house has its own access point to the garden. Merrydale accommodates a wide age range and children of either sex so consideration is given to how children are grouped. House 1 will cater for the younger age group, house 2 for the older boys and house 3 predominantly for the older girls.

Consideration will also be given to personal preference and where particular friendships exist.

Although catering for a fairly large number of children each house has the opportunity to close its doors to others if they so wish. All bedrooms are single rooms and children can at any time enjoy privacy and time alone.

# ANTI DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICE

Merrydale is committed to operating in a climate that does not discriminate on the grounds of race, religion, gender or disability.

The unit aims to promote anti discriminatory practices by:

- Treating disabled children as children first
- Supporting children and their families in advocating the breakdown of environmental, cultural and personal barriers that serve to inhibit their opportunity to participate in mainstream community activities
- Careful and thoughtful use of language
- Recognising and eliminating our own racism
- Ensuring that our practices are free of negative stereotyping
- Challenging any racist comments, actions or attitudes in others and by tackling racist structures and individual practises when encountered.

The expectation is that every team member will actively promote anti discriminatory practice in all areas of their work and conduct and be open to examine and reflect upon the way we work, our own attitudes and methods of evaluating the practise of individual team members.