Children’s Services

Statement of Purpose and Function for The Springs Short Breaks Service

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Registered Provider and Responsible Individual:

The Springs is one of Hertfordshire County Council’s [HCC] Children’s Homes. Hertfordshire County Council are the Registered Provider and have appointed Lynn Knowles, Head of Children’s Homes as the Responsible Individual.

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Registered Manager:

Gary Wiggins is currently in an acting Manager role awaiting confirmation of registration. He holds an NVQ level 5 in Management and an NVQ level 4 in Working with children and young people. Gary has 17 years’ experience of working with children and young people in a variety of social care settings, which includes working with children with disabilities and those in mainstream provisions. In which 8 of these years have been in a Management position.

1. Introduction

Hertfordshire’s Children’s Residential Service provides homes and short breaks for children and young people who are looked after or assessed as in need by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). As a service we aim to provide high quality care to children and young people in order to help them feel “loved, happy, healthy, safe from harm and able to develop, thrive and fulfil their potential” (The Children’s Homes Regulations 2015)

The service sets its aims and objectives high with reference to Government Legislation and Guidance, HCC’s Policies and Procedures, and the Children’s Services Plan to ensure that young people are supported to reach their full potential.

Within HCC and under the ARC (Adolescent Resource Centre) Services (Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency Model – Blaustein and Kinniburgh (see below for diagram of ARC model)), there is one home for children and young people with disabilities and three mainstream homes. There are also three outreach projects who work with families in the community to support children, young people and
their parents/carers. All parts of the service work to consistent policies and procedures which are reviewed regularly.

The Springs are part of the ARC services which comprises of specialist multi-disciplinary team that bring together health, education and social care in supporting traumatised children, young people parents and carers.

The purpose of these services is to provide a flexible, responsive and quality service to the most traumatised, complex and vulnerable children and young people across Hertfordshire consisting of outreach, assessment and short break respite care to prevent family breakdown and children coming into care.

We work within the ARC model - which enables us to work with children and young people with complex needs, helping them secure attachments and build on their resilience. This enables children, young people and their families and carers to gain an understanding of their experiences, triggers and responses in order to develop different strategies to manage their emotions.

**ARC Model**

Hertfordshire are committed to support children and young people to remain within their family setting where it is safe to do so and have developed The Springs short breaks service to assist with this. Where families are dedicated to caring for their child but struggling to manage some of their presenting behaviours, we can create an individualised intensive support package to reduce the potential for breakdown. This support may include a planned short break as well as outreach work. The service works alongside the family to ensure the parameters of this service are adhered to under section 17 of the children act 1989.
The Springs provide both outreach and intensive support, as well as offering short breaks to children and young people age 12-17. The short breaks service encompasses Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights (*we will open on a Monday night on all bank holidays due to other services not being available to find placements on a Monday). We have four beds allowing for three planned short breaks stays and one emergency referral under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. Priority will be given to those with planned short breaks to ensure they are receiving the care as set in their agreed package. The young people may be of either gender as they all have individual bedrooms.

2. **Aims, Objectives**

"Every Local Authority must provide services designed to assist carers in their area by giving them breaks from caring... (for a disabled child or young person)

(A) local authority must have regard to the needs of those carers who would be unable to continue to provide care unless a break from caring was given to them.

In performing those duties, a local authority must also have regard to the needs of those carers who would be able to continue to provide care more effectively if breaks from caring were given to allow them to:

a) undertake education, training or any regular leisure activity; or
b) carry out day to day tasks which they must perform in order to run their household.”

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

The ARC services have been set up to work with traumatised children and young people and their families. The Springs short breaks service aims to achieve good outcomes for children and young people by offering planned respite and emergency placements that meet individual needs. The ARC services aim to prevent placements from breaking down and preventing young people becoming accommodated by:

- Reducing family breakdowns
- Minimising placement moves in respect of ‘Children in our Care’
- Assisting young people who are classified as ‘Children in our Care’ and are therefore subject to a court order.
- Assisting children, young people and their families and or carers who are experiencing a period of crisis.
- Assisting with transitions to alternative placements.
- Breaking down the distrust and sense of worthlessness that may have built up in the children and young people and allow them to explore the source of distress in conditions that provide safety and an effective means of re-negotiating their place within the family.
- Working with a consistent model
• Minimising the necessity to place children and young people a distance from their home (thus increasing the chances of them returning home).

The sole criteria promoted by Hertfordshire is assessed need:

• Where all parties are in agreement that it is in the best interests of the child or young person to remain in their family.
• Where the assessment clearly identifies that a series of short breaks will enable the child or young person to remain within their family.
• The child or young person must be aged 12-17.
• No child or young person’s break will exceed 3 consecutive nights (unless their stay falls on a bank holiday).
• No child or young person should or need to have more than a total of 40 nights away from their home in any year.
• Any child or young person requiring a longer term solution will become sec 20.

In order to assess need, the social worker and arc worker will talk to the young person and their family and seek to understand:

• Views of the child, young person and carers.
• Parenting capacity of the carers within their family.
• Support package required if all parties are in agreement that it is in the best interests of the child or young person to remain in their family.
• The length of time away from home and frequency of such stays.
• The potential impact on the child’s/young person’s place in the family and on their parents or carers (for example, the impact on siblings and how they may interact).
• Any risk assessments that may need to be completed.

We are a preventative service with the purpose of maintaining the family unit. Individual programmes of support will be considered from short term intensive outreach support which is time limited intervention to longer term packages of support consisting of both short break stays and outreach work. All packages will have clear individualised goals set under the ARC model and reviewed regularly with the family and social worker. Support will gradually decrease until the family has reached a stage of equilibrium. If it is felt that the family need more intervention this is assessed on an individual basis.

For all children and young people staying at The Springs short breaks we aim to:

• Provide all children and young people with a sense of belonging to be able to express themselves to have fun, as well as attempting a range of activities whilst with us.
• Assist children and young people in understanding their feelings and behaviour and coping with the consequences of their actions by ensuring staff and carers meet the child’s/young person’s need for security, affection, dignity, privacy, respect and stimulation at all times.

• Help children, young people and carers identify their feelings, triggers and responses and recognise it is the whole family who need to work together.

• Provide support for children and young people to understand their past and the impact it has had on them thus enabling them to make sense of themselves and move on in the future.

• Encourage growth and belief in children and young people to help them achieve their full potential with regard to personal, social, educational and health development.

• Promote children and young people’s emotional resilience enabling them to build on positive relationships with the hope they will eventually experience trust and be able to express their feelings appropriately.

• Promote and encourage children and young people to make informed choices and in developing the ability to negotiate effectively with their parents/carers.

• Ensure that interventions are structured specific, time limited and reviewed regularly.

• To formulate a support plan at the beginning of our involvement and revisit on a regular basis to determine whether there have been any significant changes within the family.

• Promote families and carers strengths and enable them to recognise and utilise them and encourage families to take ownership for the issues that requires intervention.

• Provide children and young people with a positive home environment that creates security, has clear boundaries and routines (both at The Springs and within their home environment).

• Provide reassurance to the child/young person in order for them to feel safe, secure and cared for when they are staying at The Springs.

• Work in partnership with parents, carers and significant others.
• Arrange educational sessions that will link into individual goals as well as educating young people on topics that are relevant for their safety and wellbeing in general e.g. e-safety, child sexual exploitation

• Seek feedback from children, young people, carers, professionals and parents so we are constantly developing and reviewing our service

• Promote and encourage age appropriate independence skills.

• Involve the children and young people, wherever possible, in the decisions concerning their day to day life and give them opportunities to contribute to their long term plans. Young people’s Meetings are held each weekend which gives them space to voice their views and for staff to give them information.

• Help children and young people to gain and maintain a positive image of themselves and their heritage by respecting and valuing their religion, culture, ethnicity, language, gender, sexuality, and disabilities.

Our objective is to develop the physical, social, psychological and emotional well-being of the young people we support, which may include the need to address or repair any earlier trauma to thus enable the young person to achieve forward progression in their lives. In order to facilitate this we offer support in the following areas:

• Life and social skills
• Self-care & personal safety (including protective behaviours as a means of understanding and managing personal safety)
• Attachment & building healthy relationships
• Loss & bereavement
• Identity/self esteem
• Family work
• Identifying and expressing feelings safely including anger management
• Group living
• Managing inappropriate sexual behaviour
• Reducing substance misuse
• Tackling offending behaviour
• The chance to have fun
• Therapeutic sessions
• Sexual Health awareness and keeping safe
The following systems are in place to achieve this:

- We will offer good primary care with appropriate role modelling.
- Staff meet with children and young people regularly to draw up agreed targets and support plans. These plans will include individual behaviour strategies to tackle the issues faced by the young person.
- Opportunities will be given for group work and individual work.
- Young people’s meetings.
- Joint work with families and/or relevant professionals and organisations.
- Clear and factual information on health issues.
- Weekly staff meetings to plan for young people’s individual aims and objectives for weekend stays.
- Feedback forms completed by young people and families to ensure needs are met.
- Staff training on relevant topics that may affect children and young people.
- Regular case discussions with our in house therapists.

3. **Ethos**

Children and Young People and their families referred to The Springs short breaks are generally regarded as ‘In need’ so our service needs to be offered in partnership with other professionals, parents or carers who have parental responsibility and relevant family members. It is an integral part of our approach to recognise that children and young people exist as part of a network of relationships involving parents, family and other significant people. Children, young people and their families will feel much more valued if they are involved in the development and delivery of the service. It is empowering for them to feel that their opinion is respected and it will lead to better communication in the future.

The Springs short breaks promotes quality time out for troubled children and young people struggling to live with their own family unit; enabling them and their family’s time to reflect. Following support, strategies and guidance it envisaged that young people will be able to function again within their family’s and succeed socially and educationally.

The Springs short breaks promotes a positive experience within a supportive and caring environment and is proactive in ensuring that that children and young people’s needs are met in every way possible. Every effort is made to ensure that systems do not get in the way of them experiencing a truly homely environment as well as having fun and feeling loved and cared for.

We believe that building good relationships with our children and young people and staff as well as between all the young people who stay at The Springs short breaks is key to helping them develop daily living skills and develop independence as well as supporting them to stay safe.

We are keen that our children and young people are encouraged to stay healthy and active and support them to attend activities to promote this.
We believe it is important for them to have fun and enjoy themselves and place a lot of value on this as well as the therapeutic input. We aim to support children and young people to be involved in a variety of things individually and as a group and feel this has many benefits including raising their self-esteem and improving their ability to form and maintain relationships.

We place an importance on sensitivity to children and young people who have experienced trauma and will ensure we understand, where possible, their history and triggers and adapt the home accordingly:

“Because trauma survivors are often sensitized to potential danger, trauma-informed service systems work towards building physical and emotional safety for consumers and providers. The system should be aware of potential triggers for consumers and strive to avoid retraumatization. Because interpersonal trauma often involves boundary violations and abuse of power, systems that are aware of trauma dynamics should establish clear roles and boundaries that are an outgrowth of collaborative decision-making.
Privacy, confidentiality, and mutual respect are also important aspects of developing an emotionally safe atmosphere. Diversity is accepted and respected within trauma-informed settings, including differences in gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on”.

Hopper (2007) (Shelter From the Storm)

At The Springs we promote the involvement of children, young people and their families in the development and successful running of the service. Not only do we accept the principle of young people’s involvement it can be seen in practice through a variety of participation and consultation activities within and outside our environment.

The team at The Springs believe that the opinions and ideas of the children and young people are valuable and as such will be listened to through the use of regular young people’s meetings. These meetings are held, where possible, once a week, as well as consulting with them on a one to one basis to determine their views of the service that The Springs provide. Staff generally facilitate the weekly young people’s meeting and record the minutes, however at times young people are supported to take ownership and chair their own meetings.

The agenda is planned in advance, collating ideas from all of the children and young people, along with any ideas that the team also wishes to raise. Children and young people are actively encouraged to participate in their meetings, share their points of view and to take an active part in the decision making process. This is a good opportunity to promote empowerment, self-esteem, and a number of other interpersonal skills, that have a positive impact on their lives. All children and young people are able to make suggestions or comments.
Children and young people have regular sessions with staff as part of their stay and any outreach work. These provide a forum in which they can actively contribute towards their care. Staff are expected to take in to account any religious, racial, cultural and linguistic issues that may impact on the care of the young person.

At The Springs we try and promote children and young people on the premise that they should be empowered to express views not only about the service we provide but about their community and society as a whole. We aim to provide them with the skills and self-confidence to make informed choices and endeavour to teach them that they have a right to be heard and listened to; that they show respect for themselves and others; listen to others views and opinions and gain the confidence to speak out.

Suitable means would be provided for any child or young person with communication and or learning difficulties, to make their wishes and feelings known regarding their care and the service provided by The Springs.

Family members, foster carers and professionals are encouraged to visit The Springs and see the service/facilities provided prior to the commencement of an individualised programme of intervention by the staff at The Staff. All views are welcomed and acknowledged. Family members, foster carers and significant others are invited to attend meetings, as is the child/young person. This setting, once again, provides a forum for the child/young person and their family to contribute to the care provided.

All children/young people, families/carers and professionals are encouraged to complete an evaluation form when their case is ready to be closed, as well as feedback forms after each short break stay. This helps us to identify development needs within The Springs and allows the children and young people to have their say about the care and service they received during their time with us.

Participation of and consultation with children and young people is essential in our work and it is our aim to always ensure feedback is given. Providing feedback serves to demonstrate to the children and young people that they have been involved in a meaningful process and their views and involvement is valued.

**Religious and cultural observance**

We recognise and respect that religion may play an important part in our children and young people’s lives. This will be clearly considered in the care plan and measures will be put in place to ensure that young people are able to follow the religion of their and / or their parent / carer’s choice this includes providing facilities for religious requirements re diet, prayer areas etc. Staff will also help children and young people make contact with local religious establishments and attend services if required.
The same consideration will be given to cultural aspects of a child/young person’s life, with staff encouraging engagement with faith, culture, ethnicity, and communities to support their sense of identity.

We believe that it is important for children and young people to have the opportunity to learn about and experience different religions and cultures; we arrange visits and attendance at celebratory events within the community as well as at the home.

4. **Referrals and Admission**

**Principles**

- All staff are committed to providing a prompt, flexible and responsive service to the needs of children and young people.
- Working in partnership with colleagues from field teams and Brokerage is central to the effective use of resources.
- The use of the limited resources is targeted at those most in need.

**Accessing Planned Short Breaks**

HARP Referral Form completed by Professionals

Signed by Practice Manager & Group Manager

Placed on ICS and Brokerage notified

HARP – yes

Allocated

Placed on waiting list

Reviewed weekly

Initial meeting held with social worker, child/young person and parents agreements to be signed

Short break plan to indicate number of days per month

The HARP administrator will group referrals into time slots according to help staff from the teams to be available at panel. The Springs Manager or Deputy will attend each panel and will bring information on capacity levels.
The Springs will provide weekly updates around capacity and planned placements to Brokerage and will discuss placements every Monday morning to ensure good communication and shared knowledge of plans.

**Accessing placements – Emergency accommodation**

The Springs will have 1 emergency placement available; they can only be accessed in the following manner. In the case of an emergency admission consideration must be given to the placements appropriateness. The needs of that child/young person must be assessed and the placements of other children/young people should not be unnecessarily unsettled. The levels of support may be revised to reflect higher ratios if any perceived risks are identified. The need to maintain and review assessments such as the case documents and risk assessment is vital following an emergency admission in order to best care for the young person.

HARP chair/Brokerage /Out of Hours on call senior manager contacted by SW team or out of hours service and agreement for the young person to be Accommodated under Section 20 must be sought

Availability checked with The Springs or on call manager and a decision made in respect of current occupancy

Placement made

Contact made with social work and Brokerage team to identify appropriate placement by the end of the day

If appropriate staff will assist in the placement move

5. **Working with The Springs**

At The Springs we understand the importance for every child and young person to get “things right” from the start of their stay with us. Once a planned package of care has been agreed, a worker will go out and meet the child/young person and their family and discuss what all parties want from our service. From this we will develop a support plan and sign an agreement of what work is needed. We will then arrange for the child/young person to visit The Springs prior to their overnight stays. If young people needs to make contact with family or family are joining them at The Springs for sessions whilst they are staying with us this will be agreed prior to them coming in.
The internal support plan is a personalised working document which contains essential information, details of any needs or risks and details of work and strategies for addressing specific behaviour. The support plan should also give consideration to the child’s needs in relation to recreational, medical, educational, family, cultural, racial, sexual orientation and religious matters. Each plan is designed to encourage the child/young person to be reconciled with their past, give space to enjoy their present and look forward positively to their future. The plan will include specific, measurable targets that detail who are responsible, the strategy to follow and the agreed timescales.

Where possible this will be completed prior to admission. The support plans are reviewed regularly and shared within team meetings and with relevant professionals to ensure consistent work practise. The support plans are live working documents and all staff are expected to contribute to them.

6. **Safeguarding**

We are aware that our children and young people will explore, try new things and sometimes push boundaries and take risks; this is an essential part of growing up and although we do not seek to eradicate all risk, we do aim to protect our children and young people from harm and empower them to become self-managing in their own safety. We effectively assess risk at the point of admission and regularly review this to ensure that we are effective at reducing the risk of harm and utilise our risk matrix approach to assist us to retrospectively review and reflect on the safety of our children and young people and the appropriateness of our approach.

With all of the potential that the online world and new technology offers, children and young people now have access to huge opportunities. They use technology to express themselves, explore, and be creative; we are aware that this new technology has changed the way our children and young people choose to communicate.

**Child Protection**

Children and young people have a right to protection and this is clearly defined in the Quality Standards.

Our staff are effectively trained in the ability to recognise and identify signs that a child or young person may be at risk and have access to clearly defined systems around how to safeguarding the young person and minimise risk.

Safeguarding concerns and procedures to follow are discussed in supervision, team meetings and management meetings. Any safeguarding issues are given the highest priority and effective action taken wherever there is a concern about a child’s/young person’s welfare.
This will include alerting the relevant professionals and seeking their advice. The Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board has comprehensive inter-agency child protection and safeguarding children procedures which can be found online at www.hertssafeguarding.org.uk.

Children and young people who access our service must be provided with a safe and stimulating environment within which they can feel secure, safe from harm and able to thrive and fulfil their potential. Should any employee become aware of any behaviour amongst colleagues, which is contrary to developing a safe environment, this should be brought to the immediate attention of the Manager or a senior member of staff (or should that individual be involved, their line manager). Failure to take such action will be construed as collusion. To know and do nothing is wrong. Hertfordshire has a Whistle Blowing Policy which adults have access to.

All staff receives training in safeguarding as part of their induction programme and have annual refresher training. This training includes Child Sexual Exploitation and other relevant risk factors that become evident.

**Going missing and absconding**

We are committed to ensuring our children and young people are kept safe at all times and understand that safeguarding and promoting their welfare is our key responsibility. Research tells us that children looked after are significantly more likely to go missing, with those in residential care estimated as three times more likely to go missing. Through supervisions, team meetings and training staff’s awareness and understanding will be continually up-dated in relation to the procedures and protocols we have in place to safeguard our young people.

When a child or young person is admitted we show them our protocol for when a young person goes missing from our care (see Appendix A). We continually up-date the child’s/young person’s individual support plan and risk assessments to highlight strategies we put in place to reduce and stop missing episodes. We offer a consistent approach and are proactive in our practice to prevent children and young people running away.

If we believe a child or young person is at risk we will immediately follow and attempt to keep them in sight and persuade them to return. We will also search the local area and other known locations. We will continually contact the child/young person via their mobile; if this is not successful we will report them as missing, or earlier if there is a heightened risk for any reason e.g. self-harming, drug use, sexual exploitation. We will continue to make all efforts to contact them and persuade them to come home throughout their absence. When they return home we will welcome them and provide food and care. We will talk with them about the reasons behind them going missing and re-evaluate their support plans and risk assessments in consultation with their social worker.
We have good professional links with our local police and have regular meetings to discuss concerns and strategies to implement to reduce missing episodes. Within Hertfordshire we have the Sexual Exploitation and Runaway Children’s Panel (SEARCH Panel). This panel is chaired by a Police Inspector from the Harm Reduction Unit of Hertfordshire Constabulary. The panel’s key task is to ensure there is an effective system for professionals of communicating continuing concerns about runaways and ensuring multi agency working to locate them and prevent future episodes.

Child sexual exploitation remains a major child protection issue across the UK. We at The Springs have raised our understanding and awareness of child sexual exploitation and our safeguarding training now includes the identification of the main issues which can help staff to recognise the signs and dangers our children and young people may face. We understand that sexual exploitation of children and young people can involve gangs or individuals luring them into performing sexual activities in exchange for gifts. The team are alert to modern technology that can aid individuals to groom children and young people; in particular staff are vigilant to the misuse of the internet and/or mobile phones. We also have close links with Hertfordshire’s dedicated Sexual exploitation unit HALO when working with young people who are at risk of this type of abuse.

**Disclosures**

In the event of a child or young person disclosing abuse, they are provided with support and encouraged to pass information onto their Social Worker. Individuals are made aware that information of this nature cannot be kept confidential. All cases of alleged or suspected child abuse that are reported will be investigated immediately following set guidelines. The relevant people and agencies will be informed and the appropriate action will be taken.

**E-Safety**

We have an ‘Internet Use Policy for Young People’ which is given to the child/young people on admission to The Springs. They are expected to read, sign and adhere to the rules within this for their own safety.

**Bullying**

We are committed to ensuring our children and young people feel safe and are protected from being bullied. We understand that being bullied can cause extreme emotional harm, but when the target is a looked after young person, it tends to exacerbate existing feelings of insecurity and anxiety caused by their experiences and family situation. Children and young people in care can also become bullies themselves either as a way of seeking revenge on others for past hurts or as a way of expressing the emotional turmoil they are suffering because of their family situation.
We have an anti-bullying policy in place which all staff are aware of. On admission children and young people are given a copy and it is discussed with them and explained that any incidents of bullying will be dealt with promptly.

Bullying will be regularly discussed in the Young People’s meetings to encourage open discussion about how people are getting on with each other and also in link sessions where this is felt to be necessary. Risk assessments will be completed to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying. In certain circumstances, where issues of safety arise it may be necessary to move the young person who has bullied. Only in exceptional circumstances where there are no other feasible options would the victim of bullying be moved.

At The Springs a member of the team is nominated to keep the team up-date on any new information or research relating to bullying. The pledge around bullying is regularly updated by the children and young people especially when it is seen that it would benefit group living within the home.

We are aware due to on-going advances in technology that cyber bullying, using social media on mobile phones and over the internet, is becoming more prevalent. We strive as a team to make children and young people aware of the dangers and how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and encourage the young people to immediately discuss with the staff if they are being bullied on line. We work with the children and young people to address and assist them to have an awareness and understanding of whom they accept as friends on social networking sites. At The Springs we have an Internet Use Policy for children and young people using the in house computer. This policy has been drawn up to promote the safe use of the Internet, clarify expectations for online behaviour and the consequences of any misuse.

**Children’s Rights**

All children and young people who move in are given a booklet which covers how we look after them, the activities and routines we have in place on a day-to-day basis, the expectations around behaviour and potential consequences. It also gives information about how to contact NYAS, Childline, Ofsted and the Head of Residential Homes. There is a private telephone for the children to use in the home.

NYAS, an independent advocacy service, have been commissioned by HCC and an advocate visits the home fortnightly to meet with the young people. If they want to discuss something directly with the advocate they can arrange a private meeting. NYAS provide a free phone number for the young people to be able to contact them outside of their visits. This along with the number for Childline and Ofsted is displayed in the telephone room which young people have free access to.
7. **Health**

Some of the children and young people referred to The Springs short breaks may have learning difficulties, communication difficulties or a diagnosis that may require training or specialised ways of working and we will always endeavour to prepare for this. Staff will support them in a variety of ways to help reduce anxiety.

Some children and young people will also come with prescribed medication. All staff attend HCC medication training and in house training so they are competent in handling and administering medication.

We also provide clear, factual information on sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, HIV and AIDS where appropriate and / or requested. Staff work closely with health colleagues and HCC has a designated nurse for Children Looked After who is available for consultation and staff training as well as to meet with young people on specific issues and health related matters. The nurse is also responsible for completing review health assessments and obtaining health information. Staff will support children and young people by explaining in a way that is appropriate and meaningful to them.

Alcohol, illegal substances, smoking and solvent abuse are not acceptable at The Springs; we are a non-smoking, drug free environment and actively promote zero tolerance. Young people are discouraged from any of these behaviours and we work closely with external partners to provide support for young people to make appropriate choices in relation to drugs, alcohol and cigarettes

Young people over the age of 16 will be assessed to their ability with the holding and administration of their medication unless otherwise agreed by the case manager or medical practitioner. Medication for children under 16 will be kept secure and issued by the staff. We keep some home remedies on site and a record is kept of all medication issued.

The essence of a healthy life style is apparent throughout the home and children and young people are supported to engage in activities to meet these needs

8. **Education**

The Springs are committed to improving educational outcomes and attainment for our young people. The team know how important it is to talk to children and young people about positive aspects of their lives, as well as their dreams, wishes and ambitions for the future and how they plan to achieve them. They stress the importance of education in achieving good healthy lives as adults.
The team are committed to the value of education and the activities that surround it, for example, establishing a routine, the need to be organised and punctual and the understanding of behaviour requirements. Staff are positive about the need for and benefit of statutory and extended education and aim to help the children and young people develop their skills and instil ambition and motivation for their future.

As children and young people will be staying with us over the weekend we ensure we show a commitment to them completing homework or attending school activities during this time.

We may also plan to hold sessions with the children and young people at their school during the week so we know the importance of establishing a good working relationship with their schools.

As previously mentioned we also aim to run one to one and group sessions for children and young people that are educational and link into their individual goals. These topics will support and educate young people in areas such as keeping safe, protective behaviours, child sexual exploitation and e-safety.

9. Behaviour Management

Underlying principles

Children and Young people will have the basic rules of the home made clear prior to or soon after admission, in whichever form is required by their communication needs. In addition “the way that we do things in the home” will be regularly discussed at house meetings both as a reminder of what is expected but also to give them the opportunity to contribute to the running of the home.

We believe the major determinant of behaviour and the positive ethos of the setting is based on the quality of the relationships between staff and children and young people; these relationships are founded on honesty, mutual respect and good professional practice.

One of our main principles is to enable children and young people to develop the skills required for self-regulation and control and to improve feelings of self-worth and respect. We recognise that this is vital if our children and young people are to become healthy, contributing members of society. They are encouraged to develop by frequent expressions of approval, commendations and extensions of privileges rather than extensive use of disciplinary measures.

The principles of restorative justice (RJ) are fundamental to the work we do and addresses the needs of the victims while helping the offenders take responsibility for their actions. It allows the victim the opportunity to express themselves and play a part in the decision about reparation by
giving them the opportunity to tell the offender how they have been affected. It gives the offender the opportunity to express themselves, see things from another’s perspective; take responsibility for their actions and provides them the opportunity to make amends and to re-assess the way they deal with situations.

The principles of RJ are used in every day interactions where staff are expected to consider the approach they take to young people and how they share their own personal feelings about the offending / unacceptable behaviours.

**Strategies**

In order to help children and young people develop self-control the following behaviour management approaches are used:-

- **Restorative justice:** talking through actions and their consequences and encouraging the child/young person to recognise their feelings, behaviour and the impact it has on others. This ensures that consequences put in place allow the young person the opportunity to make the situation right again.

- **Imposed consequences:** where there has been a serious behaviour issue and the young person is unwilling to work with a restorative approach. These can include time out from the main group; increased supervision; activities aimed at encouraging them to express their feelings and explore the consequence for the individual and others.

- **Reward charts/incentive plans.**

- **One to one time.**

- **Encouraging the children and young people to express what they would find useful as a behaviour management approach, either individually in sessions or as a group in young people’s meetings.**

- **The Manager and Deputy are responsible for monitoring sanctions used to ensure they are fair and effective. Consequences are recorded in the ‘Making it Right’ book and are available for all auditing and inspection processes.**

**Physical Interventions**

As a last resort, and only to prevent physical harm to self or others or serious damage to property, staff may restrain a child/young person. This will be for as brief a time as possible and within the guidelines issued by HCC our Residential Child Care Policy ‘Keeping Safe - Behaviour Management in Residential Work’. The current method of restraint is ‘Keeping Safe’ offered by an external consultant and all staff have a two
day introduction and annual refreshers in the holds to be used as well as techniques for distraction and de-escalation.

Wherever possible at least two members of staff will be present at any restraint and all incidents will be clearly recorded and followed up with the child/young person and staff involved. The incident and details will be recorded in a bound book and shared with the social worker and family where appropriate.

10. Leaving The Springs

For every child and young person who stays at the Springs we aim to get their feedback on how they felt their stay was. We will normally do this on a Sunday evening. Staff also ensure the child/young person is ready for Monday morning; this includes packing school bags, ironing uniform, making lunches, discussing any anxieties they may have. We at The Springs want to help making the transition from The Springs back to school or home a positive one.

In respect of emergency placements we will support where possible to help children and young people move on to their next placement. This may include talking to brokerage, gathering additional details and talking to children and young people in order to ease their anxieties.

11. Staffing

We have high expectations of our staff, both as individuals and as part of our ARC service and together promote a culture of consistency, within which young people are enabled and inspired to achieve their full potential. Staff understand the importance of creating and sustaining positive relationships with our children and young people, and build these based on mutual respect and trust. Staff promote the essence of these relationships by being clear and consistent about acceptable behaviour and by affording unconditional positive regard.

We work within the wider system of professionals including the young person’s Independent Reviewing Officer, family members and significant others to ensure holistic and long-lasting change and deploy various strategies to support this. Staff will ensure through these various strategies that the views of significant others are also taken into account within relevant plans.

Levels

There will be up to three staff on duty during the day/evening; we have two staff sleeping in through the night. These are the maximum staffing levels and can be increased as appropriate. The Manager and Deputy provide an on-call service to the Homes on a rota basis outside office hours.
Recruitment

All staff are recruited according to HCC policies; this includes meeting the requirements at a professional and personal interview, and the successful outcome of a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check; occupational health check and two references. Our recruitment process ensures that staff have the experience and qualifications to meet the complex needs of the young people we support, which is further expanded through our comprehensive training opportunities.

Support and training

We recognise that staff are our most valued resource and we aim to build on and develop their existing skills through a comprehensive support and training package. The team work to offer children and young people a safe and nurturing environment and to enable them to develop self-care skills, self-esteem and healthy relationships.

In order to do this staff need to have the skills and emotional resilience required, we therefore provide:

- A comprehensive induction programme for new staff.
- Monthly individual supervision for all staff with new staff having supervision fortnightly during the first six months. We aim to give agency staff supervision after each eight shifts worked except where they are working more frequently when they will have supervision monthly. All staff have informal supervision where needed.
- Weekly staff meetings and management meetings, and regular consultations with our own in house therapists if needed.
- A comprehensive training programme including the following mandatory training: Keeping Safe; Safeguarding/Sexual exploitation; First Aid; Fire Training; Administration of Medication; Responding to Bullying; Level 3 Diploma CWDC; Dealing with Complaints. The team are encouraged to develop and take on individual roles within the service and go on specific learning opportunities to develop and keep up-to-date and explore the evidence base for their knowledge and skills.
- There are a number of support groups available to staff including those for Black and Asian Staff; Disabled Workers and Lesbian, Gay Bi and Transgender staff. All staff can gain support from CareWell, HCC’s employee assistance programme.

Structure

The Home is led and inspired by a Registered Manager, supported by a Deputy Manager, three ARC Seniors and six ARC short break workers. These are supported by one office managers, one domestic assistant and one handyperson. These are our establishment figures when fully staffed. Vacancies are recruited to as quickly as possible. If there are gaps in the rota we aim to use staff from Datchworth and Springs Outreach otherwise
we use regular agency or HCC contracted staff and try to ensure that the people used are consistent and familiar to the young people.

See Appendix B and C for staffing details and organisational structure

12. The Building

The Springs was built to high specifications in 2009 and meets all relevant building regulations. The environment is both safe and stimulating and every effort is made to ensure that it presents as homely and welcoming to children and young people with all avoidable hazards being considered. There is a private bedroom for each of the children/young people, with an en-suite shower room and two further bedrooms for staff when sleeping in. There is one additional bathroom with a bath and toilet. Our resources also include a music room, lounge, dining room, games room and outdoor spaces.

At The Springs, alarms are in situ on the external doors and on each of the children/young people’s bedroom doors. These are part of our risk management strategies given the short term nature of the home and how potential risk can be unknown when young people are coming in on an emergency basis. These are generally only fully activated during sleeping hours. Outside of these times the doors chime so that staff on duty are aware if a child or young person leaves their room, enters another person’s room or leaves the building. This is a safeguarding mechanism to reduce any possible risk of harm to the children and young people from each other or from themselves (through sexualised behaviour, bullying or absconding) and maintain building security. We will work with individuals around owning their responsibility to keep themselves safe.

We also have a CCTV system in place as an additional security measure. This is an external system which allows us to monitor anyone coming on to the premises. There are no internal cameras. This is explained to each child/young person when they move in. The Springs will only use any other forms of individual electronic surveillance equipment with children/young people where this is required as the result of a court imposed order or part of an agreed programme between the child, young person, police and their significant others.

A local policy details the actions to be taken in case of fire and emergencies. There is a fire risk assessment in place and this is reviewed regularly. A designated Fire Officer ensures that the fire equipment is inspected weekly. All these inspections and the fire practices are recorded and a monthly report completed.

The building and grounds are maintained and repaired by a contracted facilities management company.
An annual assessment of the building and area is completed regarding the suitability of the site for the home and covers risks as well as resources available within the community (see appendix D). This is kept up to date via ongoing liaising with the local neighbourhood community police and specialist police divisions.

13. **Services Available in the Community**

The children, young people and staff at the Home have access to a number of resources in order to meet the welfare needs of the young people living there. These include:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (Psychotherapy)
- Medical (CLA Nurses, Community Doctor, dietician, etc.)
- Social Work Teams
- Fostering Services
- In House Therapists
- Advisory Teachers/Tutors
- Youth Connexions Team
- Targeted Youth Support Team
- Independent Visitors
- Interpreters
- Advocacy Services (NYAS)
- Community Policing and specialist teams

14. **Complaints, Compliments and Feedback**

Our philosophy and working practice is based on equal opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. All children, young people and their families or carers have the right to be treated fairly and with respect and have the right to complain if they feel this is not happening. They also have the right to complain about any aspect of the service and will be given advice and help to do this, if required.

Whilst we encourage children, young people and families to raise issues directly with staff we understand it might be hard to do so and all are given information on how to contact the homes manager by phone or by letter. The young persons leaflet contains information and details of how to contact NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service), Ofsted, the Head of Residential Children’s Homes and Childline. Information is also given and displayed around the unit on the HCC complaints procedure which has clear timescales for responses and resolution.

There is a private telephone available to the children within the home which has details of phone numbers.

The children and young people also have the opportunity to speak to their social workers, Ofsted and Regulation 33 inspectors alone, about anything concerning them.
We will also encourage feedback about the quality of our service from children, young people their families and professionals and actively seek this through the use of questionnaires or other consultations.

Feedback is also sought within our Regulation 33 and Ofsted inspections as well as staff surveys. This information is used to improve and develop the service along with new research and evidence based practice.

15. **Other agencies – Contact details**

Further information and guidance on children’s homes can be obtained from:

**Lynn Knowles**
Head of Residential Homes
Children’s Services
The Lakes
Lemsford Lane
Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6YW
Tel: 01707 343630

**Ofsted**
Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly
Store Street
Manchester, M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231
Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**NYAS**
Egerton House
Tower Road
Birkenhead
Wirral, CH41 1FN
Tel. 0300 330 3131
Website: [www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)
Email: help@nyas.net, info@nyas.net

**Children’s Rights Director**
Office of the Children’s Rights Director
Ofsted
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London, WC2B 6SE
Tel: 0800 528 0731
Website: [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org)
Appendix A – Missing Persons Protocol:

**KEEPING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IN MIND......**

Our pledge if our young people are missing

We want our children and young people to be, and feel, safe and happy in our care and will strive to achieve this at all times. However, we acknowledge that sometimes this is not the case and young people’s whereabouts can become unknown, leaving them potentially exposed to additional safeguarding risks.

In these instances we will undertake all reasonable and practical steps expected of a good parent to secure the safe and speedy return of our children and young people and aim to demonstrate to them that their absence does not pass unnoticed, that we worry and keep them in mind at all times and try hard to locate them.

In these situations, we want to ensure that our children and young people feel that we care and as such we agree to undertake the following:

• Adherence to Hertfordshire County Council’s Protocol for Children Missing from Care or Home

• Our children/young people are considered “Missing” if their whereabouts are unknown or are felt unsafe – regardless of the circumstances of their disappearance. We will work with the Police, who will lead on the completion of an individually risk assessed basis to determine at which point our children/young people become “Missing” versus “Absent”, having taken into consideration their view on their placement, the known risk factors if missing from our care, the view of the parent/carer and consideration to any external influences which may result in a child being removed without consent. This will be evidenced via their risk assessment. We will ensure that every child/young person is aware of the steps we will take to ensure their safety should they become missing from our care at the commencement of the placement and will have preventative strategies in place to try to avoid this need. This will include planning around their
stay to cover areas such as contact with family and friends, being aware of known/highlighted risks and their history where possible, having an allocated advocate visiting from NYAS who can bring worries or complaints from young people to our attention in the hope we can resolve any issues they may have with The Springs so they enjoy their stay with us, building relationships with social workers, schools and other professionals to ensure we are working together, knowledge of the local area, access to help-lines for young people, weekly young people’s meetings, strategies to manage discrimination and bullying, working relationships with the local beat officers and active involvement in police initiatives to safeguard our young people.

• We will ensure that we talk to our children/young people about our strategies around missing at the point of admission to ensure that they are aware of our proactive strategies and our reasoning for this. We are aware that this knowledge has been sufficient to reduce missing incidence in some young people.

• In the first instance we will establish that our child/young person is missing by checking with all other professionals, searching our house and searching our young person’s bedroom – we will not just be looking for our young person, we will also be looking for anything that could assist us or later the police to establish a level or risk or locate our young person. This might include looking for notes, telephone numbers, missing items etc.

• After this we will try to contact our child/young person via their mobile phone and negotiate their safe return to the unit or other agreed location. We will undertake all practical steps to help them to return safely including offering to transport where this is appropriate and staffing ratio affords this. If they decline to answer our calls we will leave a message that demonstrates our concern and primary desire to ensure their safety. We will NOT be authoritarian or punitive and acknowledge that the behaviour is demonstrative of a deeper issue. Recognising that young people do not always have credit with which to pick up their messages we will also text a similar message and request that they make contact with the unit – offering the use of a reverse charge service. We will ensure that our children/young people are given a contact card on admission to ensure that they know how to make a reverse charge call and are aware of the unit’s number to make sure that they can contact the unit for help and support. The unit also use the Basics Information & Key Contacts Information and ensure that the children and young people have a safe phrase or word that they can use to alert staff to any potential harm or difficulty they may be in. Trying to make contact with our children and young people will not be a one off event but will be repeated at regular intervals throughout the period of missing to ensure that the children/young person feels that they are being held in mind. Young people have
historically demonstrated that such measures can provoke a positive response – with young people agreeing to talk to us and negotiate a plan to ensure their safety.

• We will also search the local area for our children and young people if this is felt appropriate, travelling to their last known destination and making enquires in the area. We will also visit places they may frequent such as the train station to try to locate and negotiate their return. Experience has shown us that our young people have often progressed their missing status further if staff have not intervened, as they can find it difficult to independently return to the unit. We will not stop the search for our missing young people and will continue to try to locate them through the night as necessary. We know that the police will need to speak to us every 4-6 hours, family members will want to be updated and our children and young people need to know that we continue to hold them in mind and therefore we will continue to be available to answer the phone, respond to any changes in the situation and maintain contact with our young people

• We will contact family, friends and known associates of our children and young people and extend our concerns to them in a bid to foster their support to locate them and ensure their safety. We will keep family members updated in line with the agreements reached at the commencement of the placement. We acknowledge that the family and/or friends of our children/young people, in some cases, can reach out to them and bring about the speedy end to a missing episode, or may well have access to social media sites such as Facebook or BBM, which often contains additional information that may aid staff/police.

• We will share our concern for our missing young person with the other children in residence, paying attention to confidentiality. This is in recognition that one’s peer group are often privet to additional information and often feel the burden of holding this. Young people have previously noted to us that by seeing the efforts staff go to locate other young people has subsequently made them think differently about their own periods of missing.

• If through these efforts, and unless the risk assessment identifies an immediate response, we have not been able to find our young person we will request the support of the police and officially book out our young person as missing from our care. We will assist the police to conduct their dynamic risk assessment by ensuring the quality of the answers we give – we will strive to ensure that we can offer as much information as possible including information around the circumstances of their disappearance, what they were wearing and an overview
analysis of risk. We will record the risk level defined by the police. If the categorisation is “Missing” we will record this on ICS to ensure that relevant professionals are aware of this.

• We will hold on file and proactively share with the police, the Key Contacts & Basic Information Form which includes a photo, description, list of known addresses, assessments of risk in relation to being missing and the young person’s GP/Dentist name and will provide sufficient details to the police to aid their search. We will also clearly evidence the steps we have taken and will continue to take to find our young people – this will be recorded on the Key Contacts & Basic Information Form. We acknowledge that the police will be the lead agency for investigating our young person’s disappearance; however, we will continue to undertake every reasonable step to find our young person in line with our pledge for their safety and our duty of care. We know that at times the Police’s assessment of risk around our young people being missing might be lower than our own – however we will not be complacent in this and will hold our own assessment of concern. If we do not feel that the assessment of risk by the police is supportive of our concerns – we will raise this with them and justify rationale for our difference.

• Where there is a known risk, we will not submissively allow our young people to leave site. Although we will only restrain a child or young person where there is an imminent threat to themselves, others or a significant risk to property, we will use other means to demonstrate to our young people that we are concerned for their safety. We will try to discuss and negotiate with our young people to try to avoid their need to leave site. We will follow young people off site (where staffing affords this) to try to negotiate with them an agreeable plan of action. We inform them of our worries for their safety and will listen to their concerns and actively advocate/act on their behalf. We will take down the registration numbers of any cars our young people get into, take descriptions of people that meet our young people and try to negotiate with the adults as appropriate/safe to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our young people. We will subsequently make every effort to identify any young person or adult who is noted to be with our young people – as this could be key to protecting them. We will make sure that we share all of our concerns with the Harm Reduction Team of Hertfordshire Police – as this enables a central point of intelligence and allows the emergence of themes to be established.

• We will stay in contact with the police and inform others, as appropriate, who are working with our young person about their missing status. This may include schools etc., which often hold additional parts of the “jigsaw puzzle”. We will respond
accordingly to the changing needs of the situation and ensure that all parties are kept up to date. We will inform Ofsted if this is necessary.

• We will try to ensure that we demonstrate to our young person that we held them in mind throughout their absence – saving them dinner for example indicative of our desire to return them swiftly to our care. We will also write messages and notes, to share with them our worries and fears while they are absent, thus creating a time line of our ongoing concern. We will be genuine with our young people about our fears for their safety and ensure that this does not become a routine response.

• We will do all we can to bring our children and young people home safely and will welcome them back in a positive and genuine way– we will collect them wherever possible or strive to make plans (within our remit) to ensure that our young people are in a safe location in the event of them declining to return. We will listen and act on their worries and concerns and feedback to our young person what steps we have taken. We acknowledge that together we need to identify the issues which caused, and may continue to cause, our young person to leave our care and work together with the multi-agency team to try to make plans for the future. We acknowledge that sometimes these issues maybe beyond our direct control, but we agree to help our young person to share these concerns and try to find a resolution. We also acknowledge that the route of the issue may, at times, be linked to the unit, our staff or our care giving and as such we encourage our children and young people to speak to NYAS, undertake de-briefs with the police, speak to their social worker or other professional, access help-lines, speak to family etc. to ensure that there is a support network to help them manage the situation. We acknowledge that there are other compounding factors that may lead to our young person leaving our care and we will ensure that we have awareness around current youth issues including; bullying, discrimination, sexual exploitation, drug use, gang culture and will be proactive in our management of this.

• We will actively welcome the young person home, offering food and drinks, access to bath/shower, clean clothes and sleep as required. We will attend to all of these primary needs and any request for medical or professional involvement before undertaking a de-brief. We fully acknowledge the need to document the missing episode in line with Hertfordshire County Council procedures; however we will avoid this procedural need overshadowing the imminent needs of our young person.
• We will follow up on each and every concern noted from the young person’s debrief and subsequent observations and conversations. We will ensure that we “leave no stone unturned” in our efforts to safeguard our young people and will record our evidence trail in our missing persons book. We know that opportunities to safeguard our young people can be missed if we are not attentive to the subtle hints dropped by our young people – we also know that this can become one of the barriers to young people disclosing – as they believe that they have already “told” and/or haven’t been believed.....

Appendix B – Staffing Details: Available on request

Appendix C – Organisation Chart:
Appendix D – Area Risk Assessment: Available on request