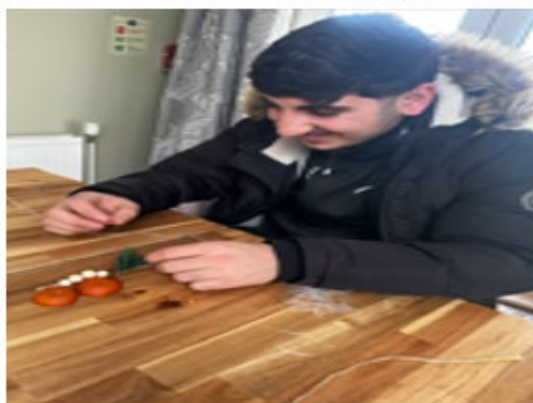


Our Young People's Houses Annual Report 2023



"All children, young people, adults and families in Midlothian are supported to be the best they can be. This is achieved through a nurturing, respectful and collaborative approach that promotes wellbeing, equity and inclusion."

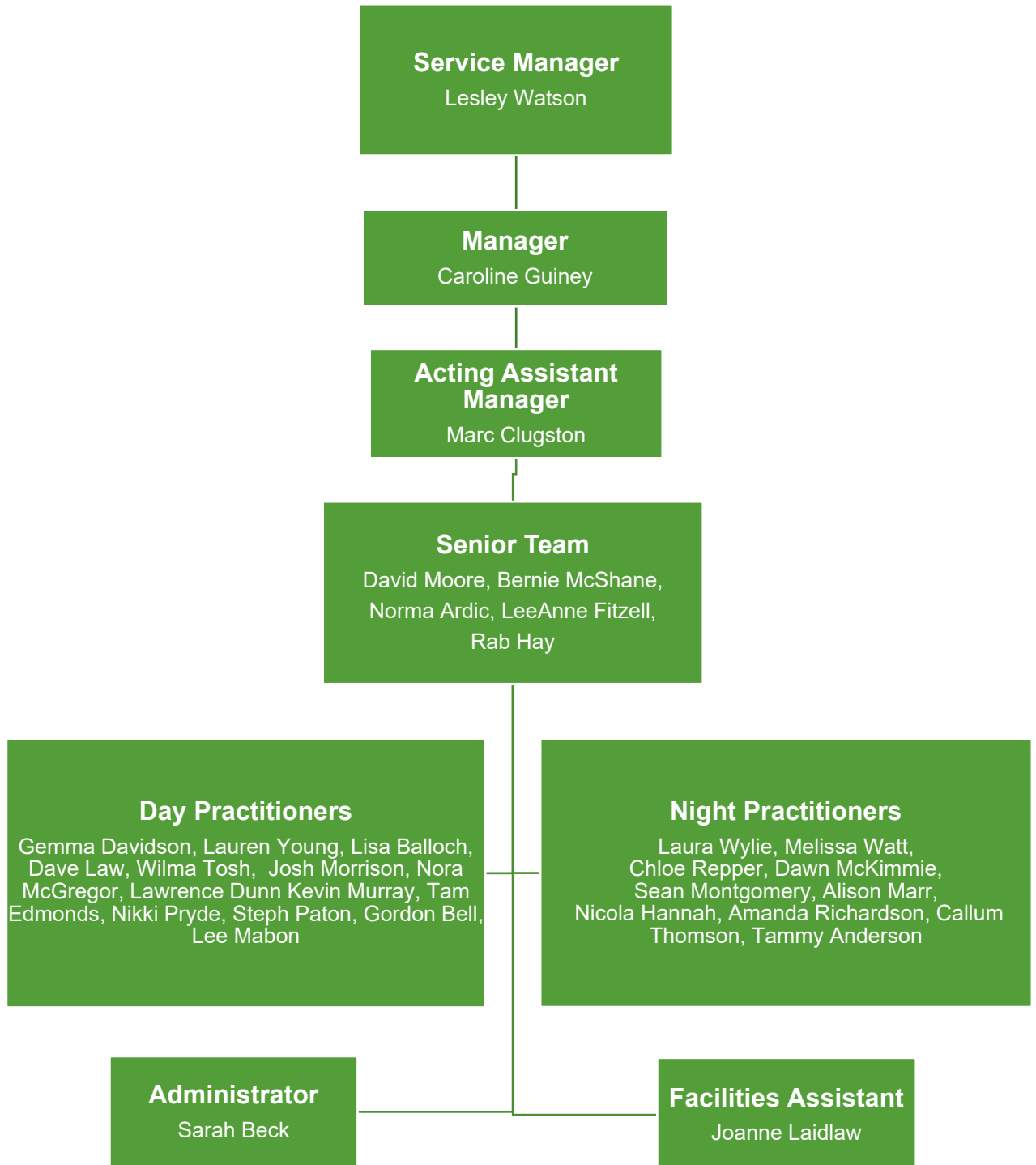


CONTENTS

Meet our team!	Page 3
Our service structure and function	Page 4
Overview of our 2022 Care Inspection Report	Page 5
Overview of 2023	Page 6
Highlights of 2023	Page 8
Our staff teams Learning and Development	Page 9
Feedback from our young people/parents/carers/other professionals	Page 11
Our work with the Directorates Strategic Groups	Page 11
Complaints	Page 12
Duty Of Candour	Page 12
Our 2024 plan	Page 13



MEET OUR TEAM



OUR SERVICE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

Our Children and Young People's Houses are located at Lady Brae, Gorebridge and Woodburn Court, Dalkeith. We provide a range of short term, interim and permanent placements for a maximum of nine children and young people. Our team are responsible for carrying out all statutory functions relating to a young person's plan as well as providing a warm, nurturing, and supportive environment where our children and young people feel safe and loved. We work with a range of young people and their families who have experienced multiple challenges and disadvantages. Our homes act as an alternative to foster care or kinship care and offer both planned, short-term therapeutic placements with an aim that the child will transition home, or longer-term placements when the circumstances are more complexed. Our staff are trained to manage a variety of challenging behaviours as well as having a deep understanding of the significant impact trauma can have a young person's life.

We prioritise the quality of the relationships that young people experience within our homes by promoting a strong nurturing and supportive value base. Our staff team are supported and developed to ensure a caring, relational and trauma informed approach is adopted in all aspects of their roles.

In addition to providing safe, nurturing, and caring homes we also work with families within their own homes using a range of interventions and programmes that support families within their own communities.

There is focus across children and families on strong multi-agency working to help ensure a seamless response to individual needs. Working together jointly, sharing aims, information, tasks, and responsibilities, enables us to intervene and respond to a young person's needs more effectively.

We also provide continuing care placements for young people who choose to remain with us as they transition into young adulthood. Young people in a continuing care arrangement can remain with us up to the age of 21.

We are committed to the recruitment and development of a professional workforce who can provide a range of tailored interventions which place the young person at the centre. We do this by using a flexible person-centred planning approach that puts the needs of the young person at the heart of everything we do. Our practice is underpinned by Getting It Right for Every Child, The Promise, and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

OVERVIEW OF OUR LATEST INSPECTION REPORT

Midlothian Children's Residential Services received an unannounced visit from the Care Inspectorate on the 21st of November 2022 when a full inspection was undertaken. The inspection involved discussions with young people and staff as well a forensic inspection of our policies, guidance, and processes. After 4 days spent across our two homes the inspector graded the service as 'very good' across three key questions.

- 1. How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?**
- 2. Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life.**
- 3. Leaders and staff have the capacity and resources to meet and champion children and young people's needs and rights.**

Some of the key strengths identified by the inspector included.

- **Young People were experiencing positive outcomes.**
- **The service had a clear model of relationship-based practice.**
- **Staff approached care in a trauma informed way.**
- **Both houses were homely and welcoming environments.**
- **Management has a clear vision for service improvement.**

In his evaluation the inspector went on to highlight that the children and young people in the service had positive relationships with a staff team who were committed to providing nurturing, relationship-based care. The inspection evidenced that staff understood the needs of children and young people in the service and recognised and responded appropriately to the impact of trauma.

The inspection did not make any recommendations or requirements but highlighted key areas for us to improve on current practice. These areas are.

- Thematic analysis of incidents of restraint and restrictive practice to ensure a trauma informed approach is being consistently used to reduce incidents.
- Building repairs and upgrades are completed timely to ensure we provide a welcome and homely environment.
- All our young people are supported to explore their life story and support their lifelong links at their own pace and their families' key people are fully informed.

Following the inspection, we were visited by senior management at Fife Council after being recommended as an example of good practice by The Care Inspectorate.

OVERVIEW OF 2023

Our service has been on a journey of change over the last couple of years, with our focus on prioritising staff wellbeing and further embedding our relational practice. The benefits of those changes have been clear to see throughout this year. We were delighted to start the year with a boost to staff morale and recognition of all the work we do with a regrading awarded to the full staff team. We chose to continue with the model of 12-hour shifts which our staff have told us has significantly enhanced their wellbeing and work life balance. The 12-hour shift pattern has not only helped our staff team, but it has also allowed our children and young people an enhanced level of continuity of care by limiting the number of shift transitions. This has enabled us to improve the quality of our relationships across both the day and night shifts and be more responsive to our children's needs. We have also seen a significant improvement in staff retention and moral which can also be contributed to the positive leadership and working environment across the service, which was highlighted in our most recent inspection.

The positive changes that are now evident in our approach, environment and culture have enabled our children and young people to thrive socially, emotionally and within their education settings. As a right based service, we have also ensured that the cultural and religious rights and wishes of our young people are promoted throughout the service. Our service promotes concepts of diversity and inclusion, and we have an identifiable value base that allows us to respond positively to sensitive issues such as LGBT rights. As a champion of children's rights, we have worked to ensure that our child's voice is always heard. And when we know we are not best placed to do that ourselves we have supported our children to seek out independent advocacy to ensure that they can take part in decisions that affect their lives and can voice their opinions in environments they might find challenging. One of our young people has received support throughout the last year from CAPS Advocacy. We also plan and support fortnightly visits from our 'Who Cares' worker helping to further embed our rights-based approach.

Throughout the past year we have had 13 young people living with us between the ages of 7 and 18 years old who have experienced significant childhood trauma. Our children's experiences are often made more challenging by having to manage diagnoses such as Autism and ADHD as well as significant barriers to learning. Our staff team have a depth of knowledge in ASN, ASD and ADHD which helps them to remain responsive to our children's needs. First and foremost, we are a trauma informed service that endeavours to create an environment that promotes safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment. Our relational based approach embeds the principle that relationships are at the centre of what we do and are essential for an individual's wellbeing, self-esteem and for creating opportunity for positive outcomes.

In March 2023 we held a full staff development day at Newbattle Abbey College delivering a session on the Teenage Brain and how risk, trauma and vulnerability impact on the brains socio-emotional

system. We also completed a session on professional and shared values and revisited our service ethos in interactive exercises.

As part of our learning and development strategy we have worked in partnership with the Educational Psychology team throughout the year to help develop our relational practice and resilience as well as helping us to be more attuned to our own wellbeing both individually and as a leadership team. We have taken part in sessions on Conversations That Matter, Zones of Regulation and Windows of Tolerance. We also shared a powerful experience as a team watching a Ted Talk by Jaz Ampaw-Farr 'The Power of Everyday Hero's.' In addition, we have started to develop an in-depth 'Stages of Crisis' profile for all our young people, the profile includes information on stressors, triggers, strategies and approaches that aid effective de-escalation. It also includes a young person's understanding of their own story, key stages and experiences. This work supports our goal of becoming a non-restrictive service.

In line with our commitment to our 16+ children, we have continued to work closely with our colleagues in the Midlothian House Project to ensure a strong transition strategy. As part of that strategy, we have completed exit interviews for all our young people who have moved to their own tenancies as part of our ongoing quality assurance and future planning to ensure that we are "getting it right". In Lady Brae house, we have four young men between the ages of 15 and 17, and in our discussions with them about their long-term plans, all have been vocal in their desire to stay with us as they see us as their family. This is against the historic evidence for 16+ children in residential care and a clear sign that we are 'getting it right'.

As part of our recruitment strategy and in line with The Promise we have forged a strong relationship over the last few years with the Social Services Lecturing Team at Edinburgh College. Each year we visit the college in the first semester to deliver a session to the HNC group detailing our working environment, what policies and guidance underpin our practice and finish with a Q&A. Since 2021 we have offered 10 student placements across our two homes, allowing us a valuable opportunity to nurture and develop our students and imprint our professional and shared values. As a result of this strategy, we have managed to offer full time posts to two students as well locum posts. This year we were able to offer placements to five students.

Over the last year there has been a particular focus on ensuring our children have a voice and that their voice is heard. We include our children and young people in all aspects of group living and have worked with them to create a collaborative way of communicating, adopting a 'we said, they did' system of communication as well as empowering them to make decisions relating their day to day lives. We include our children and young in our yearly quality assurance feedback as well as the young people who have recently left our care, and we use the evidence they give us to inform our future planning. Our young people are also a vital part of our interview process, and their views are critical to the final choice of staff.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

Over the last year we have supported three unaccompanied young people to settled into group living, engage in full-time mainstream education, and begin to find their place and identity within the community. One of our unaccompanied young people has joined a local football team and staff enjoy going to watch him play on a Sunday. He has also been supported by staff members to watch Dundee United play and is now a season ticket holder and goes to all the home games. We have also supported our unaccompanied young people to be introduced to their Mosque, helped to translate their plans and residents meeting notes into their own language and actively promote culturally sensitive communication.

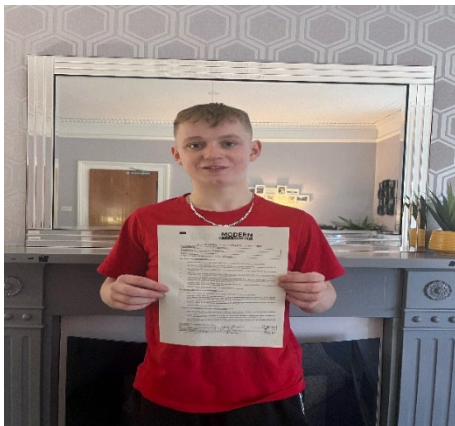
We were proud to see three of our young people enrol in further education courses at Edinburgh College this year, two of which have successfully completed their courses and one who is yet to finish. One of those young people, with support from staff to complete and circulate their CV, went on to gain full time employment at a garage and subsequently offered an apprenticeship in mechanics.

This year, staff at Lady Brae, along with the support from the wider Children and Families team, successfully planned and supported a transition home for a young boy who had already experienced the trauma of a failed transition. The transition plan extended to giving outreach support to family, which included targeted systemic family work between the young person and the family as well scaffolded help and support, post and pre transition. The transition home went extremely well, and the targeted outreach support certainly contributed to this outcome.

Woodburn Court welcomed two siblings, over the last year they have been supported by our staff team and their Children and Families Social Worker to reconnect with family in the Scottish Highlands. We are so pleased that both have now successfully transitioned into their mother's care and wish them all the best for the future. This outcome has been a result of strong partnership working and us placing a particular focus on supporting all our children to strengthen their lifelong links and key relationships. This has resulted in our young people repairing relationships with parents, keeping relationships with previous foster carers and reconnecting with family.

Our young people have been supported and encouraged to take full advantage of local and wider community facilities to help broaden their social and emotional development, and to improve their management of important life skills. Over the last 12 months our young people have experienced caravan holidays to Pettycur Bay, Rock Climbing, Ryze trips, educational country walks, sea-based activities, and trips to Blackpool and Alton Towers. We have also supported some of our children join the Cadets and local football team, as well as attending the local gym with staff. This has helped them to build their resilience and social development and become more confident.

“Pictures tell a better story”.



TEAM LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Staff Development

An on-going focus for the leadership team has been to promote staff personal and professional development. This year three of our senior team have been working towards their SVQ4 in Health and Social Care and three of our Children's Services Practitioners have almost completed their SVQ3 in

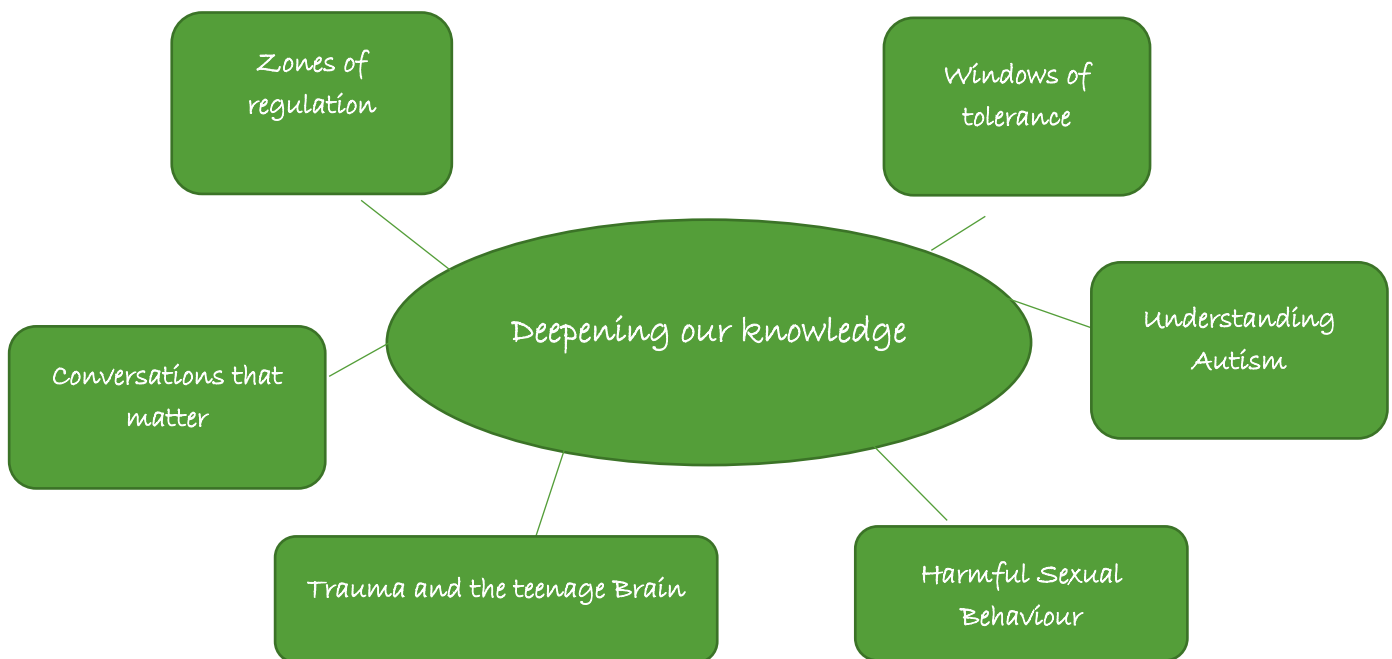
the same subject. Three practitioners have completed modules from the Social Work Degree sponsored programme.

In addition to this, our staff team, as part of their individual personal development plans have completed modules and face to face training. Some examples of this include; Child Protection level 1 and 2, Adult Support and Protection, Harmful Sexual behaviour, NES Trauma Training level 1 and 2, Positive Approaches to Risk, First Aid and Elementary Food Hygiene. Six of our staff team have also attended the annual trauma conference in Glasgow allowing us the opportunity to learn about emerging themes and new theories to inform practice and network.

Full Staff Development Day

Following on from positive staff feedback from 2022 we held our annual staff development day at Newbattle Abbey College in March this year with staff appreciating the opportunity to meet outside the workplace. The agenda for the day included a presentation from MYPAS on the updated Positive Approaches to Risk Policy linking up to date findings/approaches with teenage brain development. This was followed by a session focusing on our professional and personal values. The staff team engaged well with both sessions and the feedback was excellent.

Other Staff Development Days/bespoke training undertaken.



SELF-EVALUATION AND 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

As part of our self-evaluation process, we have gathered quantitative and qualitative feedback using an online survey from 6 of our young people; 11 professionals and 4 parents and carers. Overall, the feedback from all was extremely positive. However, there are actions that have been drawn out of the questionnaires that will inform our planning for 2024.

Below are extracts from that feedback.

We asked our young people; *I have trusted relationships with the people who care for me?* 3 strongly agreed / 2 agreed / 1 neither agreed nor disagreed.

We also asked; *I am given the opportunity to make fun and exciting childhood memories?* 3 strongly agreed / 3 agreed.

We asked our professionals; *The level of care and support young people receive meets their individual needs?* 6 strongly agreed / 5 Agreed.

We also asked young people and professional's; *Young people in Lady Brae House and Woodburn Court are supported to keep lifelong links and relationships with family and friends?* 7 strongly agreed / 3 agreed.

We asked our parents and carers; *Are you happy with the care and support your child receives?* 3 Strongly agreed / 1 agreed.

What Young People said:

"I really felt supported at Woodburn Court, staff even help you with your homework".

"The team have listened to me and made me feel like family".

"We are very very happy and feel we are being supported".

What Professionals said:

"The joint working between Midlothian House Project staff and residential staff ensure our most vulnerable young people receive the best possible support in their transition to independence."

"Please share my huge 'thank you' to everyone at Woodburn Court for this fantastic outcome for x – you are all amazing".

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Our team have been involved in several strategic groups this year contributing to the overall Directorate Service Plan.

Our good practice and contribution towards the development and delivery of the children and young people's rights priority theme in line with UNCRC and The Promise has helped shape Midlothian Council's, The Promise delivery plan.

We are part of The Nurture Strategy group and the focus this year has been to advance three key priority areas 1: Build on the vision of Midlothian as a nurturing authority through a framework for relational practice, professional learning, and networks. 2: Strengthen the professional support and supervision for school staff supporting children presenting with

significant distress 3: Develop a common approach to measuring progress in relation to nurture-related support and intervention.

The Trauma practice steering group lead by Ciara Burke; Midlothian's Trauma Development Lead. The group are focused on advancing trauma skilled practice through the trauma training programme and sharing practice of on-going support to embed the training and learning. As a service we are actively engaging with this group sharing our experiences, skills, and knowledge to help form inform strategic decisions and planning.

COMPLAINTS

Complaints made by our young people can be made to Midlothian Council's Complaints Department in accordance with the Complaints Procedure. For issues that are straightforward and simple, requiring little or no investigation, these are dealt with at stage 1 by the Residential Manager. If the complainant is still unhappy the complaint can be escalated to stage 2 where it is investigated by a senior member of staff. If a complaint is complex this can go straight to a stage 2. If the young person is not satisfied with the stage 2 response from the service provider, they can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) which is the final stage for complaints about public services in Scotland.

For the period January 2023 – December 2023 there were no complaints.

DUTY OF CANDOUR

The Duty of Candour Procedure (Scotland) Regulations 2018 set out the procedure that organisations providing health services, care services and social work services in Scotland are now required by law to follow when there has been an unintended or unexpected incident that results in death or harm (or additional treatment is required to prevent injury that would result in death or harm). The purpose of this legislation is to ensure there is an openness and learning, which is vital to the provision of safe, effective, and person-centred health and social care and to ensure trust and open communication is at the heart of every relationship between those providing, receiving and/or experiencing treatment and that this is maintained when things go wrong. We are pleased to report that there have been no reported incidents in relation to the Duty of Candour requirements.

OUR PLAN FOR 2024

- We will further embed the trauma informed principles through all aspects of our practice with a particular focus on our recording, policy and guidance.
- We will create a reflective practice strategy which will reflect all areas of staff and child well-being and our leadership.
- We will continue to work towards a service free of restrictive practice, this will require continued focus on staff development and recruitment.

If you want to find out more about our service, please contact:

Caroline Guiney
Residential Services Manager
0131 270 5760

Our supporting documents can viewed at

[Residential child care | Midlothian Council](#)