Supporting independence:
St Christopher’s Isle of Man aftercare services

St Christopher’s is a registered Manx charity, working in partnership with the Isle of Man Government since 2004 to help young people over 16 through the process of leaving care.

Goaill kiarail jeh paitchyn as sleih aegey neayr’s 1870
Caring for children and young people since 1870
Our approach

We think it’s normal and healthy for teenagers to push adults away and make mistakes as they grow and move towards being independent. That’s why we provide services that are flexible and support young people who want to dip in and out of our aftercare services as their circumstances change.

Our aim is to help young people develop the confidence and skills they need to live independently. When we succeed, young people grow and become happier, healthier and more productive adults. The whole community benefits.

Our methods

St Christopher’s has a proven track-record of delivering outcome-focused services that help young people get back into education, find a job or home. But we never forget that supporting them is the most important part of our work.

Working with academic and commissioning partners, as well as everyone from the police to mental health services, we use a package of attachment assessment tools to assess how young people feel when they use our services and tailor the support we offer to best support their needs.

A unique package of support

Our aftercare services provide a stable, safe environment in which young people can thrive.

- **Enjoying and achieving.** Care leavers use our Day Support Unit to find out more about training courses and relevant qualifications that expand their opportunities.

- **Making a positive contribution.** Young people who live in our supported housing pay their own rent, manage their budgets and agree to our housing contract terms.

- **Being healthy.** Our trained staff offer sexual health advice and emotional support using tools such as Life Story Work, an approach to working with young people that can help prepare them for adulthood.

- **Staying safe:** We offer emergency accommodation which means young people in need of a place to stay aren’t homeless and sleeping on the streets.

- **Helping young people to prosper.** Young people in education, training or work get one to one support and priority when they’re assessed by an independent panel for our supported living accommodation.

“I would have been lost without my aftercare worker.”

Young person who used our aftercare services
Involving young people

Our services are focused around what young people want, choose and tell us.

Young people in our services are encouraged to have their say at the well-attended weekly residents’ meetings, as well as the VIP Council, and individual key work sessions.

We use peer mentors to show new residents around and help them to understand house rules and expectations.

Our services

Expert support, at the right time. That’s what our aftercare services offer young people leaving the care system. We offer emergency and longer term housing as well as supported lodgings, community support and advice and information services.
Semi-independent community living

Based in Douglas, the Derby Road home offers semi-independent living for six care leavers from 16 to 18, providing supported transition to independence and adulthood.

Sometimes young people leaving care need an extra bit of support before they are fully independent. They don’t suddenly become an adult. Derby Road offers this semi-independence to 16 to 18 year olds for up to two years.

Each young person is assessed by an independent panel before they join the home. They pay rent of £116 a week, sign an agreement and take responsibility for their own budgeting.

They take care of their own meals and personal needs – but have access to 24 hour support from our experienced staff. We’re there whenever they need us, whether it’s 2am or 2pm.

Facilities

➤ Derby Road is a traditional Edwardian townhouse which has original features and fireplaces with modern aspects such as double glazing and central heating.

➤ The accommodation is very well furnished, newly decorated throughout and is welcoming and homely.

➤ Residents have six double bedrooms, two communal toilets and three shared bathrooms. Staff have two bedrooms and their own bathroom.

➤ There is a large living/dining room, a big kitchen, a chill out room with a pool table, internet facilities and a laundry room.

➤ Outdoor space includes two small yards and there are two offices for staff, meetings and training.

Extra support

This service:

➤ Provides a bridge between children’s residential and our aftercare services.

➤ Is most suitable for people who recognise that they will struggle to live alone but feel ready to move into the community. Ideally young people will be settled in full-time education or employment. Our team work closely with social workers to identify suitable young people.

➤ Is aimed at care leavers assessed as having ”medium to low level” support needs.

➤ Includes staff support for young people in education, employment and training.

➤ Supports social workers through monthly reports and with access to facilities that can be used for review meetings and link working.

➤ Encourages residents to take charge of their health needs. This might be about making their own appointments and updating staff. But equally, staff can accompany young people to GP, dentist or child and adolescent mental health services.
“Staff at Derby Road treat us like adults, so we behave like grown-ups.”

Resident at Derby Road

“Derby Road provides a well decorated comfortable home that young adults can be proud of and enjoy. Supportive staff work with young adults in setting and achieving targets and goals that help the young person to live successfully in an independent setting.”

Regulation and Inspection Unit report, February 2013

**John’s* story**

Soon after his 17th birthday, John met a link worker from Derby Road. He’d been living in a children’s home for three years and was an ideal candidate for semi-independent living, having formed strong relationships on this placement.

John chose his bedroom at Derby Road and decorated it before he moved in. He settled in quickly and attended residents’ meetings. He’d often ask staff for help with cooking and shopping. Gradually, they reduced this support which he struggled with, but they reminded him that he would eventually live in the community so needed to learn these skills.

Our staff team set up regular meetings with John’s college tutors because he had been missing lessons. This helped him complete the work he had missed and keep his place on the course.

After seven months, with the support of our aftercare support worker, John moved into a nearby flat of his own. At first he was anxious about the move. Our staff helped with budgeting, learning how to keep himself safe in the flat and emotional support.

John has now lived in his flat for two months. He sees his aftercare support worker and Derby Road staff once a fortnight, has a part time job and maintains a relationship with his mum. The team are extremely proud of what he has achieved.

*name has been changed.
Supported housing

Millbrook, located in Douglas town centre, provides eight people between the ages of 16 and 21 with somewhere safe and secure to stay for up to two years. It also offers one emergency bed for up to 72 hour.

One night of not feeling alone can make all the difference to a vulnerable young person in crisis. We provide young people leaving care with comfortable en-suite accommodation and 24 hour support when they need it.

Our dedicated staff work with young people to help them identify and reach their goals. We help them feel understood and like they aren’t alone.

Referrals can be made by any agency or by individuals themselves and are made in consultation with the Children’s Referral and Assessment Panel.

Facilities

➤ A former hotel, the Victorian home has recently been redecorated and has eight part-furnished en suite bedrooms which include a small fridge. There are also bedrooms for night staff.

➤ There is a communal kitchen with cooking facilities, a comfortable adjoining lounge and dining area and laundry. Residents can also buy low cost evening meals.

➤ Computer access is available on request through the office and the home will soon have wireless internet.

Extra support

The service also provides:

➤ Opportunities for young people to gain life skills, training and qualifications.

➤ The opportunity for young people to get a reference from staff to help them get a place of their own. The team can also recommend approved landlords.

➤ A popular “Drop Back Service” which means young people can come back for help, advice and emotional support if they need it.

➤ Joined up support for young people moving on from the home as our aftercare service is based at Millbrook.

➤ Independence for young people who are expected to pay rent and agree to engage with a support plan as part of their Licence Agreement with Millbrook.

➤ Support for residents to access health services including drug and alcohol teams, vulnerable adult nurses and GPs. Health issues are reviewed during weekly key worker meetings.

➤ Partnership working with adult or children’s social workers. Our team take the lead for independence planning and the social worker is generally responsible for the Pathway Plan. When a young person doesn’t have a social worker, Millbrook staff take on responsibility for support planning, consulting with the Children’s Resource Allocation Panel or the Adult and Children’s Initial Response Team on decisions.
“The staff are spot on and really try and help you. They get on us to do stuff which can be annoying but I wouldn’t have finished college without being at Millbrook.”

Former resident at Milbrook

**Supported lodgings**

We have four trained and experienced supported lodgings carers who open their homes to provide accommodation for 16 to 18 year olds for up to two years.

Some people who are leaving care need an extra bit of support before they want to live on their own. Our supported lodging carers offer this kind of assistance to young people as well as renting them a room in their home.

We assess and support individuals, couples and families to offer this valuable service. Young people who benefit from it are:

- Usually in education or employment.
- Assessed by an independent panel against a set of criteria.
- Matched with an appropriate family or individual.

**My supported lodgings: Anne*, 60, from Ramsey**

“When Peter* first came to stay with us, he was a nervous young man. He wasn’t used to sleeping in a bed and would often prefer a sleeping bag on the floor.

“He had pretty much brought himself up, surviving on his wits. He was doing his A levels and realised that if he was going to succeed, he needed some help in the form of a stable, caring home – the type everyone is entitled to. After being told about the supported lodgings scheme for older young people, Peter initially came to meet us for a meal to see how we’d get along, after which, everyone agreed to a three month trial. That went very well and Peter is a member of the family for ever now.

“My husband Phillip* and I had thought about fostering and joined the supported lodgings scheme six years ago because we wanted to help teenagers specifically. They get a bad press, but like the rest of us, they need someone to listen and take time to understand how they feel. As an ex nurse, I wanted to use my skills to help people and do something that meant we would spend quality time as a family unit. As well as being very well read, my husband is a very hands-on person and the young people love helping him out with DIY and having all manner of interesting debates.

“We think it’s very important to recognise when a young person needs their own space. We could spot the signs with Peter and would leave him alone for a while.

“We also make sure all the young people who stay with us know our simple house rules. We explain them for a start and if there are any misunderstandings, we get together over a cup of tea or a meal and discuss how to resolve any issues.

“It’s nice that the six young people we have shared our home with have all taken away with them some of the building blocks they didn’t have to move on and be happy and confident in the outside world.

“Peter is now 22 and has done really well for himself. He went on study politics, economics and philosophy and passed all his exams with honours. He is currently living in France with his partner and has a job marking the English papers for Oxford University. He keeps in touch by Skype or phone and visits whenever he can. Our 10 grandchildren are really happy in his company; he is just a family member to us all.”

*name has been changed.
Aftercare support services

As well as residential aftercare services, we offer practical support and information and advice for young people moving into adulthood and living in the community.

Leaving care can be a daunting, intimidating and emotional prospect. It can also be a really exciting one. We’re there for young care leavers living in the community to support them through the transition, however they feel about it.

Based at our Millbrook home, our team of trained support workers:

➤ Work with children’s homes, foster carers and the Department of Social Care to support professionals and the young people they are responsible for with everything from Pathway Plans to finding an approved landlord.

➤ With partner agencies, run support services for young parents and young parents to be that offer peer support, parenting workshops and pregnancy advice.

➤ Operate a “Drop In” and “Drop Back” service for young people living in our houses to talk to someone about issues that are concerning them.

➤ Offer young people support with legal matters and accessing any benefits they may need.

➤ Provide emotional and crisis support to vulnerable young people to help improve their well-being.

➤ Mediate between young people and their families so that care leavers can improve relationships with people close to them.

“I can come back sometimes to see the staff and get help. They are always dead happy to see me which makes me feel like I am not on my own.”

Young person who used our aftercare services
Supporting independence: St Christopher’s Isle of Man aftercare services

**Education support**

We want all the young people that we work with to have positive futures. Everyone who accesses aftercare services can benefit from the Day Support Unit, based at Cronk Sollysh.

Lack of opportunities can come to define a young person. We give everyone in our care the chance to learn. They can benefit from education and training they may not have had access to or engaged with in the past.

Our five-strong team at the Day Support Unit includes three qualified teachers and helps any young person in our care to get back into mainstream education or training.

Young people who have been suspended from school or are on a reduced school timetable can also use the service if they are living in the community.

Our team:

➤ Might help one person with their homework and provide another with a complete programme of education, including sitting GCSEs and other exams.

➤ Offer college and career guidance and help young people develop accredited life skill qualifications, everything from time management to cooking.

**Our Link Workers**

Every young person who lives in residential care also has their own link worker. They have a specific role to help young people with the transition from care to semi independence.

Working with the young person, their keyworker and the staff at the residential home and aftercare service to prepare for the increased responsibility they will face in semi independence.

Their role is to help young people leaving care explore their opportunities that are available to them, help them set up their new accommodation and get the support they are entitled to. They also work with social workers and landlords to cut through the confusion that young people often face when they leave care and help young people with practical tasks like getting birth certificates and bank details together.
Our people, qualifications and training

Our recruitment and staff development policy means that our people are able to give the children and young people in our care the best possible support.

Our aftercare managers hold NVQ Level 4/5 qualifications in working with children and young people and our team members hold NVQ Level 3. Staff are trained in a range of areas such as attachment theory, CALM (Crisis Aggression, Limitation and Management), working with young people who self-harm, child protection and transitions through care.

Where possible, we have a “grow our own” policy to staff recruitment and run an intensive induction, training and support programme for Manx staff with no previous experience in residential care. We also worked with The Children’s Centre to set up and develop the NVQ centre (Isle of Man Childcare Partnership Training Centre).

Evaluating our work

Working with academic and commissioning partners, we develop new and innovative approaches to support young people with complex needs achieve their potential.

Using learning from attachment theory, education and behaviour management, we’ve worked with academics at the Centre for Abuse and Trauma Studies (CATS) to develop a package of attachment assessment tools - the Attachment Style Interview (ASI) and Q Pack assessment - that are delivering a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people.

When children and young people come into our care, we carry out an initial assessment to establish the best ways to support their needs and help monitor the impact of our interventions.

Our assessment involves:

➤ Asking children and young people, teachers and carers for their views and opinions about their development every three to six months with Q Pack assessments and in attachment style interviews (ASIs). This helps us measure attachment styles, strengths and weaknesses and significant life events

➤ Working with young people to plan and make decisions about their care

➤ Staff keeping an electronic record of the young person’s daily behaviour and Care Support Plan, reflecting on agreed goals

➤ Close partnership working with other agencies across the island

A recent evaluation of outcomes data for the children and young people supported by St Christopher’s Isle of Man revealed that those in our care for at least three to six months experience positive change across all Every Child Matters outcomes.
Tangible results

Every young person supported by our aftercare services receives a tailor-made support package and leaves with proof that they have increased their independent living skills.

St Christopher’s uses the Outcomes STAR to help shape and direct a young person’s support journey. When we start supporting them, each young person works with us to complete their initial STAR assessment, which encourages and enables them to:

➤ Assess their current strengths

➤ Recognise areas for development and agree goals

➤ Identify ways of moving towards those goals using AQA awards to support and demonstrate progress.

At subsequent assessments, the STAR gives a quick pictorial representation of ‘distance travelled’. This helps young people to feel more in control of their lives and more confident about moving towards successful independent living.

In addition to helping young people and their key workers in joint planning and assessment, the Outcomes STAR tool allows St Christopher’s to benchmark performance within and across its services.

About St Christopher’s Isle of Man

St Christopher’s is a charity that has provided care for vulnerable children and young people for over 140 years. Drawing on our broad experience, we help build brighter futures for young people.

St Christopher’s has been on the Isle of Man since 2004 and is a registered Manx charity with three island-based trustees.
St Christopher’s is registered Manx charity, working in partnership with the Isle of Man government since 2004.

We deliver a broad range of services for vulnerable children and young people on the Isle of Man, including children’s residential care, supported housing, aftercare services, secure care, community support and educational opportunities.

For more information

Visit www.stchris.org.im

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