

Simon

Thanks for the reply.

Hope the information below helps

**ROCSOLID has been supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness since 2007.**

The charity was established by the owners/directors of Reach Out Care Fostering Services who wanted to help produce better outcomes for care leavers and help them transition successfully into independent living.

It started with one young person now accommodates around 90 people, including young families, in seven self contained flats in Newton Aycliffe (staffed 24/7), two and three bedroom houses in Newton Aycliffe, Stockton and Billingham and now, Marsh House in Billingham.

They are aged predominantly, but not exclusively, between 16 and 25. Not all are care leavers but all are at risk of homelessness and have vulnerability.

These include

- mental health challenges
- substance/ alcohol misuse
- complex needs
- offending behaviours
- at risk of sexual exploitation

Housing benefits offices in Stockton and Durham recognise the charity as an accredited supported housing provider.

We work in a multi agency setting and have a service level agreement with Durham County Council so are subject to regular inspections. We have excellent feedback from a wide range of agencies who refer in to us and importantly, we have seen some excellent outcomes. We

are mindful that the Maslow hierarchy of need places good quality accommodation as one of the things fundamental to people's overall wellbeing.

The directors purchased Marsh House in 2012 to use as a second admin base (Reach Out Care also delivers the supervised contact and complex needs service on behalf of Stockton Borough Council) but it became clear, from ROCSOLID referrals, that it could be put to more effective use.

To meet expressed demand, we have created good quality single sex accommodation for seven women. Each bedroom has its own lock and each has a small kitchen area with a sink, units, microwave, toaster, sandwich maker and electric kettle. Upstairs there are two shared bathrooms (baths and overhead showers) and WCs. Downstairs there is one shared bathroom (bath and overhead shower) and a WC. There is also a separate washroom downstairs.

Other communal facilities include a spacious well-equipped, fully fitted kitchen, dining area and lounge area – this is all open plan and on the ground floor. The house has lawned garden areas to the sides and front and there is a smoking shelter screened from public view at the side of the building. The house has tall mature trees to the sides and rear.

Marsh House has internal and external CCTV with a bank of internal monitors. It is staffed 24/7. On weekdays there are two staff on duty 9am-5pm and one in the evenings/overnight, and one member of staff over a weekend. A senior manager is also available oncall 24/7

Traffic to and from the premises is minimal. Earlier this year we hosted two open sessions for local residents and several said how the neighbourhood had benefitted since Marsh House ceased to be a GP surgery as there had been a high volume of traffic flow and accompanying noise and disturbance. The site has parking for ten cars but, in general, at any one time, there is a maximum of six at the premises. These would include other professionals or partners attending meetings, key workers and educational trainers. None of the residents are car owners. (In fact, only one of the 90 people associated with the charity have cars.) Residents receive very few visitors so this also contributes to low traffic flow.

ROCSOLID receives referrals from a number of agencies eg Centrepont, Stockton leaving care team, Hope for Justice, other housing associations, For Real and A Way Out, a well established Stockton charity. We do not accept anyone who is not referred formally and we never offer emergency beds.

There are robust acceptance and matching processes in place. Dealing with vulnerable people means that safeguarding – for them, our staff and the wider public – is our No1 priority. Safeguarding is part of our staff induction process and it also forms part of our mandatory training schedule.

Everyone wanting to be accommodated at ROCSOLID is PNC checked. We will **NOT** take anyone with a conviction for arson or anyone who is on the sex offenders' register or anyone who has served a lengthy prison sentence. There are **NO** exceptions to these stipulations. We also do not take anyone who presents a medium or high risk in any area of their behaviours.

All residents are given a named key worker and together they devise an individual support plan containing specific goals and targets. Everyone who comes under the ROCSOLID umbrella must agree to abide by a raft of requirements eg acceptable/non acceptable behaviours, and house rules and to engage in some form of education, training or employment.

By signing this agreement women at Marsh House, for example, are acknowledging we have a zero tolerance rule to alcohol or drugs on the premises. They also acknowledge our strict requirement for non aggressive, non violent behaviour.

Current learning and training opportunities for Marsh House residents include:

- a literacy and numeracy course at the BELP in Billingham.
- a range of courses run in partnership with other agencies in Marsh House. Topics include the power to change, psychotherapy, wellbeing, budgeting, and cooking.
- twice weekly support sessions at A Way Out in Stockton
- ICT training

These are all designed to build self esteem and self confidence, promote independent living skills and increase the likelihood of employment.

Everyone benefits from approximately 3-5 hours of one-to-one key worker support time. ROCSOLID also employs a full time housing support officer to help clients with housing related benefits.

The women's other support needs are met through a range of partner organisations. These include probation, CRI (the Stockton Recovery Service ) and Stockton affective disorder team based at Wessex House.

The charity uses CHARMS online database to log all information about ROCSOLID residents, their progress, goals, appointments etc and this is scrutinised during our local authority inspections.

It is early days at Marsh House so we have no demonstrable track record of the length of time women will live there. However, at Hope House in Newton Aycliffe, we have experience of young people living for several weeks in a 24/7 staffed environment to literally years. One woman, now in her mid 20s, has lived in her flat for six years and is likely to remain because of her vulnerabilities. Continued engagement in achieving individual support plan objectives, and on-site behaviours, would influence the length of time someone would live at Marsh House. However, our thorough matching and referral processes help us to create the supportive, stable, homely environment, complete with clear boundaries, which would most help clients progress to achieving successful independent lives. Many people who started out at Hope House with its 24/7 support, have progressed to living in ROCSOLID houses with ongoing key worker support and daily housing related drop-in/contact. For some, this has served as a further bridge to full independence with sustained tenancies with other housing providers.

During our two open house sessions at Marsh House we were able to reassure neighbours on several fronts. Some had no objections whatsoever to the project being in the area. Others were concerned about the possibility of sex offenders or people actively involved in drug taking eg heroin living in Marsh House. We were able to reassure them that this would NEVER be the case as safeguarding is our priority.

Another concern was...what if the charity ceased to use the premises? Would another landlord be able to house the types of people they had expressed concerns about eg sex offenders, alcoholics, "hardened" criminals etc? (The truth is that sex offenders, alcoholics and "hardened" criminals rent houses all over the borough. There is actually MORE security for residents in having a charity such as ROCSOLID house vulnerable people than a commercial landlord with, for example, a house of multiple occupation.)

However, to further allay concerns expressed by some of the neighbours, we have instructed our solicitors to make a deed of variation on the covenant if retrospective planning

permission is granted. This will impact on the future use of the building and people who can be accommodated therein as it redefines “vulnerable persons” to “mean single sex persons over 18 years of age who are deemed vulnerable by virtue of issues other than arising by dependency on alcohol or prohibited drugs, **and this definition specifically excludes persons who are registered sex offenders, anyone with a history of arson and anyone who has served a custodial sentence in excess of 2 years for an offence of violence against the person or property.**”

We have given Marsh House contact details to residents who attended the open sessions and our service manager Mandy Shaw has stressed that she is always available if they want to chat further or have concerns. Our manager has also sought informal feedback from neighbours and this, thus far, has been positive.

We are very responsive to neighbours comments and concerns. For example, one very close neighbour was concerned that one of the external CCTV cameras was including views of her back garden. We invited her in to view our monitors and she saw that her privacy was not being violated in any way and she went away reassured and happy.

We are currently devising a feedback questionnaire which will be distributed to people living in close proximity to Marsh House on an annual basis.

