



Parents Information Pack

Parent/carer of:

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Croft Link Worker:

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The Croft Child and
Family Unit
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Tel: 01223 885800



Introduction



This information pack has been written by parents for parents & carers. The parents that have contributed to this information pack have themselves attended The Croft with their child/ren. We have also asked the staff for explanations of their roles and responsibilities and for a brief overview of what happens during your stay at The Croft.

Mostly we feel that, in the long run, attending The Croft has been a positive experience and that it has given us new skills to cope in sometimes difficult circumstances. We are however, very aware that this can be a daunting and emotional experience. At this time you may feel very anxious and don't know what to expect from your time at The Croft; parents come to this point with a very wide range of difficulties, they may be exhausted and desperate for help, or may feel that this is a huge and unwanted intrusion into their lives. We hope that this information may help to ease you into the routines of The Croft and help you to understand what to expect and to make the most of your time here. Remember, you are not alone, you will find the staff friendly and supportive, they are here to help and they have the best interests of your family at heart. We hope that you find this information useful and wish you all the best during your stay.



What to expect on the First Day....



On your first day, normally a Monday, you will usually be asked to arrive around 10.30am. After signing in at reception, a key member of staff will come and introduce themselves to you and show you around. You will be shown to your room(s) and given time to unpack. You might be asked to complete some paperwork and hand in any medications, which are kept in a locked cupboard in the medical room.



The other children already attending The Croft will be in school when you arrive but your child is not expected to attend on the first day. They are however welcome to join in with the children when they have their break times. Some new children like to join in with the afternoon activities.

You are welcome to use the kitchen whenever you like (children must be accompanied). You can help yourself to food and drinks. You can use the lounge and the quiet room and help yourself to DVDs and videos or watch TV. There are games and toys for the children to play with and a toy cupboard and playroom. There are two enclosed gardens, one with play equipment and another which is a quiet haven. The pool table, art room, music room and soft play room are available after school hours.

Throughout your first day, you will meet various members of staff and other parents. You will have the opportunity to talk with your case manager or a key worker and discuss your stay at The Croft. You will meet a doctor and they will examine your child to check that s/he is physically well. They will record your child's medication and any medication you take as well.

Around 3:30pm the resident children finish their day and return to their parents/carers. The first task is to make a plan for the evening. The children do this together with their adult and you will be asked to make one with your child too, using the large whiteboard in the atrium. A member of staff will assist you and advise you of the activities available.

You can choose when you would like to cook and eat tea. On your first night it helps to break the ice as you meet the other parents/carers in

the kitchen. There is also the option of buying ready meals from the local Tesco and there are a variety of takeaways locally including fish and chips, Chinese, McDonalds etc. Although the parents/carers are responsible for their own children after the school day, there will be a staff team around to support you.

All the children have to be in their beds by 8.30pm. Some children find this very hard particularly if they have difficulty settling at bedtime. You will have the opportunity to work out a plan with staff beforehand and they will assist you if necessary. Obviously some older children are not ready to go to sleep at 8.30, but they are expected to stay in their rooms quietly. The children are kept busy during the day and are often quite tired in the evenings.

The day staff finish their shifts at 9pm and the night staff come on duty. The night staff will also help you to settle your child and support parents/carers as necessary. The night staff work all night so there is always someone to talk to or help whatever the time of night. The kitchen is always open throughout the night. If you are not sure about anything- just ask!



During the Week - Term Time

From the second day, you and your child will join in with The Croft programme. You are responsible for getting your child up, fed, washed, dressed and ready to attend Morning Meeting at 9am. The children will be under the care of the staff from then until 3.30pm. Various activities take place during the day, throughout the week for parents.

There will be appointments with various members of staff, for example, with psychiatrists, psychologist or therapists. Some appointments will be for you to attend alone and some with your child and some will be specifically for your child. There are also informal meetings which parents/carers are encouraged to attend.



On a Thursday afternoon recreation group is held where the children are taken off site, perhaps swimming, bowling, to a park etc. Parents/carers and siblings usually go too. For the first week, you and your child will stay on the Fulbourn site and do a safety walk to check how much support your child needs on a trip. The Croft usually provides transport to activities and has car seats for children. Some parents prefer to take their own cars though.

On Fridays there is no morning meeting and the children go straight into school at 9am. One of your child's key workers will meet with you to review how the week has been and perhaps discuss plans for managing your child's behaviour over the weekend.

School ends at 10.45am on Fridays and then you are free to go home. You will return on the Monday morning by 9.30 ready for your child to attend school.



Going home on the First Weekend

The first week at The Croft can be quite overwhelming and tiring. Some people are desperate to get home but others are worried about how they might manage their child's behaviour over the weekend and whether they will be able to get their child to come back on Monday morning! It's important to discuss any concerns with one of your child's keyworkers. Many people find the first week quite hard work and it is worth bearing in mind that your stay will probably get easier as you and your child get used to The Croft.

What will my child do all day?



From 9am they will be involved in the Croft Programme. They will attend school in the morning and do various therapeutic groups during the afternoon. They also have appointments, assessments and play or music therapies. There is more detailed information in the Staff section of this Parents Information Pack about what the children get up to.

So what Will I do All Day?



You will find that you are surprisingly busy. There will be a number of meetings, appointments and assessments for you to attend with and without your family/child. You will be given regular updates from your key worker and may have appointments with the family therapist etc.

You will be given the dates and times of these meetings once you are settled in. There are also parents' groups where you can talk to other parents and share your experiences and concerns. You are not restricted to staying on site; you are free to go out during school hours. Some parents have to fit in work during their stay.



There is plenty of information about local facilities, shops, cinemas, bus services etc in the leaflet stands in the lounge. You also need to cook and prepare your evening meals, do laundry etc. This will involve sharing facilities with other parents so you may need to work out a rota with them. This may also be the first time in a long while that you can actually sit and relax, perhaps catch up on much needed sleep - while the children are in school this is your chance! If one of your child's difficulties has been managing to stay in school, many parents are surprised at how quickly the children adapt to attending the Croft school and joining in with the day programme. There is a Tesco superstore within walking distance and it becomes a second home to many of the parents attending the Croft! It has a cafe which can be nice for those wanting to just escape for a coffee somewhere for a while. The Croft has a computer for the use of parents and carers during the day and once the children are in bed. Internet access is available for parents/carers who wish to bring in laptops but these are brought in at your own risk. The Croft cannot be held liable for loss or damage to them.

The Holiday Programme

Like all schools, the school at The Croft breaks for school holidays (these are usually the same dates as the local schools). The routine during the school holidays is different and usually a programme of activities is planned. This can include off site trips to the cinema, swimming or the seaside.



There will be onsite activities which may be organised and run by staff such as a treasure hunt or there may be sessions with a suitable children's entertainer.



The school holidays are a good opportunity to spend some quality leisure time with your child. Some families may normally find it difficult to go on family outings because of behaviour issues, so this provides an ideal chance to go out with your child whilst having the backup and support of the staff from The Croft when needed.



Visitors

Family members are welcome to visit you at any time during your stay. Friends are welcome too, but just check with a member of staff before their arrival. Children are still expected to stick to their timetabled activities so it might be best to limit their visitors to after school.

"My son's best friend came to visit after school; we shared a picnic on the grass outside The Croft. He was really pleased to have a visit from his friend and to show him where he was staying. I enjoyed the chance to chat to his Mum too".



What should I bring?

Being an NHS site, The Croft can tend to get a bit warm so even if you need jumpers and coats for outside, lightweight clothes for indoors are to be recommended. The children can bring in toys and games from home that will help them settle in but there are plenty of things for them to do at The Croft. It is best not to bring in anything valuable though. No games consoles are allowed in rooms including hand held ones. There is however a Nintendo Wii for the children's shared use. Books, story tapes or cds from home might be useful; the Croft has a selection of these which you can borrow and a couple of cd/cassette players. Don't forget to bring in books, puzzle books, magazines etc., for yourself although again there are some you can borrow. You can bring in electrical items like hairdryers, straighteners etc., but they must be checked by the NHS electrician before you plug them in.



Mobile phone chargers are ok and absolutely necessary if you have a mobile! There is no payphone on site and most people do bring in mobiles but are asked to use them respectfully.

Don't forget swimming things! The children usually go swimming on a Thursday at Rec Group at least once during your stay and you are welcome to join in.

Although you don't need to, you might want to bring in some money; you might well find that you spend a fair amount of time in Tesco's during your stay!

Kitchen

Whilst you are staying at The Croft, you are responsible for preparing breakfast and an evening meal for you and your child. The children have their lunch provided by the staff, plus snacks and drinks at various times during the day.



The Croft kitchen is well equipped with two ovens, two microwaves, freezer, fridges, pots, pans and baking dishes, plus the usual crockery and cutlery. The kitchen is stocked with fresh and frozen food bought from the nearby Tesco Store, once or twice a week.

There will be vegetarian options available. The NHS has a healthy eating policy. Special dietary requests should be made known to staff before your admission. You are welcome to help yourself to food and drinks. The shopping list is written up on the whiteboard in the kitchen and you are welcome to add your suggestions to the list. Some parents/carers choose to supplement The Croft food with their own and a fridge is available for you to store food. There are sticky labels available for you to label your food. Some parents/carers find it helps to avoid the teatime rush by preparing food for the evening meal earlier in the day when the kitchen is quiet. If the weather is nice, you could always take a picnic outside - watch out for wildlife! The kitchen is open 24 hours. There is also plenty of baking equipment if you would like to bake cakes etc. NB: sharp knives are not kept in the kitchen but are available, just ask a member of staff and they will get one for you.

Laundry Room



There is a laundry room with washing machine, washing powder, tumble dryer, iron & ironing board available. The room is locked when not in use, so just ask a member of staff and they will unlock it when you need to use it.

Medicines

All medications, whether for you or your child, have to be handed in on arrival to the Croft. They will be stored in a locked cupboard in the Medical Room; this is a safety policy. If you or your child is on medication, a record card will be made and staff will give out medicines at prescribed times. As part of your admission it may be necessary for staff to adjust your child's medication. Some parents tend to keep headache tablets in the car to avoid having to ask staff for them.

Bedrooms

The bedrooms face out onto the play area. They all have windows which can be opened to let air in but not wide enough for child to climb in or out of! The rooms are carpeted and furnished with modern single beds. Most rooms have wardrobes/chests of drawers and bedside tables. Some children will share a room with their parents/carers and some will have separate bedrooms. Duvets, duvet covers, sheets and pillow cases and towels are provided. All the rooms have power sockets.



Bathrooms



There are two bathrooms with toilet, sink and bath and one bathroom with a shower. You will need to bring your own toiletries, toothpaste, shampoo, bubble bath/ shower gel etc.

Babies



We have a cot, high chair, safety gates, booster seats for the table etc. If in doubt please give The Croft a ring and we can make sure that you have the equipment that you need for your stay.

Observations



As part of the assessment process, the staff will spend a good deal of time observing your child and recording their observations in your child's file. They will also be looking at the way you and your child and siblings interact. This can feel very intrusive and many parents/carers can feel that they are being watched and judged. It is however, a very important way for staff to assess your child.

Feedback

You will meet the unit Consultant Psychiatrist regularly during your stay; they will review your child's care plan and give you feedback about diagnosis, medication and any other medical issues. You may also want to meet the unit Teacher to get some feedback from them. If you would like to do this just ask your key worker to arrange a meeting.

Your key worker will meet with you towards the end of the week to feedback on their observations and discuss your child's progress. Any comments you have will be added to your child's records.

Be Prepared!

Going into The Croft will probably be a fairly challenging experience. Many people find it quite tough; being away from home, in an unfamiliar environment. Staying with people that you don't know and with their children who may have a variety of difficulties is not easy.



However, many parents do find friendship and immense support from the other parents/carers. It can be very heartening to meet and talk with other parent/carers who are going through similar difficulties. Staying at The Croft can also be a relief for some parents/carers as for 24 hours a day there is support to enable you to manage your child.

Also it can be hard if a partner or your other children are unable to join you. However keeping focused on the reasons for your admission and on what you are trying to achieve from your stay can help. Often, people say that the first week is very hard, and also week 3. The final week can also be challenging, some people are filled with relief at leaving, others are worried about life outside of The Croft. The children, even if they have had moments of 'I hate it here' are often quite sad to leave.



For some children it is the first time they have had the opportunity of success, in school, making new friends or with behaviour. One of the strengths of The Croft is the way in which the children are helped to 'repair' things

that go wrong. For example, if a child has a major tantrum, once they are calm again they are helped to understand what has happened, to make amends if necessary and then most importantly they are helped to put the incident behind them, to learn from it and move on. All the children attending the Croft are valued and a great deal of effort is made on helping them to achieve success and this is celebrated.

Complaints and Concerns

If you have any worries or concerns during your stay you can discuss them with your child's key workers or other members of staff. The Ward manager or one of the other Senior Nurses runs a weekly group that resident parents are encouraged to attend. It is called the Housekeeping Group and this is a chance for residents to discuss any issues they might have from getting along with other residents, to raising day to day problems. It is also a chance for you to air your views and also offer suggestions for improvement. Although the fundamental principles of The Croft remain the same, the place is always evolving and staff are constantly looking to improve the experience for parents and children.

If you want to discuss any concerns with someone who does not work at The Croft, the Trust has a department called PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) and you can speak directly to them on telephone number 0800 279 2535.

Your Last Day!

(In your final week, some parents prefer to leave on the Thursday afternoon after Rec Group, others will leave on the Friday morning.)



At the Thursday lunchtime there will be party food for your child complete with a cake! The staff, the children, the other resident parents plus members of the child's family join in. The leaving child gets to choose what they would like to do for Rec Group.

CPA Discharge Meeting

Towards the end of your stay a CPA discharge meeting will be held; this will usually be in your sixth week but may be later. Staff from The Croft will attend along with parents/carers and professionals involved with your child including their school teacher plus anyone else who you feel should be there.

The staff will summarise your stay, offer reports on your child's difficulties, progress and also make recommendations for the future. You will also be asked to contribute to the meeting to share your views, if you would like to do so. Then the meeting will discuss what sort of follow up support you and your child should receive. All the information will be put together in a report (CPA Discharge Report). This is given to you, your GP and your health team within 2 weeks of discharge. It will also be sent to other professionals with your permission. If your child is on a Child Protection Plan it will be sent to their Social Worker.

Afterwards



Many people feel very mixed emotions on leaving The Croft. Sometimes people will not leave completely and will return for family therapy sessions or their child might attend play or music therapies. It can feel quite daunting for the child to be leaving too, particularly if issues such as schooling haven't been fully resolved. Sometimes after leaving, parents/carers can find their child's behaviour can be a bit difficult "I found that my son started really trying to push at boundaries after we left The Croft, it was almost as if he was testing us to see how we would react. It took a lot of effort to remember all the skills we had learnt and to be consistent. It paid off

though and he did settle down after a few weeks". Some people can feel a bit emotionally flat afterwards, a bit like an anticlimax and a feeling of 'what happens next?' It can take a while to readjust.

On a Monday morning the resident parents/carers are invited out for a coffee and parents who have left The Croft are very welcome to come and join in. This group is run by Andrea and Andrew and they ask that you just give a quick ring before hand to confirm the time and the place.

A Parent's Experience of The Croft

When our son started school it became clear that he wasn't just an obstinate quirky kind of child but that there was possibly something wrong. He became increasingly anxious and aggressive in school and then to top things off he developed epilepsy. It was at this point that things got really desperate, school couldn't cope and we were getting differing opinions about treatment and support.

When The Croft was suggested to us we were horrified, it seemed like such a drastic step and an invasion of our lives. However we quickly realised that they have a fantastic team in place who were equipped to assess *all* aspects of our son's problems and do it with in a few intense weeks rather than endless outpatient appointments. There is no getting away from the fact that it was an emotional and stressful experience for the whole family, there were more than a few tears along the way.

We met some wonderful people among other parents; it was comforting to know that other people were facing the same struggles. We don't have a cure for our son's problems but we do have a better understanding and are better able to cope. The medical reports have enabled us to get the help in school that our son needs, he now has full-time one to one support whereas previously it had been a struggle to even get a statement for him.

The Croft is a fantastic resource for the child and families it supports but you only get out what you are prepared to put in. If you are fortunate enough to be offered a place, grasp it with both hands and make the most of your time there; it is daunting but it may be the best thing for your child.

Wishing *all* parents the best of luck.



Who is everyone, what do they do? And what else happens at The Croft?

This next section was written for us by the staff to try and explain a little more about how The Croft works and what happens during your stay.

What is the Croft?

The Croft is a specialist centre for families with children under 12 years of age who have mental health concerns or other medical conditions that affect children's development and behaviour. We also work with families where the parents have mental health problems and who need intensive support to develop their parenting skills.

Medical conditions

We often work with children who have diagnoses of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), tic disorders including Tourette Syndrome or different types of epilepsy. Many of these children show hard to manage behaviour, sometimes because of their condition and sometimes for other reasons, often it's a bit of both. We try and understand the behaviour from lots of different perspectives in order to help as best we can.

Mental Health Concerns

Sometimes we work with children who are very anxious, especially about separating from their parents, or who have significant problems with eating. Occasionally we work with children who have had unusual experiences such as hearing voices.

Intensive Parenting Support

We also work intensively with parents who, for a variety of reasons, need more significant support than is available in the community.

What the Croft doesn't do

Whilst we can offer, guidance, support, assessment and diagnosis if appropriate, we can't always 'fix' problems. We can offer recommendations regarding suggested education settings for example but we cannot force other statutory services and agencies to act on them.

Who will you meet?

The team is made up of doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants, music therapists, family therapists, a play therapist, clinical psychologists, a social worker and teachers. Everyone plays a different role, but we all work together to understand the needs of your family and then prepare a plan to meet your specific needs.

The Referral Process

Who refers?

Lots of different people refer families to the Croft including Psychiatrists, Paediatricians, Psychologists, Social Workers and other mental health professionals. They often have concerns about the child and family that they think will be difficult to resolve with outpatient/community appointments.

What happens then?

After receiving a referral we review it as a team and work out whether we think we may be able to help. If we are not sure we might ask the referrer for more information or set up a meeting with them to see whether we can help. If we think we can help we will write to the family and offer them an initial appointment.

Pre-admission assessment

After we have some information from your referrer we then invite you to meet with us at the Croft. We try to assess your view of the problem and we always ask about what you might like to get from the Croft. Finally, at this appointment we start to think with you about whether we can help and what we might be able to offer you. We will also try and show you round so you know what its like. The Croft isn't a usual 'hospital' and so knowing what it looks like and where you would be staying if you did come is very important.

How we assess your child during your admission

Everyday activities

For your child

All children (who are of school age) attend the Croft school in the mornings. They also attend the group programmes in the afternoon, which mix fun activities with therapeutic activities. Your keyworker will also spend individual time with your child to work through a variety of assessments, such as why they think they are at the Croft, what they would like to change and how well they are able to manage their emotions.

Throughout all these activities your child will be closely observed. We try and observe things that are relevant to your aims for the admission, to our questions about how we understand your child's difficulties and any other issues that arise, such as your child's response to increasing or decreasing their medication.

Additional assessments

For your child

All children are offered music therapy and all families are offered family therapy. If we think it will help, we offer your child further cognitive testing to check out your child's strengths and weaknesses with learning activities. We can also test their language, memory, and attentional skills. Some children are offered a story stems assessment, which looks at their view of family roles. Some children will be offered a play therapy assessment, when this is available and some children will be offered a psychological assessment, such as a cognitive behavioural assessment. Some children will go on to be offered individual therapy if we feel this is helpful during the admission.

If we want to assess the presence of (ADHD) Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, we will ask for a Connor's questionnaire to be completed by various members of staff. We also use this questionnaire to see if changes in medication are having any impact.

If we want to assess the presence of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) we will use the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS), this is a play and talk based assessment looking at symptoms of ASD. We will also do a long

interview with you called the Autism Diagnostic Interview (ADI), which looks at your child's development from infancy onwards.

If we think there might be other issues we can refer to other services for assessment, such as brain scans and blood testing.

After admission

Discharge meeting

Towards the end of your admission, we will hold a discharge meeting. This is where we invite the important people who will continue the care of your child after you leave the Croft. This often includes someone from school, your referrer and other people who might offer further support. Before the meeting we will talk to you about what you would like us to share and what you would like us to keep private. During the meeting you will have your chance to express how you feel things are and what you want for further support. Children are invited to the end of this meeting if they would like to attend.

Discharge Reports

After the discharge meeting the whole team contributes to the final report about their understanding of your child and what they will need for their ongoing support. This report is sent to yourself, your GP, the referrer and to others that we have previously agreed need them.

Ongoing support from the Croft

Once you have left the Croft you may be offered further appointments as an outpatient. You will also be invited to our fun day which we hold annually in September.

The Croft Day Programme

What the children will be doing?

Morning meeting

In the meeting we go through the timetable for the day, including any specific appointments for each child. We also remind the children of their goals for the day.

Short play

What happens in short play?

After morning meeting, your child will go into short play until 9.30. All the children go into the playroom and choose something to play with. This is very helpful to see how they interact with the other children, for example whether they choose to play with other children or by themselves. It is also helpful to see whether they can concentrate on one activity or whether they flit between many different ones.

School

What happens in school?

Even if your child has not been attending school, or has only been attending a little of school, they will be supported to join the Croft school from their second day (unless it is during the holidays). With a smaller class size, lots of teaching support and very experienced teachers, most children are able to access school. Early on at school their ability will be tested and work set at an appropriate level for their ability. The teacher will contact their own school for information about their learning level.

During school time, similar activities take place everyday. These include literacy and mathematics work, a story, some creative work and free choice. Children get free choices if they do the work expected of them and they also receive daily stickers for effort and good language.

Breaks and lunchtime

What happens at break and lunchtime?

At breaks the nursing staff take the children out into the garden to play and then bring them in for a drink and biscuit. At lunchtime the children's lunches will be prepared by staff who will accompany them whilst eating. When a child leaves the Croft a special party lunch is prepared and everyone is encouraged to come along and we will sing a leaving song.

Review of the day

What happens in review of the day?

At the end of the day the children are asked to review how their day went. They are asked to identify the good bits of the day and the more difficult bits of the day. This is very useful to assess how much a child can remember of the day, how much they identify how they felt during the day and how they respond to the different activities.

Groups

Art group

On a Monday afternoon the children get involved with various art and craft activities including painting, drawing, model making clay etc.

Skills for Life group

On Tuesday afternoons your child will learn about healthy living issues. These include keeping themselves safe, food and nutrition, keeping healthy etc.

Social skills group

On a Wednesday afternoon the children do a social skills group. This includes learning about emotions, including anger, and how to deal with them. It includes lots of games and activities that give children strategies for managing difficult emotions.

Recreation group

On Thursday you and your child will join the other families for some recreational activity. In your first week, this is usually a walk around the hospital site to check your child's safety. After that it might be swimming, bowling or going to a local park.

The Residential time

After the programme you and your child can spend time together. You are asked to make a plan with your child of how you will spend your time. Early on staff will help you with this and to let you know what is available to do at the Croft. Other parents may also be very helpful at this stage. You will also need to prepare dinner for you and your child and sometimes it is helpful to coordinate this with other parents so that not everyone is trying to use the kitchen at once.

What happens to me each day?

Weekend feedback

When you arrive back on Monday, your keyworker will try and meet with you to see how your weekend went. They will also let you know about the team's discussions from the previous week and whether you have any appointments.

Housekeeping meeting

In the housekeeping meeting issues to do with everyday smooth running of the Croft are discussed. These often include kitchen issues or heating issues.

Practical Parenting group

In the behaviour management group parents are encouraged to use a problem solving model to think about managing their child's difficult behaviours. Parents are encouraged to share their concerns and also share their solutions and strategies.

Parents' support group

In the parents' support group the parents often go out for a coffee and a chat to simply debrief with each other about being at the Croft and their experiences so far. Sometimes parents who have previously attended The Croft come along too.

Mellow parenting group

Parents are invited to take part in the mellow parenting group and if you would like to you are asked to have a few minutes of you and your child videoed doing an activity chosen by yourself. In the group itself you will look at your video and the videos of the other parents and we pick out the positive interactions between you and your child.

Weekly feedback

At the end of the week you will meet with your keyworker again so they can catch up with how your week has been at the Croft. You might want to discuss any concerns about the weekend as well as any that have arisen during the week.

Other activities

During your time at the Croft you may also meet with different members of the team. You might be invited to join your child in music therapy, or meet with one of the Doctors. You may want to meet with your keyworker regularly throughout the week and you can also request to meet with any other people you want to keep up with, such as Nadine, the teacher.

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