

FIVE OAKS CENTRE



TRAINING TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE - EXTENDED PROGRAMME



Five Oaks is a unique residential training centre for young people with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus. It is owned and managed by the Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (ASBAH).

*Five Oaks Centre, Ben Rhydding Drive, Ilkley, West Yorkshire, LS29 8BD
Telephone 0943-603013 / 0943-609468 / 0943-602743. ASBAH is a registered charity.*

Young people are given crucial growing time



At Five Oaks, we structure a programme for each student. It is designed to build confidence and experience. Placements are usually offered for at least six months, but they can continue for up to two years.

Alongside this programme, students may seek more formal academic training at a local college. In these cases, the student will need to be committed to the extra work and there will be need to be an agreement in place on funding the place for the duration of the course.

Students wishing to be considered for a place at Five Oaks are asked to complete an application form

The Five Oaks Centre leads the field in training for independence - combining patience and understanding with knowledge and skills.

In 1989, our expertise was recognised by the European Community. Our 'Training Towards Independence - Extended Programme' received an award in the housing and support services category of the EC's HELIOS programme.

and attend an interview, with a one- or two-night stay if required.

For a couple of days after arrival, new students will be observed doing daily tasks, particularly those where difficulties have already been highlighted.

They will then have a meeting with the programme co-ordinator, the allocated key worker and the duty manager. A programme will be agreed, including points of

progression towards a final goal.

The first formal review will take place after three months, and then at six-monthly intervals. Contents of individual programmes are assessed every 6 - 8 weeks, with new objectives inserted as appropriate.

At all stages, staff ensure that students understand the purpose of these reviews and re-assessments, and can confidently participate in them.

Our training is offered to young people over 18, who want to become more independent and need to explore their options. Students receive regular feedback and gain knowledge through their own experience. A key aim is to improve self-esteem and sense of responsibility for their own lives.

On admission, the student will have a single room in the main house. This will be followed by a trial period in a training flat, situated in the grounds. If things go well, the stay in the training flat will be extended for the rest of the course.

Attention will continue to be focussed on problem areas, while newly acquired skills receive reinforcement from time to time.

Very often, students insist on arrival that their aim is total independence. Sometimes this can be achieved. But many students will also accept during the course that total independence does not actually suit their needs.

The time they have had at Five

Some characteristics of spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus

Young people with spina bifida often have varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs and, therefore, restricted mobility. There will be poor or no sensation in the paralysed area and thus messages are not relayed to the brain concerning shape, size or position of these limbs. In childhood, they may not have realised the limbs belong to them.

Because of damage to the nerve supply, there is often incontinence of bowel or bladder. The difficulties caused by the spina bifida are obvious and, in general, respond to physical intervention.

This does not mean a cure but an amelioration of the problems.

If hydrocephalus is present, learning difficulties usually result. Some interference with the transmission of messages within the brain may occur, making it harder for the person to concentrate and remember. Challenging behaviours are characteristics of the adolescent with hydrocephalus.

Nowadays it is widely recognised that a person with raised intracranial pressure may have problems with visual and/or auditory perception, spatial awareness, learning, and gross and fine motor co-ordination. There is occasionally some stretching of the optic nerve, giving rise to sight problems.

Spina bifida and hydrocephalus may affect so many systems of the brain and body that it is not surprising that many children born with these disabilities fail to develop rapidly or along expected pathways. Our experience shows that many do make progress, despite these wide-ranging difficulties, following a well-structured training programme.



Oaks does enabled them to make better, more informed choices about what they want for themselves in the future. Living with an appropriate level of support in the community will be the goal of all of them.

It is imperative that all young people are enabled to develop skills and achieve their potential. To achieve this result at Five Oaks, young people with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus take part in a structured programme of goal-setting geared to individual needs.

Research has shown that most young people with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus have specific learning difficulties. These can be severe when hydrocephalus is present, but the causes may not be immediately obvious.

Many of these young people

continue to depend on adults around them, while in contrast their able-bodied peers have become self-empowered. People often label this behaviour, inaccurately, as 'being lazy' or 'not being bothered'.

On the surface, many of our young clients seem more able than they really are. They often have a good vocabulary but their comprehension may be poor. They may mix well but say the wrong things at the wrong time. They respond quickly to cues but may be completely unaware of the passing of time.

It is tempting to think that one good burst of independence training will sort them out. Almost certainly, this will not be enough.

Young people with hydrocephalus are usually very immature for their age - having unrealistic

**It makes
sense
to invest
in training
while
people
are
young**

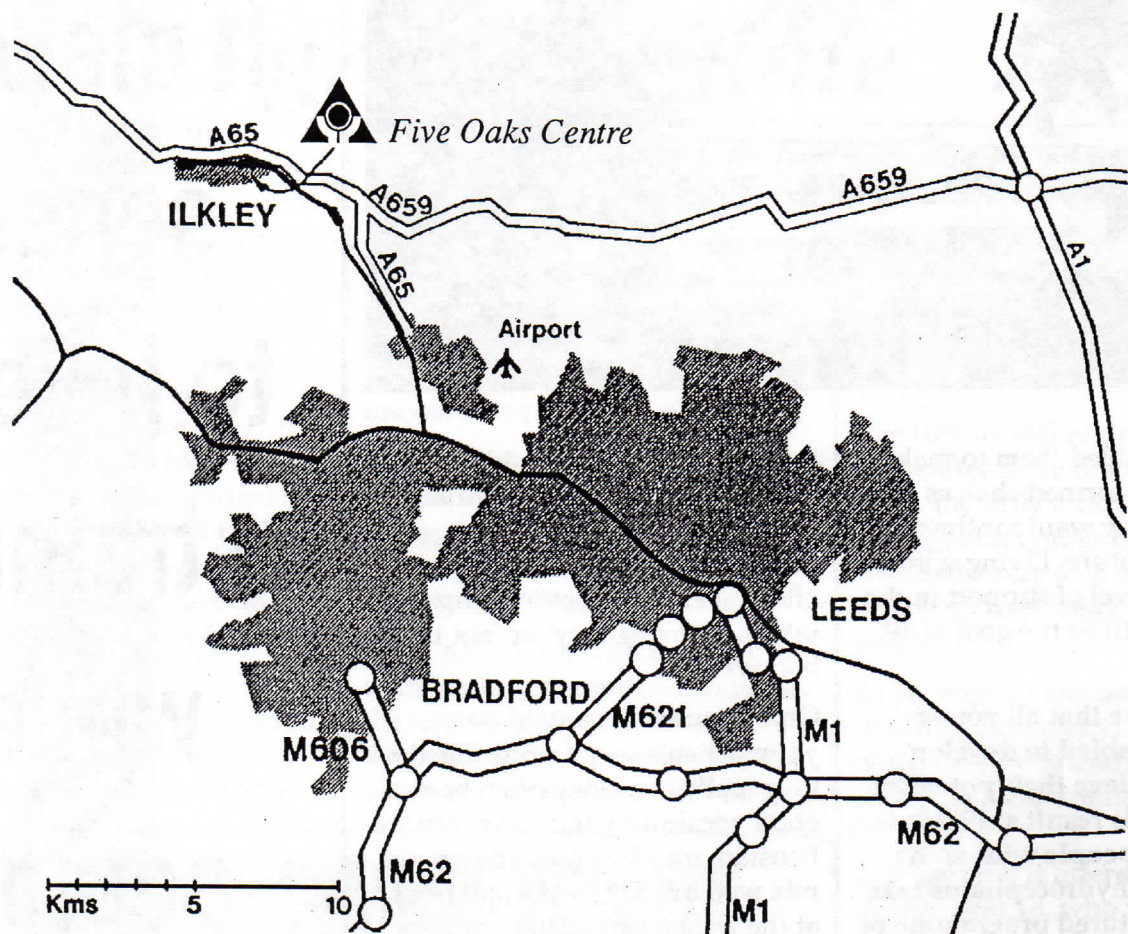
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FUNDING OF PLACES AT THE FIVE OAKS CENTRE

Students applying for placements at Five Oaks will require sponsorship from their Local Authority. This is usually the Social Services Department but could be the Education Department or the District Health Authority. Joint-funding could be agreed as an alternative.

Until April 1993, students will receive the residential care allowance from Income Support, which is approximately two-thirds of the full fee. The remaining one-third will be sponsored by the Local Authority. After April 1993, with the arrival of targetted community care budgets, most of the cost will fall on the sponsoring Authority.

Five Oaks provides high-quality training for young people for spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus, and it is subsidised by ASBAH's charitable funds. In 1992/3, we estimate that this subsidy will be in the region of £100,000.



Five Oaks has good road and rail links and is within easy reach of Leeds and the M1 and M62 motorways, Leeds and Ilkley British Rail with Leeds -Bradford Airport nearby.

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attitudes and aims for themselves. They therefore tend to need extra time develop into adulthood.

At 18, they are usually functioning three or four years behind their peers. They require more time to grow up. This we can offer at Five Oaks. Our experience shows that many of these young people are not ready

to live independently until they are in their mid-twenties.

Many referrals are for people who have failed in previous placements as they have not been mature enough to cope. Others have already tried sheltered or open employment, or been to college. Some may also have tried to spread their wings by trying to live away from the parental home in sheltered accommodation or on their own.

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ASSOCIATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA AND HYDROCEPHALUS

CENTRE

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