



Orchard House
Family Assessment Centre

Statement of Purpose



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Staff at Orchard House will at all times work in partnership with families placed with us, seeking whenever possible to promote a feeling of safety and well-being.

Individual parenting support programmes will be offered according to the needs and capabilities of the individual. Counselling and other emotional therapeutic techniques can be provided for parents where there is evidence of emotional disturbance or other difficulty in emotional functioning affecting their capacity to parent. Assessments of the history of attachment and separation can be made if directed by the court.

Parent/infant brief psychotherapy can be provided where there is evidence of emotional disturbance affecting the parent/infant relationship.

A key worker system based on mutual understanding, respect and trust is in operation to encourage the development of a working relationship between families and staff.

The management will be available if needed to respond to and liaise with parents at initial and subsequent review meetings and on a day-to-day basis.

Staff are aware of the fact that some families may feel they have been given little choice in their admission to the centre. As far as possible every attempt will be made to consult and empower families to make choices over their concerns whilst living in Orchard House, bearing in mind that the child's welfare is paramount.

Statement of Overall Aims

Orchard House Family Assessment Centre is a privately owned initiative set up in response to local need. It is the first centre of its kind in Somerset. Orchard House provides an environment in which families placed with us can feel safe and supported whilst their parenting is assessed. The service provides a relaxed and non-institutionalised atmosphere with an expectation that styles of behaviour will be consistent with ordinary family life.

Orchard House also provides an independent residential assessment service to families where there is risk of significant harm to children. Families can be referred by Social Services departments throughout Great Britain. Psychiatric, psychological and other therapeutic services are available if required and directed by the court.

The centre enables children to live safely with their families whilst care from their parent/s or carers is assessed with a view to the development of parenting skills and a better understanding of the child's needs.

Orchard House aims to provide individual, evidence based assessments which will enable properly informed decisions to be made about whether or not it would be in the child's best interests to remain in the permanent care of their parent/s or carers.

Orchard House also aims to provide longer term placements for families that require support to develop their parenting skills. Staff work to empower families who require support in order to enable their child/children to remain in their care.



Facilities and Services Provided

Orchard House is situated in Taunton, in close proximity to the town centre. Taunton is the county town for Somerset. It lies between the cities of Bristol and Exeter. Orchard House is easily accessible from the M5 and A303 and Taunton mainline station is a short taxi ride away.

Orchard House consists of a high standard of accommodation which is fully furnished for single parent families, couples and whole family units. A maximum of six families will share the accommodation.

Orchard House is managed by an experienced team headed by Dr Freda Gardner, Clinical Director and Consultant Clinical Psychologist.

The primary purpose of Orchard House is to provide a comprehensive assessment of parenting skills in accordance with the Department of Health Assessment Framework 2000. This will be conducted up to a period of twelve weeks. The placement plan will be established at an initial planning meeting and in a twelve week assessment the process will be reviewed at the fourth and eighth week and also in the final review meeting in the final week of the assessment.

Individual parenting needs will be assessed in a formal viability assessment at Orchard House alongside the referring Local Authority. A creative, flexible approach to the subsequent placement will be adopted as far as is possible. External viability assessments can be arranged if necessary. Residents will be encouraged to read and discuss progress reports and have access to their own individual information files.

Court reports and Child Protection Case Conference reports can also be provided as well as attendance at case conferences and court hearings.

Orchard House recognises that parents will have had different experiences in life and may need differing levels of support. We welcome referrals from agencies working with young parents under the age of 16, care leavers and parents who may have ongoing mental health problems or previously suffered with drug and alcohol related issues. Progress is closely monitored and each case is assessed individually, according to need. Staff at Orchard House liaise with other professionals involved in the resident's life including social workers, health professionals, solicitors, youth justice teams, as well as family members.

They will keep all the relevant parties updated on a regular basis. It is, therefore, the committed practice at Orchard House that we, along with the local authorities and professionals in other agencies, work in partnership with parents.

Parental responsibility must be promoted and it should be recognised within all agencies. Working with parents on a voluntary basis will always be our preferred option but we are mindful that families may be directed to participate following intervention and with their child/children who are the subject of court orders. Therefore, we at Orchard House are fully focussed on the best interests of the child/children above all other considerations.

We have staff based within the centre twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Our staff are aware of the need to take into account the families' religious beliefs, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background and any specific needs resulting from disability.

Registered Provider

The Registered Provider of Orchard House is:

Orchard House Family Assessment Centre Ltd
Orchard House
Middleway
Taunton
TA1 3JS

Tel: 01823 351785

Fax: 01823 288100



Staff Number and Qualifications

Dr Freda Gardner

(Consultant Clinical Psychologist) Clinical Director

Dr Gardner BA (Hons) MPhil PhD CPsychol, qualified as a Clinical Psychologist in 1989 at The University of Edinburgh. She has been in full time clinical posts since 1990 following a Research Associate Post at The University of Cambridge. While in full time employment in mental health services at the United Bristol Healthcare Trust, she completed a PhD thesis on Parent Child Interaction. Since that time she has conducted both adult and child clinical work with a special interest in parent assessment and intervention issues and the psychological effects of physical illness and pain.

In 1993 she was appointed as Consultant Clinical Psychologist at the United Bristol Healthcare Trust and Senior Lecturer at The University of Bristol. She held the position until 2002. During that period she held research grants from MRC, BHF and Bristol Hospitals Special Trustees.

Since 2002 she has worked in private practice from the Somerset Nuffield Hospital, Taunton and has worked as a South West Law Society approved expert in child and family assessment, intervention and care proceedings. She has also provided assessment and intervention for adult and paediatric patients with physical illness including chronic fatigue syndrome and acute and chronic pain. This service has been developed with a multi disciplinary team and is currently an NHS provider to Taunton Deane Primary Care Trust.

Dr Gardner has provided assessments for the Courts in respect of Child Care Contact and Parenting Assessments since 2000. She has worked directly in the assessment and psychological management of parents and children for ten years combining clinical and theoretical experience. Orchard House was opened under her direction in 2006.

Ros Weller

Practice Manager

Ros is qualified in Social Work and has worked with children and families for the local authority and as a registered manager in private practice in a family placement setting. Ros has 12 years experience of working in social care in variety of settings undertaking a range of tasks. Before joining Orchard House in October 2007 Ros worked as a manager along-side a private residential provision for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. She established a fostering agency offering a range of placements for children and young people. With extensive experience of management, child protection and court work Ros is a welcome addition to the management team.

Paul Hart

Financial Director

Paul has a background of 20 years in business and finance, working in a variety of commercial roles. He is an experienced management and company accountant, having previously worked for Argos, TV-am and The Kobal Collection amongst others. Paul's particular skills are in developing practical business systems and in communicating numbers effectively to colleagues and clients.

After leaving London in 1995, he set up his own business in the West Country, advising and supporting small and medium sized companies in start up, financial organisation and business development. Initially involved on a consultancy basis, he joined the company full-time in 2007.

Dr Mari Aldridge

Chartered Clinical Psychologist, Forensic Psychologist

Dr Mari Aldridge has a BSc, MSc, D.Clin.Psy, C.Psychol and qualified as a Clinical Psychologist in September 2007. Since this date she has worked at Orchard House Family Assessment Centre and undertaken assessments for the Courts in respect of Child Care Contact and Parenting Assessments. Prior to working at Orchard House she gained extensive experience as a Forensic Psychologist working for H.M Prison Service. Within this role she undertook risk assessments, psychological and psychometric assessments and rehabilitation work.

**Dr Bella Bowen**

Counselling Psychologist

Dr Arabella CL Bowen has a BSc. Hons., MA, PsychD., Adv. Cert.Sys.Fam.Th., C.Psychol. She qualified as Counselling Psychologist in 2001. Prior to working at Orchard House she gained extensive experience in parent and child assessment and intervention, specialising in child and adult mental health, family intervention, recovery from abuse, and the psychological management of child and adult trauma or illness. Since 2006 she has undertaken assessments for the Courts in respect of Care Proceedings, Child Care Contact, Parenting Assessments, and the assessment of Attachment styles.

Dr Vanessa Snowdon-Carr

Clinical Psychologist

Dr Snowdon-Carr has a BSc. Hons., D.Clin.Psy, C.Psychol. Dr Snowdon-Carr qualified as Clinical Psychologist in 2002. Prior to working at Orchard House she gained extensive experience in parent and child assessment and intervention, specialising in child and adult mental health, psychometric assessment, family intervention, recovery from abuse and the psychological management of child and adult trauma and illness. Since 2006 she has undertaken assessments for the Courts in respect of Care Proceedings, Child Care Contact, Parenting Assessments, and assessment of attachment styles. She is the Clinical Manager at Orchard House.

Dr Sarah Tonks

Clinical Psychologist (Child and Family Assessment)

Dr Sarah Tonks obtained a qualification in Health Psychology in 2000 and worked in this field for Gloucestershire Royal NHS Trust until 2002. She qualified as a Clinical Psychologist in 2005 and has been in full time clinical posts since that time. She conducts both adult and child clinical work with special interests in child parent assessment issues and child and adolescent mental health. Therapeutic interventions provided include psychological and other therapeutic management for adult and child mental health difficulties.

Dr Maya Spencer

Consultant Psychiatrist

Maya Spencer is a very experienced psychiatrist. She qualified in 1984 and has worked in Adult Mental Health in the NHS since that time. She currently works as an NHS Consultant Psychiatrist and also works closely with Orchard House. Maya is also available to provide clinical assistance if necessary. In addition she is able to provide formal psychiatric assessment and management if required and is also available to provide reports and assessments for court.

Jackie Sillett

Assessment Co-ordinator

Jackie's entire work experience has involved working with children and adults in a caring profession. For 25 years she worked as a children's nanny in England and abroad spending these years with 5 different families, often as the sole carer of the children in her charge. She also worked within secondary education as a learning support assistant and sole carer for a young person who due to trauma experienced as a child was unable to take part in mainstream education. She has also worked in a hospital as a ward administrator coordinating general administration, auditing and the overall smooth running of the environment of the ward.

Samantha Burdon

Practice Co-ordinator

Sam worked for Social Services in Taunton for 3 years with adults with learning disabilities both in a residential setting and a day centre. She worked with people with profound multiple learning disabilities as well as adults in supported living accommodation in the community with downs syndrome and autism. Sam then worked as an occupational therapy assistant at Musgrove Park Hospital. Her role involved observing patients in hospital and their own home doing everyday activities to determine the level of support needed whilst at Musgrove and for discharge home. She has also spent time doing voluntary work with the Conquest Riding School for the Disabled as a leader with groups of children and has a BTEC in Social Care.

**Vicki Fairfax-Ross**

Child Care Co-ordinator

Vicki is a Registered Nurse and Health Visitor. She is also a baby massage instructor. Prior to joining Orchard House, her experience has been in a variety of care and support roles working with children and parents both in the public and voluntary sectors. This has included employment as an unqualified social worker providing advice and support for young, single homeless mothers in temporary residential accommodation and also work as a trained volunteer supporting parents of babies with special needs in using the Portage Programme to help their overall development. Vicki also has a BSc in Sociology and Social Administration and is currently studying towards her City and Guilds 7302 teaching qualification. She continues to combine her work teaching baby massage in the community with her role at Orchard House.

Family Assessment Workers and Other Staff

Orchard House has a team of 20 Family Assessment Workers; some of whom are full-time and others who are part-time. All staff have various levels of experience working with children and/or families and were recruited because of the different skills that they bring to the centre. Staff have backgrounds working professionally with children in care, nursing, health visiting, occupational therapy, mental health, teaching, learning difficulties and various complex medical needs.

Attached to Orchard House we also have a consultant psychiatrist, a designated health visitor and a physical therapist.

Currently we have four staff qualified to NVQ 3 Level or above and 7 staff working towards NVQ 3 in Child Care and Development.

Fees and Charges Structure

Fees are arranged on an individual basis, according to the level of parenting assessment or support required. We have, therefore, designed flexible service options, which allow us, in conjunction with referrers, to tailor the service we provide specifically to the needs and preferences of each family.

Assessment of Viability

When it is imperative to meet the parents and to assess interaction, a fee from £750 is charged for pre-placement assessment, depending upon the amount of work required. Time spent attending any interviews, meetings or court hearings will be charged in addition at an hourly rate of between £45-£175 per hour (dependent on staff seniority). Travel time will be charged at half the usual hourly rate.

In some instances we are able to review documents to assess whether a residential assessment is in the best interests of the child or children and whether, in principle, the assessment proposed meets the criteria of Orchard House. There is usually no charge for this form of assessment of viability.

Additional Chargeable Services:

In some exceptional circumstances additional charges may need to be agreed.

Please note:

Placements cannot be confirmed until the Local Authority's designated person with financial responsibility for placements has signed the requisite authority on the referral form and contract agreement.

If a planned and agreed placement is cancelled, 1 week's fee will be charged.

There is a minimum charge for 1 week following admission, and on leaving, part weeks will be charged fully.

Orchard House may charge a cancellation fee for client appointments which are cancelled at less than 24 hours notice at the full rate.

Orchard House is aware that Local Authorities can only pay what is agreed and that they are under severe financial pressure. We will make every effort to work co-operatively to use public money appropriately.



Admission Criteria

Orchard House welcomes referrals from all agencies particularly where there is potential for family breakdown, due to the risk of significant harm to the child/children. Orchard House always considers new admissions in relation to the existing clients who are resident. There is no minimum or maximum age requirement for parent, carers or children. The service provides residential and non-residential assessment for parents with behaviour or lifestyle concerns which present particular risks to children and include:

The adult behavioural consequences of all forms of child abuse.

Previous concerns associated with drug and alcohol misuse.

Substance misuse combined with other psychiatric disorders for those parents/carers who are currently receiving ongoing professional advice, support, or medical treatment to monitor their mental health.

Inability to separate from abusive relationships with partners or other family members.

Young care leavers or teenage parents under 16 experiencing parenting for the first time.

Teenage expectant mothers can be admitted prior to their expected confinement date.

Referrals would not be accepted from parents/carers who are classified as Schedule 1 offenders.

Underlying Ethos

The underlying ethos of Orchard House is embodied in the Children Act 1989 which requires professionals to 'work in partnership' with parents/carers to assess their individual parenting needs, whilst ensuring that the child's welfare is paramount.

In order to assess parenting needs, staff need to adopt a flexible approach to working with families and develop a relationship based on trust and understanding.

Workers will make every attempt to enable parents to realise their child's developmental needs and quality of attachment in their relationship.

Family observation will be evidence based and supported by current and relevant research to maintain the optimum level of objectivity.

Staff are aware of the fact that the Children Act 1989 and "Messages from Research" published by the Department of Health, in 2000, states that the child's best interests are met within his birth family. However, decisions based on the child's safe parenting will need to be made and in some circumstances a child may not be safe within their own family.

Advice, Guidance and Counselling Provided

Staff based within Orchard House will offer advice and practical support on all aspects of parenting and child development. Staff will support parents in developing their strengths and areas for improvement in parenting their child/ren. Staff will use behaviour modification techniques, role play, modelling and discussion with parents on their views of their own parenting skills.

In addition to this, individual social work and therapy sessions can take place in order to discuss significant personal issues for parents such as previous history of abuse, alcohol, drug problems, self esteem building and violent relationships. We may also explore the parent's perception of parenting and their own experiences of being parented as a child.

Staff will liaise with key professionals in accessing other services which will complement their parenting ability.



Arrangement for Professional Supervision

All staff working for Orchard House have regular supervision provided by the centre's Practice Manager or a senior Family Assessment Worker. This supervision is recorded. Supervision will monitor family progress, discuss training needs, monitor workload management and personal issues for staff. The staff team also receive monthly group supervision facilitated by the Practice Manager. Appraisals will take place on a yearly basis. The Practice Manager is regularly supported by the Clinical Director.

Assessment Techniques

The main assessment technique used is the DOH Framework for the Assessment of Children 2000, based on "Messages from Research" and the Children Act 1989. This maintains a degree of standardisation of the assessment along with the additional assessment information provided and collected by other key professionals.

To assess the parenting capacity of parents with learning difficulties, we use the Parenting Assessment Manual (PAM) written by Dr Sue McGaw. This is an assessment resource specifically designed to assess parenting skills and the parents ability to meet the child's developing needs. Assessments are based on parental knowledge using the McGaw cartoons, observation and a work book that each parent completes so that gaps in parenting knowledge and life skills can be identified. Both the professional and parent's perception of the family's needs are considered. The assessment incorporates observations, questionnaires (written & visual aids) and structured interviews as well as apparent history.

Parenting ability is a unique, individual process based on the experience and resources of parents and carers. Therefore no single assessment technique will be adopted; eclectic use of available theories will enhance the assessment evaluation.

Observations of family relationships will play a key part in informing the child's developmental needs and quality of the attachment relationship between the care giver and child. Child observations will have a basis in the psychodynamic approach and understanding of the internal world of the child.

Sessions will use a time limited, task focussed approach to discussing the parent's individual needs and identifying future support to enhance their parenting of the child to enable them to develop and meet their full potential.

The assessment will depend on the parent's willingness to recognise the concerns and their motivation to change their current circumstances. Staff within the centre will adopt an empowering approach to enable parents to express their wishes and feelings for the future of their family.

Psychological Intervention and Management available

Parents will be assessed on admission. The need for clinical intervention for parents and children will be defined by the assessor. All clinical decisions will be evidence based.

The assessors are psychologists, counsellors or psychotherapists trained in the methods.

All proposed plans for clinical intervention will be discussed with the Clinical Director as directed by court.

Therapeutic techniques

Counselling and Psychotherapy

Counselling and other emotional therapeutic techniques can be provided for parents where there is evidence of emotional disturbance or other difficulty in emotional functioning affecting their capacity to parent. Assessments of the history of attachment and separation will be made.

Parent/infant brief psychotherapy can be provided where there is evidence of emotional disturbance affecting the parent/infant relationship.

Cognitive behavioural therapy

Cognitive behavioural therapy can be provided for parents with specific parenting problems. Intervention can be provided for parents, children, parents and children together and for families.

Child Cognitive behavioural therapy

Child Cognitive/behavioural therapy can be provided for pre-school and school age children when there is a history of behavioural or other problems. This intervention can be provided with the parents.

Monitoring progress

All therapeutic intervention will be monitored by the Clinical Director. Any changes or developments in intervention will be discussed and implemented on a weekly basis during the period of intervention.

Assessment of outcome

Audit and outcome measures, including mental health assessments will be used at the mid and end point of the intervention period. This will be conducted in accordance with evidence based practice.



Follow up

Communication with Children's Social Care and/or NHS services will be made before discharge. Efforts will be made to identify continued care and/or intervention where necessary.

Supervision

All clinical work will be supervised. Individual and peer supervision will be conducted. Continuing professional development will be provided for all staff.

Framework for assessment of children in need and their families

All assessments and clinical intervention will be in accordance with the standards required.

Rules of Conduct Applying to Residents

Orchard House is an intensive centre staffed twenty-four hours a day. Every family that is placed within the centre will have different needs and there will be varying concerns about their parenting ability. Therefore, the following conditions are standard for all residents but every family will have other conditions that will have been agreed in the pre-placement meeting which will have to be signed by all parties on admission:

No alcohol or drugs are permitted on the premises at any time.

All music and any other noise should be kept to a minimum and if staff request that the noise level be lowered, the request must be complied with immediately.

No chip pans or candles are allowed.

Violence or any other anti-social behaviour is not acceptable.

The condition of residents' rooms should be kept to a reasonable standard and any breakages will have to be contributed towards.

No pets allowed.

Under no circumstances may a room be decorated.

Termination of Placements

Circumstances in which placements may be terminated should only occur after staff and senior management have informed the person involved that their behaviour is unacceptable according to the terms and conditions of placement within the centre (See the previous section).

The overriding principle which governs this decision is the 'child's welfare is paramount'. If parents continue to ignore or accept advice that their placement is at risk, then the situation must be resolved by terminating their placement. This should happen only as a result of a continued attempt to involve the parent and inform the relevant professionals of the seriousness of this and the consequences for their child/ children's future.

Respecting the Privacy and Dignity of Residents

We believe that everyone has the right to the privacy and dignity that all of us in society enjoy. We would encourage residents to view Orchard House as 'home' and we respect the individual's right to make informed choices about their lifestyle.

For some residents, however, the child protection risk may be so significant that constant monitoring is necessary to safeguard a child's life. In these extreme circumstances our staff reserve the right to monitor parent/carer behaviour in an intensive way through use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV). The use of this supervision enables an assessment to take place that truly reflects the situation enabling a support framework to be quickly identified. Subsequent support systems such as audio monitors can be put into place with minimum delay. However, the parents/carers would be fully informed of this process and the reasons for it. This will enable them to make their own choices about their ability to accept this and work within it.

For other residents in the centre, staff respect their right to privacy and dignity at all times unless we have reason to believe that the safety of a child is at risk.

All families involved with the centre will have access to written information about themselves and reports will be shared and discussed.

The staff at the centre will be expected to work in a non-discriminatory way at all times; both in direct work and in liaison with other professionals.



Policy for Drug and Alcohol Use

The centre has a zero tolerance on the use of alcohol and/or drugs on site. If this is ignored then the contract agreement will have been violated. The placement may then be terminated after consultation with the referrer.

In this situation a review meeting/discussion will be convened at the earliest opportunity with the family, referrer and a director. The current family circumstances, level of risk to the child/children, age and understanding of parents/carers involved will be discussed and an agreed plan of action detailed.

Confidentiality Policy

Orchard House has a confidentiality policy which all staff read and sign during induction. All residents have the right to privacy and confidentiality in so far as possible. However, if a family are placed in the centre for an assessment, information will need to be shared with the placing authority and other professional agencies in order for professionals to work together to safeguard the welfare of children.

Information sharing will also need to take place with the staff that work at the centre, as this is staffed 24 hours a day on a shift rota basis. Therefore, it is imperative that the staff that are coming on shift are aware of all issues that have happened since they were last on duty in order to work effectively.

Parents will be informed at the pre-placement planning meeting that records are kept and regular feedback will be given to the placing authority and other relevant professionals.

Families that are placed at Orchard House will already be aware that the reason for the placement is as a direct result of them requiring intensive parenting advice and support and in many cases a full assessment of their ability to parent their child/children on a long term basis.

The Statement on Privacy and Confidentiality is given to all residents on admission, setting out the principles governing the sharing of information.

Arrangements for Protecting Children

Orchard House's Child Protection Policy is in accordance with the Somerset Local Safeguarding Children Board (SLSB) guidelines and Child Protection Handbook 2006. Our procedures aim to compliment the SLSB handbook.

A copy of the local Safeguarding Children Board procedures is kept within the centre. The Manager and staff are all aware of these procedures, having read them, and understand what is required of them.

Clear procedures govern allegations or suspicions of abuse either by staff or other residents.

Any allegation is then reported to the appropriate Social Services Department and the police.

Orchard House's Child Protection Procedures and Policy are available to staff to inform them of any necessary action. Staff are updated on these regularly.

Where a parent/carer or member of staff suspects any abuse or becomes aware of an allegation of abuse in relation to the Clinical Director, or any member of senior staff they should report this to any of the following:-

Ofsted

National Business Unit, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester. Tel 0845 40 40 40

Somerset Local Safeguarding Board

B3 North, County Hall, Taunton. TA1 4 DY. Tel 0845 3459166

The Duty Social Worker

Tel 01823 335285 Fax 01823 357900

Somerset Emergency Duty Team

Tel 01458 253241. Fax 01458 251210

A Police officer

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

Any incidents of suspected child abuse are recorded, investigated and maintained on the client's file for future reference. In relation to the family centre if any of the events listed in Schedule 5, Events and Notifications, takes place, the appropriate action will be followed and all parties will be notified as specified.



Complaints Policy

In the event that a resident experiences dissatisfaction, they should speak to the Practice Manager. The complaint will be acknowledged within 24 hours and a written response received within 7 days. If a resident is not satisfied with the way in which any issues have been dealt with, they should refer the matter to the Director.

If the resident is still unhappy that their concerns have not been dealt with to their satisfaction, they should refer the matter to the OFSTED.

On admission, parents and children are provided with a copy of the complaints policy and it is also clearly displayed in the centre.

Fire Precautions

On orientation all residents are given clear instruction on fire procedure and this is also displayed throughout the centre including bedrooms. Fire alarms and emergency lighting are tested weekly and extinguishers, together with an engineer's check of alarms and lighting, are tested six-monthly. Staff have six-monthly fire training, a fire evacuation drill is carried out each time a new family is admitted to the centre.

Dr Freda Gardner – Clinical Director
Ros Weller – Practice Manager
April 2008