

HILL HOUSE  
at  
The Galtee Clinic



**INFORMATION GUIDE  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE  
AND  
THEIR FAMILIES**

Hill House  
Kiltankin  
Ballyporeen  
Co Tipperary

## What is Hill House?

Hill House is a home for up to four teenagers aged between 12 and 17. It is located in South County Tipperary near the town of Mitchelstown. Hill House was set up to help young people prepare for adulthood by creating opportunities for teens to develop skills and interests that will be helpful in the years to come.

Hill House is different from most children's homes in a number of ways. The clearest difference is that the care is provided by a married couple, Alexander and Ricarda Borchert, who live in the home with the young people. Alexander and Ricarda see it as their responsibility to create a safe, home environment for the young people to live in and from where they can go to school, to work or whatever activities they are involved in.



Hill House is part of the Galtee Clinic, which is a small farm one field away from Hill House. The Galtee Clinic helps young people and their families in lots of different ways; one way is for young people and their families to learn about themselves and each other while taking part in the everyday activities on the farm. The Clinic also tries to provide opportunities for young people to continue their education or get work experience in the local community. The Galtee Clinic aims to have young people leave our care with practical life skills, ready to be happy and productive members of society.

## What does Hill House do for young people?

Hill House and the Galtee Clinic aim to work with teenagers and their families as the young people get close to becoming adults and leaving care. The programme is set up to provide opportunities for young people to learn real life skills, have opportunities to continue their education, try many different things and have fun. Our goal is to introduce teenagers to a large number of activities through which young people may develop skills, learn about themselves and the community in which they live.

## Where is Hill House?

Hill House is just outside the village of Ballyporeen, in South Tipperary, about ten minutes from the town of Mitchelstown. It is close to the M8 which is the motorway that runs between Dublin and Cork. This means that it takes about 40 minutes to get to Cork City, about an hour to get to Limerick and about one and a half hours to get to Dublin. It is, as the name suggests, on the top of a hill with beautiful views of the Galtee Mountains to the North and the Knockmealdown mountains to the South. Between the home and the mountains are farms and fields of sheep, cattle and crops.



## What is Hill House like?

Hill House is a newly built dormer style house, set on  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre with great views of the surrounding countryside and mountains. On the ground floor there is a large sitting room, a kitchen/dining room, a utility room with a washing machine and dryer, a hot press and a coat closet. There are two single bedrooms downstairs each with their own bathroom, and a double room where Alexander and Ricarda sleep. Upstairs there is a sitting area on the landing, a small snug sitting room, and three single bedrooms each with en-suite sink, shower and WC. Each young person has their own room and bathroom, which they can decorate and organise as they wish.



## Who do the young people work with?



As we said before Hill House is a little different from most children's homes in that a couple live in the home with the young people. The couple, Alexander and Ricarda, are from Germany and both have Master's degrees in something called Social Pedagogy. It is a bit hard to explain exactly what Social Pedagogy is, but it is easy to understand that it is the professional training given to social care workers in Europe. Pedagogy is an old word that means something related to teaching and Social is to do with life in society so Social Pedagogues are like teachers of life. Alexander and Ricarda do not see themselves as foster parents but more in the role of providing young people with the opportunities to learn and grow, and so are called our House Pedagogues.

Each young person also has their own Activity Worker, as we like to call them. Their job is to focus on helping the young person identify interests and activities outside of the home. Activity Workers spend time getting to know the young people with whom they work, and they work with the young person to explore as many activities and experiences as possible to help the young person find things they like to do and things they might like to learn about. The Activity Therapists then works with the young person to create a programme to develop those interests and to find work experience in the community.



Hill House has a Manager whose name is Claire Warren. Claire has worked with children for a good number of years and she has an important job. Her job is to make sure that Hill House and those that work there do so in the best way possible, and when problems arise she is there to help find out the reasons for problems and to work with everyone to find solutions.



There is also a Clinical Psychologist that works in the Galtee Clinic. His name is Dr. Toby Haslam-Hopwood and he has worked for a number of years with young people in Ireland and other places. His job is to work with the young people, their families, their social work teams and with the Galtee Clinic to help create programmes that meet the needs of each young person.

### What do the young people do?

When teenagers come to Hill House they are supported to spend the first few weeks making a home for themselves, getting to know the other young people, Alexander and Ricarda and the other people involved in Hill House. When young people feel settled and ready they are encouraged to spend time on the farm, helping out with the tasks such as looking after the animals. We like to encourage young people to take primary ownership for looking after particular animals of their choice. The jobs that the teenagers do are seen as the beginning of work experience and the young people are paid for their time and efforts.



We also encourage the young people to take ownership and responsibility for how Hill House and the farm are run. We have a weekly community meeting which all the young people and staff attend. These meetings are focussed on issues that come up for young people and staff and decisions are made about as many things as possible, including the programmes on offer and the activities of the farm. If young people are interested they can play an active role in the business side of the farm, growing vegetables or rearing animals to sell in the local markets.

### How long do young people stay in Hill House?

How long young people stay in Hill House is something that we encourage young people to work with their social workers and the Galtee Clinic team to decide. We want, very much, to help prepare young people for becoming adults and this often means learning about themselves, about relationships with others and the world of school and work. As long as young people, their social workers and the Galtee Clinic feel that progress is being made towards the goals then young people can stay in Hill House up until they are 18, or young people can move somewhere else, such as home, or a foster home or residential setting. There are regular meetings with social work teams (called Placement Management Meetings or Child in Care Reviews) in which these things can be discussed and we encourage young people, and their families, to have an active role in these.



The Galtee Clinic is reasonably new, so currently we only operate Hill House as a home. If there is enough interest the plan is to open up some more homes around the farm and also, if needed, to create a step down programme to support young people in the community after they turn 18.

### Can young people see their friends and families?

We think that friends and families are very important to people, particularly teenagers. Although our first interest is in keeping young people safe, we want to create as many opportunities as possible for young people to see their families and friends. When young people come to Hill House we work with them and their social worker to put together a plan for contact with friends and family members and we then work our very best to see these plans work.



### Can young people have a phone in Hill House?

As we work with older teenagers we think it is very important that young people keep their connections with important people outside of Hill House and the Galtee Clinic. We therefore allow mobile phones but expect that young people use their phones safely and they do not allow their phones to interfere with their day to day life. For example we expect young people not to take their phones to bed with them, as we like to encourage everyone to get a good night's sleep.

### Do young people get pocket money in Hill House?

Day to day essentials, such as toiletries (toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap etc) are bought as part of the weekly shopping for Hill House. Outside of this young people are supported to earn money and budget for items that they want and need. Young people are given some financial assistance when they first come to Hill House after which they can earn money through working on the farm, taking part in their education and having work experiences. The amount of money earned is the same as is received by young people who attend Youthreach.

### What sorts of education or work experiences are available to young people in Hill House?

We think that education is the best option for teenagers as this allows for the best opportunities in the future. For those that are interested in continuing education there are two Secondary Schools in Mitchelstown, and there is a YouthReach in Fermoy (about 15 minutes away). We do recognise that school is not always for everyone and so Activity Workers focus on helping the young person identify what they would like to do and then the Activity Workers take on the responsibility for helping these interests come to life. There is always work to be done on the farm and we also seek out work experience opportunities in the local community.



### Who is Hill House for?

Hill House is designed to work with teenagers (from 12-17) who are interested in the programmes on offer in the Galtee Clinic. We do not work with young people against their will and so think that it is very important that young people are given the opportunity to visit Hill House and have an active role in the decision to come here. We are not set up to meet every young person's needs and interests and therefore cannot work with all young people. However we would be very happy to speak to anyone who is interested in what we have to offer and we will try to create a programme that works.



### What do young people or families do if they are unhappy with Hill House?

We think it is very important that young people, their families and their social workers are happy with the care and the programmes provided by Hill House and the Galtee Clinic. We ask for feedback from everyone at regular intervals and we use the feedback to make changes to our programmes. If someone has a concern or a complaint we ask that they let us know so we can do something about it. We also have a complaints procedure where Claire, our Manager, looks into the complaint and tries to find answers. We also encourage young people and their families to access other organisations such as EPIC (Empowering People in Care) or if need be the Ombudsman For Children. If you have a particular concern please feel free to contact Claire, our manager, on 052 746 7855.