

Section Four

Management and Staffing

Oak Lodge Fostering Services

Section 4

1 Management and Staffing

Team Composition

- Oak Lodge Residential and Fostering Services has four directors/registered proprietors. The directors are responsible for overseeing the work of the residential and fostering services; approving the statement of purpose and function and all policies and supporting the work of the services by ensuring adequate resources are available.

Staff Recruitment

- The staff selection process at Oak Lodge High Support Fostering Service is based on core competencies, experience, qualifications and interviews.
- In line with good practice in recruitment, all vacancies are advertised and openly available to interested applicants.
- Applicants are asked to supply, in writing personal details, past and current work/volunteering experience and any qualifications or skills relevant to the post.
- Applicants are also asked to include a declaration relating to past criminal records and to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with young people.
- A job description is sent to the applicant prior to interview.
- If an applicant reaches interview stage s/he will be interviewed by at least two experienced representatives of Oak Lodge and an independent representative.
- At the interview stage each applicant is informed of expectations regarding the role. This involves identifying minimum levels of personal qualities, knowledge, experience and skills required for the post.
- If successful at interview, three references are sought for each candidate as well as proof of qualifications. References will be followed up with a telephone call by a person who has sufficient knowledge and experience of child protection and an awareness of safe care issues, as they apply to recruitment practice.
- Each candidate is also screened through An Garda Síochána and overseas police authorities.

Staff Support

- The nature of our work may prove physically and emotionally challenging for individuals and for the team as a whole. Staff in Oak Lodge High Support Fostering Service are assisted, through the provision of supervision and support mechanisms, in feeling professionally confident, competent, and focused in their work. Staff members work toward high levels of autonomy, however, such autonomy can only exist in a professional environment. Oak Lodge High Support Fostering Service aims to help staff develop and maintain a high standard of professionalism through:
 - Staff Induction
 - Professional supervision
 - Incident de-briefing
 - On-call support
 - Staff training and development
 - Team meetings
 - Independent group facilitation

Staff Induction

- All staff in Oak Lodge undergo an induction programme specific to their role in the service. Induction involves an introduction to the service and expectations of the role. The induction provides an opportunity for new staff to familiarise themselves with their role and the practical operation of the service. It also provides an opportunity for staff members to identify their own learning needs and to identify practical measures through which these needs can be met.
- Staff will be provided with training on various aspects of practice outlined in the policies and procedures document and in particular the Child Protection aspects of the document. Staff will also be provided with Children First (and TCI training is appropriate to their role). Each staff member will receive a copy of the policy and procedures document. This document forms the basis of our work. It is the responsibility of each staff member to read and understand its content. Following the reading and formularization of the material within, each staff member will confirm in writing that he/she agrees with its contents and agrees to work to its specifications.

Staff Supervision

- Oak Lodge High Support Fostering Service, in recognising the complexities of the task assigned to its staff, is committed to providing them with regular individual and group supervision.
- Individual supervision is a regular structured opportunity for staff to discuss their work, review progress and make plans for the future with the Head of Fostering Services on a one to one basis.

- Each individual member of staff will have individual supervision with his/her line manager at least once per month.
- Group supervision will cover the same themes as individual supervision except in a group context and will be facilitated by Head of Fostering Services and/or an independent facilitator.

Main Purpose of Supervision

Supervision is an opportunity to:

- Ensure quality of work and service provision to each young person/foster carer.
- Review and plan work
- Reflect on the content and process of work
- Develop understanding and skills
- Seek and receive information, support and feedback
- Voice concerns
- Express and explore issues
- Be pro-active/Be challenged
- Monitor professional development
- Identify training needs and opportunities

Contract for Supervision

- At Oak Lodge High Support Fostering Service a contract between the Supervisor and Supervisee is drawn up and the following is agreed;
 1. Supervision will take place once per month
 2. Supervision will be for approximately one hour
 3. A record of the supervision sessions is kept and this record will be signed by both parties.
 4. All staff to participate in supervision.
 5. Agenda for supervision to be drawn up between supervisee and supervisor.
 6. Any unethical or immoral behaviour will be addressed in supervision. If the behaviours persist disciplinary proceeding may need to be invoked.
 7. Illegal behaviour will be passed on to relevant sources.
 8. Cancellations will only occur in extreme circumstances, e.g. illness etc.
 9. Reasonable notice is required for cancellation.

Dual Focus of Supervision

Operational Focus –

1. Role of the individual in ensuring a high quality service
2. Job Description,
3. Overall purpose and function of the Service,
4. Policies and procedures,
5. The Young People,
6. Foster Carers,
7. Planning
8. Relationship building,
9. Liaison with other agencies,
10. Recording and Report writing.

Developmental Focus –

1. The impact of the work,
2. Strengths and skills,
3. Areas for improvement,
4. Working as a team member,
5. Consider own input, concerns and ideas.

Structure and Process of Supervision

- The Head of Fostering Services will provide supervision for the Link Social Workers and administrative staff. Link Social Workers will supervise the Outreach Support workers.
- The directors will arrange for the Head of Fostering Services to access appropriate professional supervision.

Team Meetings

A fortnightly staff meeting provides the opportunity for team discussion and debate.

- 1) Meetings will be held fortnightly on the same day at the same time.
- 2) Meetings will be free from interruption.
- 3) Meetings should aim to finish after one and a half hours.
- 4) The chairing and minute taking functions will rotate.
- 5) Staff who are unable to attend meetings must read the minutes at the earliest opportunity.
- 6) The agenda is drawn up in advance of each meeting

All staff are required to attend and actively participate in meetings. While the aim of team meetings is primarily focused on the delivery of service, they also encourage professional growth and development, i.e. listening skills, learning from other staff members, presentation skills, working toward high standards of child care and social work practice. Meetings also allow the team to identify learning needs or areas of professional weakness and to engage in decision-making regarding practice issues. These needs and issues can be looked at during group supervision or through further training.

Independent Group Facilitation

- Oak Lodge High Support Fostering Service will provide an independent group facilitator if required, to provide the team with a mechanism for team support and team development. This group facilitation will be provided on a three-monthly basis or more often if necessary. Details of the policy on this teamwork structure will be drawn up between the facilitator and the team.

Oak Lodge Fostering Services