

We asked our managers and staff to answer some questions posed by young people and we have based our answers on their collective response.

Why do you want to do this kind of work?

We want to make a difference and we feel that we can make a difference. We want to help young people to understand and make sense of their experiences and we want to empower them to make informed choices that enable them to realise their full potential.

We want to create an environment where young people can overcome disadvantage by beginning to believe in themselves, understand their worth and build their self confidence.

We value and enjoy the relationships we build with young people; we enjoy the company of young people and feel a deep sense of satisfaction when young people respond positively to the care and commitment we offer.

What would you do if a young person ran away?

We would follow them and do everything possible to find them including trying to contact them by their mobile phone and by contacting their friends and family to help us find them.

We would talk to the staff and other young people who may know why the young person has run away and we would search local places the young person may frequent. Our main concern would be to ensure the young person concerned is safe and not in any immediate danger.

If we are unable to contact the young person we would decide how long to leave it before the police and the local authority are informed. This would be discussed at the placement planning meeting. If we are very worried about their safety we would notify the police when the absence is discovered.

When the young person is found or returns to the house we would welcome them and ensure they are safe and well. We would make sure they have the opportunity to talk if they want to, we would offer them a drink and something to eat and ask if they needed anything further.

We would enquire why they ran away and would respond sensitively and appropriately to the information given.

What would you do if you found a young person self harming?

We understand that self harm is for some young people a way of relieving intolerable feelings and coping with difficult issues and we are not shocked or unduly alarmed by this. We would usually know if this has happened before and would have a pre-planned response to the situation.

If urgent medical help is required we would call for assistance from the emergency services. If the injuries were not serious we would help to clean and dress the wounds and discuss with the young person whether or not medical attention is required.

We would also ask the young person if they wanted to talk about their feelings and any issues that may have brought on the act of self harm and we would respond sensitively and appropriately to the information given.

As a key worker how would you support a young person in the home?

We would ensure that the young person understands the reasons why they are in the home and that they know everything they need to know about the home.

We would check out the young person's wishes and feelings and ensure that their views are listened to when plans are being made and if necessary act as a spokesperson on their behalf.

We would be a positive role model at all times. We would spend time with the young person doing shared activities and getting to know each other and we would endeavour to build a relationship based on mutual regard, respect and honesty.

We would be there for the young person whenever support is needed e.g. at planning meetings, at school, getting to exams, shopping, filling in forms, sharing activities etc.

Are you strong enough to take abuse?

We understand that we may experience physical, verbal and emotional abuse and we do not take it personally. Whilst we do not condone it we are trained to keep ourselves safe and to understand that there are underlying reasons for this behaviour.

In the aftermath of an incident we aim to help young people recognise the impact of their behaviour on others and to develop strategies to re-direct the anger that manifests itself in abusive behaviour.

In our company the personal impact of abuse is not underestimated and there are arrangements in place to help us with this.