

SOCIAL PEDAGOGY AT HORIZON CARE

Horizon Care was one of the first providers of residential child care to embrace Government recommendations to improve practice in residential child care through implementing Social Pedagogy.

In line with existing ethos and practice at Horizon Care, all staff undertook initial two-day training in Social Pedagogy, followed by two further days of training in practice, and fully qualified pedagogues were appointed to support and advance these developments.

Social Pedagogy differentiates itself from other approaches to social work through its focus on the 'everyday' ('Alltagsorientierung') of the service user and the holistic view of all aspects of the life experiences ('Lebensweltorientierung'). It is a profession that, together with the family and school, educates the individual to successfully participate in society.

The foundation of the practice of Social Pedagogy lies in its values: the orientation towards unconditional positive regard for the individual and an understanding of the individual's life experiences. Social Pedagogues see their work as an encounter between equal human beings and social pedagogic practice is successful on the basis of co-operation between equal partners. Social Pedagogy mediates between the individual and society, aiming to achieve the highest level of autonomy possible.

It seeks to compensate individual and structural disadvantages in socialisation for people of all ages, in all aspects of their lives, by supporting and enabling the individual and inducing change in the individual's environment.

The Social Pedagogy qualification focuses on the development of a pedagogic relationship between the service user and the social pedagogue by acquiring a large variety of methods for direct work with the service user (derived from psychology, sociology and medicine) and also develops management skills.

A Social Pedagogical environment also supports the independent living skills of young people. Beginning with the day of the admission the team as a whole reflects on the abilities of the young person in their everyday activities and develops strategies to achieve a more successful everyday life (for example, by cooking with the young person).

By participating in this training the staff have learned new ways of understanding and responding to the needs of children and young people, and using the approach has enabled staff to help them understand the consequences of their own behaviour and decisions, to reflect on these and make adjustments to them in the future.

Overall, Horizon Care believes the application of social pedagogical ideas in residential care has the potential to improve the practice by combining existing excellence with a well structured theoretical framework.