

OUR ETHOS

It is the intention of Oak Lodge Residential and Fostering Services to provide high quality care placements to all children and young people in the care of our services.

We believe that all children have the right to a childhood that is free from abuse and harm and adults charged with the care of children have a duty to provide appropriate care and protection that enables children to achieve their fullest potential.

Oak Lodge Residential and Fostering Services staff and foster carers adapt best practice principles that underpin our approaches to working with children and young people placed in our care. We acknowledge the fundamental rights of children to be protected from harm, treated with respect and dignity, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration.

We constantly apply safe practices in recruitment, support and training of staff and foster carers and recognise that valuing children means valuing workers.

We seek to work collaboratively with all those involved in the life of children in our care and adapt child centred approaches to our practice and decision making process.



Activity based residential programme providing **C**hallenge, **O**pportunity, and **R**espice in a **N**urturing environment.

Giving young people opportunities others take for granted.

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WHAT IS THE ACORN PROGRAMME

Activity based residential programme, providing
Challenge, Opportunity and Respite in a Nurturing environment.

The ACORN Programme offers an activity based programme in a nurturing environment in which those children and young people (12-17) partaking in a programme can take time out from their current situation or crisis that they may be experiencing. Our programme endeavours to create an environment through physical, social and cultural pursuits and activities that will empower and enable those using the service to take a break and reflect on the issues that are currently affecting them..

The ACORN Programme will provide a 4 day residential placement or organised frequent respite. We aim to facilitate young people for whom continuing to live at home, in the community, in Residential Care or Foster Care is becoming a challenge, for whatever reason.

Our Programme also offers an opportunity to span the change between residential care and the community for those entering or leaving a residential service. We hope to provide a secure and reliable support for young people and their carers in times of crisis.

The Acorn Programme

Activity

By using an activity based educational process centred on action and reflection, the lessons learned on the Acorn Programme will stay with the young person longer than those taught through lecture or reading. Experiences are intentionally designed, presented and reflected upon so as to instill values.

We will provide a wide range of activities for the young person to choose from. Some of these include

Abseiling

Kayaking

Rock-climbing

Mountain Biking

Gorge scrambling

Surfing

Swimming

Hill walking

Problem solving exercises

Canoeing and kayaking

Orienteering

Sailing

Quad Biking

Camp Craft

Scrambling

Orienteering

Equestrian

Backwoods cooking

Social Activities include; cinema, local concerts & festivals, eating out, bowling, ice skating and visits to local cultural and historical sites.

Challenge

The ACORN programme is designed to include action that requires special effort. Whether for the young person it is more challenging to paddle a sea kayak in open waters or to speak openly about their personal challenges or fears, they will be asked to make the choice to challenge themselves. These exciting and remarkable experiences that involve uncertain outcomes and acceptable risks, once accomplished, provide the courage for later challenges in the community.

Opportunity

The programme is run with the best interests of the young people and as such they will have the opportunity to have their say about what happens while they are on the programme. As well as the opportunity to experience adventure activities they may not normally have access to. By participating the young person will have the opportunity to challenge themselves, to explore new experiences and to grow. The young person also has the opportunity to participate in household chores and day to day activities such as shopping and planning meals. It is our hope that by participating in these activities we can add a real sense of purpose and value to the young person's experience with us.

Respite

We know that the young person may have come to stay with us for a few days because they are having a difficult time at home or in their current placement. For this reason we will have staff whom they can rely upon to give the young person individual support, space and guidance they might need to get over these stresses. After all, the goal is to help the young person to find a way out of whatever stresses they may be feeling.

Nurturing environment

We endeavour to provide the young person with a safe, fun and relaxed environment where they can find the space and time to think about the things that are going on in their lives.

The new experiences and skills which they will gain will help to take their minds off the things that are troubling them. This will, in turn, allow the young person to focus on some new goals and objectives.

They will have the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends.

The young person will be supported by a very approachable and understanding staff team who will do everything they can to make their stay as enjoyable as possible.

Most important of all they will be given the opportunity to relax and have fun in a friendly environment.

WHO IS THE ACORN PROGRAMME FOR

The programme gives young people and their carers an opportunity to take a break from their present circumstances and take time to look at ways of improving their situation into the future. The care provided could be instrumental in trying to avoid crisis or in times of stress and trauma in the young person's normal environment. This time gives young people the opportunity to engage in leisure, social, and educational activities within a supportive and nurturing environment.

OUR DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

We provide direct and dramatic experiences in inspiring and unfamiliar settings. Our competence and capabilities lie in using the mountains, sea, rivers and lakes.

The programme involves physical journeys but there are also journeys of development and discovery for the young person. It is our aim that a journey started with the Oak Lodge ACORN Programme, continues long after the young person has finished the programme. Anyone attending the ACORN Programme participates as an individual and if appropriate as a team member, working with the same instructor for the duration of the course. Our courses focus on the development of the individual and the interface with the natural environment.

OAK LODGE STAFF

Our instructors have the technical skills to take young people into the outdoors. However, of paramount importance are the "soft skills" that enable an instructor to translate the events of an adventure into lessons for life. All instructors are fully qualified and hold National Governing Body Qualifications. They are all fully trained up in First Aid and T.C.I.

WHO WE ARE

The ACORN Programme is part of Oak Lodge Residential & Fostering Services Ltd. which is a non statutory agency that was established in 2007 by four experienced practitioners with qualifications in social care, social work and psychotherapy. Our objective is to provide services to children and young people who for various reasons cannot live at home with their birth families and require alternative placements.

We at Oak Lodge recognise the importance of working as a team and value each person's role in the life of a child in their care. We therefore seek to work in partnership with children, birth families, foster carers, HSE colleagues, therapists, psychologists, educational colleagues and all significant others to achieve the best outcome for the child or young person.

Currently our head office is based in Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary. We have residential centres based in Co. Tipperary, Co. Kilkenny, Co. Waterford Co. Wexford and Co. Cavan. Oak Lodge also have Foster carers based across the South-East. We accept referrals from all H.S.E. areas.