

Anderida Adolescent Care



Left to right: Directors Brian Thompson, Erica Castle and Kerry Shoesmith

Directors Kerry Shoesmith and Erica Castle and the wider team at Anderida Adolescent Care have worked to support some of the most vulnerable young people in the country – individuals who are often either close to being placed in a secure environment or have just left one. Overall, the organisation supports 11 children across six homes and is in the process of registering a seventh – most of which are located in East Sussex. Directors tell *The Parliamentary Review* about the Anderida philosophy and how they support local authorities.

Our provision comprises either single, dual or triple occupancy accommodation with a crisis placement provision in Scotland.

Historically, we have always been able to reach families that other agencies can't. In order to build on this, we have continually adapted our approach and have focused increasingly on the therapeutic nature of our work. Key to this was the adoption of non-violent resistance.

Six years ago, we met Dr Peter Jakob, who introduced this approach to the UK. We work with young people who are often out of control and display harmful behaviour, including child-to-parent violence. In the face of these challenges, Dr Jakob advocated a new approach developed in Israel by Dr Haim Omer. This approach draws on the ideas of peaceful protest and reconciliation, such as those advocated by Gandhi and Martin Luther King. We had already embraced a more therapeutic approach and trained the staff team in cognitive behaviour therapy, and so we were able to come to the model with a good understanding of the

FACTS ABOUT ANDERIDA ADOLESCENT CARE

- » Directors: Erica Castle, Kerry Shoesmith, Jane Bettley, Hazel Pries and Brian Thompson
- » Established in 1991 by Brian Thompson
- » Based in Eastbourne with homes across East Sussex
- » Services: Residential care for vulnerable adolescents
- » No. of employees: 60
- » www.anderidacare.co.uk

“This level of commitment to our staff has led to us being one of very few organisations to have achieved the Investors in People platinum award, something we are truly proud of”

thinking behind it. Key to CBT is the impact of traumatic experiences on young people and the need to recognise and support them compassionately and understand their associated behaviours.

NVR focuses on improving the relationship between the young person and the care giver while increasing the presence of parents and safe adults. It involves unconditional loving gestures and resisting punitive measures. Instead of punishment, care givers peacefully protest harmful behaviour, highlighting behaviours that need to change. This can take the form of an actual protest, whether this be a peaceful sit in the child’s room or the organisation of a group coming together at the home. This community response brings together a variety of people to form a support network and emphasises the support the child receives.

This is a powerful therapeutic approach and replaces the need for sanctions or, at the most severe end

of the spectrum, police intervention. The results of this approach have been hugely encouraging. We have noticed a higher uptake of individual therapy from adolescents and have also seen greater success in helping children to return to their families. Beyond this, instances of young people being criminalised have significantly decreased, and our own staff have become more empowered, as they can clearly see the positive effects of their actions, or the benefits of acting even if the gains are not immediate. As well as supporting the children we care for, our staff can identify the benefits and appreciate their own effectiveness.

Following our adoption of this approach, both Kerry and Erica sit on the steering board of NVR UK, who are working to formally accredit all levels of qualification in this approach, professionalising NVR in the UK.

A commitment to training

We have instigated a rigorous internal training programme. Many years ago, we became disgruntled with the local resources for attaining NVQs, and so we decided to establish our own Assessment Centre. Our training team are now able to offer diplomas up to Level 5 in-house, using the rich experience they have gained in the field. We train all our staff to foundation level of NVR and Level 3 Diploma in Residential Childcare. All the senior staff take up the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management, and most volunteer to undertake the Advanced Practitioner training in NVR. We achieve a high rate of success for the completion of these qualifications and have constructed a highly trained and experienced workforce. This level of commitment to our staff has led to us being one of very few organisations to have achieved the Investors in People platinum award, something we are truly proud of.

Dining and lounge area at one of Anderida’s residential homes





One of Anderida's residential homes

Ofsted and the need for greater flexibility

One of the greatest challenges we face is the overwhelming increase in referrals. We have gone from receiving approximately 40 a year over the last three years to receiving 965 last year. As children's homes close across the country, services are stripped from health and social care resources that support children to stay at home or in fostering placements, residential organisations become more stretched, and waiting lists expand. Many of these young people are then trapped in the system, as no service will accept them because of the amount of time it takes to build trust and make progress. This is not a criticism of the services themselves but rather of the wider environment in which Ofsted criticises homes for the time it takes them to turn around these extremely traumatised and vulnerable children. This leads to a perverse situation where homes are incentivised not to accept the children who need support the most, which often leads to these young people being placed in unregulated services. This must change, and more understanding is needed from Ofsted that considers these most-at-risk children.

Another challenge we face is convincing regulators and authorities of the necessity of our approach, which is giving looked-after children a "good parent" who is truly present in their life, rather than placing them in an institution where interactions are governed by regulations and jargon. Ofsted struggled to understand that our sit-in technique is consistent with that of a good parent who peacefully talks to their child about their concerns in the child's space, but with the help of our local MP, we have resisted the unconstructive interpretation of a regulation that prevented us from employing this technique. Children with the highest level of need have a right to genuine parenting, and it is essential that regulators recognise this fact. Apart from this specific technique, the way looked-after children are treated more generally also needs to be reassessed, as, currently, arbitrary decisions are made about whether they can see their families, including siblings whom they have been separated from, which refuse to take into account changing circumstances. While regulation is important generally and keeps children safer, it is essential homes are given the flexibility to meet the needs of those they care for, and this is something we will continue to champion and fight for.

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