

Open Choice Independence Ltd

**Provider of accommodation with support
For 16+**

Annual Report September 2007

Service Aims & Objectives

Open Choice is meeting the aims of its service's by being consistent in its aims of service success, growth and development. This is achieved by overall daily management of its staff, accommodation, clients support, including particular supporting programmes, and the development of relationships with other services and agencies. Key performance indicators would consist of a number of points.

1, continuing to work closely with local authorities to house and support a variety of young care leavers within their local communities. Our objectives consist of a number of indicators such as,

Does Open Choice currently have suitable and above average accommodation available when a local authority wishes to place a care leaver with Open Choice. If the answer to this question is no at the time of a request then Open Choice does prefer to wait until good and suitable accommodation becomes available.

2, Is the young person being referred to Open Choice ready to live on there own within their local community with regular practical support from Open Choice. If the answer to this question is no at the time of a referral then Open Choice will decline the local authority's request.

3, Choosing the correct support worker to work with a particular client is a very important and practical step towards the success of the client's time spent with Open Choice.

4, Regular monitoring and updating of policies and procedures.

5, Regular and consistent staff supervisions and team meetings.

6, Monthly management and director board meetings.

Annual Plans

The plans for Open Choice's services are primarily to reach more local authorities in order to work with, house and support more care leavers.

At present Open Choice provides single self contained accommodation but is also able to provide shared accommodation in the form of small concentrated two bedroom hostels with structured support to each client. This is available to each local authority, such as Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Our targets would be to provide a number of these two bedroom hostels within local distance to our head office in Dunstable Bedfordshire, as well as providing more self contained flats/studio apartments.

Management Systems

Open Choice's Management structure consists of two full time managers one of which being the director. Management meet and discuss issues daily regarding all services which Open Choice offer. There is a formal supervision record from director to manager and a monthly management and director's board meeting where everything relating to our services is discussed and planned.

Staff supervision is monthly and is from manager to support worker. Team meetings are fortnightly where both manager and director are present. Team meetings are to discuss any issues relating to our clients, any issues relating to our support workers and their work, our housing providers and any relating problems or forth coming issues.

Training

It is Open Choices policy that all support workers train for NVQ 3 in caring and supporting young people, this is currently offered and accessed through Bedfordshire Social Services. Currently half of Open Choice's staff have this qualification and more will be commencing there training towards the end of 2007 with the last remaining support workers taking there NVQ 3 in January 2008.

Open Choice's manager will commence her NVQ 4 Registered Managers qualification in October 2007.

Open Choice does not currently have an appraisals structure in place however this is something the management is looking at putting in place on a yearly basis.

Open Choice's risk management strategies consist of the following.

1, All clients referred to Open Choice come with Open Choice's risk assessment which is assessed by management along with Open Choice's referral procedure/papers for each client, including interviewing each potential client which completes our referral procedure.

2, All properties which Open Choice provides to its clients are fully gas certified should gas be supplied at any particular property. Monthly health and safety detailed checks are carried out in all of Open Choices properties and filed. Clients are regularly encouraged to report any new concerns to there support worker or to contact Open Choice's office. Open Choice's support staff are also regularly encouraged to report any concerns as soon as they arise.

3, All Open Choice's supporting staff are required to contact our office after a supporting session with our client to confirm that everything is fine with our client, our staff and our accommodation (lone workers policy) should there be any concerns at all then management are made aware of this through contact with the office that day.

4, Open Choice works within the guide lines of a number of policies and procedures approx 30 in total.

5, Open Choice has in its office for all staff to read at any time our Community Operational handbook which has a number of policies and protocols for staff to follow.

Referrals

Open Choice's referral rates are largely via Bedfordshire's leaving care team or direct from Bedfordshire's Commissioning Department approx eighty percent of Open Choice's referrals are from Bedfordshire. Ten percent is from Hertfordshire and the remaining ten percent is from other services.

The outcomes from these referrals excepted by Open Choice are over ninety percent successful for the first six months. During the first twelve months Open Choice is over eighty five percent successful. We support our clients through a number of our programmes (please see our website www.openchoiceproject.com)

Service User Involvement

Open Choice engages service users through the support sessions they receive. This enables them to use the resource fully through the various support programmes which are implemented to each individual's needs. Throughout support sessions our service users are continually encouraged to make choices, give their opinions and suggest ways in which they feel they could progress. Open Choice also holds 3 monthly reviews where each service user is encouraged to express their views of the service and discuss any issues regarding the service they receive. These views are recorded and copies are provided to the young person, their social worker and any other professional who has attended the review. Open Choice will continue to hold reviews at 3 monthly intervals for all service users where they will play an active part in discussing the services Open Choice provides.

Complaints

To date Open Choice has never received a complaint from any client regarding the services they receive, which we find testament to the professionalism we apply to our work. Should complaints be received from clients we have policies and procedures to follow in order to respond correctly.

Open Choice to date has never received a complaint from any outside agency or any of our property suppliers during the past three years 2005 to 2007

Partnership Arrangements

Open Choice is a private limited company which currently has no partnership arrangements. However, Open Choice does work alongside a number of other agencies relating to young people.

Health and Safety

Open Choice carries out monthly Health and Safety checks on all of its accommodation. These checks cover a comprehensive list of every aspect of each property. Any repairs or faults arising from this are immediately taken up with the relevant letting agent/landlord and remedied as soon as possible.

Open Choice currently holds a Health and Safety policy which covers the client's accommodation; risk assessments and risks to lone working staff practi

Added Value

We believe that the combined knowledge and experience of our staff team is paramount to the high success rate which we have so far achieved during the past three years.

During this time the management at Open Choice has worked very hard to establish and build upon the relationships we currently have with our accommodation providers, all of which have grown in their confidence towards this company.

In addition to the accommodation and support we provide to our clients we also provide them with access to our 24 hour advice line.

All of the accommodation that Open Choice provides is fully furnished and equipped with basic kitchen equipment and bedding, this then allows the young person to access their leaving care grant to enable them to personalise the accommodation. On the first day of being with Open Choice each client is provided with a mobile phone. Open Choice also offers weekly incentives to young people for attending all of their support sessions. Each young person receives a birthday gift and as an added incentive after six months of being with Open Choice each client is offered an activity e.g. a glider flight, a lesson on a dry ski slope, or appointment with a beautician, or something other of their choice.

Audit and Inspection

Currently Open Choice falls outside of national legislation due to not owning any of the properties we access and then offer. The reason for this falls simply to the cost of buying properties which Open Choice can not afford given the current over priced property market, therefore the only option available to us is through the private letting market. We understand that the current legislation is due to be altered in the very near future which should incorporate the operation of this company; this is welcomed by Open Choice.

Service Priorities/Issues for next year

Firstly other than self contained accommodation which Open Choice currently offers, we are aiming and planning to provide a number of small two bedroom Hostels with a rolling supporting programme's for the young people who will occupy these properties.

There are also plans to provide small two bedroom Children's homes specialising with young offenders should there be a need for local authorities to require this service.

There will be two NVQ 4 Registered Managers at Open Choice plus more of our team members acquiring the NVQ 3 In caring and supporting young people. (Open Choice's policy is to have all staff trained to NVQ level 3 before the end of 2008)

Open Choice plans to extend its current services to other areas to reach more local authorities and ultimately to be working with more young people who require the services of Open Choice Independence Ltd.

Mr Mark Reid
Managing Director