

## **Sycamore House**

### **YOUNG PEOPLE'S GUIDE**

#### **Welcome to Sycamore House**

This is a guide for all young people who come to stay in Sycamore, and we hope it provides you with answers to some questions that might be making you anxious about your stay with us.

Sycamore is a six-bedded unit for young people of mixed gender aged 10 to 17 years. We offer medium to long-term placements for young people who are unable to live with their own family or foster care. In some circumstances, Sycamore House will take an emergency admission of a young person where it has been agreed that Sycamore House can meet their needs. This will be decided after the unit manager has spoken with the Safeguarding and Placement Services / Registered Provider. These type of placements are rare are will be risk assessed to make sure all of the young people in residence needs have been taken into consideration. We only accepts referrals from North Tyneside Council as the placing authority; we do not accept referrals from other areas.

Your stay with us will usually be between six weeks and two years, where during this time the staff at Sycamore will work with you to find the best way forward. To help you do this you will have a named key worker. Your key worker will be responsible for organising and attending meetings with you and will work individually with you and your family (where this is possible). This does not mean that you can only talk to your key worker, you can speak to all of the staff at Sycamore.

## How To Find Us

From Killingworth – bus no 356

From Whitley Bay – bus no 810, 301, 302, 326,

From Wallsend – bus no 313,301,302,

From Howdon – 313, 302, 301,

We are also between Meadow Well and North Shields metro stations

## Some Useful Numbers

Parents

Family

Friends

Social Worker

Sycamore Office 6438909 / 643 8913

Manager – Susan Blake – 643 8912

Sycamore Young People's Phone 643 8908

\*All Young People will be given the number of their social worker so that they can speak directly with them at any time.

Children's Participation Team – Toni McMullen 643 8215

Complaints Officer: 0191 643 2280

Mentor Project: 0191-643 8880

Young People's Advocacy Worker 0191 643 8881

Ofsted: 03001231231

## **Visitors**

Our door is always open to your family and friends, and we encourage you to maintain the friendships and relationships that you had before you came to stay with us while you live here.

What we do ask is that people who do visit you are respectful that they are visiting the home of other young people and that they behave in a manner and in a way that does not upset or compromise the safety of others.

If we find that people are not observing this we will ask them to leave immediately and they will not be welcome back. It is best that you speak to a member of staff when you want to invite a friend for tea or just to visit so that we can make sure that this is an enjoyable and positive time for you.

## **Key workers**

Key workers are responsible for making sure that your admission process goes well and that you have everything that you need when you first come to us. They also attend meetings with you and are responsible for compiling reports. When any report is written, you will be asked for your views and because you will have been part of regular key work sessions with your keyworker, you will know what is being written and why; and you will have the opportunity of putting your own words in your own section of the report.

This makes it easier for us to plan ahead and most importantly that you are a part of all decisions that are made about your future. You may also have a co keyworker who will often be there when your key worker is not at work.

## Health

Here in Sycamore we like to make sure that all of the young people that we care for are healthy. We do this by making appointments with your doctor, dentist, optician and any one else that you see regular. You can use these appointments to raise any concerns that you have or to gain information. If you do not feel that you can ask questions yourself, your key worker will support you with this. You will be given toiletries that will be for your use only. These will help you with your personal routine of brushing your teeth and showering/bathing daily.

If you are allergic to anything or you like a certain brand you need to tell us so that we can make sure you have what you need.

## Staying Safe

We all have a responsibility to do everything we can to make sure that you are safe. We do this in various ways. When you first come to stay with us we will look at the information that we get from your social worker and also any information from other people who know you including your family. We will also be asking you if you think you are able to keep yourself safe. It may be that adults say one thing and you say another but don't worry we can work together on putting in support where there are any worries or concerns.

We use this information to complete risk assessments.

If you go missing from the placement we have to use these risk assessments to decide whether we should inform the police. A copy of the process we follow in this case has been put in your welcome pack and you will have to discuss this in more detail with your key worker.

We will also provide you with some links to other agencies' should you want them, who are there to support young people who runaway and you can get these from your keyworker.

## **Culture**

We all have our own culture. A culture is something that we believe in, a way of life. Whether you were born in Newcastle, New Delhi or New South Wales, we all have a culture that we identify with. This can be related to the football team that we support, or a way of living that says we belong. It is important that you always respect the culture of another person and that you don't behave in a way that knowingly upsets another person.

## **Religion**

It is important that you are able to follow your religion during your stay with us. If there are any dietary restrictions or rituals that your religion requires you to respect, let us know and we will do everything to make sure that you can respect your chosen religion. If religion is something that you have not thought about much before, you can speak to your key worker if it is something that you would like to know more about. We hope that you respect the religion and culture of other people and that while this may or may not be something that you consider important to you, that you consider what is important to other people.

## **Activities**

While you live with us we like to build in some fun times, and possibly you have an interest in a certain activity that you would like to join or re-join. Activities are not an automatic right although we do like young people to join in activities in order to broaden your social network and the skills that you need to do this. These should be part of your individualised care plans and rewards incentive that you compile with your key worker and something that you look forward to each week.

## Education

Here at Sycamore we believe that education is life long and you will continue to learn throughout your life.

The staff here understand that sometimes attending school is the last thing on your mind, but we will do everything we can to support you through this. All young people have the right to an education and have a named school as well as a personal education plan. This is sometimes called a PEP and is completed by both your social worker and your teacher. You can see your PEP at any time and you should be part of putting this together.

If you do not have a named school for whatever reason we will do our very best to make sure that you are provided with some education provision. We will expect you to work with us on this and share your views on which school you attend and which lessons you enjoy or find difficult. This is very important to us so it is essential that you share these views with us.

And what better reason for attending school (*other than getting a job and making money when you're older!*) than earning money for going! While you're with us you will have the opportunity to earn money through your very own 'Learn to Earn' incentive scheme. This can be saved for you, (*a bit like a building society, but you don't get interest!*) and you can save for something special that you want and go out with your key worker and spend, spend, spend!!

## Smoking and Substance Use

Sycamore operates a no smoking policy. This means that while we understand that this is a very important time in your life and that smoking maybe a part of your life in a big way; we will in no way encourage or support smoking of cigarettes or any other substance. If you do smoke, you will have to smoke away from the building, which means walking down the street or at least away from the front area of the building.

The use of any substance, whether it be aerosol, legal highs or another illegal substance will be taken seriously and there will be consequences of bringing such substances onto the premises. Remember, we have a duty to care for all young people who are in our care and we cannot ignore the use of substances in any way in order to promote the safety of all young people.

We do have links with other people who can offer support around use of substances and we would encourage all young people to access these services in order to promote their well-being and in order for them to be considering the risks that are associated with certain activities.

## Complaints

If you do feel that you are unhappy with something while you are staying in Sycamore you can speak to any member of staff who will then speak to a member of the management team. They will record that you have made a complaint and will try to resolve the problem. If you feel that you cannot speak to any one in Sycamore, then you can use your complaints form that you were given when you first came to Sycamore.

Once this is filled in by yourself, you can post it and you will have a response from the independent complaints officer in North Tyneside Council who will then deal with your complaint. The number is 0191 643 2280.

While we will do everything that we can to resolve problems, it is the responsibility of everyone who lives and works here to respect each other and their individual rights and to accept that at some time there may be a difference of opinion where we have to agree to differ and to respect the views of others.

You can also make a complaint to Ofsted whose number you will find in your 'useful numbers'.

If you have a concern or complaint about anything at Sycamore you can either:

- Tell a member of staff
- Talk to the Manager (Susan)
- Speak to your Social Worker
- Out of Hours (evenings and weekends) you can call 0191 2006800
- Contact Ofsted on 03001231231 or by e-mail at [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) or by post to Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

## Pocket Money

You will be given pocket money every Monday and Friday. The amount you will get will depend on how old you are. At the moment young people 10-12 years get £6.00 in total per week; those 13-14 years get £8.00 per week; those 15 years and over get £10.00 per week.

You cannot borrow from another day's pocket money and money is only handed out when you have completed any task set and your bedroom is tidy and laundry is brought down to the laundry room. We like young people to have tea before they get their pocket money so don't be surprised when your asked to *eat your tea* first!

## Behaviour Responses/Sanctions

If you have damaged property or you have misused funds that have been given to you, you may be asked to make a contribution towards the replacement or repair of property. If you have damaged something staff may ask you to help repair the damage, each case is different and you need to be talking to your key worker about how you want to repair the damage. Sometimes you may have a planned activity and you may begin to behave in a way that makes it unsafe for you to take part, in this case you can be sanctioned an activity, meaning that you miss out this time. Usually you will have the opportunity of working towards another activity very soon. This is not meant in any way as a punishment but is there to ensure that all young people are safe on any activity and that their enjoyment is not going to be spoiled in any way by behaviour.

## Independent Visitors

Every month we have a visit from an independent visitor from a company called NYAS. These visits are called **Reg 33 visits**. These visits look at how well we provide a service to the young people that we care for, what we do well and if there is anything that we can be doing better. It also provides you with an opportunity to speak to someone about your experience of being in care.

We also have inspections from **Ofsted** who come from the government to make sure that we care for children properly. We like to have the views of young people so we hope that you will talk to people about how you feel about your stay in Sycamore.

## Participation

Within all of the children's homes in North Tyneside you will have the opportunity to share your views and have your say on how the homes are run and to discuss any changes that you think need to be made. You can share your views in a number of ways.

You are encouraged to attend Young People's meetings which are held roughly every two weeks. Susan, the manager, also holds 'breakfast banter' meetings in the mornings with young people to discuss their views and any issues they may have.

Your views are very important to us and these are shared with senior managers so that they know what you think of the service good or bad and any suggestions you may have on how to improve the service and you will be given feedback.

You will also be given an opportunity to tell us each month what you think of things like food, bedrooms, do you feel you can talk to someone etc.

You also have links to the Children's Participation Team the Young Mayor and Children in Care Council who support all Young People in the borough.

## And Finally.....

Coming into care and living with people who you don't know and away from your own family can be distressing. We hope that this guide has answered some of the questions that may have made you anxious about coming to stay with us.

Everyone at Sycamore hopes that your stay with us is both enjoyable and beneficial and that you leave us with many happy memories, and when you do move on from us, never be a stranger, your time with us has been important to us all. Please come back from time to time to let us know how you are doing.