

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Organisation Improvement Framework

Review/Assessment Report

Commercial in Confidence



Family Care Associates Ltd

Leyland, Lancashire

**UNDERTAKEN BY
Andrew Mackey**

On behalf of Investors in People North West

**LAST DAY ON SITE
5th November 2009**



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Introduction

Family Care Associates (FCA) was founded in 1988, with the aim of helping children in care to achieve their full potential and to live enriched and rewarding lives. This is achieved through a number of different approaches depending on need. FCA run 7 residential homes, a family placement service (Families@Family Care) and one education establishment which provides day education. Where appropriate the organisation can also provide therapeutic services for children through its own Therapeutic Services Department and through a service level agreement with a partner organisation.

The organisation was first successfully assessed against the Investors in People standard in 1998 and their last review was undertaken in November 2006.

The staff list provided by the organisation showed a total of 139 staff, all of whom were considered to be within scope for this review. A sample of 22 was selected for interview. This represents 16% of the staff team and is in line with IIP UK guidelines which suggest a sample size between 10% and 20% for an organisation of this size. The assessor visited both the Head Office in Leyland and the Family Placement Service based near Shrewsbury.

Outcome(s)

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for assessors by Investors in People UK, the Assessor was satisfied beyond any doubt that Family Care Associates Limited continues to meet the requirements of the Investors in People Standard. On behalf of Investors in People North West the Assessor would like to congratulate the organisation on this achievement.

Objectives

It was agreed with the client that the review would focus on three key objectives. These were:

Objective 1

Provide a commercially viable and profitable network of services to meet the present and emerging needs of Social services, Education and Health Departments for children in the public care.

Objective 2

Offer purchasers value for money in line with their 'best value' objectives

Objective 3

Enhance the life chances of children we work with by actively promoting their education and health opportunities

Findings against the objectives

Objective 1

Provide a commercially viable and profitable network of services to meet the present and emerging needs of Social services, Education and Health Departments for children in the public care.

Areas of strength

- Staff interviewed demonstrated a clear understanding of what the business is about, what's needed now and what will be needed in the future. Some specific examples were provided to show that the organisation understands the changing nature of demand – for example Westfield moving into provision for children with mental health issues, linking in with Cheadle Hospital and providing appropriate training for staff in dealing with the issues that are likely to occur. There is a general recognition that the nature of need of children in residential settings is changing. As more support is provided for community placements, those children who do go into residential homes are likely to be those with more challenging behaviours.
- Effective management is in place and most staff were able to confirm that they are actively involved, at a level that is appropriate to their role, in the planning of services
- Training and development needs are identified through a range of methods and identified needs are met where possible. Staff provided lots of positive comments about the ease of access to training and the level of encouragement that they receive from managers. One commented '*I wouldn't be in this job now if my manager hadn't encouraged me to do training.*'

Recommendations

Hidden for reasons of commercial confidentiality

Objective 2

Offer purchasers value for money in line with their 'best value' objectives

Areas of strength

- The organisation appears to have a very open and inclusive culture which encourages all staff to be actively involved in raising ideas and suggestions for improvements. Staff seem to feel comfortable and confident in doing this. Ownership and personal responsibility are encouraged and staff described a 'no blame' culture, where they feel it is OK to admit when they have made a mistake. One staff member described being '*allowed the space to learn*', while another talked of '*having permission to make mistakes*'. Several were able to give examples of methods used to encourage ideas and suggestions (eg via team meetings, 1:1 sessions with managers and via informal means).
- All staff interviewed were able to describe how ownership and responsibility are encouraged and how everyone is encouraged to make decisions. Delivering effective, value for money services is clearly important and this is understood by staff.
- All staff who were asked were able to confirm that they feel that their contribution is both recognised and valued. Many were able to explain how they derive and maintain a sense of value – examples included being asked for opinions, being supported through difficult periods and by receiving thanks and praise from colleagues and from managers.

Recommendations

- *Hidden for reasons of commercial confidentiality*

Objective 3

Enhance the life chances of children we work with by actively promoting their education and health opportunities

Areas of strength

- Staff interviewed showed a high degree of motivation and commitment and a passion of the work that they do. All who were asked were able to explain how they make a difference and how their contribution is recognised and valued. There was also a great deal of loyalty shown for the company itself. One commented '*I wouldn't want to work for anyone else*'.
- There is a clear and effective focus on the needs and interests of the children with whom the company works. This is recognised and appreciated by staff. Examples were offered to illustrate this – for example, refusing to take a referral (and therefore losing money) because the referral would disrupt the dynamics of the existing resident group.
- Staff clearly believe that they make a difference and many commented that this is what keeps them working here. However, there is also a competitive

streak evident, with staff wanting to achieve more. One commented that *'however well we are doing we could always do that bit better'*.

Recommendations

- The company could consider ways to ensure that learning and development activity is always measured against objectives (either for individual staff, individual children, specific staff teams or for the company as a whole). This can help make sure that training and development remains focussed on the ultimate outcomes (ie improving the live chances of the children that the company works with).

General Feedback

Areas of strength

- The company appears to offer a high degree of support to its staff and several specific examples were offered to illustrate this. Staff appreciate this – especially when the support is offered to help them through particularly difficult periods. This helps to build and maintain a sense of value for staff and to generate long-term loyalty to the company.
- The organisation seems to have achieved the difficult task of balancing the caring approach necessary in this field with the commercial awareness and business approaches needed to succeed in a difficult and changing market. Several staff recognised this and felt that this was one of the strengths of the organisation, and one of the things that attracts and retains staff.

Recommendations

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Investors in People Topic Map

Business Strategy	Learning & Development Strategy	People Management Strategy	Leadership & Management Strategy	Management Effectiveness	Recognition & Reward	Involvement & Empower	Learning & Development	Performance Measurement	Continuous Improvement
The Standard - Top Managers should make sure (and their people should confirm) that:									
<p>Organisation has vision/purpose strategy and plan</p> <p>People involved in the planning</p> <p>Rep.groups (where app.) are consulted when developing plans</p>	<p>Learning priorities are clear and linked to the plan</p> <p>Resources for learning and development are made available</p> <p>The impact will be evaluated</p>	<p>People are encouraged to contribute ideas</p> <p>There is equality of opportunity for development and support</p>	<p>Managers are clear about the capabilities they need to lead, manage and develop people</p> <p>People know what effective managers should be doing</p>	<p>Managers are effective and can describe how they lead, manage and develop their people</p>	<p>People believe they make a difference</p> <p>People believe their contribution is valued</p>	<p>Ownership and responsibility are encouraged</p> <p>People are involved in decision-making</p>	<p>People's learning and development needs are met</p>	<p>Investment in learning can be quantified</p> <p>Impact can be demonstrated</p>	<p>Evaluation results in improvements to people strategies and management</p>
Your Choice - Top Managers should make sure (and their people should confirm) that:									

Clear core values relate to vision and strategy	The learning and development strategy builds capability	The recruitment process is fair, efficient and effective	Leadership and management capabilities for now and the future are defined	Managers are role models of leadership, teamwork and knowledge sharing	Reward and recognition strategies link to business strategy and are externally benchmarked	Effective consultation and involvement is part of culture	Learning and development resources are used effectively	The contribution of people strategies is measured and evaluated	Self review and information from external review are used
Key performance indicators are used to improve performance	Plans take account of learning styles	A diverse, talented workforce is created	Managers are helped to acquire these capabilities	Coaching is part of the culture	Representative groups are consulted (where appropriate)	People are supported and trusted to make decisions	Learning is an everyday activity	Impact on key performance indicators can be described	Effective feedback methods are used to understand people's views on how they are managed
Social responsibility is taken into account in the strategy	People help make decisions about their own learning	A work-life balance strategy meets the needs of its people	Leadership and management strategy link to business strategy, taking account of external good practice	People are helped to develop their careers	What motivates people is understood	Knowledge and information are shared	Innovative and flexible approaches to learning and development are used	Performance improves as a result	Internal and external benchmarking are used
People and stakeholders are involved in strategy development	Learning and development is innovative and flexible	Constructive feedback is valued	Everyone is encouraged to develop leadership capabilities	There is a culture of openness and trust	Success is Celebrated	People committed to success	People are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential	Career prospects improve	People's views on how they are managed improves
	There is a culture of continuous learning	The structure makes the most of people's talents			Benefits strategy goes beyond legal requirements	There is culture of continuous improvement	All learning is valued/celebrated and is an everyday activity	Flexible and effective approaches to measuring return on investment are used	People's views on how they are managed improves
					Colleagues' achievements are recognised	People can challenge the way things work	Mentoring is used	ROI in people is reported to stakeholders	People believe it's a great place to work
						There is a sense of ownership and pride in working for the organisation	Personal development is supported		

Traffic lighted (Red, Amber and Green) – See Key on Evidence Matrix

Blue – Other Observations

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Objective/Priority/Issues	Suggested Development Activity	Client Action	Assessor Support	IIP Centre Support
Clarify the skills and knowledge that managers need to operate effectively	Consider the development of competency frameworks or similar approaches to identify and document the skills, knowledge and experience needed by those with management responsibility at all levels of the organisation	Yes	To be advised	To be advised
Ensure consistency in evaluating the impact of learning and development activity	Consider processes to agree specific learning objectives prior to training and using these post-event to evaluate effectiveness	Yes	No	No
Ensure staff fully appreciate the need for value for money	Review the appraisal and supervision processes and consider whether value for money could be included as an area of performance management	Yes	No	No
Link learning and development to specific objectives where appropriate	Review processes for applying for training and for approval	Yes	No	No
Provide administrative skills training programme for staff	Consider establishing a generic admin skills programme open to all staff	Yes	To be advised	To be advised
Address concerns about line management arrangements for admin staff in Shrewsbury	Review current and potential arrangements and communicate outcomes to staff involved	Yes	No	No
Address concerns re structure and duration of induction	Review current arrangements and identify potential improvements. Consider risk assessment (danger of losing potentially valuable staff)	Yes	No	No
Review LSA roles	Consider potential for upgrading one or more LSAs to TA role	Yes	No	No

NB 'To be advised' indicates those areas where assessor support or support from the IIP Centre might be appropriate – client to consider and advise if assistance and support is required

Conclusion

The organisation is an open and welcoming place and staff on both sites were cooperative and helpful, helping the process run smoothly. The review was an enjoyable one to work on and I am grateful to those who made it so. I am delighted that the review was completed successfully and hope that the recommendations offer some useful insights that will help the company continue to be successful.

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