



investing in children

# **NSF Agenda Day Report 2003**

## Children's National Service Framework

*Investing in Children agreed to hold two Agenda Days to find out young people's views of health and social services and to explore ways of improving services with the active participation of young people. We asked questions based around those in Appendix A but we wanted to create an 'open agenda' and give young people the opportunity to talk about anything they felt was important to them.*

*The days involved 25 young people aged between 12 and 19 years and were held on -*

*Agenda Day 1 - 24<sup>th</sup> August 2002 @ Abbey Sports Centre, Pity Me and  
Agenda Day 2 @ Investing In Children, Pity Me 18<sup>th</sup> December 2002*

### Agenda Day 1 - 24<sup>th</sup> August 2002

#### Workshop 1

##### **1. Describe a happy, healthy and safe young person.**

- They would have a nice Family.
- They would have money.
- Plenty of friends.
- Access to leisure services.
- They would live in a safe environment.
- There would be close links with the police.
- There would be safe guards against bullies at school.
- They would go to a school where there was friendly staff.
- They would take part in out of school activities e.g. self defence classes.
- Leisure centres would be easier for them to use e.g. cheaper, friendly staff, marketing campaign.
- Doctors surgeries would be more accessible to them e.g. email.
- No classical music in the doctor's surgeries.
- There would be more school nurses.
- Access to sexual health information in schools e.g. websites, link on school website.
- Contraception mailing service.
- More discreet places for family planning clinics.

##### **2. Name three things that need changing in your area that will help young people grow up and remain healthy, happy and safe.**

- More youth clubs.
- Clean up parks.

- Fencing around schools.
- Clean up dog dirt.
- More police.
- Clean up area.
- Organise community group trips.
- Drop in courses to learn basic skills.
- Being allowed in shops in all conditions i.e. no signs that say "only three children allowed in the shop at a time".
- Better transport.
- Lower bus fares.
- Cleaner public transport.
- More unusual leisure activities e.g. fencing.

## Workshop 2

### 1. How would you describe a 'good' service or type of support?

- 24/ 7 or more flexible hours.
- Friendly reception staff.
- Confidential.
- Approachable professionals.
- Continued consultation and participation.
- Ideally located.
- Not closed during school holidays.
- Services specific to young people.
- Make full use of existing services.
- Improve job centres, friendly staff, and updated equipment.
- Free services.
- Make it easier for young people to access services.
- Publicise the service so young people are aware of them.

### 2. If you had to list three most important things that you think people need from a service or type of support, what would they be?

- Friendly staff e.g. if you go to the doctors you are depressed and the doctor is not friendly it might make you worse.
- Publicity/ access. Young people need to know where the services are so they can access them.
- Well organised and a full use of resources.

### Marketing

- Leafletting in schools.
- TV.
- Radio.
- Newsletters.
- Internet.

- Web links e.g. BBC.
- Posters in schools and youth clubs, libraries, shops, sides of buses.
- Local newspapers.

### **Involvement from parents and Carers.**

- Minor involvement but depends on situation.
- Different between male and female.

### **People in rural areas.**

- Telephone.
- School.
- Free taxi service if you lived in an area you couldn't get to a clinic etc.
- Staff from different ethnic minorities/ faiths.

## **Agenda Day 2 – 18<sup>th</sup> December 2002**

In this agenda day we focused on the **Gaps** that were identified and tried to come up with some practical suggestions.

1. How can services support children and young people during key transitional phases in their lives?
2. How can children and young people participate in designing and challenging the quality of services?
3. How can services/ professionals support children and young people to keep safe?
4. How can services/ professionals support the emotional health and well-being of children and young people? (taking into account situations such as: divorce, bullying, bereavement, friendships, relationships, racism, academic pressure, peer pressure).
5. What behavioural boundaries do children and young people think is acceptable i.e. bed time, meal times, staying out, using alcohol, smoking and other drugs?
6. What do children and young people think about other services/ facilities being delivered at their school for them (i.e. would they use them), or other community members visiting their school to access services there?
7. We would like practical suggestions from children and young people about how social care services can meet their needs.
8. How can services meet the needs of boys and girls?
9. What do children and young people want from their relationships with their fathers and mothers, in particular how do children think their parent/s can support them in accessing services?

10. What are children and young people's reflections on services they have used in the past i.e. looked after children's views on public or foster care.
11. What are young people's views on the parent held record?
12. To what extent do children and young people want to be able to self-manage health conditions and how can we help them to do so?
13. We would like to ask 16-19 year olds:
  - Where do they get emotional support and advice from?
  - Are there enough opportunities to access physical activities/ peer relationships? (leisure services/ youth clubs).
  - If young people are interested in embarking on training for public health/ social care careers, what would attract them and what would put them off? What are the barriers that exist and what would help?

## Workshop 1

### 1. What behavioural boundaries do you think are acceptable?

#### Bedtime

- What time you should go to bed depends on the age or on the individual.
- It should be different for school nights and weekends and holidays. Later on a weekend because you don't have school the next day.
- When you are older than 11 you should just go to bed when you are tired.
- If you just went to bed when you were tired, younger kids would stay up just for fun.
- Should have a choice and you should be able to negotiate with parents within reason.
- 10 year olds should go to bed at 8.30 – 9.30.
- Parents should be able to tell when child is tired and make them go to bed then.
- The group said that at age 9+ you should be able to decide for yourself when you go to bed.
- If you are forced to go to bed then you might not go to sleep straight away, but if you go to bed because you want to then you will sleep because you have chosen to.
- The group agreed that 9-10 hours sleep a night is the minimum they need as opposed to the usual 8 that is recommended.
- Parents make children go to bed at a certain time so that they will be up early enough for school, because they want you to stay healthy, to get you out of their way and to show authority.

## **Food**

- What you eat should be your own choice, however parents are more concerned for your wellbeing so will serve healthy food as opposed to junk which most young people would eat as their choice.
- If you want to be vegetarian you should be allowed to choose for yourself when you are 14, or when you are mature enough to make an informed choice.
- Parents should respect the fact that you have chosen not to eat meat and try to cater for it as opposed to forcing you to eat meat.

## **Alcohol**

- You should be allowed to drink when you are younger than 18 on special occasions and in a controlled environment.
- Because it is not sold to U18's then it is more attractive to do it illegally.
- If you aren't allowed to drink by your parents then you are more likely to do it on street corners behind their backs.
- The age for buying alcohol should be either lowered to 16 or there should be no age limit at all like in France.

## **Smoking**

- It is disgusting.
- It should be banned in public altogether.

## **2. What do young people want from their relationship with their parents?**

- Friendship
- More pocket money – based on the amount of housework you do.
- Attention
- Love and care
- Mutual respect
- No more saying “because I said so”
- They should have to say please and thank you
- How they were brought up influences the way they bring their children up.
- Parental duty to keep child safe.
- When you reach 11 you should be allowed to take full responsibility for your own emotional and physical wellbeing.
- Unconditional love even if you are in prison or on drugs.
- Knowing you can go to them for anything.
- They shouldn't shelter you from things emotionally.

- Parents shouldn't stay together if they are unhappy they should get a divorce because arguing isn't healthy for the child, neither is unhappy parents.
- Parents should be honest and explain what is going on as opposed to trying to tell lies to hide things from you.
- Parents should talk with each other about problems and involve the children.
- When you are too young to decide where you want to live then your opinions should be taken into account and listened to because you can't decide to move out. Example was given of parent who smoked, children both went and said it bothered them and parent said its my house I'll do what I like.
- Parents can help young people to access services by giving them lifts.

### **3. How can children and young people have their say on the design of services and how can they have their say about quality?**

- Through organisations such as Investing in Children.
- Meet with groups of young people.
- When working with young people you need to take into account
  - ◆ Their age
  - ◆ Different approaches
  - ◆ Consider emotions
  - ◆ Make it fun, if its not fun no-one will want to go.
  - ◆ It should be hip and happenin'
  - ◆ The place
  - ◆ Time, young people are busy
  - ◆ Effort
  - ◆ Food and drink
  - ◆ There should be a genuine prospect of change
  - ◆ Use pay as an incentive
  - ◆ Other incentives.
- Questionnaires are out of fashion and not personal.
- Face to face discussion as interviews tend to be controlled by the interviewer.
- Groups: advertise, schools, colleges, youth clubs, Connexions.

### **4. How can young people be supported emotionally?**

- Counselor
- School nurse
- Bullying support groups
- Peer support groups.

## Workshop 2

In **Workshop 2** we wanted to explore how different services intervened in the various stages in the lives of young people. We looked at –

Starting nursery  
Starting primary and junior school  
Secondary school  
Further education  
Puberty  
Leaving home  
Being looked after

We started by making a list of all the services we could think of and then talked about our experiences and how things might be improved and focused on the following -

Health Inspectors	Careers advice
Nurseries	Special educational needs
Schools/Teachers	Drug education
Opticians	Sex education
Doctors Nurses	Parenting classes
Dentists	Health advisors
Educational Tests	Social workers
Educational support	Educational welfare
Injections	Telephone help lines
Healthy eating advice	

### **Health tests and injections**

From a very age young people talked about having tests carried out without knowing what they were for and no one fully explaining what was happening. One person told of her experience of being told she was being injected with a disease so that she wouldn't catch other diseases. People talked about things that happen in school like having to queue up in corridors waiting to see a doctor when you don't know what it's for which can be very intimidating.

### **Stress**

Almost everyone agreed that school could be a very stressful place with lots of pressure placed on you to do well. Most teachers don't realise how much worse they can make life for young people. Some young people said that their health had suffered because of stress at school. Most teachers are not very good at dealing with bullying and often make matters worse. More teachers should be specially trained in order to deal with the bullying problem that **every** school has. Not all bullies are pupils some teachers are also bullies and should not be working with young people.

## **Education support**

Young people who are off school for long periods of time need proper educational support rather than just having work sent home. Teachers should be able to go out to homes and support young people otherwise they will be at a disadvantage and will fall back in their education.

## **Healthy eating**

School food was discussed and most people think it is wrong to go on about healthy eating while serving expensive unhealthy food. Why do adults think that all young people want to eat is greasy chips and burgers all of the time and why is the healthy option on the school menu **more** expensive than the unhealthy option, surely it should **less** expensive to encourage people to try it.

## **Leisure**

Most young people thought that they would like to take more exercise if they had the chance. At school if you want to play football or netball you have to be part of the school team but if you are not very good or just learning you don't get the chance to participate. Leisure centres are expensive and many are not welcoming to young people.

## **School nurse**

A lot of young people would not like to be seen going to the school nurse and would rather go to somewhere more private in their own time. Some young people thought that the school nurses are not very well trained, are never there when you need them, can't do anything or give you any painkillers anyway because they don't have your health records. Some young people had experience of teachers not knowing about the medical condition of some pupils, which, with conditions like diabetes, could put young people at risk.

## **Advice**

Most of the advice young people need should not be provided in school. Young people should be able to choose to go where they want to for advice about careers, health, relationships, sex education and advice about STI's instead of being told by teachers. Most people would rather go to friends and family for advice for some things but not others. Some had experience of teachers not being confidential. Most of the advice we receive about our health is confusing, young people should be involved in the design of leaflets and posters.

## **Conclusion - What we would like to see**

Young people of all ages have the right to have things explained to them before they undergo treatment and tests. It's no good just saying this is good for you and expecting us to be happy with that. We also need to be given choices about when and where services are available. Schools are not always the best places for some services. Services should work together so that we get the best out of them, for example if a young person has diabetes and goes to school every teacher should speak to the doctor so they know about this and be aware of what to do in an emergency.

*The Investing In Children NSF Agenda Days' were organised by Ashleigh Sangster and Claire Troman, the report was compiled by Claire Troman.*