

# Multi Agency Looked After Partnership Agenda Day

October 2005

On Tuesday the 25<sup>th</sup> October, we held an agenda day at the Investing In Children Office at 1.30pm till 3.30pm; the purpose of the agenda day was to gather young people looked after views on the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership Strategy and decision-making. The five outcomes are Staying Safe, Being Healthy, Making a positive contribution, Economic Wellbeing and Enjoy and Achieve.

MALAP is related to the five outcomes from every child matters, so in order for the agenda day to be related more to the five outcomes we planned the agenda day around the five outcomes. We used a coloured system to point out direct question replies (blue coloured pen) and blank sheet answers (red coloured pen), E.g. **I don't like my social worker** and **blue** being directed questions answers e.g. what is it like to go for a medical? **I think I should not have to go for a medical because no one else has to.**

We split the agenda day into two parts, the first workshop was the blank sheet agenda (part 1), followed by the 4 questions below (part 2), the aim of this workshop was to get the young people to think about issues that affect them and what stops them from doing things that they enjoy, it also ties in with the normalising debate, leading a 'normal' life.

What does it take to be healthy and happy for you? What stops you from being healthy and happy?

How are you kept safe? What do you think stops you from being safe?

How do you have fun? What prevents you from having fun?

What would you like to be when you are older? What can stop you from getting there?

What do you need in your life to be safe, healthy and do well?

Then after this workshop the young people had a 15-minute break, after the break, the young people went into the second workshop, the 'Normalising Debate' we described what it the debate is and if any one could think what a normal life to them is, the normalising debate lead to issues on stigma and having a 'normal' life (part3). Part four of the normalising debate was an audit tool of questions, this was given to the young people, if the young people did not want to fill in this audit, we would go through the questions with the young people. The aim of this was to list some of the services available to the young people and see what they thought of the services that are provided, this included the Independent reviewing officers and looked after reviews, leisure services i.e. Max Card, Medical services and checks and any other services that they could think off.

The young people were paid a fee of £10 for attending the agenda day and if they had any travelling expenses we reimbursed the young people for travelling.

# MALAP Agenda Day Programme

**1.30pm – 1.45pm – Introduction**

**1.45pm – 2.30pm- ‘Blank Sheet Agenda’**

**Good Points, Bad Points and Changes you would like to see!**

What does it take to be healthy and happy for you? What stops you from being healthy and happy? (Being healthy)

How are you kept safe? What do you think stops you from being safe? (Staying safe)

How do you have fun? What prevents you from having fun? (Enjoy and Achieve)

What would you like to be when you are older? What can stop you from getting there? (Making a Positive Contribution)

What do you need in your life to be safe, healthy and do well? (Economic wellbeing)

**2.30pm – 2.45pm break**

**2.45pm - 3.25pm:** The ‘Normalising Debate’ stigma, leading a normal life etc.

**Thank you, for attending the agenda day and I hope it wasn't too boring. Your views are important.**

## **'Blank sheet agenda'**

### **Group 1:**

#### **Part 1**

##### **Good Points:**

- They let us have lots of pocket money.
- Get computers worth.
- They take you on activities.
- You can earn extra money each week.
- They let you see you parents.
- I see my social worker at home.

##### **Bad points:**

- Social services are crap.
- They are thick.
- They promise you things and never stick to their word.
- They don't listen.
- When you want to talk to them they are never there.
- "I want to go somewhere, I have to get a bus but if she wants to go somewhere then she can get a lift" (residential).
- I don't see my social worker a lot only every 2 months.
- "If my social worker wants a word with me she will come, but if I want a word with her she wont come"
- At my looked after review my social worker was there for 40 minutes. I didn't get a chance to speak to them.
- I have had 6 social workers since I was 1 years old.
- CATS are crap.
- Staff members make stuff up.
- I am billed for breakages (residential).
- They do not listen.
- My mates aren't allowed in the home (residential).
- Not allowed any biscuits before tea or any meal.

##### **Changes:**

- Not have them.
- To let you know more.
- Visits with my family.
- Not as many punishments. (Foster Care, residential)
- They should not take you away.
- They should not take things off you.
- Let us have more activities.
- We would like money for our birthday.

#### **Part 2**

**What does it take to be healthy and happy for you? What stops you from being healthy and happy?**

- Let us do what we want.
- Rock climbing
- Football.
- Travelling around.
- Let us go to the gym.
- Anger Management.

### **How do you have fun? What prevents you from having fun?**

#### Having fun

- Going out with friends.
- Playing computer games.
- Watch Television.
- Getting drunk now and again.
- Go out with my mates
- I travel to Stanley crook.

#### Stops you having fun

- Staff not letting you out.
- Staff taking your belongings.
- Makes you have computer time.
- Don't let you go very far.
- Bedtimes are too early.
- Have to be in at a certain time.
- People should not annoy you.
- People walk into the centre.
- The children's home prevents me from having any fun.
- They can't have a laugh. (Residential)
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### **How are you kept safe? What do you think stops you from being safe?**

- They don't let you out.
- If they think you are in trouble they call the police.
- Carers keep you safe.
- I am friends with everyone in towlaw.
- Staff are ok I know they cant hit me.
- I have problems when I go to Sunnyside.
- They take the piss out of me when I go there because they know I am in care.

### **What would you like to be when you are older? What can stop you from choosing your career?**

#### My career in the future

- F1 racing x2
- Footballer.
- Computer man.
- Horse instructor.

- Rich.
- Police Officer
- Hit man.

What stops you and your carer path?

- Carers.
- Not letting me do what I want.
- Get caught.
- When I am being naughty they wont let you do what they want.
- My family are pissing me off all the time. They are always nagging me. When I feel suicidal they don't nag.

**Group 2:**

**Part 1**

**Good points:**

- Free driving lessons.
- Activities paid for.
- Get a flat.
- Grants.
- Making friends.

**Bad Points:**

- Don't get to choose whom you live with.
- Health checks.
- Pocket money. } Amount
- Clothing allowance. } Amount
- Time you have to come in.
- Can't sleep out.
- Can't stand older boyfriends.
- Smoking they force me to quit.
- They have too many rules.
- In general I get looked down at.
- Keep a record of every single activity done in the day e.g. toilet.
- Review meetings.
- Where meetings are held.
- Treat differently.
- Meetings are inconvenient
- Getting moved around a lot.
- Being removed from my parents.
- Carers are not interested in young people.
- Carers insult my parents.

**Changes:**

- Would like a constant social worker.

- Social workers need to show young people respect and not be judgemental towards young people constantly.
- Change all bad points e.g. staying out longer on a night.

## **Part 2**

### **What does it take to be healthy and happy for you? What stops you from being healthy and happy?**

- Getting moved around.
- Given regular meals.
- Get Doctors appointment when needed.
- They always think something is wrong so you can never be happy.
- Discuss your problems with their family members.

### **What would you like to be when you are older? What can stop you from choosing your career?**

- Money.
- Education
- People you live with lack of encouragement, want you to do what they want.
- Emotional background, which can affect confidence.
- Move round schools, which cause me to miss work, do work again and fall behind at school.
- Not a lot of encouragement.

### **How are you kept safe? What do you think stops you from being safe?**

- If I'm late they phone the police, who then follow me.
- I have to come in at embarrassing times, half past eight at fifteen years old.
- Emergency Duty Team.
- If I am late my foster carer will look the door! (A few young people's comment).

### **How do you have fun and what stops you from having some fun?**

- Police checks.
- Money.
- No friends are able to stay.
- Time restrictions.
- Foster carers can sometimes be stubborn.
- Social care and health sometimes pay for activities.
- Some places can have age restrictions.
- More workers at organisations like CATS.

## **Workshop 2**

### **Part 3- 'Normalising debate'**

- Why should young people looked after go to the doctors?
- To be treat normally like other kids who are not in care.
- We can get a job too!
- They can get what they want!
- Policed checks.
- No check ups when sleeping out.
- Health checks.
- Times have to come in.
- Who you hang around with.
- Who your boyfriend/girlfriend is!
- Have to be a certain age to come in at later times.
- Pocket money-certain ages get different amounts.
- Don't get listened too, if I have got a problem.

### **Part 4- 'direct questions on services'**

#### **Max Card**

##### **Do you have a Max Card?**

8 young people said no and 3 said yes, the rest inconclusive.

##### **What do you think of the Max Card?**

They use to be good, ok, they are helpful, they were good in the past but I don't know what they are like at the minute, not very good, don't use it, I think the Max Card is great.

##### **Have you had any problems with using the Max Card in Leisure Centres?**

4 said no, yes at Spennymoor, in the past some places would not accept the Max Card, don't have one, some of the staff in some of the leisure centres look at me in a very judgemental way.

##### **Do you think everyone should have a card for free access to the leisure centres?**

Yes from a young age it encourages being healthy, no, yes, majority said yes, yes because it would make everyone the same and you could go with your mates that are not in the care system.

##### **What Leisure activities would you like?**

Gym, swimming, trampoline, tennis, football, rock climbing, weightlifting, cycling, archery and Splan.

#### **Driving Lessons**

##### **Did you know when you are 17 you can have free driving lessons?**

The overall answer of yes and no was halved.

**Are you having lessons now?**

9 young people said no and one answered yes.

**What do you think about having free driving lessons?**

Good, I like it and I think all young people should be able to get them, Its great, Its cool, I think it is good because it gives me a start in life. Very helpful for life on your own, no, it's a very good experience and it's free.

**Do you think young people are told about this well enough?**

Young people said that they are not told well enough about the driving lessons.

**Would you be interested in Driving Lessons?**

All of the young people would be interested in the driving lessons.

**Independent Reviewing Officers**

**Do you know what an Independent reviewing officer is?**

5 young people said no and 4 young people said yes and 1 young person said kind of.

**Do you have one?**

6 said yes and 3 said no, one young person said they didn't know.

**What do you think about the service they provide?**

Shit, crap, better than what was earlier in place, I think it is up to standards but could be improved e.g. let you finish your bit before someone butts in. It's o.k. Sometimes, there is bad points, bad, I don't know and crap.

**What do you think about the information they give you?**

I haven't had any information, rubbish; I don't know, bad, its o.k. Great, crap.

**Do you like looked After Reviews?**

No I use to hate them, no, no its to personal, no they are shit, they are all right.

**Do you think you should have looked after reviews?**

No, yes, yes but they need to be more young person friendly, don't know, I think you should have them to make sure you are o.k but I shouldn't have them every 3 to 6 months.

**Do they give you enough choices and allow you to make important decisions?**

Majority of young people said no there was a few young people that said yes and one young person said sometimes.

**Medical checks**

**When do you have a medical check?**

I don't any more, every 6 months, soon as you move, don't know,

**Are you told or asked to have a medical check?**

Yes, I did get told that it was compulsory to have one, I was told and asked, asked, no.

**How do you feel about going to one?**

O.k. can't be arsed, I use to hate it, and bad, pass, boring, and I hated them.

**What are the places like when you go?**

Shit, clean and roomy, doctor or a nurse comes out to see me, bad, silly, it use to be o.k don't know yet, strange, weird.

**Have you ever told any one that you go to medical checks?**

No, no because one of my mates had one, yes.

**School**

**Do the teachers and your friends treat you differently at school because you are looked after?**

I don't tell them that I am looked after, no, sometimes.

**Are you at school?**

A few said no and the majority said yes.

**Do you enjoy school?**

No, some times I do, yes.

**Do you think you are given a good enough education because you are looked after?**

No, sometimes I do, yes, it is just the same as every one else, don't know, yeah.

**Do you have to go to a different school because you are looked after?**

No, Yes I have been sent to a different school, yes because I get moved placements, I have to go to a behavioural school for emotional problems.

**Activities**

**Do you like the activities that are there for you?**

No, yes, there ok, I don't tell them that I am looked after, sometimes, social care and health did not provide them.

**What places do you like going to?**

Leisure centres, swimming, cinema, flamingo land, Ice-skating, gorge walking, mining, camping, walking, anywhere, everywhere, horse riding, bowling, pictures, theme parks.

**Do you think its fair that you go on these activities?**

Yes, helps your confidence, social skills and socialising.

**Should it be offered to all young people?**

Depends there could be conflict, yes, don't know, yeah because its fun.

### **Should you have mixed groups?**

No, yeah it would be different; majority said yes there should be mixed groups.

### **Conclusion**

The main points from the agenda day were that young people felt staying out late at night and socialising with friends is unfair because of times they have to come in (in at 8.30pm) and foster carers and residential workers try to dictate who a young person is allowed to hang around with, and personally it should be that young persons decision, to be honest would you like it if your partner or friend or parent told you who you are allowed to socialise with or what time you have to be in.

Young people looked after would like to be treated the same as any other young person or child 'To be treated normally like other kids who are not in care', young people's statuses are often put first not that young persons individuality and it should be the young persons individuality put first.

The whole aim should be on the 'normalising debate', a young person leading a normal life, although you can define normal for the general population you can however define normal with that young person what is normal to them, for example going to the doctors when they are ill like everyone else and not going for social care and health, fair enough if the young person has just come into the looked after system and you are searching for signs of abuse but to do it every 6 months or once a year is not fair and could create stigma.

Young people in the looked after system have a lot of professionals in their life and to adhere to the same professionals would be ideal e.g. a constant social worker, but giving them a choice in social workers that are available, it would be much easier and not as stressful for the young person as they might not have gotten enough confidence to speak to that professional.

With the flaws comes the positives, for example young people who are looked after do get stuff paid for like trips out, free driving lessons, theory and practical tests paid for and pocket money.

To sum it up young people still feel that they are not listened to and generally they are upset with the system.