



INVESTING IN CHILDREN

Membership Evaluation

Date November 2005

PROJECT NAME Newcastle Bridges School

PROJECT LOCATION c/o Ward 10
Newcastle RVI
Queen Victoria Road
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4LP

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ASSESSOR Helen Mulhearn

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

Sector Education and Health
Ages 5-19 years
Area City
Ward Westgate

Number of beneficiaries



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:

The Newcastle Bridges School

The Newcastle Bridges School is a service for children and young people accessing education in hospitals and health services in Newcastle.

There are eight departments within the school as highlighted in the School Prospectus, please see attached. For the purpose of this evaluation I met with three teams, which come under the heading of 'Hospital Sites'.

A service provided for all of the children and young people as patients whose stay in hospital is more than five school days.

The service offered provides:

- An education appropriate to each student's needs and circumstances.
- Links with the school, providing continuity in education.
- Written educational advice, if requested for statementing purposes.
- Support and advice regarding the educational needs of each individual student.

I visited teaching staff, children and young people in all of the hospital sites, these being; The Freeman, The General and The RVI. Although the teaching staff have their bases within each hospital and they regularly meet as a team to discuss the educational needs of the children and young people they work with. Also to support each other in dealing with the many issues they encounter whilst teaching children and young people with a range of needs and the whole spectrum of issues that affect them.

All of the teachers and support assistants I met with assured me that they are guided by the children and young people they work with. All of the staff team are sensitive to the way each child and young person feels on that day and what their physical capabilities might be, depending on their reason for being in hospital.

Happily this was echoed by the children and young people I met with. All of them shared that they were encouraged to work when they could.

The General

The staff team at each hospital site face a set of different challenges as the needs of the children and young people are as diverse and wide. Not only do the staff team need to be aware of the educational needs, and the physical needs, as I stated previously but they do need to be sensitive to the emotional needs of the children and young people on a daily basis, especially with long term patients. The service is provided for children and young people ages five to sixteen.

The General Hospital has many long term patients often with profound and multiple needs, examples of some of the needs are:

- Acquired brain injury
- BMT – Bone Marrow Transplant
- Isolated children and young people

The teaching staff develop their service and provide their service in negotiation with the children and young people in order to achieve the best results for all. Every child and young person is encouraged to be involved in their own learning.

Please see attached 'Why bother?'

In all the hospital sites, the few children and young people I met with shared that they do enjoy education.

Here are some examples of how the children and young people feel about the service that is provided by the Newcastle Bridges School – Hospitals Sites Team.

'A' – communicates by a blinking system.

Teaching staff have asked how 'A' feels about education. The teaching staff spent time with her to ascertain her views. 'A' confirmed that she likes it and thinks she should work for about twenty-five minutes during each session.

When I visited 'A' with Trisha, the teacher at the General 'A' let me know that she did enjoy working.

'M' is a boy in isolation. Sat in his protected space he chatted happily with me as the teaching staff prepared his lesson. Cleaning and wiping down the charts he would be using for his math's task as they were positioned behind appropriate boundaries, a yellow boundary that 'M' cannot step out of with a red line encasing that one which staff cannot step over – as I stood behind the stable style door and talked about his education. Yesterday 'M' wasn't feeling too well and did not do any lesson, but today but he was ready to get on with the challenge before him.

The teaching staff use a reward system, stickers small prizes etc. Staff recognize that for some of the older young people this may not be appropriate, *therefore, they are given the choice to visit the café or the shop with a member of staff to buy sweets or have a hot chocolate etc.*

Teaching staff are involved in the care planning, they maintain a link with school and home. The staff have also supported children and young person in re-integrating into school, achieving good results, obtaining internet access for children and young people in ITU and been involved in training for student nurses and medical staff.

The latter encouraging medical staff to take a holistic approach to the children and young people, and whilst dealing with the physical needs of their patients, to not assume that children and young people do not want to learn.

The children and young people I met with confirmed that it does help their day seem more normal.

The Hospital staff team have taken a pro-active step in beginning to record the positive changes they make in the lives of the children and young people they work with. Please see attached examples from the RVI and NGH.

As with many Investing in Children members, the good practice of listening to children underpins the way the service is delivered but evidencing it is harder when dealing with a transient group. These recording sheets provide the children and young people with answers to their questions, needs and suggestions. It also records what has been achieved and changed for children and young people individually and collectively.

I met with two young people in the **RVI**, both long term patients.

'D' is a young woman who has much experience of working with the teaching staff. 'D' also shared that sometimes all the family got involved. Part of art session turned into puppet making, which ended up as puppet theatre with everyone having a role.

Child 'S' is six I sat with her and she showed me what she was doing in 'learning land' on the laptop. 'S' was having some treatment at the time I visited. Rather than the teacher intrude whilst the nurses were setting up 'S' for her treatment, 'S' had asked for the learning land disc to be left so she could work on it once she was sorted. 'S' also showed me her special folder on the laptop where she kept all of her work.

When I visited the Freeman the ward was nearly empty, a very quiet time for a change. Children and young people come and go. Although the team sometimes see the children who have recurring visits, their main task is keeping their students up-to-date with their school work so they do not fall too far behind at school.

I did chat with one or two children and young people who were around that day. They all said they had done some education and all said that it had definitely made the day go faster.

The Freeman benefits from a teenage room and a play room.

The staff team told me that children and young people often 'blossom', as this allows for one to one which gives children and young people the chance to ask questions and take advantage of learning with the hospital team.

The Newcastle Bridges School provides a unique opportunity for children and young people to have some one to one education. Their needs are being met by a special group of people. These skilled workers make daily judgements whilst talking and listening to the children and young people they work with to provide the best service they can, changing it and adapting it on an individual basis with some great results. The great results are not only academic but can have a huge affect on the confidence of children and young people whatever their illness, their situation or circumstances.

In respect of the working style and ethos behind the service provision and in light of all the positive changes made for children and young people I have no hesitation in recommending that the Newcastle Bridges School receives their Investing in Children membership.

Helen Mulhearn
Project Worker
Investing in Children
November 2005

Bridges to learning

The Newcastle Bridges School provides education for children and young people spending long periods in hospital. The school's teachers are based in hospitals, but also work with their pupils' schools to ensure they provide education that is right for them. They are guided by the children and young people, and take care to be sensitive to the way each feels on any particular day. The children and young people say they are encouraged to work only when they can, and to be involved in their own learning. They say learning helps make their days seem more normal and pass more quickly. Their teachers have helped train medical staff to take a holistic approach, understanding young patients' desire to learn as well as their physical needs.

One of the children – A – communicates by blinking. Teaching staff asked her how she feels about education, and took time to understand her answers. She confirmed that she likes it and thinks she should work for about 25 minutes during each session.

A boy in isolation – M – says he wasn't feeling too well yesterday and did not do a lesson, but today but he is ready to get on with the challenge before him.

D says sometimes all her family get involved, for example when an art session turned into puppet-making, which ended up as a puppet theatre with everyone having a role.

Six-year-old S uses a laptop and asks the teacher to leave a disk so she can work after her treatment.

The Investing in Children assessor says, "These skilled workers make daily judgements while talking and listening to the children and young people they work with to provide the best service they can, changing it and adapting it on an individual basis with some great results. This can have a huge effect on the confidence of children and young people, whatever their illness, situation or circumstances."

"...a huge effect on the confidence of children..."

[possible pics – laptop and disk, or puppet theatre]