



## **INVESTING IN CHILDREN**

### **Membership Evaluation**

**Date** December 2005

**PROJECT NAME** West End Women and Girls Centre (WEWGC)

**PROJECT LOCATION** Stephenson Building  
173 Elswick Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6SQ

**CONTACT NAME** Huffty Raey  
**PHONE** 0191 273 4942  
**E-MAIL** w.endwomencentre@btconnect.com

**ASSESSOR** Helen Mulhearn

### **SUMMARY OF EVALUATION**

**Sector** Youth Provision  
**Ages** All ages  
**Area** West  
**Ward** Westgate

**Number of beneficiaries**



## Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:

### West End Women and Girls Centre (WEWGC)

'West End Women and Girls Centre aims to empower girls and women in the West End of Newcastle, who have been traditionally disenfranchised for access to existing services, to effect positive change in their leisure, work and social environments.' Taken from WEWGC - Mission Statement.

West End Women and Girls Centre are housed in a 'huge' old building and is a 'huge' success. What I am about to write has probably already been written in one way or another as dialogue with, and inclusion of the girls, young women and women who access the service are the foundation blocks on which the project is built.

Listening to children and young people is not a new theory, and not a new way of working. At Investing in Children we believe that children and young people have a right to be involved in decisions that affect their lives, a view that is endorsed at WEWGC and a fundamental way in which the service is offered.

The problem I face writing this report is ensuring that I truly reflect and highlight how the girls and young women are included, the opportunities they are offered and how their voices are heard and included in the group work, the project development, and management structure i.e. via Management Committee.

A number of groups run at WEWGC as shown in the following timetable please see page 11 of the current annual report, Appendix 1. The report clearly highlights all the group work that is offered at the centre and the current status of all the projects.

For the purpose of this evaluation I met with young women from the Transitions Project.

**The Transitions Project** – is funded by Newcastle Children's Fund. As the group has grown over the last few years it has been necessary to change the meeting times in order to achieve the best results for the girls and young women who attend.

The Transitions group meet on:

- Monday - primary school ages.
- Wednesday - secondary school ages.
- Thursday - joint session just for fun.

For one week in November I met with the girls in all of the sessions.

The Transitions Project provides homework support as well as issue based work, one to one support and advocacy, as well as food! Every session I joined in I got fed (an added bonus).

During the week I met with Brooke, Lucy, Lauren, Tonilee, Chelsea, Lauren, Marjuana, Jacqueline, Danillelle, Chloe, Natalie, Marwana, Natalie, Nicole and Emma, only part of the total amount who use the project.

Monday and Wednesday is an opportunity for the girls and young women to do their homework in a supported and resourced area. The project has many useful books to help with homework and questions the girls might have.

Before the girls get down to work, they enjoy a healthy snack, sometimes they cook this themselves and other times Val, Emma and Ally (the workers) cook for the group.

On my first visit to the Monday session, Brooke, Lucy, Lauren and Tonilee made pancakes. In the homework room the girls have their own drawer, with their own books, if they have no homework then they can write up their recipes or play games and colour in.

At the Wednesday session the young women had more homework. After their snack they moved into the homework area to finish the work they had to do. Those that had no homework moved between the two areas chatting to each other and me about the project, their lives etc.

The whole group planned the Thursday session the week before. It was a DVD evening with Pizza. The groups chose some films they wanted to see and the workers brought in two to choose from, Shrek 2 was the DVD they chose to watch that evening.

All the sessions end with a game or two depending on time.

All of the sessions were relaxed and informal, all of the girls and young women are very comfortable in their surroundings. Here are some of the comments they made during our chat:-

*'It's good'*

*'They're nice'*

*'I have been coming for ages'*

*'They ask what we want to do first'*

*'I always bring my homework so I can get it out of the way'*

*'We have been talking about the building changes, we can say what we think!'*

*'There are lots of files to help us with our homework'*

*'Tomorrow (Thursday) we are planning our own session, pizza and popcorn'*

*'We eat food, play games and do homework'*

*'We don't even have to pay in' said Natalie and 'we are not allowed to eat sweets, cos we can't bring them in but that's because they aren't healthy and its not fair if we bring them in and other people haven't got them'*

*'We have a say'*

*'If you don't have homework they give you wordsearches, paper, colouring to do'*

*'We have groundrules and we made them up'*

*'We ask for stuff, like cooking, arts and crafts'*

*'We can borrow books from the library'*

*'Huffty's dead canny'*

*'We did a no-smoking campaign'*

*'They're all nice'*

*'We have lots of files to help us do our homework'*

*'They ask us what we want to do first'*

As you can imagine the girls and young women I spoke with had plenty to say, in fact they never stopped talking from the start of the session to the finish!

The comments from the young people as always are the most important part of my evaluation, but I would like to highlight some of the work which has been ongoing for many years and some of the plans WEWGC has for the future.

WEWGC has been a success for the last 23 years, run on a shoestring budget and dependent on the commitment of volunteers, then more recently with paid staff as well as volunteers. Over the last three years the work has taken on a new dimension as the Co-ordinator, Huffty has secured new funding, for new groups and project work, whilst ensuring all involved participate in the project development.

I have attached:

**'Doing Up' the Stephenson Building  
Planning for Real  
West End Women and Girls Centre**

This report explains the 'why' and 'how' all the girls, young women, women including volunteers and workers were all involved in planning for the future.

The girls and young women I met with were all aware of the plans and were very keen to tell me all about how it would be changing and what might be going where.

***'We have met the architect and everyone has had a say and they made changes'***

I have also attached:

**Children Step Forward  
Adults Step Back – 2003 Report**

The report was written by '**The Wicked Planners**'. The Wicked Planners have been meeting at WEWGC on a Friday but ***the girls have recently changed it to a Tuesday as it is more convenient for them.***

The Wicked Planners have since become nationally renowned, winning an award from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for their project being the best at involving children and young people in planning for change and decision-making.

The Wicked Planners continue to lead conferences, plan other projects and present their experiences to other agencies and organisations.

Chelsea told me that they '*plan things, do conferences and stuff but its always about what we want to say*'

The work at West End Women and Girls Centre is endless, the groups are for ever changing and expanding to meet the needs of the girls, young women and women who access the project. The girls and young women I met with were very clear about how they are involved and encouraged to participate in their group and the future developments of West End Women and Girls Centre.

Huffty said in her Co-ordinators report (please see page 15 of the annual report) '**We will continue to place participation at he heart of our Centre – how could we work in any other way?**'

All the evidence that I have presented clearly demonstrates this to be the case and therefore, on behalf of the girls and young women I have no hesitation in fully recommending that West End Women and Girls Centre becomes an Investing in Children member.

**Fantastic.**

**Helen Mulhearn  
Membership Co-ordinator  
Investing in Children  
December 2005**

## Wicked empowerment

West End Women and Girls Centre (WEWGC) aims to give girls and women in the West End of Newcastle power in their own lives. The project is built on dialogue with the girls and women who use it. Their voices are heard and included in group work, in developing the project, and in the management committee.

There are several groups operating within WEWGC, including the Transitions Project. This provides homework support and issue-based work, one-to-one support and advocacy.

In the homework room the girls have their own drawer, with their own books. If they have no homework, they can write up their recipes, play games or do some colouring-in. The whole group plans sessions a week in advance – for instance a DVD and pizza evening. All the sessions end with games.

“They ask what we want to do first,” says one of the girls. “I always bring my homework so I can get it out of the way.”

“We have been talking about the building changes. We can say what we think!” confirms another.

Natalie says, “We are not allowed to eat sweets, ‘cos we can’t bring them in, but that’s because they aren’t healthy and it’s not fair if we bring them in and other people haven’t got them.”

**“...we have ground rules – and we made them up...”**

Another important point, “We have ground rules – and we made them up.”

All the girls and women, including volunteers and workers, were involved in planning to renovate their building. “We have met the architect and everyone has had a say and they made changes.”

Another WEWGC group – The Wicked Planners – used to meet on Fridays, but the girls changed it to a Tuesday, which is more convenient for them. The Wicked Planners have become known nationally, winning a government award for being the project that best involves children and young people in planning for change and decision-making. The Wicked Planners lead conferences, plan other projects and present their experiences to other agencies and organisations. Chelsea says, “We plan things, do conferences and stuff, but it’s always about what we want to say.”

“WEWGC groups are forever changing and expanding to meet the needs of local girls and women,” says the Investing in Children assessor.

[suggested pics – Wicked Planners doing a conference or presentation]