



investing in children

Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:

Barnados - Newcastle Independence Network

Newcastle Independence Network is a Barnardos run Project Centre in the middle of Newcastle. Newcastle Independence Network is made up of three teams.

- Teenage Pregnancy
- HATS – Housing Advice and Tenancy Support
- One to One team

Newcastle Independence Network is on the fourth floor of Warwick House. The ‘floor’ provides separate office space for the three teams and plenty of space for meeting young people in the ‘young people’s room.’

A space created for the young people to meet either for group work sessions, keywork sessions or training courses. A space where the team also have meetings, with their own team and as a full team.

When I first met with the team and discussed Investing in Children it was decided that each of the three teams would apply individually for membership. However, after meeting with the young people involved in the project I have decided to write two.

The teenage pregnancy work although entwined with the other two teams, very much stands alone and works with a more multi-agency partnership approach. The young women I met with, very much identified with the TP service rather than the ‘NIN.’

When I met with young people from the One to One and Housing Advice Team their work with young people showed much more of a cross work wise and the young people identified more with NIN as the service.

Housing Advice and Tenancy Support/One to One

Two teams who provide a comprehensive housing advice and tenancy support service with one to one support, to maintain the young people in their tenancy and support that transition into independent living.

Both teams work with the young people to secure a positive ‘housing’ situation when young people are referred to their service. Referrals are made via:

- Housing Centre
- Other Agencies
- Self-referral

Workers support the young people from the outset. They work to support the young person in resolving their ‘homeless’ crisis. Housing is sought with the Council or with private landlords. The workers help the young people fight for their rights.

I met with two young people who have experience of the Housing Advice and Tenancy Support Team, and the One to One Support Team. They were very clear about what being involved with NIN meant for them.

Josh, a young man who has Norman as a key worker, told me he thought that the service NIN provided was **'pretty good.'** Josh said he was referred by ???? and came through the Housing Support Team and then he has worked with Norman for a while.

Josh said **"Norman gave me some of the options and I chose the best one for me, I decided to go for a flat cos I didn't fancy sharing or supported lodgings. I have a flat in Heaton which is good for me as I am near my Sister. Norman was a good help because he knew where to get grants from charities and stuff. He helped me to get furniture, carpets and stuff, it was all good help which I didn't expect. I got a decorating grant from 'Your Homes Newcastle' as well. Norman also took me to Ikea and other furniture places, like in Byker and I got a cheap bed. I don't like filling forms in and stuff, but I appreciated that push from Norman, it was worth it."**

Leanne is a young woman who is supported by Lesley on the Housing Advice and Tenancy Support Team. Leanne like Josh came into the NIN office to have a chat with me. Leanne came with Michael, her little one year old boy (cute as a button too!).

Leanne told me she became homeless when she was pregnant with Michael and was referred by her Midwife. Leanne was four months pregnant at the time and has been involved with NIN ever since, seventeen months. It has been an uphill struggle for Leanne to obtain her own tenancy and Leanne is very positive about what NIN have done for her. Leanne said **'its wicked here. I don't know how I would have got through if it wasn't for the Lesley. Lesley has given me lots of support and has done all the hard work. It's not just about the support for me it's about the telephone calls, I haven't got a phone and never have any credit on my mobile. There's all the letters that were written, all the stamps and stuff. I could just ring and give Lesley all the information over the phone and the letter would be sent.'** I asked Leanne about when the support ends, her reply was **'when we are both ready, when Lesley thinks I'm ok to do it alone and when I feel comfortable. They have been a good help I would recommend them to anyone.'** What more can you say.

UP2U is a young people's participation group facilitated by Newcastle Independence Network. Again young people from both teams are consistently asked if they would like to join. Josh said Norman had asked him, and asked him, and asked him!! However, at this point in time it was something he wasn't interested in.

I met with Annette, Jo and Claire who are part of UP2U. They explained that although they work with Newcastle Independence Network and all have had homeless/housing issues (some still ongoing). They felt that 'their' participation is about being involved in the bigger picture within Barnardos.

The young people were keen to tell me about their recent trip to London to a Barnardos Conference. The Up2U group joined other young people from around the UK to share and discuss their participation in Barnardos projects. All of the young people told me how they are looking forward to their next event.

More evidence of dialogue and change:-

Participation Group – The young people renamed the group Up2U.

Up2U Planning – The group plan activities, sessions and training. The workers support the young people in planning and organising their weekly meetings.

Reviews – The group review each session, talking about what they enjoyed, what they could improve and what they want to change for the next time.

Regional Management Group – Claire represents the group on the Barnardos Regional Young People’s Management Group. This group has also renamed itself the ‘VIP’ – Volunteering in Participation. This has a regional focus and gives the young people a stronger voice for participation.

Interviewing – After doing some interview training and some mock interviews, they are ready to be involved in real interviews. The young people agreed **‘it was great.’**

Young Homeless Forum – Although the young people are able to sit on the Young Homeless Forum, this is not something they want to do. The young people feel that for them they ‘have moved on from the homeless issue.

Conferences and Events – The group are involved in City run conferences and other Barnardos events such as: Alcohol Awareness Conferences, The Regional Management Group for Barnardos, ‘B’ Oscars, etc.

Claire, Jo and Annette told me that the group meant a lot to them they had all moved into it from the Monday night ‘lifeskills’ group. They believe that the UP2U group is about getting involved and having your say, learning and finding out about how to make a difference! The group meet once a month, but sometimes they can meet three times a month. They meet as and when they need to.

Claire told me that she was part of the Teenage Pregnancy Support Group and was a very active participant in times gone by. Claire, Jo and Annette were very positive about their involvement with NIN and what a difference it had made to their lives. All three young people reiterated what other young people spoke about, the help with benefits, appointments, etc. was great. Claire also said that she was referred by her Sister. Once again, confirming that young people are more than happy to recommend NIN to other young people.

Annette also felt it important to recognize that the workers all work hard for young people, they do too much and sometimes make themselves ill in the process.

All of the young people I met with spoke very highly of the workers at NIN. Workers they worked with in the past and those they are working with now. I got the impression that this service has proved itself invaluable in the lives of young people referred to it, and that young people themselves are confident to refer their friends and relatives because they know it will be a huge help.

Newcastle Independence Network is a large team of workers supporting young people in Newcastle. NIN makes a difference by listening and working with young people to meet their needs. Then gives space for them to become involved and participate in the wider debate about homelessness, Barnardos and service delivery. Therefore, on behalf of Claire, Jo, Annette, Leanne and Josh I would very much like to recommend that Newcastle Independence Network becomes an Investing in Children member.

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