



## Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:

### The Family Services Team

The Family Services team is a newly formed team, amalgamated from 3 teams based around the county. In March 2006 the team relocated to Clevesferye House in Ferryhill, although there is a desk available in the Social Care and Health office in Stanley for any workers who find themselves in that area.

Family Services deal predominantly with parents; in running courses such as Handling Children's Behaviour, and a course such as this would benefit up to 30 children of those adults attending. Referrals are generally dealt with by allocating a six week short intervention intensive course for families which is then reviewed and a decision made as to whether the work is complete and the case is closed or requires further input in the form of more formal support.

For the purpose of this evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Aaron, Kerrie and Andrew.

#### **Evidence of Dialogue and Change**

When I met with Aaron, who is five, he showed me his **"big book, it's got pictures, maps, photos of my bike, stickers. May has done some writing and I've done some writing, and a little book. There's pictures of me at school at the sandpit."**

Aaron went on to show all of the things that he's done with Family Services and he had pictures and photos stuck in his book to remind him of his work. He had a day out a Roman fort with May and he got **"dressed up like a Roman."** He has been to St Helen's Children Centre, there was a photograph of him there, **"I played with the cars."**

On another page Aaron told me that he had **"talked about my dreams, I dreamed about ice cream."**

When I asked Aaron if he didn't want to do any of the things May had planned for him when they met, what would he say? Aaron said, **"I just say, 'I don't want to go out May, I can't be bothered.' And then we don't go."**

I met with Andrew to find out his views on Family Services, Andrew and his family have been working with Family Services for some time and it appears to be ongoing. Andrew told me about spending time at Clevesferye House with Paul. Some time ago Andrew can remember meeting with Paul and some young people to talk about **"how we improve Social Services."** Although now Andrew finds it hard to remember what was said.

Andrew talked about other work he'd done with Paul, on his own. **"We did some work sheets about anger management, it was good. I could understand everything."**

Andrew likes going to Clevesferye House, **"they've got more toys and play things at Ferryhill. For older children they could have books, computers and paints."**

Andrew also had another suggestion for Family Services. **"They should have an obstacle course, if they have time and that. They could let us go on the obstacle course."**

Andrew feels he can reach the team when he wants, **"I just need to tell mam if I want to get in touch."** He added, **"I think they listen to me, if I wanted to say something I could."**

At present the team have an exit evaluation questionnaire which children and young people are asked to complete after their time with Family Services. The questionnaire is then reviewed by individual workers during their supervision on a monthly basis.

The current plan is that the team will have two away days during the course of the year and the children and young people's questionnaire will be part of the agenda for the whole team to discuss, and then from this the team plan will be written based on the comments made.

This exercise will be very useful in shaping Family Services membership application for next year to provide evidence of further dialogue and change in their work with children and young people.

The team have made changes to the evaluation in order to make it easier for young people to make comment, and they have also added extra sections on advice from Investing in Children. The new sections will ask for children and young people's suggestions and ideas about how the service works. The

evaluation questionnaire will also include a section asking children and young people if they would like to be contacted in the future to talk about their experiences of family services. The questionnaire is currently being worked on by staff and it will be exciting to see how it develops and is made use of for the next re-evaluation of the team.

Kerrie told me about her experience with Family Services. **“They were good, they were listening, they were kind, we listened to each other.”**

When I asked Kerrie what she would change about the service, she told me, **“It could be longer, to get more out of it. You make a relationship with somebody and then it’s finished, almost back to square one. At the end I felt a bit left on my own. It would be nice to be contacted a bit further down the line to see how things are going.”** Kerrie felt that she didn’t know that there would be anyone to contact if she needed to.

When these comments were fed back to Family Services they quickly responded by producing a card to give to children and young people when their time with the team has ended (see attached). The card thanks the young people for working with them and provides contact numbers for them. Although it is difficult for the service to continue working with young people at the end of their allocated time, the team recognise the need for young people to feel they are able to contact them if they feel they want to. When Kerrie saw the card she said, **“This would help a lot, I’d know how to get in touch if I needed anything. I think it’s good.”**

Family Services are a team who work in varied ways with many young people with differing needs, and it is clear from meeting with the children and young people they do this in a way which is sensitive and that children and young people feel valued and listened, and for this I would like to recommend that they receive Investing in Children membership.

**Lisa Lines**  
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