



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Fostering Team

I met with Camilla Hunter and Louise Ethell from Durham County Council Fostering Team in early May 2007, to discuss what they have been doing during the last year to continue their IiC membership. Camilla and Louise are the two members of staff from the team who have been given the lead of involving the children and young people with whom they work in genuine dialogue and change.

I met with a group of 26 young people on the 24th may, 2007 who had been invited by the service to come to an Easter arts and crafts event and also to give their views on ways in which the service could be improved. Some of the young people who attended the day had been to the last event at Lego land and had also been involved in past meeting to discuss ways forward and changes need for the service these young people included Toni, Declan, Connor, Sarah and Melissa.

I then met again with the group on the 31st may, 2007 at the botanical gardens.

Evidence of Dialogue and Change

All of the children and young people were invited to attend the day at Durham's botanical gardens. During the day I was given time to sit with the young people by themselves and discuss, what they had been involved in, what had changed as a result of what they had told the staff and whether they were happy with the changes made.

Toni, Declan, Connor, Sarah and Melissa told me about what the group had done and were planning to do;

- **The group told me about their previous involvement in the development of the children's guide, and how they were going to keep looking at it to check that it was all still relevant.**
- **They had chosen to meet 6 times a year**
- **They had given their views on places they would like to go on trips and how often they would like to go, they had decided that they would discuss what changes needed to be made and how when they had activities.**

I ask the group about how they felt they had been listen to by the team, and they told me;

- **"We asked to have more activities and they let us choose where we go".**
- **"They ask me if I wanted to come, I like telling them what I want".**
- **"They ask us lots of questions, and we give them good answers"**

Other things that the group are looking at developing are;

- **Profile card- for foster carers and their families to record details of who they are, who else lives there, their home, any pets they have etc.** this is so young people who have to go on an emergency placement, have some information about the family they are going to stay with. The young people are going to be working on what information needs to be on the cards, what pictures there should be and the design.
- **Training of foster carers- the group has plans of being involved in the training of foster carers**
- **They also wanted to develop a newsletter to let other young people and their foster carers know about what the group was doing and things that were happening, that they felt people would want to know about.**

I asked the group if they felt that the team should receive membership for listening to them and helping them get what they wanted, and the groups response was;

- **“They’re great, and I think they should get membership”**
- **“I like coming here”**

I also asked the young people if they were interested in continuing working with the team to make changes. All of the young people, who had previously been involved, were very keen to continue the work and other young people who hadn’t been as involved in the past were keen to become more involved. These young people were; Andrew, Tara, Sam, Toni, Connor, Sarah and Melissa.

The group I spoke to are called the FLAC (Fostered looked after children) group, but they also have another group of children and young people who meet 6 times a year as well. The other group of children and young people are the children of the families that are fostering children and young people, and they are called the birth children group. They have been working on;

- **Activities – the group had decided on activities they would like to do.**
- **They also meet 6 times a year for activities and discussion sessions**
- **They want to develop a newsletter to let other young people who are fostering know about what the group are doing and issues that may effect them.**
- **They are also looking at the idea of having a support network for birth children that’s meets once a month on the same idea as “foster carers thoughts”**

Both groups have been in the stages of recruiting new young people to join the groups, as the young people who were previously involved have now moved on and very few have continued to be involved. This takes time, but the groups seem to be coping with this very well and are continuing to do some great work as shown above. There is currently 10 young people that attend the birth children group, and 5 + young people regularly attend the FLAC group.

Two workers have be allocated time to support birth groups and a budget has been set my management to develop the work and continue to involve the children and young people who use their service within the services development. I feel that this shows a great commitment to meaningful dialogue and change involving children and young people, and embedding the practice within the service. So on behalf of the children and young people I met with from the FLAC group I have no hesitation in recommending that the fostering team receive Investing in Children membership.

**Tabatha Tilley
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Investing in Children**

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