



investing in children

Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

WEYES

The West End Youth Enquiry Service has had some major ups and downs over the last year or so. Since my last evaluation core funding was lost, workers lost their jobs and Tracey Leach the Project Manager went off on maternity leave.

Tracey has now taken an extended maternity leave, (congratulations to Tracey and her family.) In the interim Danny Gilchrest 'held up' the project and maintained some service whilst seeking funding for a more long-term future. I met with Danny back in November and agreed to re-evaluate the project in 2007 when hopefully a more comprehensive service for young people would be being offered. I revisited the project in June, firstly to meet with Phil Stobbart the new temporary Project Manager. On this visit I also met with Andy, Sandra young people who use the project and their baby, Sandra. Secondly to take part in an art session and meet some more young people who use WEYES.

Evidence of dialogue and change for WEYES is still an inherent part of practice for the team. The team being: Phil Stobbart, Project Manager (Temp)

Rae Briggs, Mental Health worker

Theresa Bromillough, Sexual Health worker

Sam Lane, Sexual Health worker

Ali Briggs, Artist

Linda –New General Health Worker

Rachel - Admin

and

Jambo Thourong, Alternative Therapist

Workers have been employed to meet the needs of young people in the West End of Newcastle. WEYES managed this by:

- Re-opening their doors on a drop in basis
- Offering taster sessions of possibilities
- Worked with young people to get funding for specific project work

1. **Re-opening the doors on a drop in basis** gives the chance for young people to come back to WEYES for information and support. The Sexual Health clinics have continued to run with support from Newcastle PCT. The Mental Health worker from Children-North East was also able to influence how and what happened next.
2. **Offering taster sessions of possibilities** was a way forward for the team to engage with young people in a new and imaginative way. Relaxation sessions, acupuncture, Indian head massage, reiki, thermo crystal healing and full body massage. Taster sessions were held and youth clubs were invited, a ratio of one young person plus one youth worker.
3. **Interested young people worked with the team to get funding** which they succeeded in doing by being awarded £10,000 from the Youth Opportunities Fund. With this money a project was planned which offered a service to the young people through:

- Art sessions
- Alternative Therapies
- Mental Health Sessions

All three strands linked together to provide a comprehensive service for the young people. The young people evaluated the project by **creating a DVD**. I watched the DVD that Rocky, Ellie, Sam, Laura, and Jackie made. They talked about what the project meant for them and how they had benefited from it. I noted some of the comments whilst I was watching –

“The staff are really kind”

“It’s the best project I know”

“I’ve changed, I don’t self harm anymore – it’s because of Rachael, she’s fantastic”

During my first visit to the project I met with Andrew, Sandra and little Sandra. Sandra came to the project with her social worker, after this, Sandra joined in the group work. Andy had a catalogue of problems and after hearing about WEYES from Sandra, he came to the project and said **“I need help.”**

Sandra and Andy told me that **“If it wasn’t for here we wouldn’t be together.”**

Andy continued to tell me that he has had **“loads of support, I can come in and see Phil. I’ve had loads of help, everyone is really friendly.”** Both Sandra and Andy were keen to point out **“nobody judges you, I was drinking loads, doing drugs and look at me now. Even me last blood test was clear. It’s great.”**

They told me that **“the staff try their best but there just isn’t enough money. We use the drop-in, I think it would be daft going back to sessions, it’s really good ‘cos you can just call in.”**

Sandra is was in the mother and baby unit with St Cuthbert’s Care but has recently applied for a flat in West Denton and succeeded. Sandra got support from the team to fill in her application for Your Homes Newcastle. Sandra also said **“they’ve helped us out with social services as well, in fact they all help, you don’t have to ask.”** They also said that it’s really helped them as a couple because staff know them both. The staff are able to ask them **“how you doing with Sandra.”** Sandra and Andy have also benefited from sessions as a couple with Jambo.

Sandra said **“they have a big box of toys for little Sandra to play with, and the staff will watch her if she’s settled so we can meet with Jambo”**. Sandra continued, **“that’s the only down side, there is no creche.”**

All in all Andy and Sandra couldn’t praise the project enough, they had lots of good stuff to say about everyone. Andy is now working at the Metrocentre.

On my second visit I spent time with Ali in her art session. Jackie and Sam were the two young people who came to the session and Rae the mental health worker was also involved. At the beginning of the session I chatted with Ali about how the sessions run. Every week a different art work is created. **All of the young people’s art work is on display in the garage. There is also a new pillar in the front garden of the project, which was also created by the young people.**

In this session the girls made masks, Ali talked to the girls about anatomy, thinking about what makes up our face and how people hide behind masks. Sam and Jackie chatted about work they had been involved in at WEYES and how they enjoy coming to the project. We also chatted about how the girls feel that all the work joins up, the work they do with Rae, ‘Getting connected,’ a programme which helps to build up the confidence of the participant by working through challenges. **Jackie told me about all the presentations**

she does, she keeps and lets Phil see. I asked Jackie and Sam what they thought about the coming to WEYES and Jackie said the project is **“fandabidozee”**
And Sam followed that up with **“supercalifagil...”**. (I hope you get the idea.)

All of the young people I spoke with did say that they get listened too. They all agreed that they get support and on the 25th of July they all agreed with my report! Sam used that opportunity to add that in the art sessions they paint and draw and use pastels. Sam was also quite open and said **“ if I have a day when I feel down and stuff I can come here and talk to Rachael, there is always someone here to talk to. They will always sit down and listen to stuff.”** Sam also said that it feels like a second home because you can come in have a drink, have a slice of toast or make some food.

It is therefore on behalf of these young people who had nothing but ‘good stuff’ to say about all of the workers at WEYES and were clearly able to share the benefits the project has given to them as individuals that I have no hesitation in recommending that they remain Investing in Children members.

Well done and good luck with the funding applications over the next year.

Helen Mulhearn
Investing in Children
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