



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Keeping the Family In Mind Project.

For the purpose of this evaluation I met with Sue, Louisa, Marley, Emma and Isis.

Barnardos 'Keeping the Family in Mind' (KFIM) project provides children and young people in Liverpool, who are young carers, an opportunity to express their own views and opinions about being young carers. Through the involvement of children and young people who access the Barnardos 'Action with Young Carers' projects, KFIM has developed and established itself as an independent project,

This happened as a result of discussions between staff and young people who were caring for parents with mental health problems. Through this dialogue, changes have been made, locally and nationally, to the way that Mental Health Services are provided. The project continues to support young people to make their voices heard.

This report will identify how young people get involved in dialogue and the changes that have occurred.

Opportunities for Dialogue and Change.

Focus Groups.

The project meets regularly with young people to discuss what the project has been doing. These meetings allow young people the opportunity to raise issues that are important to them. At one of these meetings, attended by twenty-nine young carers, there was a discussion about how the delivery of adult mental health services impacts upon young carers and family members.

The Post Card Campaign

Sue told me how this began with a focus group, "**We all met and talked with one another about different things**". Sue went on to explain, "**As a result of this, many young people spoke about the negative experiences they were having from other people about their parents mental health**". Louisa went on to give me a thorough account of what happens with the views and ideas that the young people raised. "**The issues that we raised are passed on to Mersey Care NHS Trust.** Louisa added, "**Because of this they have made some postcards with some of the things we have said**". Mersey Care NHS Trust want to use these postcards to raise the profile of how mental health can impact on the family. They have also been distributed locally and nationally so children and young peoples messages are really heard in their own words.

Family Rooms

This change occurred as a direct result of the project working with young people to achieve change. Marley told me, "**The problem with the hospitals was that there was no privacy when you visited your parents**". Emma added, "**The staff really listen to what you say and we always get to know what is happening with our views**". Sue told me, "**We were given the chance to say what we thought of mental health services, which resulted in four family rooms being developed in the Mental Health Trust**".

Young people who are carers for parents with mental health problems have a strategic voice, which has allowed some young people to influence service development. The project has also been working across Liverpool with children and adult services to ensure these young people can contribute to service development and have their views heard either directly or indirectly by the project coordinator Louise Wardale. Louisa explained, “**There are now four mental health in-patient hospitals with family rooms**”. There are also now four adult mental health hospitals with a kite mark, which are only awarded to services that have a family room and provide family orientated services. Young people at the project designed the logo and planned the opening of the first family room.

The family room initiative has been recognised at a national level. Sue explained, “**The office of the Deputy Prime Minister got in touch about what we have done**”. In a recent social exclusion and mental health report there is an action plan dedicated to children and young people visiting their parents on in-patient units. Sue told me, “**This is a result of the ‘Keeping the Family in Mind’ family room project**”.

Newsletter

Young people regularly get a newsletter informing them of what the project has been doing and what things they have been changing.

Ten Messages Campaign

An awareness campaign has been developed by Mersey Care NHS Trust highlighting the perspective and experiences of what children and young people have said about mental health and adult mental health services. The initiative for the campaign took direction from young people at KFIM sharing their views and experiences with the Trust. Sue explained, “**Mersey Care approached us about some of the things we had said about caring for someone with a mental health problem**”. Sue went on to tell me what some of the messages were about, “**When professionals come into contact with children and families they should tell children what is wrong with their parents and not just ignore you because you are young**”. The Trust also listened to children and young people about their ideas before launching the campaign.

Effective Care Coordination Leaflet

This was developed and designed by young people. The idea was generated from discussions with staff and young people not knowing what support their parents should receive when accessing an in-patient mental health hospital.

The Keeping the Family in Mind project is based on listening to children and young people. It provides many opportunities for young carers to enable them to make their views known and influence how services provide care. Children and young people’s views and ideas are respected and can influence the direction the project takes when campaigning and working to enhance family services. It will be interesting to discover next year when re-evaluating the project how children and young people continue to get involved in decision making.

I would like to thank everyone who helped me to write this evaluation. When I asked the young people if they agreed that Keeping The Family In Mind Project should get Investing in Children membership they all said yes! Therefore I have no hesitation in recommending that this project receive Investing in Children membership. Well Done

Rob Johnson
Investing in Children
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