



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Merseyside Society for Deaf People (MSDP) Youth Service

The MSDP Youth Service is the largest of its kind in the Northwest and caters for all ages from 4-19 years. It offers a wide variety of activities and support for deaf young people. MSDP After School Club is a unique and highly valued service that allows deaf children to come together in an environment where their communication code is respected and supported. On my visit I met with Ian who explained that the aim of the After School Club is to overcome the danger of isolation for deaf young people and to help them with any personal development issues. The After School Club runs term time from 2:30pm – 6:00pm

Deaf Active Youth Service (DAYS) is a successful youth-led service empowering members by making their own choices and decisions for the future. Young people aged 11-19 years are welcomed and take part in activities on and off site.

I would like to thank Ian for signing and interpreting for me. For the purpose of this evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Stephen, Stephanie, Bill, Vicky, John and Aaron.

Evidence of Dialogue and Change

Stephen explained why he likes to attend MSDP. **“I have some friends at home, but we can’t communicate so it’s good I come here.”** Stephanie added, **“I have made new friends and I have a good time. But it’s important that we come here and have a say.”** Bill continued, **“We get a lot of support here.”**

Steering Group

The young people told me the Steering Group is very informal. Stephanie told me, **“It’s everyone’s. So we all decide how often we meet. It depends on what’s happening.”** Stephen said, **“We have a Steering Group to make decisions. We all sit down and talk about things. It’s mostly conversations between ourselves. We talk about things like where we would like to go or what we would like to do. People tell us things about places or things they have been to and say if something is good or bad.”** Aaron added, **“It’s definitely our meetings and then when we talk things over with Ian, he listens to us. If the staff didn’t listen or decide things without us, we wouldn’t come here. We wouldn’t do what we do. We all should get a gold star.”**

The young people have developed ways of sharing information and making decisions which best suits them. Ian explained British Sign Language (BSL) is a complete language with a unique vocabulary, construction and grammar. It is a language in its own right and has a structure and grammar different from that of written and spoken English. The young people have decided that they prefer to have discussions and make decisions by signing rather than writing things down. John told me, **“We prefer to do a lot of speaking.”**

The Gym

The young people asked for a Gym to be provided at their centre. Vicky said, **“I just wanted somewhere to go to exercise. We can’t go to the one around the corner cos we can’t go through the induction session. There’s no one there to support or communicate with us.”** Aaron agreed. **“I want to exercise and keep fit”**.

The young people told me that Ian helped support them to apply for the funding. An application was made to the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund. Stephen and Bill told me when they got the application form the young people decided they wanted to sign the application. The young people put a DVD together from the application form and put subtitles underneath the signing. They got the funding they needed!

Question Time Debate

Stephanie said, **“We did Question Time with councillors from Liverpool and with Directors of Children Services from boroughs across Merseyside.”** Bill told me how they decided to get involved. He said, **“It was through other disability groups that we met up with when we went to Alton Towers. We got together and we decided what we wanted to ask.”** The young people agreed that they thought it was a good opportunity to have their voices not only listened to but also heard. Stephanie said, **“We asked questions like why don’t you fund deaf youth clubs when you fund other youth clubs for hearing people? You see it’s our choice to come to this youth club, hearing people can come here too. But they never responded.”** The young people are hoping to get more of a response at this year’s debate.

Activities

There are lots of activities going on at MSDP. On site there are two large youth club rooms and a sports hall. Within this young people can play pool, dodgeball, basketball and indoor football. The young people can take part in rock climbing and kick boxing. I asked John what activities he enjoyed doing. He said, **“Football of course. But I like rock climbing, canoeing and bowling.”** Bill said he prefers to go to **“the funfair and swimming.”** There is also the opportunity for young people to get involved with arts & crafts, cookery and drama.

The young people said they really enjoy going on trips. Bill informed me, **“We just decide as a group what we want. For example we had never tried skiing and we wanted to try that”**. Vicky said, **“We decide where we go.”** Stephanie added, **“We make sure everyone can go. We make sure everyone can take part. Like when we talked about going to Quasar but one young person has epilepsy and so he couldn’t do it. So we made sure the activity was on an evening he didn’t attend the youth club. We try to make sure everyone is included.”**

The MSDP Youth Service is a valued resource. John said, **“I feel safe here. We have visited other youth clubs but they’re crap”**. Vicky told me, **“I wouldn’t want to go to other youth clubs.”** Aaron added, **“We even have our own showers here, its better.”**

On my visits I was made to feel welcome and I would like to thank everyone for giving up their time to help me write this evaluation. It is very evident that the young people and staff at MSDP work very hard at valuing all ideas and opinions. The young people are very involved in the many aspects of running their clubs and I am sure they will continue to be involved in decision making.

The young people I spoke to were determined and in full agreement that MSDP Youth Service should receive Investing in Children Membership. Stephen signed very strongly in agreement. In light of this and the commitment to involving children and young people

in meaningful dialogue and change, I have no hesitation in recommending that Merseyside Society for Deaf People Youth Service receives Investing in Children Membership. Well done.

Glenys Newby
Investing in Children
November 2007