



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Aycliffe Secure Services

There have been a lot of new developments over the last year in relation to opportunities that the young people are offered in Secure Services, and issues that the young people bring to the Investing in Children meetings and their own house meetings.

Evidence of dialogue and change for this evaluation is provided by the on-going Investing in Children meetings and some exciting new developments which have been created with the participation of the young people.

Investing in Children meetings still happen on a regular basis, please see copies of minutes attached. As usual for the purpose of this evaluation I sat in on one of the IiC meetings where the young people brought issues from their respective houses to be discussed. Follow up to each issue was requested by Jan Spellman with a member of staff allocated to action each change or provide feedback, (as demonstrated in the minutes.) Jan also told me that there is now a six monthly review carried out by the Quality Performance Manager to ensure that issues raised are followed up. This follows on from my last evaluation when I highlighted that issues in some circumstances went unresolved. By introducing this quality review, issues that remain unresolved will be highlighted.

House meetings still happen for the day-to-day issues that arise on each of the houses.

I met with Gareth, Kaysha and Danny who all said that the meetings do happen, sometimes things do come up again and again but stuff does move forward and things do change.

SNAG (School Nutrition Action Group) to **FNAG** (Food Nutrition Action Group) – Food is always a contentious issue and over the last year or so the FNAG group has evolved, looking at the quality of the food served in Secure, dealing with the issues the young people raise and trying to improve the service they receive. The FNAG group are working with Woodham Community Technology College in order to learn from their experience of running a successful kitchen.

Behaving Positively to B4L (Behaviour for Life) - Following through from Behaving Positively (as highlighted in last years evaluation a group set up to deal with issues which needed to be addressed in relation to behaviour) a new system B4L has now been launched within Secure Services. A system that affects what each young person can do with their time in secure, depending on how much they positively participate in the B4L scheme.

The whole system has been developed by the B4L group, which is made up of adults and young people. Please see the attached leaflet which explains B4L and highlights the people involved. *Kaysha told me that all changes to the system are discussed as a group and that as they begin to put it into place problems are arising but they are trying to work through them together.*

Activities & Youth club - are now tied in to the B4L system and most young people get to take advantage of them if they want to.

- **Youth Club** - has not been well attended recently. However at the Investing in Children meeting Sam asked for new volunteers and the Youth Club has now restarted. Stephen and Gareth are two of the young people who are already volunteering.
- **Games Club** - happens on a Monday
- **Lunchtime Club** - is a new club, run by Education. The workers are able to get packed lunches so the young people can access the club during their lunch break.
- **Charity Auctions** - I attended one of the charity auctions that was held in Secure before Christmas. Donations were given in and Sam worked with the young people to create Christmas cards and decorations to sell. Members of staff made things like cakes and sweets to auction too. Kaysha volunteered as the auctioneer but decided to take a back seat on the day which was okay as Sam was ready to step into her shoes. The event was very successful, lots of tokens were spent, some young people even went back to their houses to get more tokens to spend. The tokens were the young people's own money as well as reward tokens they had earned during the few weeks leading up to the auction. Most of the young people took part in the event.
- **Enrichment Weeks (Themed Weeks)** - are co-ordinated by Sam Campbell. Over the last year Sam has been supported by one or two of the young people who are on the XL programme. (XL is an alternative education programme offered in conjunction with the Princes Trust – please see below.) Gareth told me that he “is keen on the computer, so I have helped put some of the timetable together. I helped organise the birds of prey. We sorted out making bird boxes and stuff.” The theme for this week was Nature and Conservation, Gareth also did some of the activities for the sports week, Dean also worked on the Sports Week and planned some of the coaching sessions with Ross,
- **Special Projects** happen when opportunities arise with outside agencies and services.
 - **HMS BULWARK** - due to its affiliation with Secure Services some young people took part in this gardening project.
 - **MIND** - the young people have the opportunity to visit MIND in the local area. The session is led by an artist, which the young people are able to join in. Gareth, Kaysha and Danny all said, “You don't have to go if you don't want to.”
- **Shows** - the young people like variety and produced a Christmas Show. Young people have also asked for singing lessons and received some coaching.
- **Beauty Club** - is still on going. Gareth said, “I work at the beauty club.” At the Investing in Children meeting Jan reminded everyone that there is lots of equipment and kit at the beauty club.
- **Training Centre** - Nigel now co-ordinates the training in the sports hall with the cardiovascular equipment and the treadmills. The young people would like music to be playing when they are training.

Marcel, one of the young people is currently undertaking some research into what activities the young people want to see happening and when they want them to happen.

New opportunities include:

Princes Trust –

The Princes Trust is now offering funding for the XL programme within Secure Services. There are four young people who have completed the first level and achieved their bronze award. The young people have chosen projects for the next stage of the award. Gareth told me that he is also “developing an evaluation sheet for the ‘XL’ programme.” Additional funding is being sought to enable the young people to achieve specific projects that they have requested to do as part of their course. For example, Stephen wants to work on a gardening project, therefore an application has been made for £400.00 for equipment such as tools and boots etc.

Gareth is one of the young men I met with who is part of the XL programme. Gareth told me that he has completed his bronze and is ready to move on. Gareth was also keen to tell me that as part of his Exiats he has been paying for outside activities at the local gym. One of the workers has been coming in on his own time to make sure that Gareth is able to get there.

During the last year one young woman has been fully trained in nail art/therapy etc. Sam Campbell managed to secure a £400 grant in order for this to be achieved. Sam also made contacts with services in her area that could support her career further when she goes home.

Working alongside the Princes Trust has opened new doors for the young people in Secure Services. As part of working through the XL the young people have been able to apply for more funding under different headings. A recent development has been looking at ‘how to run a business’. The group are provided with a business mentor and have been given a start up grant for a **Smoothie Bar**. When I revisited the Secure Unit to check out my evaluation I met Alex and Jade, two young people who have been involved in the development of the Smoothie Bar. Alex told me how she worked with Sam to set the prices, decide what would be served etc. The Smoothie Bar has now been launched and on the morning of my visit proved to be very popular. Alex and Jade helped Sam and another member of staff to sell smoothies, coffee, hot chocolate, snack ‘a’ jacks and lots of other stuff. When I visited the Investing in Children meeting in late 2007 one of the houses asked for ice lollies. Sam suggested that these could be sold from the Smoothie Bar; so it’s a case of ‘watch this space.’

Interviews - Young people are still involved in recruiting all staff. Gareth and Kaysha have been involved in interviewing new staff. Both young people confirmed, “we definitely get listened to.” I think this demonstrates that this is an on-going practice and the process is very successful.

NYAS - still support and advocate for children and young people within Secure Services. A new development is that exit interviews are now carried out with the NYAS reps as opposed to Secure Services staff. This is to allow the young people to be able to say what they want without holding back.

Questionnaires - are now in place for anyone and everyone who comes into Aycliffe Secure Services to make comment. This includes young people, parents and visitors. Feedback is then analysed and then if needed change is brought about as a result. It is anticipated in the near future that a new questionnaire relating to childcare practice will also be available for comments.

Sentencing continues to be shorter and the time that children and young people stay with Secure Services is not as long as years ago. In order to have an impact on the lives of the

young people that come under their care, the staff team are constantly challenged to work smarter in order to provide a service which can produce the best outcomes for the young people. I believe that the varied programme clearly demonstrates how this is being achieved on a whole unit level. By giving Sam an increased responsibility to organise extra and enriching activities, more activities for young people to be involved in them, the service is improving and in turn enriching the lives of the young people who find themselves there.

I know and understand that this is a hard time in the lives of young people, locked up from everything they know and what is familiar, but it appears that a lot of young people walk away taking something positive from their experience within Secure Services. No system is perfect and there are always improvements to be made but for the first time in the last seven years (the time I have been visiting Secure Services), I was told:

“I’m happy with it here, me!”

“It’s really good on the house at the moment, everything’s ok!”

I think it is clear from the evidence provided that the system of change does work at a strategic level and that the changes made do make a huge difference in the lives of young people. Through further discussion I have agreed with the Management Team that Investing in Children from this point will be done on a house by house basis which will hopefully begin to take care of some of the issues highlighted in previous evaluations.

My report has been read by some young people and has been agreed by them. Therefore on behalf of the young people I would like to recommend that Aycliffe Secure Services receives it’s renewed Investing in Children.

Helen Mulhearn
Investing in Children
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