



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

CATS – Copelaw Activities

This report will highlight and identify opportunities that exist for children and young people to engage in dialogue within the CATS service in order to make changes to the service.

CATS aim to help children and young people in an emergency situation. The activities act as a mechanism to allow workers to meet with young people and build relationships. This relationship then acts as a mechanism to allow workers to provide the children and young people with support in making decisions that affect their lives.

Initially the children and young people are invited to attend an activity. The team are very flexible and alter the service to suit the needs of the children and young people accessing it.

The team meet with the children and young people and ask them what they like doing, what they are interested in and what hobbies they have. This is done to try and build the programmes around each individual young persons needs.

Historically the CATS team have only taken referrals from the social work teams. However, the team are now adopting a multi agency approach and are taking referrals from schools, school nurses and other professional bodies.

From the visits I made it is evident that workers are continually changing the service to ensure they are meeting the needs of individual young people.

CAT's workers support children and young people both individually and within groups, activities take place each night and on a weekend. Children and Young People are asked to join in with activities depending upon the area of County Durham within which they live

Evidence of dialogue and change is taken from discussions I had with children and young people during two separate activities.

For the purpose of this report I had the pleasure of meeting with Kieran, Chloe, Matty, Courtney, Terry, Andrew, Connor, Hayley, Beth, Jack, Jade, Zoë, Caitlin, Kieran and Jamie.

The activity I attended had been changed to allow one young man the opportunity to get out of the house. He cares for his younger brother and sister and often can't make activities. After discussing this with him the CATS team asked him what would allow him to re-engage with the service. He informed me that **“the workers asked me what would make it easier for me to come on the activities; I told them I needed to bring my brother and sister with me as well”**. As a result of this dialogue the young man and his younger brother and sister all took part in the activity **“it gave me a break and I could be part of CATS again”**.

It is evident that children and young people are included in the service delivery of CATS and in particular which groups of CATS they are involved in. Andrew told me **“I asked to go on other activities with Terry; we started being mates after we went mountain biking, I was happy tonight when they put us together – its good that he’s my mate now”**.

The children and young people get to have a say about which activities or programmes they take part in, **“If I don’t like an activity like the water ones, I tell them I don’t want to go, it’s up to me, it’s my choice”**.

The activities are very much based on Fun! They are all geared towards giving young people a break from everyday life and providing them an opportunity to enjoy themselves.

I asked the group if they felt listened to by the workers **“they listen to us all the time; like last week they asked us what activity we wanted to do we all voted and now we’re doing this (archery) and horse riding for the next 5 weeks”**.

“I love CATS, they are the only people that I can speak to if have a problem; they listen to me and I always end up feeling happy. They always make me feel happy again if I am sad and help me with my social worker” I asked this young person how they were listened to **“my life is complicated, CATS people listen to me and help me decide how to make things better again”**.

All the young people who I spoke to were happy with the service that CATS provides however, they have asked that I highlight some recommendations that they would like to develop with workers:

“It would make it better if they did the activities it would build up our confidence if we saw them doing it as well.”

“We should fill in something to say what they could do better and improve on. The workers should look at it and act on what we say.”

“I want to do some art; like making jewellery, painting and sketching, instead of doing outside stuff all the time.”

Evidence of children and young people being involved in dialogue and change is not only evident within the direction of the CATS service, it is also evident that workers are engaging in dialogue with children and young people individually; supporting them to make changes to their lives at that particular moment in time.

The children and young people were very positive about CATS. They feel that they are listened to and have the opportunity to participate in the direction of the service.

The young people involved in this report agree with the content and recommendations made. Therefore it is on their behalf that I have no hesitation in recommending that CATS – Copelaw Activities remains an Investing in Children member for another year.

**Kim Kyle
Investing in Children
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