



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Coxhoe Youth Room

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

Coxhoe Youth Room is based within Coxhoe leisure centre; the project operates a drop in session two evenings a week and a girl's group session one night per week. The 'Youth Room' is open to young people aged 13 to 19, in addition to this the 'Youth Room' also operates a junior youth club which is funded by Durham City Council.

The main focus of the project is the drop in sessions, the sessions act as a mechanism to allow workers to meet with young people and build relationships to develop activities and programmes of personal, social development. These planned programmes are then introduced during sessions specifically designed for project work and are based on the ideas initially developed by young people.

As the 'Youth Room' is based within the Leisure Centre it creates the opportunity for children and young people to access its health facilities including gym sessions, football, indoor activities and also an outdoor skate park and youth shelter.

Coxhoe Youth Room is a valuable resource to young people from the surrounding areas. During my visits it was evident that young people are at the heart of the project, during the session the 'youth room' was full of young people and the atmosphere was exhilarating.

Evidence of dialogue and change is taken from discussions I had with young people during a drop-in and girls group session. For the purpose of this report I had the pleasure of meeting with: Andrew, Shane, Shaun, Scott, Wayne, Luke, Craig, Grant, Stephen, Matthew, Callum, Sam and Alana.

DJing Project

Music and specifically the decks form a focus of the drop in sessions and give many young people an opportunity to be involved in something they enjoy.

However, some of the young people who use the drop in regularly informed me that **“the decks took over the whole place so we wanted a separate place for it so everyone could enjoy themselves not just the DJ’s”**.

In the back of the 'Youth Room' there is now an allocated room, with decks, lights and records. I spoke with some of the young men who were responsible for this room **“we decided that we wanted a DJ room, we asked the workers if we could have one and they told us that we needed to sort things out for it, we done all the fundraising for the decks and stuff.**

I asked if the group have had any problems with the DJ room and if they needed to change anything about how it is run. Younger members asked staff if they could also access the decks, Project staff responded positively and asked the young people to consider the younger members request. **“We spoke to the workers about new members using the decks; we had to work out a way how everyone gets to have a go. We have changed how we used to do things in the DJ room and now everyone has a turn and we time how long we are on”.**

Our House

Four young people are developing the ‘Our House’ refurbishment project. The group are making decisions in order to improve the facilities of the ‘Youth Room’ including redecoration and the purchasing of new resources.

The group have successfully been allocated money from Coxhoe community partnership to fund this piece of work. I asked the young people if they involve other young people in deciding what resources they buy for the youth room.

“We asked everyone what they wanted to spend the money on; people said that they wanted:

- **Couch**
- **Nintendo Wii**
- **Computers**
- **Television**
- **Games**
- **PS2**

“When everyone decides what to spend the money on we all talk about it and vote on if we need it or not.”

The young people are responsible for the budgets of the project and report back to the community partnership, producing reports to highlight expenditure. **“We have got to work out all the budgets for our money; like what we’ve spent and how much more we have to spend.”**

Girls Group

The idea for the girls work developed from a group of young women who attended the drop in sessions on a Monday and Wednesday evening. The group ran a taster session for other young women to see if they wanted a girls group; a number of young women attended the event and put together a funding bid to the Youth Opportunity Fund to help fund future sessions.

As the project staff implemented the necessary changes to allow this session to take place on a regular basis, I asked the young women why they felt they needed this group, **“we wanted somewhere to relax away from the boys; we are out numbered at the drop in sessions. We can talk about all sorts of stuff now and we get to do what we want to do.”**

I asked the young women if they felt listened to by the workers. Alana informed me **“of course we are listened to; we wouldn’t have this group if we didn’t get listened to. We decided to ask other girls if they would like a girls group. We talked to other**

girls in Coxhoe and Park Hill and asked them if they would like a girls group. We got a really good response, girls saying that they did want the group.”

Sam also told me “its not about getting the group going, we plan what we want to do every week, the workers don’t do stuff for us, they support us with what we want to do”.

Change is also occurring within the leisure centre as a direct result of dialogue with young people. The girls group asked if they could do some sports activities in the leisure centre as a group as they felt very self conscious about exercising in front of other people. **“We spoke to leisure centre management and have agreed that we can have sessions in the gym and classes just for us and the centre will provide a female member of staff to work with us.”**

It is evident from meeting with the young people that they have a sense of ownership over the ‘Youth Room’.

Young people are involved in all aspects of project planning including programme and budget planning and are active within the decision making processes.

Coxhoe Youth Room provides a safe environment for children and young people from a wide range of backgrounds to come together in a friendly relaxed atmosphere. It is clear that they have ownership over the ‘Youth Room’ and are keen to be part of the decision making process.

All the young people who I spoke to were happy with the service that Coxhoe Youth Room offers; however they would like to make one recommendation to project management **“We don’t have enough staff to replace people when staff are off sick and don’t turn up for sessions, so they just get cancelled. We would like to see more staff in the Youth Room so sessions don’t get cancelled.”**

All the young people I met with were very positive about Coxhoe Youth Room. They feel that they have the opportunity to participate in the direction of project. 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 Coxhoe Youth Room becomes an Investing in Children member.

Kim Kyle
Investing in Children
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