



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Crook Children in Need Team

The relationship between Crook CIN and Investing in Children dates back to 2003. I feel that we are at a point where I can write an evaluation; however I can only clearly demonstrate evidence of dialogue and change for one individual sibling group who entered the care process in January 2008.

I do believe that there has been a commitment to being involved with Investing in Children throughout the years and through agreement with the Team Manager, the team have identified and committed worker time in order for this process to happen. I have only been involved in this process since February the 7th 2007, when I met with Cath Hodgson to discuss the story so far and go through the most recent Agenda Day report, which was October 2006. We also discussed the Christmas party which was organised following on from the success of the agenda day at Halloween. **The children enjoyed the activities and were really excited when they got another opportunity to have an activity, this was something they asked for.**

When I met with Cath we discussed the dialogue that had happened with children and young people and what had changed in the team as a result of some of the Agenda Day comments. It became apparent that the feedback from this was somewhat anecdotal and the team had introduced no mechanisms to successfully record evidence of change. This in turn meant that it would only be possible to check this by actually talking to children and young people involved in the Agenda Day to see if they had noticed a difference since their involvement. However, this did not happen as I was not forwarded names of the children and young people involved, so could not follow it up.

A year later I met with Chris Gilderoy to discuss again how we could move this process forward. I was given the names of six young people who were on Chris's caseload and who would be willing to meet me and chat about their involvement with Crook Children in Need Team.

I wrote to all of the children individually, introducing myself, and why I wanted to meet with them. I also wrote a letter to the carers asking if they would talk to the children and let me know a suitable time to meet. I received two responses. I went out to meet with Jade and Carolyn cared for by Pat Carroll, on the 3rd of March and to meet with Amber and Daniel, cared for by Anne Clarkson, on the 4th March. All four children are from one family who came into care in January.

Evidence of Dialogue and change is partly provided by the four children:

Jade (aged 10) was able to share with me her thoughts of coming into the care system. Jade was very positive about the experience and chatted easily about what had happened to her, her sisters and brother. One thing that Jade remembered is that they had some biscuits, some Dr. Pepper and coke in the office on the day they came into care.

Jade told me that in the beginning Chris was her Social worker, but during the course of the two months it had been changed to Stephanie Dixon. Jade did say that Chris had talked to her about why her Social Worker was changing.

Jade and Carolyn (aged 7) talked about their contact visits which are held at the Crook Office. The girls told me about the toys and games that are available for them to play with during their contact visits. **“There is a snooker table; there are prams and dolls, lego and lots of stuff like that.”**

Jade was very happy to tell me about all of the things that they have started to do since they have come to live with Pat and John, as very experienced carers they are aware of children’s activities in their local area and they make good use of their Max Card. **“We go to gymnastics at school and at the Abbey Centre, we do loads of arts and crafts, we go to the fun club.”**

Carolyn told me that she enjoys football and dancing.

Amber (aged 8) and Daniel (aged 6) played and coloured in when I visited them. The children told me that Rosie comes and takes them to their contact visits. Daniel told me that there are a lot of toys and that **‘the people are nice.’** Amber told me that she was asked if she wanted to change schools when she came to live with Anne but didn’t want to at the time; however Amber would like to change schools now so told me that she will phone her social worker and ask.

All four children are in a comfortable and settled environment and were quite happy to talk with me. The conversation was quite general especially with the younger children but I have highlighted all the bits that I feel were relevant to my evaluation.

I have gone through my report with Jade. Jade thought that all of the parts that included her views were fine and also told me that she still felt that she was being listened too.

Over the past few years Crook Children in Need Team have held a couple of Agenda Days. The first Agenda Day was held at Kensington Hall Hotel in Willington. Over twenty young people attended and gave their views on the service they received from the team.

Feedback was given to the team and further meetings were held to look at redesigning a leaflet. Workers were allocated to take a lead in co-ordinating and continuing young people’s work. However, after they left the leaflet was never completed.

In order to re-ignite the work and begin another process of dialogue and change it was agreed that another agenda day be held.

This took place in October 2006 – please see attached report. The team then provided the children with a Halloween party, and later in the year a Christmas Party as a celebration activity. It was discussed that after this children and young people would be brought together to talk to the team about changes that have come about as a result.

I have had one meeting with Cath Hodgson where we discussed the way forward. At this point I did ask Cath about how the changes in practice might be evidenced. Although I

did say that if nothing had been recorded about how the team had responded to issues raised, a change in the team ethos might not have been noticed by the children and young people. Therefore it was agreed that new children and young people would be brought together to talk with me.

I would like to point out that there has been an incredible amount of good will from the team in Crook. The process has always been supported by the Team Manager; however we have never quite 'sealed the deal' as it were.

Therefore in order to create an opportunity for the team to be able to move forward. I am willing to recommend that the team become Investing in Children members at that this point in time.

This is based on the positive experience of Jade, Carolyn, Amber and Daniel alongside the evidence provided at the end of the Agenda Day report that another young person was also able to say that their "life has been better seen I've had my social worker," alongside this there is supporting evidence from how the team has dealt with some of the recommendations from the second Agenda Day:-

Recommendations

From the young people's views on the day I would recommend that the changes you make are;

1. That CHILDREN AND young people are asked on a regular basis where, when and how often they would like to meet with their social worker. This is important as young people change their routines and life circumstances regularly, even if you ask them at the start of your work with them this may change, and can sometimes be the explanation as to why some young people may not be attending or contributing to their meetings. Also the home may not always be the best place to talk for young people.

Supporting evidence provided by conversations with Jade, Carolyn, Amber and Daniel.

2. Meetings with young people are more for the young people. That they are made more interesting and fun for younger ones- so drawing or playing on a computer game whilst you talk can also help the young person build a relationship with you. Also focusing less on the parents and more work with the young people - maybe meet with parents during school time or when the children and young people are out?
3. Making young people aware of activities that are going on in their local community. Especially when these are cheap or free activities (see above to see what activities young people were interested in).
Look for different ways for young people to communicate their views. Ask the young people how they would like to work with you.

Supporting evidence provided – Rosie does keep everyone informed about opportunities and activities that are open to children and young people around the area and during the holidays. Individual Social Workers also have contacts in the area and pass this information on.

4. Look for different ways for young people to communicate their views. Ask Young People how they would like to work with you.

I also talked to Chris and Cath about what happens next, it was clear that all of the above evidence highlights the impact individual social workers have in the lives of individual children and young people. However we agreed that the next move will be:

1. The team think about a collective approach to recording evidence
2. The team create an evidence file of 'good practice'
3. To team begin to look at how they can begin to involve children and young people in the wider debate about service delivery.
4. There is more clear movement on the remaining recommendations suggested by the children and young people in the latest Agenda Day report.

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