



## Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

### Durham Area Disability Leisure Group

The Durham Area Disability Leisure Group (DADLG) was founded in 1996 and has developed from a volunteer-run group to a successful charity, running a wide range of leisure, sporting and social opportunities for children and young people with disabilities and their families in County Durham. Based in Chester-le-Street and working in conjunction with Durham Education in the Community and Chester-le-Street District Council, the group provides many weekly events including: trampolining, football, horse riding and cycling. Monthly, DADLG run quad-biking and a football tournament, as well as 'Taster Sessions' and short courses in archery, fencing and sign language. In addition to this they arrange social events and family fun days.



These activities allow children with learning, sensory, physical and multiple disabilities to mix, enjoying sports and recreational activities together.

### **Evidence of Dialogue & Change**

#### Expert Panel

Many of the activities run by DADLG are well established, such as trampolining and cycling, and annual events like the summer barbeque and the 'Turkey and Tinsel' get together at Christmas, however, the other activities that are arranged and planned are suggested, researched and tested by the group's expert panel.

Andrea and Lynne run the group and ensure that all the young people and their families are well informed about all the plans and suggestions. There are twenty young people on the expert panel who meet regularly, often for a meal, as the group are all in agreement that it is a nice way to have a meeting. Many young people who are part of the panel get dropped off for the evening, and enjoy the independence this gives them.

For this evaluation I was invited along to one of the expert panel's social events where they can enjoy a meal and activity and talk about the ideas they have for new things to try out.

During the meal, or activity, the young people get a chance to chat about the activities they are interested in trying out. Lynne and Andrea keep a note of the usually extensive list of suggestions. A young person then volunteers to research an activity, they find out

where you can do it, how much it would cost, how you can get there, and any other important things that they might need to find out. Anything that was researched in a previous meeting can be shared, and sometimes someone is asked to try out the activity and report back to the group about it. From this Andrea and Lynne can go ahead and book activities for everyone.

The expert panel wanted to have distinctive clothing to wear at events so that everyone could see who they are, and then they can find them to let them know about their suggestions. The group decided on red t-shirts and blue hoodies which they wear to any DADLG event.

### Newsletter

DADLG regularly print a newsletter keeping everyone up to date about upcoming events, and the expert panel have a piece in every newsletter. Their photographs are in with their names and they ask for suggestions for the future, telling people to look out for them in their t-shirts and hoodies. Anything that young people are involved in can be put in the newsletter, and jokes are always welcome too.

Lynne and Andrea pull together all of the suggestions that are made by everyone and record it clearly in a chart with a heading of “Suggestions (by)”, and then “What’s Happened”. Examples of some of the suggestions are:

*“Barry and Gillian suggested going to see Chitty Chitty Bang Bang – We’ve made a booking at the Empire Theatre in Sunderland for 26<sup>th</sup> May2008”*

*“Alex C said he would like to try driving a car – We had a go-karting session at Top Gear on 5<sup>th</sup> March”*

The group have suggested and tried out many different activities such as bush-crafts, archery, bowling, fishing, snow-tubing, cinema and theatre visits, watching rugby and ice hockey, playing cricket, football, quasar, kayaking, the list goes on and on, and nothing is impossible to try out. Whilst I was with the group the latest suggestion was ghost hunting at a castle!

During the meal I sat with Alex, who is nineteen and he told me about the expert panel. **“I thought archery would be a good idea, and I’ve suggested fishing as a new idea. You get to put your ideas forward and then get to do it.”**

I also met with Sam who told me she liked coming to DADLG and being on the expert panel. Gemma and Michael were enjoying the meal and Andrew was planning some more meals out.

### CycleAbility

DADLG has approximately 150 members between the ages of 5 to 25 and have a project called CycleAbility, which allows disabled people the opportunity to cycle. Currently pupils from Portland School and Thornhill School regularly use CycleAbility. DADLG provide a qualified coach for these sessions and they encourage any other groups or schools to use their facilities. They also provide opportunities for individuals to visit them and try out their range of cycles. One young person has recently visited to test different cycles before buying one of their own.

It is apparent that the foundation of Durham Area Disability Leisure Group is ensuring that the young people who are its members feel fully part of the group. It is *their*

suggestions, *their* plans; *their* testing that builds the group and makes it what it is. Having met with young people who are part of the group it is very clear that they are fully engaged in the planning and development of the group, and with their endorsement I would like to recommend that Durham Area Disability Leisure Group receive Investing in Children membership.

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