



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

East Durham Homes

East Durham Homes is a private, not for profit company, taking over from Easington Council in providing rented housing accommodation for the people of the district and others.

Evidence of dialogue and change is provided by EDH (East Durham Homes) Youth Group.

EDH Youth Group – is a group of young people, who have been meeting over one year. The group is facilitated by Carole Tilley, a Customer Involvement Officer and supported by Joan Moyles, a Tenant Board Member who represents the young people's views at board meetings.

On 3rd December 2007 I joined the EDH Youth Group, Lauren Nelson, Jack Fletcher and Chris Laidler. Two of the group members were unable to attend the meeting (Nicole and Andrea).

At this meeting the group had three visitors, Rachel, a Financial Director of East Durham Homes, Rhonda, a Communications Officer from East Durham Homes and Joan Moyles a Board Member.

Rachel – Financial Director of East Durham Homes. Rachel talked through board meetings, what happened, what was discussed and who attends them. Rachel brought a small flyer 'know your board members.'

Joan Moyles is a "recycled teenager" (title given to her by the young people), a board member who champions issues at the board meetings.

However the group has been involved in EDH for over a year and are now curious to see, and take part in the board meetings themselves. The plan is that there will be a seat on EDH Board of Directors for a young person.

The young people have built up a relationship with Carole, Joan and East Durham Homes over the last year, meaning that the prospect of joining the board is not a daunting prospect but a natural progression.

I think this clearly demonstrates the commitment of East Durham Homes to listen to children and young people and ensure that they are able to fully participate. They take time to ensure the young people are fully equipped and prepared to take part in meaningful debate.

Over the last year the group have met and taken part in a variety of activities and meetings:

- Choosing their name – EDH Youth Group. On the night of my visit the young people decided to change their name. The group has been thinking of ways to recruit new members they have found by calling themselves a 'youth group',

people expect to come and play table tennis and games. After much discussion and deliberation, the group decided to rename themselves:
EDH – Young Person’s Forum, if the two other members agree. Carole will call them to confirm.

- Advertising their group – Another visitor on the evening of my visit was Rhonda, a Communications Officer from East Durham Homes. The young people worked on their ideas on a flip chart and passed them to Rhonda who transformed them into the attached leaflet. This is only a first draft. Rhonda and the young people discussed how to make it into what they wanted.

They discussed – colour

- graphics
- choice of photographs etc

- Visitors – visitors to the group are a frequent occurrence. Over the last year the young people have met with

- Police
- Street Wardens

The purpose of these meetings has been to make links and have a better understanding of each other.

- Visits – The young people were keen to tell me about their recent visit to Durham Constabulary Communications Centre. They have built up their relationship with the Police and they are interested in learning more.

- Activities – Working with the PCT the young people have taken part in

- smoothie making
- drugs awareness

and are looking forward to a five week cookery course.

They chatted about where to hold the course, the group have been offered the new healthy living centre of the residents association in Eden Hill. The group want to go to the community building as it is closer to where they all live.

It is important to note that the group chose the time of the meetings and which day was best for them to meet on. East Durham Homes provide transport to the meetings and also provide a buffet.

The young people told me that the “corned beef slice” is a favourite.

Lauren has been coming to the group for just over one year. Lauren found out about the group through the Youth Forum when Carole visited to chat to the group. Jack came through Peterlee Youth Council and has been coming for over one year. As has Chris who heard Carole speak to a group at college.

All three young people get a lot out of coming to the group, they would like more young people to come and they told me that is why they want to advertise.

The young people agreed it is such a great opportunity to be involved in such a group.

Jack is actually coming to East Durham Homes for his work experience from school.

While we were chatting Carole talked to Jack about what he wanted to do on his placement.

The young people I met with definitely agreed that they get listened to and told me that the group “is good” and “it’s quite fun”.

The young people of EDH – Youth Group are able to explore real issues that they face in their communities and take part in some interesting debates and discussions which affect

the tenants of the district. The group is only at the start of the process but over the last year has established itself and the confidence of the young people. I think this work is very innovative and it's a case of watch this space.

Jack, Lauren, Andrea, Nicole and Chris all agree that East Durham Homes deserves to be an Investing in Children member and I have no hesitation in recommending that they do.

Helen Mulhearn
Investing in Children
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