



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Education Welfare Service – South West Office

This report will highlight and identify opportunities that exist for children and young people to engage in dialogue within the Education Welfare Service South West Office in order to make changes to the service.

The Education Welfare Service aims to ensure that children and young people benefit from educational opportunities available to them. To achieve this the education welfare service works with children and young people, their families, education services and establishments and other statutory and voluntary organisations. The team actively encourages children and young people to get involved in decision making and talk about how the service can best support them.

For the purpose of this report I visited two schools with Ray Hughes the Educational Welfare Officer for special schools within the area. I had the pleasure of meeting pupils at both Walworth Primary in Newton Aycliffe and The Oaks Secondary School in Spennymoor.

Evidence of Dialogue and Change is provided by children and young people that I met during my visits including: Hannah, Hayleigh, Joanne, Richard, Eilan, Melissa, Chandra and Alisha.

The South West office provides children and young people with numerous forms of support including: individual, group work, lunch time clubs, family support and liaising between the school and the family.

I visited a lunch time club at The Oaks; the club runs every Tuesday lunch time, this session is operated between the Educational Welfare Service, Connexions and the Anti Bullying service. The club was a direct response to requests from the young people who have had contact with education welfare officers in previous schools. **“we asked for our club and we got it”**. The aim of the session is to provide young people with an opportunity to talk face to face with a worker who they feel is there to help and support them. The young people were keen to point out that the drop in is a way for them to **“talk to someone if we need to, if we have any problems we talk to Ray and he helps us sort it out.”** What was evident is that the EWO’s are there to help and support the young people; they achieve this by listening to the young person and putting their needs at the centre of any solution. **“Ray is kind; he is the best thing we could have to listen to us, as he helps sort things out the way we want them sorted out, he helps me sometimes when I want to say something but cant put it into words, Ray helps me sort out how I want to say things”**.

During my visit to the lunch time club it was evident that this time was extremely valuable to the young people. I asked the young people how having support from the EWO service helped them to improve their attendance at school **“I always come here every Tuesday because it makes me happy, I get picked on in the yard”**. During the

lunch time club conversations take place on how improve school and school life. As a result of these conversations, the young people have agreed with the school that if they need extra support they can have some time away from class to calm down. The menu in the canteen has also been altered to make meal time better for the young people. **“I like the lunch time club as I get a quiet dinner time when I come here”**

I asked the young people if they would like to make any changes to the service they receive. All the young people agreed that they would like more lunch time clubs; it helps me calm down and stops me from being angry in my next lessons.

It was evident from listening to the children and young people that they value the time the EWO’s spend with them during the group work sessions **being in the group times helps me trust Ray more, I get to know him when we play games and thing, when I have problems with my attendance I trust him and have more time by myself with Ray, he is a good help at keeping me in school.”**

This leads me into the support the Education Welfare Officers give to young people on an individual basis.

The Educational Welfare Officers develop strategies and support based on the ideas of the young people. I met with Alisha at Walworth Primary **“my mammy is going to have a baby, Ray is helping me to be a help to my mammy and love the baby”**.

Richard told me **“he (Ray) sorts out problems with us, like when I had a problem with home and it was stopping me from coming into school, I spoke to Ray and he helped me sort the problem out.”** As if I was not already convinced that the Educational Welfare Office South West were engaging in dialogue with children and young people, Joanne informed me **“we can tell them anything and they don’t talk about us with the teachers, they will help us sort out a problem that we might have with the school, it makes me want to come knowing that I have their help, its good because Ray is concerned about me and I get to have a say on how I want things sorted out”**.

During my visits it was evident that the EWO South West office are listening to children and young people and implementing change to their service delivery as a result. It is important that this dialogue continues between the EWO officers and the children and young people to continue and develop what has already been achieved.

The children and young people involved in this report have agreed the content and recommendations. Therefore on behalf of them I would like to recommend the EWO South West office for Investing in Children Membership.

Kim Kyle
Investing in Children
December 2007