



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

High Etherley Children's Home

High Etherley Children's Home has three young people as residents which takes it to its capacity. I visited the home on several occasions and met with Sean, Kayleigh and Sarah. During every visit I received a warm welcome from the staff and it was clear that they are committed to continually work for their Investing in Children membership.

Evidence of Dialogue & Change

Young People's Meetings

There are meetings once a month for the young people in the house and they give an opportunity for the young people to raise any issues. The kind of issues raised range from mobile phones, bedrooms, holidays to hair straighteners. The issues and discussions are minuted (see attached) and if they are not able to be addressed immediately they are taken to a staff meeting and then the results of this are fed back to the young people. Sarah told me, **"We all have our own say and things get sorted."**

Although the meetings are a mechanism for young people to have a voice, the nature of High Etherley is that it is a small home with staff accessible at all times, therefore if a young person has an issue they can talk about it any time they wish to.

Holidays

The young people raised during meetings different places they would like to go on holiday. Staff made it clear to me that they did not expect the young people to go on holiday together as they understood that they may want different things from a holiday as well as a break from each other. During my first visit to High Etherley Sean was planning a holiday to Haggerston Castle with Simon. Originally Sean had suggested a holiday to a theme park, however he wanted Sarah to be able to go with him and as she is pregnant that type of holiday wasn't suitable for her. Sarah said, **"Haggerston Castle was really good. I had a good time."**

Kayleigh wanted a separate holiday and initially planned to go to Primrose Valley; however by the time I visited again she had been to Blackpool which she had enjoyed. Sarah also told me, **"During the holidays we have loads of day trips."**

Bedrooms

Each young person has their own room and they are able to decorate how they choose. I think this commitment to allow young people to make the room their own is clearly demonstrated with all of the young people, but especially with Sarah. As she is pregnant she will be moving on to a mother and baby unit in the very near future, however she has already re-decorated her room in the short time she has lived at High Etherley. She told me, **"I wanted it to be pink; I got a duvet and curtains, a lamp, a mirror, a TV, a stereo and a clock. I went to pick them, it happened quick."**

Sean also talked about his room, **"I decorated it how I wanted, it's all Newcastle."**

Kayleigh also got to pick out her own carpets and she got a desk so that she could do her college work in her bedroom.

Phones

I spoke to Jill, the manager at High Etherley, and she told me about the situation with phones. The home was getting very high telephone bills each month and this was causing problems. A solution was found by each young person having their own mobile phone and getting £10 of credit each week. It also allows young people to make phone calls in private and if they need more credit they can use their own allowances.

Sarah said, **“Jill bought us a phone and we get £10 credit. It’s great.”**

Individual Incentive Schemes

As well as receiving pocket money and activity money, each young person has their own incentive scheme which allows them to earn extra money for their allowances. The young people work out what their individual incentives are and they can be linked to education or life skills or behaviour – whatever is relevant to the young people.

Sarah talked about her incentives, **“I earn money by keeping appointments, and doing life skills, me and Kayleigh make two meals on our own every week.”**

She went on, **“I sat with Louise and worked out what was fair.”**

I spoke at length with Sarah, and I asked whether she felt that High Etherley Children’s Home should receive Investing in Children membership for another year she fully agreed. She told me, **“I think it’s the best children’s home I’ve been to. At another place there wasn’t much time for staff to talk to you. A smaller place works better; you can have time to yourself. I get lifts to my Dad’s so I don’t have to go into Durham. I make plans and it’s fitted around me. There’s always someone there to take me to appointments. They’ve been dead supportive with my antenatal.”**

It is evident that staff at High Etherley Children’s Home treat each young person as an individual with individual needs. They are always ready to listen and are clearly committed to the principles of Investing in Children, and so along with Sarah, Kayleigh and Sean I would like to recommend that they receive Investing in Children membership once again. Well done!

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