



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Moorside Children's Home

Moorside children's home is a respite home for young people in County Durham who are in a crisis situation. Moorside offers this respite in order to try and prevent them from entering the care system on a full-time basis. The nature of the respite offered means that there is a high turnover of young people staying at Moorside in any one week.

For this evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with two young people, Luke and Hayley, and two members of staff, Glen and Louise.

Evidence of Dialogue and Change

As mentioned in last year's report, it can be difficult to keep a record of the work towards Investing in Children membership due to the changing group of young people staying at Moorside. However, the staff are very organised and keep a file to record any evidence of dialogue and change as it happens, with a brief write up and any photographs to support it.

Young People's Meetings

The young people's meetings at Moorside are held on a rolling programme to try to allow as many young people to have an opportunity to attend, depending on the days they are at Moorside. Hayley told me about them, **"In the young people's meetings you say what you want, like trips or what should be done to the house."**

The young people plan trips and activities during this time, however the meetings aren't compulsory and it is recorded in the meeting file when young people have not wanted a meeting.

The staff work hard to create an atmosphere which allows young people to feel able to approach them at any time with ideas or suggestions. As Hayley told me, **"You can just tell them, you don't need to be shy."**

Trips and Activities

Trips and activities are often on the agenda at young people's meetings and it is clear that there are lots of suggestions made. The young people get to go swimming, to the gym, fishing, and shopping. It is minuted that when the suggestions are made the young people need to be aware of planning an activity, and that it may be something that not everyone is comfortable doing.

If suggestions are made for trips that are not suitable, then the staff clearly explain why. As Hayley told me, **"Say for example we want to go swimming but there's five of us, there might not be enough staff so they'll tell us."**

Nintendo Wii

Young people at Moorside requested a new games machine as the PlayStation they have is out of date. They asked for an Xbox 360, a Nintendo Wii or a PlayStation 3. The staff passed on this request to the manager and at the time there was not any money available

for such a purchase. Following this, many young people were not satisfied and it was raised again in the young people's meetings. The young people put forward their feelings that a Nintendo Wii would be very beneficial for everyone who would use it. They said it would keep them fit, and it was important because some people didn't want to go to the gym or go swimming, and it would be a good way for them to improve their fitness. Staff then raised this with the manager in a staff meeting; he in turn raised the issue with the team manager pointing out the benefits for the young people regarding fitness. It was then agreed that a Nintendo Wii could be purchased. The young people are now enjoying playing on it.

Mirror in the Living Room

One young person who visits Moorside, Sophie made a suggestion for a mirror in the living room, she wrote, **"I reckon that there should be a mirror in the sitting room because I enjoy doing my hair and make up with other people and watching sky TV at the same time."**

This was raised by Sophie in the young people's meetings and other young people agreed it was a good idea (see minutes attached). As a result of this a mirror has been put in the living room for anyone who wants to use it.

Smoking and Lollipops

Smoking is a major issue at Moorside. Not only are there issues for members of staff not being able to smoke on the premises, but young people are not able to smoke there either. There are some issues in the area with local people and this adds to the difficulties around young people going out to smoke. Whilst this issue was raised at the young people's meeting it was also suggested by the young people that they would like to try a scheme where they would get a lollipop instead of going out for a cigarette. This was started and it is minuted in another meeting that some young people were finding it helpful, and was helping them cut down (see attached minutes).

Swimming Lessons

Moorside promotes a healthy lifestyle and living plan for the young people who stay there, and as part of this many young people often go to the gym and swimming. During a swimming trip two young people said that they enjoyed going to the swimming baths but they couldn't swim which limited them to the shallow end of the pool, this excluded them from the rest of the group. Staff discussed swimming lessons with the young people after looking into prices and availability. Both young people were interested and staff spoke to their parents about the idea of lessons, and although all of the parents were in agreement it was a good idea, they could not afford the lessons. The manager at Moorside agreed that they would fund the lessons, and they were booked and staff and parents supported the young people in going to them. It has been agreed that in the future staff will ask young people about their swimming skills and if the young people feel it would be beneficial they can also get swimming lessons.

It is clear from the evidence collected, that young people staying at Moorside feel they can put their ideas and suggestions forward and have them valued and listened to. Staff are open to using their ideas and making changes as a result. Young people feel they can approach staff at any time to raise issues as well as there being a formal meeting to raise issues. Luke told me, **"It's cool."** Hayley agreed, **"The staff are lovely it's cool. I came here to make progress and I have."**

When I asked the young people if they felt Moorside should receive Investing in Children membership for another year they were in full agreement that it should happen, and so along with their endorsement I would like to recommend another year of membership.

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Investing in Children
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