



## Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

### Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre

This re-evaluation of Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre is based on discussions with staff and young people during two visits to the centre.

I first met with Darryn Hooke, the centre manager who gave me a tour of the centre and described some of the work that has taken place and the changes since the last evaluation.

#### **How Young People get Involved**

I was first told how the young people attending the centre are involved in the running of the centre and the type of activities that take place.

#### **Young Peoples Forum**

Darryn told me how there used to be a formal structure set up but this did not work so now a new forum is currently in the process of being set up again. The centre is going to be going down another route and feel it is time to have a new forum set up and the first meeting is on next Thursday.

#### **Planning Sessions**

Staff meet and plan sessions and activities on a regular basis with a group of young people.

#### **General Activities**

Another way the young people have an opportunity to have a say is just talking during sessions.

#### **Youth Opportunities Fund**

Six young people took part in the training for the fund panel and these are the young people who make decisions.

#### **Management Committee**

Young people attending the centre are able to work closely with the management committee. The young people wrote to the committee and asked for a Nintendo Wii for the club and have got one.

#### **Greenfield School**

A worker currently works from the school and through this is able to invite young people from the school to attend the forum.

#### **Centre Activities**

Darryn told me that officially the club is open six nights a week.

#### **After School Drop In**

This is mainly used for Issue based work. They offer the C card scheme.

#### **Basket Ball Group**

A group of young men came to the centre that were dead keen on basket ball and asked for something to be set up for them. They were able to get funding and had coaching lessons. They then applied to the Big Boost for kit. Once the young men felt they were ready they expressed an

interest about going into a league. They are now in a Saturday league and every Monday coaching is provided due to further successful funding bids.

### **DJ'ing**

The young people at the centre were interested in learning how to DJ and MC. They asked and got help to apply to the Youth Opportunities Fund for equipment and a trainer to come in to teach them.

Darryn told me how the young people did everything and are hoping to be future peers to others on a Thursday evening session.

### **Dance Project**

This Project has just finished however it came about by a group interested in dancing. The group have performed at the Metro Centre and at half time at a Newcastle Falcons game.

### **Duke of Edinburgh Award**

This group currently meets at the centre on a Sunday. There are approximately 14/15 young people working towards achieving their silver and gold awards.

### **Youth Club Sessions**

Monday – There is a girls group which has around eight young people in. One of the projects the girls came up with is a baby think it over, a girly night and beauty and pampering.

Tuesday – This was the dancing project night

Wednesday – This evening is for project work and relates to young people's issues in a creative way.

### **Opportunities for Dialogue and Change**

On my second visit to the centre I met with several groups of young people who use the centre.

The first group I met with were a group of young men aged between 14 to 16 years. They told me how they come to the centre to use the decks and play football.

***'It's generally a Thursday and a Monday that we come along and odd times on a Friday'***

***'It's something for us to do and get out of the cold'***

I asked then how they are involved in making decisions at the club and they said;

***'We asked for some decks so we filled in loads of funding forms and got the money. Then we chose what equipment we wanted and bought them. Now we use them every week in the club!'***

***'When we are organising trips we all sit down and discuss it'***

***'We normally get asked what we want to do and then they try and organise it'***

***'We got the drinks machine at the centre'***

***'We are waiting to hear about if we are successful in getting some funding so that we can get some new records'***

I then met with two separate groups of girls the first group was relatively new to the youth club told me;

***'All our friends come here, we used to play games on the computers but that was it then we were told about the youth club and that they had a Nintendo Wii so we decided to come'***

***'We came to the junior club as you used to do art, colour in use the computers and play pool etc... .'***

The next group of girls I met were Stacey, Gemma and Jessica. They told me;

***'We have been coming since we were little. This is the new youth centre that was built we have been coming to this one ever since it opened.'***

***'We get listened to all the time...'***

***'There is us three and another girl who come down to the centre and are asked our opinions on everything that happens'***

***'We got to decide the times and what we wanted to do'***

***'We asked to go ice skating and we got to go, we have also asked for trips to the lakes and they are trying to organise it'***

***'For three days in the summer we went power kiting, gorge walking and canoeing. We have organised a competition on the Nintendo Wii against Chilton Youth Club'***

***'We like to come down all the time, new people are always welcome. It's warm and dry and homely in the winter. It's like our second home!!!'***

Finally I met with the Basket ball team. The team told me how they have been playing together for the past year and a half.

***'We just started off as a few friends interested in playing basketball so we got together and asked the centre if they could help us organise something. They said yes and helped us apply for funding so we could get a coach in to teach us new skills and to buy kit and eventually join a league'***

***'We came up with the idea and spoke to Darryn and started coming in on a Wednesday evening every week for an hour and a half in the beginning. Now we come in every night!'***

***'We helped fundraise and applied to the lottery for money for kit and to enter a league'***

***'We went on the internet to look at kits and ordered them ourselves. We got to pick our own kits'***

***'We are doing really well in the league now. We are winning it so far, altogether there are 8 teams in it'***

***'It's a good way to get fit!'***

***'In the future we plan on getting new rims and backboards for the sports hall'***

## **Conclusion**

My conversations with Darryn and the young people at Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre have provided me with sufficient evidence to show that during the past year the young people's involvement in decision making has been maintained and is currently being developed.

There are a number of examples where young people have changed and reshaped the way the service is provided.

During my discussions with the young people I was impressed with the way in which the young people are involved in the running of the centre, especially the basketball team and how it has been developed with the commitment of the young people and staff.

The young people I met with all felt they are listened to and are able to make changes and on their recommendation I have no hesitation but to recommend Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre has its membership renewed.

**Eleanor Seed  
Investing in Children  
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