



investing in children

Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Stanley Children In Need Team

Stanley Children in Need team is a statutory team consisting social workers, social work assistants, senior practitioners and team managers.

The team has a variety of roles. It must respond to referrals within seven working days as set out in the Framework for Assessment of Children In Need and Their Families (2000). These referrals come from a range of sources.

The team responds to cases involving children in need and also children in need of protection. Support is provided to families in terms of assessment, care planning and reviewing. The team has a duty rota for potential children in need and child protection cases.

To help me write this evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Molly and Christine and Lauren.

Evidence of Dialogue and Change

Agenda Day

The team ran an Agenda Day to find out what children and young people who use their services think about the service they receive, and how it could be improved or developed. Lots of comments were made about the team such as, **“social workers help you,” “they try to get lots of opinions for the future”** and **“reliable like a friend.”**

The issues raised at the Agenda Day included that young people thought that there should be more trips and activities with their social worker, and young people should have a say in designing the information that is given out to children and young people.

New Leaflet

Stanley Children in Need responded to young people’s suggestions about wanting more information about the team, the role of the social worker and information on the service. Twenty letters were sent out inviting young people to be involved in deciding what information needed to be included in a leaflet and how this should look. Nichola and Stephen worked with Micky, Anna, Michelle and Kirsten in redesigning the information leaflet and in deciding what information needed to be included. (See attached) Lauren commented on the redesigned form. **“I like how it’s set out. The pictures are good as well, they go with the writing.”** She continued, **“Young people might read it, cos of the way it looks.”**

Keeping Children and Young People Informed

Some issues raised by young people were around social workers not always turning up on time, sometimes they do not ring to cancel appointments and not always being informed when their social worker is off work. Christine told me about changes that had been made. She said, **“Now if the social worker is going to be off sick or on holiday they ring or send a letter out to let you know. If someone is not there, then I know who else is taking over.”** (See letters attached) Christine agreed this change made things much better.

Lauren added, **“We both decide where we are going to meet, we just talk about it. If she is going to be off I usually just get a phone call. I prefer that rather than a letter.”**

Questionnaire

The team has in place different procedures and policies to ensure that children and young people have a voice and are listened to. For example, as part of the Evidenced Based Supervision and Appraisal process, the teams ask some children and young people who they work with to fill in questionnaires. These ask direct questions such as “Do I change the way I work with you because of what you tell me?”, “Do I listen to what you say and what you want?” and “Do I respect and treat you fairly?” These questionnaires can be used to review and change individual practice. (See attached)

Molly said, **“I talk to my social worker, I told her what I wanted. I filled in this paper, it was happy faces. I put a tick if I was happy on the happy face and she asked me if I was happy if she would come again.”** Christine told me that she thought it was important that young people are listened to. Lauren agreed, **“My social worker listens to me.”**

Trips and Activities

One of the biggest issues raised by the young people at the Agenda Day was the value and enjoyment they got from organized trips and activities. Christine said, **“I have gone on trips to South Shields, the Railway Museum, York and the park in Gateshead. We get to go shopping and then you can buy things for the kids.”** She added, **“People really enjoy the trips so that’s what they try to do. They are good at letting you know what’s happening. They send out letters with where you have to meet and where to get on the bus.”**

Stanley Children In Need team asks during their visits to children and young people what they might like to do, or what they think might improve things. These ideas and other suggestions are then discussed at team meetings. To keep the dialogue going with the children and young people the team need to feed back frequently to them.

Stanley Children in Need team are trying to develop new ways of working with children and young people in order to involve them in decision making. I think it is important that definite structures are put in place to involve all children and young people and which can run alongside the informal dialogue. For example, regular Agenda Days or a Young Persons Reference Group. I would also like to suggest that for future evaluations a separate Investing in Children file is kept to record conversations and meetings with young people and particularly the outcomes and changes that have taken place. However, Stanley Children In Need Team practice has been made more effective by allocating specific staff the time to work on engaging children and young people in dialogue. I would recommend that the Team Manager once again allocates time to specific members of the team as this strategy has proven to be more successful.

I would like to thank everyone who helped me write this evaluation. When I asked the children and young people that I spoke to, if they thought Stanley Children in Need Team should get Investing In Children membership, everyone agreed that they should. For this reason, I would like to recommend that this team receives Membership.

Glenys Newby
Investing in Children
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