



investing in children

Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Teesdale Leisure Services

For the purpose of this re evaluation for Investing in Children membership I had the pleasure of meeting with Linden, Johnno and Emily who are all active members of the young peoples planning group.

Teesdale Leisure Service provides opportunities for children and young people to get involved in decision making with regards to the service they provide and as a result changes continue to be made to the sport and leisure activities and provision at Teesdale Leisure Centre.

Teesdale Leisure Centre is a sport and leisure centre situated in Barnard Castle that provides the opportunity for children, young people and the wider community to mix together who would otherwise not have the opportunity to do so.

This report will highlight and identify opportunities that continue to exist for children and young people to be involved in meaningful dialogue with Teesdale Leisure Centre. The staff team is supported by Nicky Spencer to actively encourage children and young people to get involved in decision making and bring about change to the service delivery. The young peoples planning group, has full responsibility for their meetings, they work within a budget and are obviously keen to support staff to improve the service they provide.

Evidence of Dialogue and Change

It was stated in last years report that the children and young people who accessed the leisure centre suggested that a climbing wall would improve the centre. This was agreed by centre management and the building for the wall has now been put out to tender. **“We are hoping that it will be up and ready to use for September.”** The young people informed me that they worked alongside centre management and were given space in the centre for the wall **“we have taken over the small sports hall, the wall will be built around three walls and we are even going to have a cave built in.”**

Children and young who are part of the young peoples group discussed with Nicky and Paul some form of payment for the work they put into developing the group. **“From our meetings we now get free entry into the leisure centre, free gym and swims.”**

The young people have been involved in setting up a Saturday Action Zone group. **“We were asked by the children to do something different, they wanted the centre to do something for under 13’s only, so we set up this group whereby the children can come into the centre and have full use of the gym and pools on a Saturday.”** These sessions are very popular, however, they tend to stop over the school holidays which the children who access them are unhappy about. Members of the young peoples group are in discussions with centre management to change this for during the summer holidays.

There is currently a lack of young people aged 13 – 16 accessing the centre. The group are trying to find out why and what improvements / changes need to be made to the current service being offered.

As a result of asking older young people what changes they would like to make to the centre, the group have successfully set up Rugby coaching sessions. As a direct result of the ongoing dialogue with centre staff changes are continually being made to the sessions to best accommodate the needs of the young people. **“At first it was touch rugby but this has now changed because we wanted it to be contact rugby instead.”** As well as the changes made to the rugby sessions, the group have also been successful in setting up roller discos, fun swims (with inflatable), trampolining and the biggest change that has taken up a lot of time this year is the climbing wall project.

Teesdale Leisure centre is regularly accessed by children and young people from local primary and secondary schools. The centre staff provide alternative physical education lessons. **“When we first come in for our PE lessons we are asked what we would like to do. We do things like, gym sessions, aerobics classes, spinning and sometimes swimming. We say what we like and they do what we like.”**

It is evident that Teesdale Leisure Centre is supporting children and young people to become actively involved in real decision making, with a real budget, giving them a true voice in matters that affect their lives.

All the children and young who I spoke to were happy with the service that the centre offers; however they would like to work on a few changes which they recommend they work on with the staff team over the next year.

- **“Promote the work of the young peoples planning group”**
- **“We need to raise money to help to fund the group. We would like to do a number of funding raising events and split the money between Bubbles and our group.”**
- **“Look at creating new groups and clubs such as canoeing and basketball. Also create a young person only time for the climbing wall.”**

All the young people I met with were very positive about Teesdale Leisure Centre. They feel that they have the opportunity to participate in the direction of not just the planning group but the centre as a whole.

The young people involved in this report agree with the content and recommendations made. Therefore it is on their behalf that I have no hesitation in recommending that Teesdale Leisure Centre remains an Investing in Children member.

Kim Kyle
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