



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Tow Law Children's Home

On my recent visits to Tow Law Children's Home I was met with Dale who provided me with a lot of recorded evidence of dialogue and change from the past year. I have also met with Joanne, Samantha and Alex who talked enthusiastically about dialogue which has resulted in changes in their own life and life within the home. Alex has recently moved on from Tow Law, but he happily shared his experience of the last year at the home. Samantha happily agreed with Joanne and Alex.

Evidence of dialogue and change

Dialogue continues to happen on a daily basis, and this principle of good practice appears to be embedded within Tow Law Children's Home.

Young People's Meetings

I talked extensively with Joanne for this evaluation. She said, **"We have young people's meetings all the time. It used to be every fortnight, but that was too much for us. Sometimes it's the young people who call the meetings and sometimes it's the staff. If you want something at other times, you just ask someone."**

Alex said, **"I never really went to the young people's meetings, but that was my choice. I would sometimes pop my head in and if they were talking about something I was interested in, then I would stay, if not I couldn't be bothered."**

Joanne explained the other ways the staff and young people can catch up if they miss a meeting. **"You can always read the minutes. They are kept in a book. We take turns in taking the minutes. Sometimes it's the young people, sometimes it's the staff, whoever can be bothered."** Alex told me about how sometimes things changed from issues raised in the meetings. **"I asked for SKY TV and we got it. I wanted to watch the sport. I brought it up with Dawn, then it went to Kim and then we got it just before Christmas."**

Rooms

Joanne told me, **"I moved bedrooms in March. I wanted to paint my new room pink. I chose the colour and I helped. We also got new floors. My carpet in my room was minging. When it was windy it use to blow up. So I picked the lino that looks like wood. It's dead easy to clean, I love it. I just talked to the staff about what I wanted, then other people jumped on the band wagon, so we all got new."** Joanne added, **"In the activity room the furniture has been changed as well. The old chairs looked like dooly chairs, so we twisted on and got them changed. We got a selection of colours so we could all choose. I wanted neutral colours, so when the room gets painted again, they will still go with the new colour."**

Garden

Alex has just finished a work placement with Durham Wildlife Trust. When he brought his work back, he had nowhere to keep it dry as the shed was in disrepair. He explained, **"It was my idea, the old shed was dropping, and I needed to keep stuff in it. So I asked the staff for their help. We took all the old felt off the roof, we pulled all the**

old wood off the sides and then I rebuilt it. We used some new stuff and recycled some of the old.”

Alex went on, **“The pond was my idea as well. I talked to Kim about what I wanted. She listened and sorted it. I dug it all out by hand. And I made the bird tables; I got the logs from the wood.”** (See photographs attached) Alex has always been interested in fish and has had fish tanks for a long time. Unfortunately the gold fish died when he put them in the pond!

Food

Joanne told me, **“We all help with the menu, well we do if we are in. But I’m not that fussed, but we do have a say about the food. Like before when we were buying loads of snack things and they were getting eaten in a day. So in the meeting we said we thought it was stupid. So we stopped buying too much of that stuff.”**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped me with this evaluation and for making me welcome on all my visits.

By talking to Joanne and Alex I have been able to highlight the continued commitment to dialogue with young people and demonstrate changes that have happened. Joanne said, **“Most of the time I feel listened to. They do change things, but sometimes it’s impossible to. But they always tell you why. We have changed lots of things since I came here. Like getting the bedtimes changed from 9.30 to 10.30. I bring things up all the time, it goes through staff, then managers and then it gets changed, well sometimes.”**

There is little doubt that Alex, Samantha and Joanne have a sense of ownership of their home. Joanne, Samantha and Alex agreed with my report and it is on their behalf I would like to recommend that Tow Law Children’s Home once again receives Investing in Children membership.

**Glenys Newby
Investing in Children
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