



investing in children

## Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

### Willington Youth Theatre

This report will highlight and identify the positive partnership that exists between the children, young people and staff at Willington Youth Theatre in order to bring about meaningful change.

Willington Youth Theatre has recently moved from Sunnybrow Community Chapel to Willington Methodist Church **“the new hall is much better; it’s bigger and easier to get to.”**

On the two occasions that I visited the youth theatre the atmosphere was electric, with all members mixing together. The young people informed me that this has just recently begun to happen since they made changes to how they met. **“We thought that some of the younger ones were being left out, so we decided to get into pairs with someone we didn’t know very well and talk to them. We know people better now and it helps with the drama.”**

**Evidence of dialogue and change** is taken from discussions I had with members of the ‘Tiddly Peeps’ and the ‘Youth Theatre Group’.

It was highlighted in last year’s evaluation that children under the age of seven were expressing an interest in becoming a member of the youth theatre. Staff took this issue to the young people and after numerous meetings it was decided to lower the age to three. **“I think it was a good idea to lower the age, we can now do more productions.”** There were a number of problems that arose as a result of lowering the age, mainly when the older young people wanted to discuss issues relevant to them. **“We felt it was good having the younger ones involved but I was sixteen at the time and didn’t want to spend my time with four year olds.”** The young people took their concerns to Christina **“We talked about how things were going at the youth committee meeting; we said that we thought it would be better if we had separate nights for the older ones and younger ones but come together when we needed to for productions.”**

As a result of their ongoing commitment to creating opportunities for dialogue to occur everyone involved in Willington Youth Theatre decided that splitting the groups was the best way forward. On a Monday evening the youth theatre group meets and is for young people aged nine to eighteen. The newly established tiddly peep’s meet on a Thursday evening and is for children aged three to nine. **“When we met to talk about having separate I was nine and wanted to be with my friends in both groups. So we decided that if you were moving between groups you could go to both nights so you could get used to the older group before leaving the Tiddly Peeps.”**

Another change that has occurred recently is the times that the youth theatre meets on a Monday evening. **“We were meeting from 6pm until 8pm but we asked if we could meet earlier or have an extra day.”** Christina and Bev explained that they could not commit to an extra evening and asked the group to think what extra time they would like. **We now meet at 5.30 until 8pm its much better because we are not as rushed as what we have been.”**

Some of the young people informed me that they were becoming frustrated that some members were committing to production roles and then not attending the weekly sessions for rehearsals. Christina and Bev discussed the groups concerns and asked them to come up with a policy that all members of the youth theatre would be made aware of. **“What we decided to do was have a**

**meeting with both the tiddly peeps and the youth theatre; we have made a new rule. If someone misses three weeks without a good reason, we will ask one of the workers to write them a letter. If they don't come back that then they are not allowed to take part in that production."**

I asked the children and young people if they felt that the staff of Wellington Youth Theatre provided them with the opportunity to express their views and opinions. **"Of course they do, about big stuff like the days and times and about other stuff to do with the productions."** Another young person added **"We were supposed to be doing Megan and the golden key. We had a problem though because it had boy's roles in it and no singing and dancing. We don't have any boys and we love singing and dancing. We spoke with Christina and Bev and they said we could do what we wanted so we are writing our own production."**

During my visits to Wellington Youth Theatre I was made to feel very welcome. I would like to thank everyone for helping me write this evaluation. The children, young people and staff at Wellington Youth Theatre work well together ensuring that everyone feels safe and comfortable to express their valued ideas and opinions.

All the children and young people who I spoke to were happy with the service they receive from Wellington Youth Theatre. However they would like to recommend one area of change which I am sure Christina and Bev will not have a problem implementing.

- **"We would like to sit down with Christina and Bev and produce a 10 or 12 week plan. We would also like to have a copy and take it home so we know what we are doing each week."**

There is no doubt that Wellington Youth Theatre provides the opportunity for all children and young people to have a say and bring about meaningful change. When I asked the children and young people if they agreed with this evaluation there was a resounding YES. I therefore have no hesitation in recommending Wellington Youth Theatre remains a member of Investing in Children.

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