



Re- Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:

DISC Young Carers

DISC Young Carers has been running for ten years offering support and activities to children and young people who find themselves in a caring role. For this evaluation I had the pleasure of going along to a Young Carers meeting and I spoke to Dede, Trayth and Michael who attend the group, and also Ben and Julie who are staff at DISC Young Carers.

Evidence of Dialogue & Change

There are many ways in which children and young people are able to influence the work of DISC Young Carers. I spoke with Dede in particular as she has been heavily involved in just about everything that the young carers have done so she was able to comment.

10th Anniversary Celebration

2006 saw DISC young carers celebrate 10 years in existence. A celebration event was held in the Town Hall in Durham, which I had the pleasure to attend. A group of young people planned and presented the event, which included music and poetry, and inputs from staff and parents. The event was opened by the High Sheriff of Durham. She was delighted to do this as the young carers have received a Shrievality Award for their work on domestic violence. The event was very well received, and was at times emotional and funny as the young people and their families were very open about their experiences.

Domestic Violence Group

This group has continued to develop with Julie the Domestic Violence worker taking her lead entirely from the young people in the group. The group had some money and decided to go to the clay café for a visit. When they were there they decided to make clay masks with different facial expressions based on domestic violence. Dede told me, **“Some of the faces were of the victims and some were of the perpetrators.”** The masks were so successful that they were photographed and have been made into posters to raise awareness of domestic violence. Dede said she has seen them at her college and gets a good feeling knowing she made them.

The group have won awards for their work, as I mentioned before they received an award from the High Sheriff. They also had a joint 3rd national prize from Crimebeat and around 6 young people from the group went to London to receive the award.

Durham Crown Court

The domestic violence group identified that they wanted to go to the courts to find out about the process of going to court, and to be familiar with it in the event of this becoming a reality for themselves. The group also visited outreach call centres as they wanted to see the faces behind the phones.

Dede told me, “**We asked loads of questions.**” Julie said that during the visit they found out about public hangings in the past so the group decided to go to the Palace Green. This led to a look around the cathedral where the young people ended the day by lighting candles.

School Talks

A member of the group asked her school to invite Julie into school to discuss domestic violence. Julie did this and talked to 35 teachers. As a result of this the group have worked together to make an information pack to take into schools to inform the about domestic violence. Each teacher gets a pack for themselves. Young people wanted a quiz to be included in the adult training delivered by Julie and this part of the training now.

Another young person also asked Julie to go to his school to talk to his year 7 class. He wanted that to happen so that his friends would know about his role as a carer.

Newsletter

Young Carers have a newsletter which they can contribute to with stories and jokes, poems, raps and word searches and there is a message corner. See the copy of the newsletter attached.

Presentation to Middlesborough Young Carers Service

A tender was put out for someone to take over Middlesborough Young Carers. Five young people from DISC young carers developed a presentation to take to Middlesborough to show young people there the kind of things that DISC do, their activities and parties. Dede enjoyed being part of this.

Kool Zone

This is the new young people’s area, it used to be offices, but when young people said that they wanted their own space it was given over to them. Money was given by Kool Kash, and the name was suggested by Dede, based on Kool Kash. There was a lot of debate about this first, and many suggestions until everyone agreed on this. Dede said, “**We were told we could pick the colours and chairs.**”

Simon wanted “**comfy chairs.**” The young people had a budget and decided what to buy and went shopping with staff.

Forum

The young carers have had a forum who work together for all of the young people in young carers. At the moment the forum is under development and is looking for new members. There is something in the newsletter asking young people if they are interested, and anyone coming to the groups can ask to be involved. Dede is part of the forum and told me they “**send out questionnaires to young people and letters to find out activities that young people want.**”

Trayth said he wanted to join the forum too.

Internal Audit Group

The whole of the DISC organisation have a service user audit group, and the young carers have contributed to this. The areas they have contributed to are questionnaires, groups, recruitment, newsletter and leaflets, committees, rules and a consent form. See attached sheet for the feedback they gave on these subjects. DISC clearly state that they listen to and involve young people and are willing to make changes as a result of the audit.

Recruitment

Young people are involved in the interviewing of staff. They have an interview of their own for potential staff. Any young people who are interested in being part of the interviews will have training in equality and diversity and in developing their own questions.

R U Getting It?

Dede has been part of a group of young people who are working with student social workers about how it feels to be a young person. They have delivered training and workshops at a conference at Ushaw College. Dede was involved in telling student social workers about how a young person felt being a young carer, including what it entails to be a young carer. Other workshops involved what young people felt about what are good and bad assets in a social worker. Dede said **“we’re doing another one soon; we’re planning it next week.”** There is a hope that it will widen out to include police, teachers, nurses and Connexions workers.

It is clear that there is a great deal of activity at DISC Young Carers with children and young people at the heart of it all, giving the ideas and guiding the staff as to where they want to go next. It will be good to see how the new forum develops in the next year and see evidence of the changes they make; we look forward to seeing that for next year’s re-evaluation. In light of the ways in which DISC young carers demonstrate they listen to young people and respond to them, I would like to recommend that they receive their Investing in Children membership once again.

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