



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Daisy Hill Play and Youth Centre

On entering Daisy Hill, it is very obvious that young people have been at the heart of the project. The atmosphere was electric and the youth centre was packed with children and young people of all ages.

I was welcomed by a young man called Gareth, who showed me around and introduced me to members of staff.

I should point out, that I have made 2 visits to the youth centre. The first time I visited was because they were having a celebration day to show off all of their work to their local councillors and the second time was to speak with the children and young people when they weren't so busy about the work they have been involved in and whether they have had dialogue with the adults.

When the councillors arrived, 2 young men – Gareth and Jordan - opened the day and helped to cut the ribbon to launch their new, improved sports hall. The hall had been decorated graffiti style, and designed by the young people. The plans and drawings that the young people had designed were all available to see on the day to show how the artist had developed them to what the young people wanted.

There was a local radio station there, covering the event (yes I did an interview and “bigged – up” Investing in Children) as well as all agencies who had been involved with the youth centre.

The young people had a stand at the bottom of the young centre that was packed full of all of the projects they have been involved in recently, that anyone could go and have a look at. There were also refreshments available and the opportunity to be involved in the “wall of fame”.

Because so much was going on, I was able to wander round and have a look at the stands to find out what kind of projects the young people had been involved with. These included:

- ✚ Day at Kielder (received money from Keyfund)

- ✚ The Him Project

- ✚ Tall Ships Treasure Chest Project

This project is following a tall ship on its travels. The young people have a map on the wall with the route mapped out for the ship and they intend to open to chest in 2010. The children and young people were invited down to the ship before it sailed and they had tea at the Captain's table.

Some members of the youth centre have also been involved in the Heritage Cube which is stored at Beamish Museum. This cube contains all of the photos from the Tall Ships project as well as the captains log book. There are only 2 people that can access the cube and that is Jenn from the centre and another young person.

- ✚ Newcastle Youth Opportunities Fund – this was spent on sports activities, tutors and sessions around healthy eating.
- ✚ Meeting in the Capital of Culture (Liverpool) – this involved 2 separate trips down to Liverpool to present them with a piece of artwork done by the girls group from the youth centre. The girls specifically wanted to find out why Liverpool won the capital of culture and are planning on going to the celebrations in 2008.
- ✚ Summer Outings:
 - Leazes Park* (picnic, park activities, environment games)
 - Paddy Freemans/Jesmond Dene* (picnic, play area, feeding the ducks, nature hunt)
 - Discovery Museum* (picnic, emergency and group safety awareness)
 - Saltwell Park* (picnic, touch tone computers, park re development)
 - Kielder Reservoir* (“Let Water into Your Life Project).

After having a look at the stand, I was invited to join the Activity Service Challenge Scheme in the Art Room. This is a new project that hasn't been running very long but it is designed to give taster sessions around things like the environment and alphabet. The children and young people are making a portfolio each to provide evidence of the work they have been involved in. This month, all the work they are doing is around the environment and we made environment inspectors to stick onto the globe on the wall.

The young people involved in this group are: Gareth, Joanna, Ellen, Natalie, Abbey and Shannon. **They said the following about their group:**

“The club is open to everyone, not just healthy people. We have had disabled people come along”

“I've loved coming here; I've come here for seven years. If I didn't like it, I wouldn't come”.

“We have learnt things like: how to cook, how to put a tent up. It's all about challenging ourselves”.

“I enjoy using the sports hall”

“Nothing is bad about coming here and I wouldn't want to improve anything because we get to pick everything that we do”

“We do loads of fun activities, especially in the art room”

“I think it's really good exercise”

The children and young people within the group are encouraged to speak out if they don't enjoy a specific topic or activity. If this happens, the staff try to adapt the activity to what the young people have said.

Natasha explained to me that the older young people who attend the youth centre are soon to be starting cheerleading and kickboxing. She said that she was really looking forward to it and the money to pay for it had come from the Youth Opportunity Fund.

Again the older young people had also been ice skating and they said that they would love to go again. At this point, the younger children started saying that they would like to go and didn't find it fair that it was just the older young people who went. I later found out that this wasn't intentional; it was due to health and safety that the younger children couldn't go on the ice.

On my second visit I was able to speak to some other children and young people who use the youth centre. Here are some more comments:

“I have been coming here since I was 5 years old and I’m now 7. The best thing about coming is being able to do stuff in the gym and I also like to see my friends”.

“I don’t like having to play football”

“It’s really fun because we get to sit on the couches and chill out”

“We play fun games”

I was really impressed to see that all over the youth centre were big flip chat papers and pens available for the children to write down improvements they would like to see within the youth centre. I guess this is a good starting point for the recommendations.

Recommendations made by children and young people:

- Pool tournaments
 - Cooking lessons
 - Playstation 2 available to play on
 - Build things
 - Make sculptures
 - Do drawings
 - Do paintings
 - Woodwork
 - Computer building
 - Football
 - Dodge ball
 - Basketball
 - Badminton
 - Bull dog
 - Hockey
 - Watch TV
 - Listen to music
 - Have funny shows
 - Drama/puppet shows
 - Drink fizzy pop
 - Eat food
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- requests for the art room
- requests for the gym
- requests for the back area
- requests for the kitchen area

I think this is undoubtedly one of the longest reports I have written for membership. Daisy Hill has been doing some fantastic work and they are clearly having dialogue with the children and young people who use their centre and more importantly, the children and young people agree.

I have no hesitation in recommending Daisy Hill for Investing in Children membership, and the young people I spoke too all agreed and also recommended it. I look forward to seeing them again next year to see some more fantastic work.

Ashleigh Greathead
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