



## **Re- Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:**

### **Moorside Children's Home**

Moorside Children's Home offers respite care to young people in County Durham who are in a crisis situation. The aim of Moorside is to work with young people to try and prevent them from going into the care system on a full time basis. Young people can stay at Moorside for up to three nights a week and there are no limits on the number of times an individual can stay. This means however, that there is a high turnover of young people in any one week.

Moorside has five bedrooms, one with en suite facilities, while the other four bedrooms share bathroom facilities. Each room sleeps one young person. In order to offer help to young people who are unable to stay overnight or who do not wish to, Moorside has extended its service to provide outreach work and day centre facilities. For this evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Angie York, and Padgett, (who prefers to be known by his surname and staff always refer to him in this way) Trevyn, Shannon and Ben.

### **Evidence of Dialogue and Change**

The nature of the short term stays of young people at Moorside means that there is an ever changing group of young people from one year to the next. Staff at Moorside, and particularly Angie should be commended for their foresight and planning for Investing in Children membership as they continually collect evidence of the opportunities young people have had for dialogue and change and have documented it throughout the year using photographs, minutes from young people's meetings, and statements from young people amongst other things to ensure that although many young people move on from Moorside their input has been used to direct the way that Moorside operates.

### **Young People's Pamphlet**

Following last year's membership the staff and young people have successfully completed the young people's information pamphlet. Young people worked their way through the booklet and made changes. Initially they were to the size of the booklet and adding in pictures and making it colourful. Then when they read it through they felt it wasn't easy to read as a young person and so it has been turned into a more "young person friendly" text. Angie told me that they had realised that young people weren't reading the information in the booklet before as they were asked lots of questions by young people and the information was there in the booklet. As a result of the new version Angie says that staff feel more young people are actually reading it as they don't seem to be asked as many questions.

### **Young People's Meetings**

Moorside holds regular meetings, holding them on different nights of the week in order to ensure that all young people have the chance to voice their opinions. During an inspection at Moorside the inspectors wanted to know how information was shared from the meetings with all young people, and at the time the usual procedure was to briefly explain the important issues of the previous meeting and share any changes made as a result of these meeting.

As the meetings were once a week, this meant that some young people only attended a meeting once every few weeks. The inspectors felt that this could be improved and that the meetings should be every night for all young people.

Over a period time the young people's meeting focussed on the idea of meeting every night, in order to keep them up to date with the ideas and issues raised by every young person at Moorside. The reaction from all the young people was that they did not want to meet every night; they felt it was far too time consuming and would impinge on their time to try out new activities (see attached minutes of meetings). They also said that they felt confident enough to ask a member of staff to organise a meeting if they had any burning issues. The young people I met told me that they all had someone on the team that they felt they could talk to. Padgett said, **"Pat's the best."** Trevyn added, **"And George."** Ben said, **"I like Val, I like talking with her."**

As the young people were against the idea of daily meetings they discussed alternative ways in which they could be kept up to date with the suggestions and to voice their opinions on any changes being proposed. It was agreed that an agenda for young people's meetings would be displayed on the notice board in the young people's computer/TV room. It was also agreed to put the minutes of each young persons meeting on this notice board so that everyone could keep up wit the events at Moorside (see attached minutes and photograph). The young people I met agreed there were opportunities to voice their opinions. Trevyn said, **"They write it down and tell us they'll talk about it in their staff meeting."**

#### Art Attack

Moorside have been involved with Ignite NE which is a combination of North East Councils from Northumberland to Redcar and East Cleveland who promote innovative ways to young people involved in arts and culture. Moorside were part of a pilot scheme to try out and arts project. Young people took part in a week of art sessions at Moorside over a half term holiday. Each day they explored a theme about themselves and used a different media in art to express themselves. The young people who took part in this week enjoyed their chance to experiment and their work has been exhibited at County Hall (see attached photographs).

#### Music

Two young people who attend Moorside had musical instruments and they brought them to Moorside to practise. This threw up several issues, the safety of the young people's equipment at Moorside. Also some other young people did not really enjoy hearing the practising of the budding musicians.

At a young person's meeting the discussion was centred on how young people could be involved in music without bringing their own instruments to Moorside. After some searching they found out that the DLI Museum was offering the chance for young people to learn new skills in drumming. A group of young people went weekly to practice and eventually they performed at a Showcase Event which was attended by members of their families (see attached photographs).

#### Beauty Products

During a young person's meeting beauty products were requested, such as face masks and hair products (minutes attached). In a further meeting this request had been agreed and there is evidence of the masks being used with a lovely photograph!

#### Trips and Activities

The young people at Moorside are encouraged to take part in activities in the evenings and weekends, and also during holiday times. Evening activities tend to be

based on how the young people feel at the time. Padgett said, " **We make plans on the night.**"

Trevyn told me that the activities were "**pictures, ice skating, gym, play pool, swimming.**"

Recently younger people have been allowed to use gym equipment at Spennymoor leisure centre and Shannon told me she can go now.

Trevyn and Padgett told me about football tournaments that they have played in during the holidays. "We play other homes, we came second," Trevyn told me.

Padgett went on to say, "**They brought people in on days they weren't in, so that they could come. We picked them up.**"

Trevyn and Padgett are both keen to play in the next tournament, and if they are no longer attending Moorside they know that they can still take part, they both said, "**We'll be being brought back in the summer.**"

### Smoking

Smoking among young people is an issue which staff at Moorside are asked to responsibly discourage. Staff at Moorside feel that the guidance from their policies and procedures is that staff cannot buy or give tobacco related products to young people and smoking should be discouraged. Following those guidelines inspectors want to see documented how staff discourage young people from smoking.

Alongside this requirement from inspectors there is also the new no smoking legislation for Durham County Council coming into force whereby it will not be possible for anyone, staff or young people to smoke on the premises or outside of a County Council building.

There is no easy answer for this but staff and young people at Moorside are working together to consider the impact of this and how they might tackle it. So far the issue has been raised at the young people's meetings (see attached minutes) and several young people have put their thoughts down on paper. Trevyn who has contributed her thoughts to the work on smoking told me, "**We want a shelter. The staff have to work with us otherwise we get fed up.**" It is a very difficult problem to find a solution to; however the staff at Moorside and the young people are working together.

Staff at Moorside continue to enter into dialogue with young people to ensure that Moorside provides a service for young people which is comprehensive and that they feel part of. There are many opportunities to make changes, and the young people I met with agreed with this, therefore I have no hesitation in recommending that Moorside renew their Investing in Children membership.

**Lisa Lines**  
**Project Worker**  
**February 2007**