



## Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

### Newton Aycliffe Children in Need Team

Newton Aycliffe Children in Need team is a statutory team consisting of nine social workers, two social work assistants, a senior practitioner and a team manager.

The team has a variety of roles. It must respond to referrals within seven working days as set out in the Framework for Assessment of Children In Need and Their Families (2000). These referrals come from a range of sources.

The team responds to cases involving children in need and also children in need of protection. Support is provided to families in terms of assessment, care planning and reviewing. The team has a duty rota for potential children in need and child protection cases. The worker on duty responds to any queries relating to cases of absent workers as well as dealing with referrals which require an immediate response.

To help Newton Aycliffe Children in Need Team proceed with gaining Investing In Children Membership, they allocate specific staff time to ensure the good practice of engaging in dialogue with children and young people who use their service.

To help me write this evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Declan, Jamie, Dale, Luke, Kieran and Callum.

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

#### **Agenda Day**

The team ran an Agenda Day to find out what children and young people who use their services think about the service they receive and how it could be improved or developed. Twenty young people attended the session. The day was facilitated by young people from the Listening to Children Reference Group and was done in a safe adult free environment. Lots of comments were made about the team such as **“they are always there for you,”** **“they understand your point of view”** and **“they give you help at home.”**

Issues raised at the Agenda Day were that young people thought that there should be more trips and activities and these should be age appropriate. For example one young person stated, **“When they organise trips they should be for all ages, and they should be cos some people are left out.”**

Also the young people talked about wanting more information about the team, the role of the social worker and information on services available to children and young people. One young person said **“we should be told about what’s happening.”** The young people also wanted this information to **“be more colourful and less writing in them.”** Another commented that **“Pictures will help explain things.”**

#### **Activity Day**

Newton Aycliffe Children in Need Team listened to the views and opinions of children and young people and tried to respond in a number of ways.

One way was to organise an Activity Day. The team found the funds to run this event through the Coordination of Social Inclusion Programme/Positive Activities for Young People. All transport was arranged by the team to make everyone had the opportunity to take part in the day. Kieran said, **“We got a letter asking if we wanted to go and then they picked us up as well. It was mint.”** (See letter attached)

Keeping in mind the request for age appropriate activities, children were invited by the team to attend the “Clay Cafe” in Spennymoor. Here the children painted clay figures which were put into a kiln and fired. Declan told me, **“Making things was best, and we got to paint them.”** Callum said, **“I made a toadstool and Kieran made a fish.”** Then Callum and Kieran proudly showed me their photographs of the day.

Later after lunch the children went to a sports workshop. The children chose what activities they wanted to do. Jamie said, **“I did parachuting and it was really good.”** Dale and Callum said they really enjoyed the football.

Dale also explained how the team continued to talk to the children and to listen. He said, **“At the end, they asked if you enjoyed it and if you would like to do this sort of thing again. Everyone said YES!”** Declan added, **“We painted dinosaurs and I enjoyed that. At the Activities Day I said I really enjoyed the painting so now I go to CATS and get to paint.”** (See evaluations attached)

## **Information**

The team also sent out a letter to children and young people informing them about some of the issues raised at the Agenda Day. (See letter attached) Here the team explained that some young people thought it would be useful to receive a regular newsletter or leaflet to share experiences and views. This information could then be used to improve services. Everyone was invited to send in their ideas in an envelope provided.

Some of the young people I spoke to said they had received the letter but had not found the time to reply, while one young person said they didn't **“cos it was boring”**. Unfortunately this approach did not work and it will be interesting to see how the team now respond to the young people's request for more information.

## **KoolKash**

The team worked closely with a group of young people who were attending activities at Copelaw Activities (CATS). The young people asked the team if it was possible to develop further activities, in particular gardening. Again this was very much in keeping with issues that were raised at the Agenda Day.

After further informal consultations with the young people to explore what everyone wanted from the project, the young people turned their attention to finding the money to fund the gardening activities. Newton Aycliffe Children in Need Team worked with the young people to apply for a grant from KoolKash. (See attached) The “Copelaw Crew” put in an application which described how the project will be youth led and how they will discuss and make decisions amongst themselves. The young people have monthly meetings, but the team have agreed to be there for support and advice.

Luke told me how much he enjoys going to the garden. He said, **“We help clean all the leaves up and stuff. And we put all the plants in. We go sometimes and not sometimes. But it's OK cos we chose what we want to do.”**

## **Questionnaires**

The team have in place different procedures and policies to ensure that children and young people have a voice and are listened to. For example, as part of the Evidenced Based Supervision and Appraisal process, the teams ask some children and young people who they work with to fill in questionnaires. These ask direct questions such as “Do I

change the way I work with you because of what you tell me?”, “Do I listen to what you say and what you want?” and “Do I respect and treat you fairly?” These questionnaires can be used to review and change individual practice. One young person told me, **“I got a questionnaire a few months ago and I filled it in. Sometimes the social worker comes and they don’t talk to me and they are always changing. But after the questionnaire I suppose things have got better, but I would still like more help in school though.”** Kieran said **“Our social worker talks to us and asks what’s good and bad.”** Callum added, **“We can talk to her and she listens to us.”**

Newton Aycliffe Children in Need Team have developed new ways of working with children and young people in order to involve them in decision making. They are continually reviewing and planning ahead in order to consider what children and young people are saying they need and what would improve things. It will be interesting to see how the team work with them to provide the information they have said they would like or if there are any new issues identified by the children and young people. I look forward to hearing how everyone worked together in the coming year.

Newton Aycliffe Children In Need Teams success has depended upon all the team actively working together with children and young people. However this practice was made more effective by allocating specific staff the time to work on engaging children and young people in dialogue. I would recommend that the Team Manager once again allocates time to specific members of the team as this strategy has proven to be successful.

As well as these new developments, the team are asking on all visits to children and young people what they might like to do, or what they think might improve things. These ideas and other suggestions will be discussed at team meetings (See team manager’s email attached). To keep the dialogue going with the children and young people the team will feed back frequently to them.

I would like to thank everyone who helped me write this evaluation. When I asked the children and young people if they thought Newton Aycliffe Children in Need Team should get Investing In Children membership everyone agreed that they should. For this reason, I would like to recommend that this team receives Membership. Newton Aycliffe is the first Children In Need team to be successfully awarded Investing In Children Membership.

**Glenys Newby**  
**Investing in Children**  
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