



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Initial Assessment Team

Over the last year the Initial Assessment Team have tried to introduce a number of mechanisms to enable children and young people to have a say in the service that is offered by the team. The problem that the team has is that their involvement in the lives of children and young people they meet is never any longer than seven days. The team has up to seven days to assess the situation of each child or young person in order to decide the best way forward to resolve their family crisis.

From the outset of discussions with the team there was never any hesitation in asking children and young people what they thought. The main challenge for the team was how to do this and achieve the best outcome for all involved.

Evidence of dialogue and change is provided by the positive action the team has taken to begin to ascertain the views of children and young people. Throughout the process the team ensured that children and young people's views were sought and affected change in the way views would be collected.

- **The Questionnaire**

The first draft of the questionnaire was designed by Mark Profit a social work student on placement with the Initial Assessment Team, but also a good partner of liC as manager of Framwellgate Moor Children's Home, a longstanding member of liC.

In order to create a useable questionnaire Mark met with the MALAP reference group. Their comments and suggestions shaped the final draft of the questionnaire. Please see the final questionnaire attached and some of the comments suggested by the young people. I have also attached copies of the questionnaire through its final stages.

- **The Leaflet**

Although the idea for a more "child friendly" leaflet was asked for by the team, **the views of children and young people did inform the design of the new leaflet.** The only leaflet the team had to give out was aimed at families, but very definitely geared towards adults.

As a result of the questionnaires individual social work practice is changed and in turn can influence the direction of the team plan. The questionnaire has a space for comments and feedback. Please see attached questionnaire where a comment was written by a young person. Follow up was provided and feedback to the young person was given.

For the purpose of this evaluation I met with young people who returned questionnaires and agreed to be contacted by Investing in Children. I attempted to do this in two ways. There were 38 returned questionnaires. 31 young people were invited to a meeting at Moor Chambers and I telephoned 8 young people, on a weekly basis for four weeks, I never successfully spoke to anyone. The reason for trying to make contact via telephone was that some young people had only put down telephone numbers and I was unable to find one or two addresses.

The group meeting – 30th May 2007 at 10am until 12 Noon

Only two young people attended on the day but Rachael and Sean were quite happy to chat about their experience in 'the system.' Rachael and Sean are brother and sister and their involvement within the social care system was less than one year. The main support that they received was activity outings provided by CATS. Both Rachael and Sean enjoyed their trips with CATS. Their main point of contact was Jackie Tate. Although they do remember another worker from their first visit at home. It soon became apparent that for these two young people their main point of contact was Jackie, who in their opinion was quite "ok". They are, however still waiting for information on the Max card.

Therefore we used the opportunity to look at the questionnaire and the leaflet.

The Questionnaire -

Rachael and Sean had this to say about the questionnaire.

- **It's good, it has lots of questions about the service** (Rachael)
- **It's alright** (Sean)

Both young people agreed that a little bit more detail about the service should be included in the questionnaire as a way of an introduction. If this is a format the team continues to use I hope this comment will affect change.

The Leaflet -

Although the main content of the leaflet was informative, both Sean and Rachael felt it was "**dull and boring**" and needs to be colourful. Sean talked about the expense of coloured ink but their solutions were: -

- use coloured paper
- add some drawings
- fold it differently

Both Rachael and Sean remembered the leaflet and tried a little redesigning themselves. Please see attached. Again if the leaflet does continue to be used some of the ideas will be incorporated into a new design.

For the purpose of this evaluation I have been able to demonstrate dialogue and change with children and young people. The challenge to the team is to agree a way of maintaining the recording of evidence. Other services do use an exit questionnaire at the end of their service involvement. I would therefore like to recommend the following: -

- An investing in Children file is set up.
- Questionnaires continue to be used in some way. However I would like to suggest that the young people are paid when they meet with Investing in Children rather than the payment be sent on receipt of the questionnaire, and the questionnaire is reworded to reflect this.

For the purpose of the continued evaluation I would like to support the team by contacting young people as questionnaires are received by Investing in Children rather than wait for the yearly re-evaluation date, as I understand that continued contact with these children and young people is difficult to maintain.

- Clear records should be kept of comments, which require action, and of action taken.
- Anything which affects the team plan or team service is recorded.
- Changes should be made as suggested by the young people in this evaluation.
- A stronger relationship with the MALAP reference group is fostered.

Sean and Rachael both agree with my report and it is on with that endorsement that I am happy to recommend at this point the Initial Assessment team receive their Investing in Children membership. I would just like to say 'Thank You' to Rachael and Sean for coming to the meeting and a big thank you to the team for their perseverance in getting to the end of this process.

Helen Mulhearn
Investing in Children
6th June 2007