



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Redcar and Cleveland CAMHS

For the purpose of this evaluation I met with Steven and Hannah, who are members of the 'CHAT' group, and I also spoke with Leanne, who has been working with Redcar and Cleveland CAMHS on a self-harm referral protocol.

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service, 'CAMHS', in Redcar and Cleveland are based at The Ridings, which is situated in Redcar. During my visits for this evaluation I spoke with Gary Hodgson. He informed me that he has been working with Mita Saha and in partnership with some young people who access the service. The team is strongly committed to providing an important service, and is starting to develop a process of participation, where children and young people who use the service are able to give their important and necessary input and ideas about the service.

This report below will highlight opportunities young people have had, through different methods of dialogue, to get their ideas and opinions across. Some young people have been given the opportunity to discuss their views and opinions about the service and the team has started to make some changes to the service based on this input.

Evidence of Dialogue and Change.

CHAT GROUP

Gary and Mita, the lead workers, have been working in partnership with a group of young people since February 2006. During this time several young people have attended various meetings, with them meeting consistently once a month to discuss the service CAMHS offer's to young people in the Redcar and Cleveland locality. When staff team meetings take place, there is an item on the agenda for Gary or Mita to feed back to the team what ideas or issues the Chat group has been discussing. Steven, a member of the Chat group told me, **"They always ask me what I want to do, we have come up with some ideas which they have changed"**.

This process between the staff team and the CHAT group is starting to positively encourage an ethos of communication between children and young people who attend CAMHS. This includes children and young people who are not part of the group as they are also positively encouraged by the team to pass on any issues which they want the CHAT group to discuss or mention at the team meetings, if individual children and young people feel this is appropriate.

Children and young people are regularly asked what kind of things they think would improve the service and are supported with their ideas. Steven told me, **"We wanted to come up with our own name for the group and decided to call it the CHAT group"**. This stands for 'Children Action Team'. All children and young people are aware of this group and are encouraged by staff to join it. Information regarding the group is even provided in the waiting room, which has many posters promoting and explaining what the group is and what they do.

Waiting Room.

The team has responded to what some young people had asked for and made some developments to the waiting room area. Steven told, **"We had an idea to put a suggestion box in the waiting room so children and young people can put ideas in it"**. He went on to tell me, **"We thought it would be better if there was a box for younger children with Whinnie -The- Pooh on and the older box has people from X-Factor and movies and computer games stuff on it"**. Hannah explained, **"They can put any points of view in box on anything that can help with Camhs"**. When children and young people put their views in the suggestion box the team gather the views up and then discuss these with the CHAT group. Some of the comments the young people have made through this process are **"nice staff"**, **"different magazines"**, **"cold water"** and **"you should not have to wait long for an appointment"**. The team positively responds to all requests. An example of this is the way they responded to the young person who didn't want to wait long for an appointment, by meeting with the young person and also discussing the issues with the members of staff the young person was meeting with.

All children and young people now have an opportunity to complete a 'Comments and Suggestions Form'. Hannah told me, **"We have put this next to the boxes"**. Steven told me, **"We spoke about putting music in the waiting area and magazines because some young people said it was boring"**.

As a result of all this dialogue, teenage magazines are purchased on a regular basis and now Radio 1 is played into the waiting area. The group also complained that the chairs in the counselling room were not that comfortable and there are now some new chairs in the counselling room.

Self-Harm Protocol.

Redcar and Cleveland CAMHS have been working on the development of a Self-harm protocol which is going to be piloted in the Redcar and Cleveland area. Leanne, a young person who has been involved in this development, explained to me, **"I got involved a year ago because I heard Redcar and Cleveland were looking at developing a self-harm protocol"**. She added, **"It is a multi agency strategy to support young people who self-harm"**. The chief executive for Redcar and Cleveland's Children and Young People Service has funded the development of the protocol. Leanne has also attended a Young Mind's conference in London to gain an understanding of some the national policies and practice on self-harm. Leanne is now

working with staff from CAMHS on the development of some workshops. Leanne also explained, **"I came up with the idea to gain the views of young people on self-harm"**. She went on to add, **"I am planning a work shop to get some ideas from young people about a self-harm protocol"**. This positive development within the service has allowed young people to get involved. It will be interesting to see how this practice can be developed further to allow more young people to get involved in other aspects of service design and delivery.

During all my visits to the Ridings I was made to feel welcome and I could see that the views and opinions of children and young people are heard, respected and valued by the staff at Redcar and Cleveland CAHMS. There is lots of evidence of children and young people being involved in decision making and there are lots of plans to develop this even further. Leanne explained, **"They have taken into account my ideas and made changes to do things, such as the design of leaflets to young people and not just adults"**. Hannah told me, **"Yes, because they ask us about stuff and changed things and I also feel that I get listened to and they understand my problems"**. Therefore, I have no hesitation in recommending that this service is given Investing In Children Membership and look forward to seeing more developments over the next year.

This report has been read and agreed by the following young people who are, Steven Hannah and Leanne .

Rob Johnson
Investing in Children
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