



Re- Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:

Spennymoor Youth Centre

Spennymoor Youth Centre is a purpose built youth centre.

Ann Hardy is the Education in the Community Worker who co-ordinates the work. At present there are seven youth and auxiliary workers employed.

There are a number of youth activities and various groups who use the centre.

Monday

4.00pm – 6.00pm Band Practice (closed group)

6.00pm – 8.00pm Smart Bus Tudhoe 13+

Tuesday

4.00pm – 6.00pm Juniors Youth Club 8 – 12yrs

6.30pm – 8.30pm Senior Youth Club 13-18yrs

Wednesday

6.30pm – 8.30pm Girls Group 13 yrs+

Thursday

5.00pm – 6.30pm Dance Project

6.30pm – 8.30pm Senior Youth Club 13 yrs+

Friday

10-2.00pm Schools Group (closed group)

Sunday

3.45pm – 5.15pm Integrated Group 13yrs+

Dialogue and change

For the purpose of this evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Kirsty, Sami, Lindsey, Cal, Zak, Greg and Adam.

Programme Planning:

The young people are involved in programme planning at Spennymoor Youth Centre. For example, the young people were asked their views and opinions on activities for the Summer Programme. This involved group discussions. Kirsty said, **“At the sessions we sit round the table and have a talk. We find out what people want and then talk about it and we have a vote. That’s how the pool table got moved.”** Lindsey agreed, she added, **“We normally sit round the table and discuss things”**. Sami continued, **“And they do listen to us, Ann, Lynne and Vicky. All of them really. For the summer I asked for a sports instructor and he now comes in every Wednesday night. He’s a football coach.”**

However, not all the young people choose to be part of the session meetings Zak said, **“They do ask you things and they have meetings to decide things, but we don’t go. They’re boring.”** Cal added, **“But they do let you know what they decide on and they ask if you agree.”** Greg continued, **“Some people have meetings, those that want to, but I don’t. I just have a game of football and that. But when they come up with an idea they tell us. Then I can say yes or no.”** Kirsty finished by telling me, **“If you want anything or anything changed all you have to do is go to the youth worker, if you don’t want to talk in front of everyone.”**

Decorating the Centre

The young people asked if they could change the decorations on the windows of the pool room. As the decorations had previously been done by groups of young people who had previously attended the Centre, the young people said they did not feel like the windows were theirs. After discussing this idea with the youth workers it was decided to redecorate the windows. The young people came up with ideas and designs that reflected how they see the Youth Centre.

Kirsty also explained about other rooms that had been decorated. She said **“Upstairs in the computer room there was a mural on the wall and we wanted to change it cos it was boring. There wasn’t much fun about it. A group of us went to Ann and told her we wanted it changed. She said we will have to find out how much it will cost. So we rang Izzy Art, so she said a price. Somebody put in an application for the money. A couple of lasses did some and I did the sun and the birds. Then we airbrushed the whole thing to bring the colour out more.”**

Furniture

The centre has recently acquired new furniture. Kirsty said, **“We had really old chairs and most were broke and not very comfortable. Me and Ann had a talk and I told her how uncomfortable everything was. So she helped me put an application in for the money. We got it and I picked the chairs and table and a couch that is like chairs but not.”**

Changing Rooms

It was raised in a meeting that some of the young people were not happy with the rooms in the centre. Kirsty said, **“We used to do art in the main room, but the tables were getting paint over them. So all the senior group sat down and talked about it. We decided to move to the new arts room. It’s worked well.”**

Adam said, **“We decided to move the pool table and put the decks in that room. They asked if was ok and I said yes. It’s better in here.”** Cal added, **“We talked about moving the decks cos everyone used to just walk into the room before. So we swapped the pool room and the Decks room.”** Lindsey said, **“The lads won’t let us use the decks though, cos we don’t know what we’re doing. So we’ve asked for a decks instructor and he’s coming just before the summer!”**

Health Drop In:

This was set up in response to suggestions from young people across Spennymoor. Every Wednesday a drop in session was held at the Cube, while once a month a session was held at the “Party Night” for under 16’s. However, young people have recently complained that they are not happy with the venue. Kirsty told me, “It’s not very good cos everyone sees you go into the Cube so they know what you’re doing. Then their parents and families get to know.” As a result everyone is working together to find a suitable venue that the young people are happy with.

Coast to Coast

Some young people from Spennymoor Youth Centre took part in the Coast to Coast bike ride during the Easter holidays. Greg said, **“I asked Ann if I could do it. It’s from Whitehaven to Sunderland. It’s 138 mile. I filled in a form to get so much money and it got approved. KECO provided us with the bikes and the helmets, so it didn’t cost anything. It took four days and we stopped over in a village hall in sleeping bags, then a farm house and then the YMCA in Consett.”**

It is apparent from my visits to Spennymoor Youth Centre and having listened to the young people there, the staff at the centre hold ongoing dialogue with young people as

an integral part of their practice and this leads to meaningful change. The staff are always open to new ideas and suggestions. Some of the senior members of the Youth Centre volunteer to work with the juniors.

Perhaps however, more young people's views and opinions could be taken on board if a "suggestion box" system was introduced in the centre. This would allow those young people who do not feel confident enough or who do not wish to attend session meetings, the opportunity to put forward their opinions on the running of the centre and ideas for activities and projects which interest them. I would also recommend that young people could be encouraged and supported to sit on the voluntary management committee.

Respect and dialogue between the staff and the young people at Spennymoor Youth Centre is very evident. When I asked the young people if they thought they should get Investing in Children Membership there was an emphatic "YES". Therefore I have no hesitation in recommending that Spennymoor Youth Centre once again become Investing in Children Members. Well done.

Glenys Newby
Investing in Children
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