



## Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

### Kids Café.

I visited Kids Café on two occasions, once in March and once again in April 08. I met with Laura one of the workers within the Thomas Gaughan Community Centre and some children and young people who are involved with Kids Café: **Callum, Terri, Natasha, Faye, Britney and Jamie.**

Kids Café is about making nutrition fun and memorable, actively encouraging children and young people to get involved with food. Children and young people are free to touch, taste and cook in a relaxed and enjoyable environment.

Kids Café deliver clear nutritional messages throughout the sessions, primarily focusing on the balance of good health and '5 a day'. Children and young people are taught a range of cookery skills which can increase self esteem, confidence, independence and employability.

Kids Café is based in a lively community centre where children and young people lead projects. Laura, one of the workers explained: “ **we are a very pro active service and encourage participation in order to constantly develop and expand our project to suit the needs of our children and young people.**”

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

At the end of each Kids café session children and young people complete an evaluation via happy or sad faces and written comments. In 2004 analysis of the evaluations indicated that many of the children and young people really enjoyed the food preparation section of the sessions, in response to this Kids Café developed: 'Kids can cook: Little Chefs and 5 a day' projects for implementation during term time.

Kids café then extended this to include a 'Kids Can Cook Advanced' project at the request of the local young people.

On my first visit to Kids Café it was the young people's first session, children and young people sat where they wished and were coming up with their own kitchen safety rules. Laura explained to the young people that she would put their rules up on the wall.

#### **Washing up rota:**

Children and young people decide for themselves who does the washing up each week, Terri told me:

“ **We choose who does the washing up, we vote each week to choose who does it.**”

### **Personal Decisions:**

Within Kids Café there is a high level of participation, this can be from creating own rules and consequences to selecting their own recipes to designing their own restaurant. Young people invest a lot of time and effort into hosting their own restaurant evening for parents/carers.

The children and young people have recently created their own recipe book and designed their own Kids café logo.

The young people told me that they make their own decisions on everything from the food to the decoration:

*“ At the end of our course we make a restaurant and decide everything, some are waiters, some are chefs, we all decide who is doing what.”*

*“We can invite two family members, a teacher and a friend.”*

Laura explained that each group like to leave their mark on the occasion. Their work generates a lot of well deserved press attention.

I asked the young people why they like attending Kids Café and if they felt they are listened to:

Callum – *“ Staff are nice they help you make your own food.”*

Brandon – *“ We all sit around a table and vote about what we want to cook.”*

Amber – *“ We always get listened to, we vote on trips and stuff, if no one votes we don’t go.”*

Brandon – *“ If there is any problems you can meet with staff to talk about things that are happening, any problems we talk about how to make better.”*

Laura explained: **“ By allowing the children and young people who attend Kids Café projects to be very involved in making decisions at all levels, we not only ensure that we are delivering services which specifically cater to the wants and needs of our users, but also provide the children and young people a sense of belonging and acceptance within their community, where they feel valued for their contributions.”**

**Comments Box:** A comments box is situated within Kids Café sessions. Young people can make good or bad comments anonymously about anything they feel relevant. Staff check the comments box on a regular basis.

Amber – *“ We have a box we write stuff in, staff can then talk about and make better what we have said. It doesn’t have to be a comment about cooking it can be about anything.”*

As part of the regeneration within the community, Kids Café may have to relocate from the Thomas Gaughan Centre into a purpose built kitchen. Laura explained that children and young people would be involved at every stage of the development.

## **Recommendations:**

Amber stated:

*‘ We have a comments box in Kids Café but I think there should be a comments box in the community centre for the other kids who don’t come to Kids Café. They can still have a say.’*

As there are going to be some large changes within Kids Café i.e. redesigning website/ relocation, I feel a young person’s reference group would be greatly beneficial.

I’ll leave the final words to Terri – *‘ I think we should get this award because it’s the best group in the world.’* Therefore I recommend Kids Café receive Investing in Children Membership.

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**May 08**