



## Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

### Riverside Community Health Project

For the purpose of this re-evaluation I visited numerous projects run by staff from the Riverside Community Health Project throughout the west end of Newcastle. This report will highlight and identify the positive partnership that exists between children, young people and staff at the project.

It is clear from my visits to the project that the children play an active role in both the way the sessions they attend operate and the project as a whole. The children and young people are encouraged to put forward their views, opinions and concerns to make changes to the way staff treat them and accommodate their individual needs.

The aims of Riverside Community Health Project are clear. The work is directed towards making it easier for black and minority families to be more involved with schools and the education of children. They strive to support families to find out about their rights and to increase the involvement of children and young people in service development.

Since last year's evaluation changes have been made and projects developed as a result of ongoing dialogue between staff and children.

**Evidence of dialogue and change** is taken from discussions I had with children from the Children's Decide group and children from Wingrove Primary School.

#### Children's Decide

I asked the group if they felt listened to, "**We have our say about everything that we do, but it would be better if only one person spoke at once in our meetings**". Keya informed me that "**We have a say about what happens with our group**".

I asked the group to tell me how they have a say in what happens in their group "**We decide what we want to talk about, the times we meet and where we meet.**" The children informed me that they used to meet during the week but this has now changed and they meet on a Saturday morning.

The group informed me that "**we change things**". I asked them how they change things to which Sabina told me the group is "**about helping other kids who cant have a say, have a say**". I asked the children and young people to tell me how they help other kids and change things; Saajidaah informed me that "**we just talk to them and see what they want and do something about it, a lot of children who come to the Riverside said that its really hard when they come to live here for the first time. We have changed how they find out about Benwell and show them round, and invite them to our group.**" Keya added "**that's something that is different from last time, our group used to be just for us, but we spoke to Joanne and now anyone can come along, it changed because that what people wanted.**"

The meeting I attended demonstrated that the children and young people involved were very enthusiastic and excited by their group. **“We work on local issues to make things better, like the park, we are looking at new play things.”** and **“Its fun –we are helping the library with their new building, we are having our say on the kids section”**. When I asked if they felt that they had a say in the project all of the children agreed that they did. Bethany said **“We get to put our ideas across and get listened to, they are the best and they support us.”**

The children enthusiastically informed me of the work they have done to combat bullying in their area. The group decided to take on this issue after a lot of children came to them and said that they were unhappy at school and in the community. **“What’s the point in just talking about stuff, we make sure that things get done”**. I asked the group what they have actually done to stop the bullies in their local area, **“We can’t let bullies bully – we encouraged school councils to have ‘bully boxes’ you can write your problem down and the schools council and teachers would do something about it. It actually works; people in my school think it’s a great idea.”**

Sabina informed me; **“We make the decisions; they ask us what ideas we have to make our group better, we talk about our community, it helps to make my home life much easier.”** Jannah added **“We basically get listened to about everything.”**

#### Wingrove Primary School

Riverside Community Health Project works in conjunction with Wingrove Primary School to provide children with the opportunity to take part in an after school club and lunch time club for those children who need extra support.

The groups run over a term. The children and young people are involved in all aspects of programme planning. The children and young people come together and share similar experiences. The groups provide the children and young people with opportunities to express their views, attitudes and feelings in relation to their experiences at school.

When the groups first come together they discuss what they want to get from the group and how they want the sessions to be. The groups also discuss the plans made at the end of each session and discuss any changes that need to be made to the programme. **“We all sit down together in a circle to make suggestions; we have decided to cook the next few weeks, we are going to teach each other how to cook different foods.”**

I asked the young people to tell me how they have a say in the group. **“Well there are lots of after school clubs but I come to this one. It is the only club that I get to say what I want to do.”** **“I like to decide what we want to do, if we don’t decide then what they plan we wont enjoy, it’s good that we do because it makes it more interesting.”**

During my visits to Riverside Community Health Project I was made to feel welcome. I would like to thank everyone for helping me write this evaluation. The children and staff at the project work well together ensuring that everyone feels safe and comfortable to express their valued ideas and opinions. Members of the project are involved in running their groups and the project and make real decisions about issues that affect them.

There is no doubt that Riverside Community Health Project provides the opportunity for all children to have a say and bring about meaningful change. When I asked the children if they agreed with this evaluation, there was a resounding YES. I therefore have no

hesitation in recommending Riverside Community Health Project receives Investing in Children membership for another year.

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