

# **Family Support Strategy**



investing in children

**A Report written by Jade, Jordan, Tasha, Kirsty, Emma,  
Laura, Louise, Ashleigh, Rebecca, Sam, Kerry and Becky**

**March 2007**

## **Introduction**

No matter where you live in County Durham people are entitled to a service. Durham County Council is looking at the best way to provide these services and the best way everyone can work together.

The Family Support Strategy is a way of looking at services that are there now for children, young people and families. But it is also a way of deciding what else needs to be provided.

This report is about what some young people from County Durham told us about what they think needs to be done, and who should do it.

## **What We Tried to find Out**

We wanted to find out what children and young people think about the support services Durham County Council offer to families and young people. We also wanted to know how good these services are, if they work and who is good at providing help. We then tried to find out what would make it easier for families and young people to get the help they need. So they only have to ask once, we also wanted to know who they wanted to ask; where they want to go for support and how they want this service to look. We asked about people, location and buildings.

We also thought it was important to ask young people how they felt about different people sharing information about them and who they trust the most.

## **What We Did**

We have held Agenda Days in Newton Aycliffe and Tow Law. This is where we meet up with some children and young people and ask them for their views and opinions. We held these in the Leisure Centre and Community Centre because we thought these were easy places for most people to get to. Everyone seems to know where these are. We have also spoken to different groups of young people from Durham, Murton and Seaham.

We have spoken to 74 young people aged 9 – 16. There were 54 girls and 20 boys.

We asked each group to talk about their ideas and thoughts and then these were written on big sheets of paper. Everyone joined in and we gathered lots of information.

## **What We Found Out**

Most people we spoke to said they would go to their mam, dad and family for help and support. They said things like “my mammy makes me feel ok”, “I would go to my mam”, “they seem to be the only ones that would help” and “to my family, I know they will help me.” Others said they trust their best friend the most.

But sometimes mams and dads can’t always help, even if they want to. So we asked what they need help and advice with and if they use any support services now.

### **What type of things do you need help with?**

We got lots of answers:

- Pregnancy
- School.
- Emotional health things
- Stopping smoking
- Bullying
- Family Problems
- Safe Sex
- Help with money
- Jobs
- Leisure activities
- Homework
- Love life
- Family stuff
- Anger problems
- Stopping bad habits
- Reading and writing

### **Services Young People use now**

We asked where they go now to get advice and help. We were told that young people use:

- Psychiatric service
- Psychologist
- Doctors
- Chemist
- Clinics
- End House
- School Counsellor
- Connexions
- Youth worker
- Police
- Clinic
- Chemist
- School Nurse

## **What do you think of the services out there?**

From our answers it was obvious that young people do need help and support and do use different services. We asked how good they thought they were and got lots of different answers.

- Helpful
- Confidential – don't tell parents
- Don't feel can trust some workers because they are old
- They are ok, they give advice when you need it
- Really rubbish
- They're not on all the time when you need them

**We thought it would be really useful to find out where children and young people would prefer to go for support and help, and who they would want to talk to. So we asked about preferred location, building and people. This is what we were told.**

### **Location**

We talked about the best place for support services. We were told:

- I want them near my house.
- The best places to have a building in the middle of Tow Law – Millennium Green.
- Somewhere we don't have to walk far, so everyone has to walk the same distance.
- In the town Centre
- Like it local
- Not travelling too far

The biggest thing we found is that young people need services near to where they live. They said public transport is not very good and expensive and often to get anywhere adults have to take them in the car. This was especially true in Tow Law. This is a problem because they said some things they do not want adults to know about.

### **Building**

Following on from where services should be, we talked about the best building. We were told that services should be:

- In different buildings, but close together.
- I like to see people in separate buildings.
- In the same building or close together so you get there quicker and so you don't travel down the street and then back up again
- All in the same building
- In a drop in Centre

- A local place where everyone is allowed into
- I want to have them all in one building because it would be easier for older people, and also people who are pregnant.

The biggest issue for the young people we spoke to was that nobody should know why you are going into a building so they don't tell your parents or pick on you.

Interestingly none of the children and young people we spoke to mentioned that they want support in schools. So we asked them about this.

### **Do children and young people like getting help from people in school?**

Some said:

- I like going to the counsellor at school, because they help me, whenever I need it.
- I like getting help at school.
- Sometimes yes, but it depends who it is.

But mostly we were told:

- No, I don't like school.
- No, if I had a problem I wouldn't go to anyone in school.
- They might tell the teachers and they might tell our parents.
- I see counsellors but they're not helpful
- It's embarrassing
- Too uncomfortable
- They are not trustworthy
- Not everyone goes to school

The biggest problem for young people in Tow Law and Murton is that getting help from people based in school could only be done during school time and then people see you. Young people have to travel either to Wolsingham, Willington Parkside Comprehensives or Easington. Because they travel on the school bus they can't hang around after school or go back to school when everyone else has gone. If they don't get the school bus home, everyone wants to know why?

However the young people we spoke to from Seaham said the support services in their school is very good, confidential and lots of people use them. They said they trust the workers.

### **People**

We talked about if there was a team of people who were offering help, who would they want on this team? Ideas ranged from:

- police
- school nurses
- firemen
- lollipop lady

- Someone near our own age
- Approachable people

But most people told us they would want a youth worker on the team:

- I would like to have a youth worker that would help with any problems
- We don't have a youth worker to talk to, but that would be good

We also asked:

**What can people offer so you would go to them for help?**

- Somebody the same sex
- Treat me like a normal person, not too posh
- Somebody able to understand you
- People who listen
- Treat you with respect
- Nice people
- Treat you like an adult
- Where it's nice surroundings
- Not obvious why you're there
- Not patronising
- Treat you nice
- Be kind
- Treat me like how they would want to be treated
- Nice not shouting
- Somewhere that you can take a close friend

One important issue that kept coming up was about confidentiality.

**So finally we asked how young people feel about adults sharing information about them.**

They said:

- I would feel unhappy because everyone knows your personal details
- Unhappy because everyone knows my personal things
- Wouldn't be happy if anyone else could see my personal details
- People talking about me would make me feel angry and screwed
- I would feel stupid
- Teachers talk about you

All in all confidentiality is important to the young people we spoke to, and is one of the biggest fears that they have when they think about going to get help.

## Conclusion

So, what have we found out? The first place children and young people say they will go to for help are their families. Their mams, dads, uncles, aunties, grandmas, grandads, this is why we think it's important that families have information and people who can help them.

We also found out that children and young people want support and services that are near to where they live or have a free text service so that they could get in touch with someone at anytime. They felt that there should be more services like drop in centres like End House and in town centres so it's accessible for everyone.

We found it is important for children and young people that they know what they have said is being treated in confidence and is not shared with other people, either accidentally or on purpose. They want someone to talk to who understands them and treats them respectfully and who won't tell their teachers or parents about their personal details. Therefore it is very important to the young people that they can go somewhere to speak about their problems which is safe, comfortable but not too posh, close to home, but somewhere they can go without other people knowing why they're there.

Most of the children and young people we spoke to didn't really think school would be the best place for them to get help and support. They said they wouldn't feel comfortable there. Accessing services in school is a big problem for those young people who have to travel to school by bus. They said that the only time they could go to someone would be during school, or it meant missing the normal bus home. Both of which draws attention to them.

Also, young people said sometimes they need support or advice at weekends or later in the evening when they can't get to the school building. If support is put in different buildings during this time, people will just get confused. The young people we spoke to also mentioned that not everyone attends school, so they wouldn't like to go into school for help.

But the young people we spoke to at Seaham said they really liked the support services in their school and lots of people use them. This is very different to the views of other young people in other areas. We think that this should be explored more. If one school has got it right and provides the support that young people want, this could be copied by other schools. Schools can learn a lesson here! We think further research should be done by young people to find out if everyone is happy with Seaham School's support and why?

This report is not the views and opinions of all children and young people living in County Durham, but it is what some young people have told us. We hope you will listen.