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Editor's Column by Jane Morgan

Hi again! In this edition of the Investing in Children newsletter we're lucky enough to be featuring articles from our past editor Jenny Cooke and a past contributor of some fantastic pieces Helen Swanwick, both relating news from the states! I however, haven't had the pleasure of crossing the Atlantic yet, and so my thoughts are turned to topics a little closer to home.

It's that time of year again when every week is accompanied by an awards ceremony, we've cheered as Muse collected their much deserved best live band award at both the Brits and the NMEs. We've applauded as the red carpet has been graced by stars of the screen, Cate Blanchett, Hilary Swank and Jonny Depp to name but a few, for the BAFTAs and needless to say the Oscars.

Surrounded by all of this glitz and glamour it's hard to concentrate on writing that history essay due in the next morning, but with the months soaring by at an alarming rate and exams once **again** fast approaching it's imperative to focus. That's right more exams! This time last year I was revising hard (most of the time anyway) for my GCSEs and fantasizing of the day when they were done. Well that day has been, and unlike my siblings who went before me when A levels were the next stage, I now have to practice those revision techniques yet again for AS level exams.

With exams becoming increasingly more frequent, especially with mocks included, lessons are progressively more geared to enabling students to pass the exam, leaving little room for any deeper learning or discussion, and putting pressure on teachers to squash each syllabus in and allow time for revision of topics. I fear that this current system of teaching means pupils miss out on gaining a greater knowledge of subjects, as there is always an exam deadline approaching.

I currently study art at AS Level and plan to continue to A level next year. My first exam for this subject is in April, just seven months into the course meaning I have had insufficient time to experiment with different media and improve my drawing skills etc prior to my being assessed on them. The previous A Level Art gave students two years to develop in the subject before an exam was taken, which in my opinion is far more logical. The inanity of the exam system is not only evident in art, many other subjects suffer the pressure also. As always I'm keen to hear your opinion on this issue particularly if you are in any way involved in the existing system as a teacher.

Writing about all of these exams can't be good for my peace of mind, so I'll leave you to enjoy the rest of this fascinating newsletter.

See ya Jane x

NEWS UPDATE ...

The Jamie Oliver effect

You may have seen the Jamie Oliver programme that featured pupils from a school in Durham. It was fascinating television, as Oliver railed against the system that resulted in children being fed "crap" in schools (I think this must be a technical term used by TV chefs) and then tried (successfully in the end) to provide good, nutritious food which the students would eat.

The programme stimulated lots of debate amongst young people and adults in Durham, but also an editorial in the Observer newspaper, and an article on 'You and Yours' on the radio which is great, except when, periodically over the last five or six years, children and young people themselves have raised similar concerns about the quality of school dinners, they have largely been ignored. Indeed I can remember one senior official explaining that one of the weaknesses of Investing in Children was its willingness to support young people to explore 'trivial' issues, such as school meals and the state of school toilets, rather than the serious issues of educational achievement and school discipline. One of the most interesting things about the Oliver programme was the suggestion that all of these issues might be linked.

Hooligans

One of the most powerful ideas that drives our society's view of children and young people, and influences the way we provide services to them, is the notion that they are naturally unruly and reckless, and it is part of our responsibility as adults, to exercise proper control of them.

Every Child Matters

This is driven by a national and local media that falls over itself to publish stories that magnify instances of anti-social behaviour or criminality by young people, but is remarkably reluctant to publish stories about the achievements and contributions that children and young people make to their communities.

In the lead up to the general election, this situation is exacerbated by the fact that playing on people's fears (even though these may not be reasonable) is good politics, and we now have the unedifying spectacle of the major parties promising to 'crack down' on anti-social behaviour and tighten up on school discipline.

'Investing in Children' was created in the wake of the James Bulger case and it has been one of our central tasks to encourage a more balanced, less hysterical debate. The County Council deserves great credit for having the vision and courage to swim against the tide, and to promote a positive view of young people.

Little things matter though. On the County Council's website at the moment there is a 'Quick Poll' question: "Do you think that cameras fitted on school buses to crack down on bad behaviour are a good idea?" Over 90% have voted yes. It's not clear how many of them are young people who use the service. I wonder if anyone has asked them?

Liam Cairns

Every Child Matters: The challenge of change to improve outcomes for all children and young people. It takes forward the

Government's vision of radical reform for children and young people.

There are five outcomes which are key to well-being in childhood and later life: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. The programme aims to improve those outcomes for all children and to close the gap in outcomes between the disadvantaged and their peers.

We believe to achieve a high standard in all of the outcomes, poverty needs to be tackled.

At Investing in Children there is a large group of young people from around the county who have been working together to develop their opinions on the five outcomes. Myself and Jenny Cooke have been commissioned to follow up the group's hard work and produce a report over the next few months that will reflect the findings.

So far we have held three agenda days, spoke to young people in schools and youth clubs. We have also spoken to service providers to find out exactly what they offer currently and what they might be able to offer in the future. For example, under the 'staying safe' outcome, many young people have expressed concern regarding the lighting in bus stops (meaning there is none). So, now it is our job to find out how many bus shelters needs lights and how much it will cost.

Alongside the research we are trying to develop an audit tool that will allow us to assess various services throughout Co

Durham, based on the five outcomes. For example, to audit 'being healthy' we will need to look at the health and leisure services.

However we don't want to just audit them in the sense of 'how many leisure centres are they and what activities do they offer' but we want to know how good the leisure centres are? Do you young people feel able to use them? How much do they cost etc... We also wanted to look at equivalency, this means looking at the services available to adults and comparing the equivalent services to young people and deciding if there is any gap. For example, whilst auditing a school we will compare it to standards that an adult would expect from their employer.

So over the next few months we should be able to write a report that will capture all of the research we have done. Along with the big group we will present our findings to the group at County Hall, who have been doing their work on Every Child Matters, deciding how they want to implement it in Co Durham and we hope they take our considerations seriously.

Participation Work

As part of the Every Child Matters work we have also been exploring and analysing what opportunities there are for young people to participate in decision making. As you know, all children and young people should have the right to have their voices heard and their ideas taken seriously. Especially on matters that affect their future lives.

The work is still ongoing, and by the end of June we will have a final report on our findings.

So what have we done so far! We wrote letters to nearly 250 schools in County Durham asking them a series of questions, such as; What is the purpose of your organisation? What role do young people within your organisation? And more importantly, How do young people get involved with decision making and do you

have evidence of this? There are also a few more questions but I would say them three are the most important for us.

We also sent letters to young people's organisations, such as Durham County Youth Engagement Service, who have replied back to us, however they were unable to answer any of our questions as they said they were currently under a lot of pressure responding to a key number of Government priorities and initiatives in relation to children and young people.

We sent letters to Education in the Community, Connexions Durham, and more widely to the Regional Youth Assembly, UK North Parliament, and the British Youth

Council. Sadly, so far, another disappointing turnout, only one reply! a good one mind, from Connexions Durham. They were very helpful, they allowed us to go and talk to them about Connexions, and explained their role and the role of children and young people. They also sent us some information in the post and replied to our letter in quite good detail! (Thank you Connexions). Hopefully we will receive more replies shortly from these organisations or we will just have to think of another way of contacting them.

Jenny Cooke

Jenny Walton

TO ALL WOULD-BE JOURNALISTS

We want you to write for the newsletter.

If you are a young person, and have an idea

Note from the Editor

We don't expect everyone to agree with what's in the newsletter (I know I don't).

If there's something you don't agree with why not write me a letter. All reasonable contributions published.

The Editor

Our Trip to London for the Philip Lawrence Awards 2004

To begin with, upon arrival at Durham Station, we saw Sir Bobby Robson being interviewed – a great omen you might say! The train journey passed uneventfully ending up at Kings Cross. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to see Platform 9 & 3/4 as we were due to check into the hotel. Some bright spark in the group decided we should walk to the hotel – all the way to Euston like

packhorses! I was extremely disgruntled when we got there. To top it off, the rooms weren't ready so we had to use the public toilets to freshen up. I'm not saying they weren't nice but people tend to stare when you take a bath in their tiny sinks!

Since we couldn't check in we decided to get a head start on our trip to Parliament. We got on the tube and got off somewhere completely different – weird! Because we were early we went to Nelson's Column and climbed the lions – that was rather a giggle!

We then had our meeting with MP, Chief Whip and the Nice Lady who lives just down the road from us – Hilary Armstrong. She took us into a conference room where the public aren't allowed to go so we felt dead special. It was here we asked her burning questions like "Have you seen a fight in Parliament?", "Will men in balaclavas storm through your windows if you say 'Bomb!' on the telephone?", and "Where did you get your jacket?" (Joseph was convinced it was from H & M, his favourite shop!)

The we went out on the Terrace overlooking the river which was very pretty. We also met some Lords and they asked us to stay and have a drink with them. We would have liked that too but Hilary had a meeting to go to! So we said "goodbye" and went to the rehearsals for the award ceremony. We got to meet Frances Lawrence and she was truly amazing. She demanded that our 7th member be on stage to collect the award with us. She's truly an inspiration. Basically though, we found out where to sit, then where to stand and then we went for a pizza!

Later that night we sat in the hotel bar and lobby and made friends with fellow 2004 winners and past winners. That was one of the best parts of the trip. The following morning we enjoyed breakfast; we certainly made the MOST of it since it was free! We then made our way to the theatre to collect the Award.

The stage was set with all the visuals and the dancers were in costume – it was fantastic. Trevor Macdonald arrived as did the TV cameras and then we were in business. We got to meet Sir Trev and Frances again before being handed an overly large cheque for a grand! We had to carry that around London for the rest of the day! Suffice to say we managed and, contrary to prior predictions, DID NOT miss our train and all arrived home safe and sound and knackered!

Laura Emerson – 18

Note from the Editor

Thank you to all the following who submitted excellent articles. Unfortunately, we only had room for one: Colin Simpson. Jack Burton. Glen Hodason. Tom Burton. Naomi Philbrick. Jo



The MASK of CAMIAS

Who are Pifticar's Angels?
How do you say Redcar without using your 'posh southern accent'?
Where can you learn a huge repertoire of dubious jokes?
Why did Jordon make an appearance?
What is the colour of the toilets in Stockton's shopping centre?
What is behind the Mask of CAMHS? (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
Read on to find out the answers.....

These were not exactly the questions that came to mind when Iftikhar and I were asked to run a project on behalf of the Teesside CAMHS service in March 2005. 10 months later we not only have the answers, but we have learnt a huge amount about the CAMHS service. This is due to the fact that Liam, Mark, Kayleigh, Lynsey, Becky, Nicola, Kelly, Rachel, Andrew, Simon and Kirstie who formed the Teesside group calling themselves Pifticar's Angels (taken from our names Pippa and Iftikhar) taught Iftikhar and I a lot more than we had bargained for!!!!!!

The young people came from a wide area in Teesside so most weeks I'd find myself transporting everyone in my ancient people carrier to the meetings. My joke repertoire improved as did my ability to say Redcar like a true Middlesbrough native!

With the help of Jordon - a Spider diagram so named on account of her big...lips - no rhyming slang please!) the group identified the issues most important to them. They wondered that if CAMHS was a mystery to them (and they use the service) how did it appear to other people? To answer this they decided to interview the counsellors and psychologists who usually interview them. They asked searching questions including whether the health professionals would do their job for half their pay. Among the many recommendations the group made, they suggested changing the colour of the waiting area of the counselling suite to a cheerier colour - green and yellow - inspired by the toilets in Stockton's shopping Centre. Who says Investing in Children groups don't travel to the best places in the course of their research work?! The group finally revealed their ideal face of CAMHS from behind the Mask of CAMHS to an audience of 65 health professionals in late January. Their version of Blind Date, where a young person had to choose their ideal counsellor from 3 candidates, made a big impression, as did many of their challenging ideas. The presentation represented a huge achievement, not just in the enterprising work presented, but in the confidence that the young people showed in standing up in front of this audience and telling them how they see the CAMHS service.

So will the CAMHS team lower their mask and show the true face of CAMHS? Will the waiting area look like the posh toilets in Stockton? Have Pifticar's Angels woven their magic and captured the CAMHS team in their Jordan spider web?

It's now over to Teesside CAMHS for the answers, watch this space

Pippa Bell

Membership News

Well done to our new members this edition, these are:

Branksome Youth Centre
The Clifton centre - St. Columbus Youth Club
Firthmoor Activity Club for all
Mc Mullen House
Paediatric Home Care (North Team)
The Grove Community House

The good work also continues in the following projects that have been successfully re-evaluated:

Bowburn Junior School
Chester -le- Street Library
Ushaw Moor Junior School
St. Josephs RCVA - Coundon

Once again well done to all involved, we look forward to seeing you next year.

This is a picture of me and the group at Newton Aycliffe Library. The young people are really happy with what they have achieved so far and are looking forward to a new build! For further information on Newton Aycliffe Library please do not hesitate to contact us or contact the library direct on 01325 312586.



Washington Conference – Newsletter Article

A few years ago a conference was held in Baltimore, organised by the International Initiative, with the theme of Children and

Young People. The idea was to get nations from around the world to share learning and plan changes for the future, Investing in

Children was invited and Liam went along, taking, as always a young person from Durham, Ashleigh Sangster. However, on arrival, it turned out Ashleigh was the only young person at the conference (the conference on **young people**, that is).

So when the next international conference was planned they decided to learn from this and make the conference 'child centred'. An international planning team was set up, this involved young people from Amsterdam, Israel, USA and the UK. I was part of this team along with Karl Owen and young lady Ema Eden from Portsmouth. The planning team held two planning weekends, one in Amsterdam and one in London.

The first meeting took place in Amsterdam. It was tough at first as we all struggled to get our heads round the idea of the conference and what we wanted to get out of it. But after a slow start we developed a 'tool box' for involving children and young people. We also began to decide what it actually was we wanted to get out of the conference and it became clear we all wanted action, so we decided it would be important to allocate time with the conference for the national teams to get together to create an Action Plan of what they would do in their countries to make real changes to the lives of children and young people. The second meeting in London was a fun reunion and we got down to detailed planning of the conference, what was going to be on and who was going to run it.

The few days before the conference everyone went to different study tour site. There were study tour sites all over the USA including Boston, California and Texas. I went to Denver in Colorado. I had the backdrop of the snow-covered Rockies and was greeted by cowboys at the airport. I got to see various projects in Denver including a community court and a project in which

residents of communities formed groups to try and change problems in their community.

Anyway, onto the actual conference. The conference lasted two days and an evening reception. The evening reception was very exciting with everybody catching up. We, the youth planning board, introduced ourselves and this was followed by good food and even better music and poetry.

Also, on the first night all of the teams began to put together their market stall displays of 'what it's like to grow up in...'. We had worked really hard on our stall and had included, British sweets, school uniform and random facts and figures.

The first full day of the conference was quite nerve racking as everyone hoped the last months work would all fall into place. The agenda of the first day had been what we had decided in our meeting in London. It started off with number of introductory speeches, feedback from the study tour sites and workshops. The workshops were based around the 'tool kit' we designed in Amsterdam.

The second day of the conference, in my opinion was not as interesting. The whole day was based around hip-hop and it's importance to young people. Many felt this was completely irrelevant to their lives as young people and was only important in some neighbourhoods in some states.

However, overall the conference made me realise that we all have the same problems. Young people who have grown up in Israel, USA, Chilli, Ireland all face problems with respect, discrimination and having their voices heard. I learnt so much over the two days and it was a really memorable experience.

After the conference the UK team got together to write up our experiences of the

conference and to decide further steps. The report has now been written and circulated. We are hoping to present our report to Margaret Hodge, the Children's Minister.

Jenny Cooke

Newcastle Newsletter Update

It is now a year since Newcastle Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership decided to engage Investing in Children to assist in the development and delivery of a participation strategy. The strategy was first launched at the Discovery Centre in February 2004 and this would be appropriate time to look at how far the strategy has progressed.

The Development Plan covered a three year period and the first year was all about taking the plunge and getting things started. To do this we decided to take action on three principle areas – developing the capacity of young people to participate in dialogue, the Membership Scheme and the Staff Development Programme. A small 'reference group' was formed, drawn from the partnership to progress chase and problem solve.

The capacity building element was to be progressed by holding 'Agenda Days' across the city. These days are a means of allowing groups of young people to come together to consider a broad range of issues and then to form 'research' or 'campaigning' teams to pursue particular points, and to prepare their arguments.

Agenda Days that we have been commissioned for have now been held at Gala Field Youth Centre, Dinnington First School and Walker Technology College. They have involved over 70 children and young people aged from 8 to 16, produced a mass of views and opinions on life in Newcastle and led to the creation of seven research teams looking at everything from the way young people are viewed by various groups in society to problems with traffic, leisure facilities and the environment.

Graham Bristow

Stop2night (formally known as Darlington Nightstop)

We have been working in the community for over 11 years now, helping and supporting young homeless people aged 16-25.

We offer short term emergency accommodation in volunteer families in

Darlington. All our clients are provided with a place to sleep, warm meal and support. We also provide them with a toiletry bag filled with basic essentials and they are given the opportunity to get some laundry done.

Stop2night is unique as we are the only organisation in Darlington offering this service that offers immediate emergency accommodation. We have gained positive recognition for our valuable work by winning an award from Darlington Council for Voluntary Service and Volunteer Bureau in the category of work which makes a difference in the community in which it operates.

We gain referrals from agencies such as Social Services, Housing Dept and the Police. Our referral process is very vigorous and thorough as we need to make sure that they are suitable. We don't accept people who have drug issues, alcohol misuse and criminal convictions.

Our volunteers consist of drivers who transport the young person to the family, telephone contact person's who deal with the referrals after office hours and the host families who house the young person in their home. All our volunteers are required to undertake a full Criminal Records Bureau check prior to being accepted and they receive a training programme. Expenses are paid to all our volunteers.

When we relaunched as Stop2night we were fortunate enough to have Alan Milburn MP attend offering his support for our continued success as he supported us right at the beginning.

Anyone interested in offering voluntary or financial support please contact Bridget on **01325 382737**.



Bridget Chapman

Apologies – for any inconvenience caused by the incorrect telephone number printed in the Issue 62..

Smores & Cornbread

By Helen Swanwick

On June 15th forty young adults and myself arrived at Camp Farwell, Vermont US, a residential camp for girls aged 6-16. We travelled from across Europe, America and Australia to have the most exciting summer of our lives teaching the campers and living in little wooden cabins with

bunk beds, bug lights and net windows. I lived with six fourteen year old campers. They told me ghost stories and introduced me to smores and cornbread (great American food!) Best of all they shared their of experiences living in America such as going to a prom and hiding from a tornado and I shared my experiences with them. One day the English counsellors made Cornish Pasties for everyone.

Everyday there was a new activity. When it rained heavily we played mudsoccer during which I was picked up several times and dropped into huge muddy puddles. One evening was 'Popfest,' an opportunity for counsellors to perform like pop-stars. Another day I took a ride in the speed boat on the lake with campers towing behind on the banana boat shouting at us to drive faster then falling off.

I instructed dance and acting which included teaching the youngest campers how to dance like monkeys for a musical with a jungle theme, and choreographing pop-video style routines for an older street dance class. Sometimes we would put music on and dance around crazily to boost our energy and get warmed up before technique work. It could get cold in Vermont so this was great first thing in the morning! My favourite activity was working alongside the campers to devise plays and choreograph routines rather than simply instructing them as to what to do. This resulted in some of the campers most successful shows, for which they wrote excellent scripts and songs.

I made many friends this summer, learnt about different cultures and discovered through practice effective ways of teaching performing arts. Travelling is a valuable form of education and Camp America provides an affordable opportunity so that anyone can take part. At camp you can teach, be a counsellor or work as support staff away from the campers. You'll have time off, and get a Visa so you can travel after camp. I applied this time last year and its amazing how much I've grown from the experience and what fun memories I have.



Camp America, 37a Queen's Gate, London, SW7 5HR England
Tel: +44 (0) 207 581 7373 Email: enquiries@campamerica.co.uk
Web; www.campamerica.co.uk

What's been happening in Darlington

As from the beginning of January my employment with liC ended. I am now working for Darlington Borough Council within the Youth Service. Part of my new role is to work in partnership with liC, to support and promote liC and to facilitate some of the liC Projects in Darlington.

We live in interesting times and I hope to take what I have learnt over the last 3 years with liC, to do what I can to create opportunities for children and young people to engage in dialogue with key adults in Darlington, which will hopefully result in change. I will keep you up to date with what's happening in the coming months.

Congratulations to new Members in Darlington.....

Beaumont Hill Youth Club Branksome Youth Club

Clifton Centre Youth Fellowship Redhall Play Workers

Darlington Duke of Edinburgh Award Centre

Firthmoor Playworkers

The Mayor Cllr Roderick Frances presented Beaumont Hill and Branksome Youth Clubs with their liC membership certificate in February. Congratulations to them both.

Beaumont Hill Youth Club is an after school Club at Beaumont Hill School and will become part of the new Eastbourne Community Village. This is an ideal time for staff to build on the good work done so far, by continuing to support the young people from the Club to become involved in dialogue to look at what provision there will be for them in the new school.

The young people at Branksome Youth Club have been listened to and as a result change has taken place. Judy and her staff should be commended for the way they have included young people in developing a program instead of delivering an issues based programmed that is adult led.

Clifton Centre Youth Fellowship is an excellent youth club in the Park East Ward of Darlington. It was a pleasure working with the volunteers who facilitate the club Sheila and Susan. There is a fantastic atmosphere at the Fellowship, and young people play a central role in how it runs. All activities and events are decided upon, planned and run by the young people.

Darlington Duke of Edinburgh Award Centre has broken down a lot of the traditional barriers associated with the DoE Awards and young people who attend come from a wide range of backgrounds. Staff and young people have worked together and if problems arise every one sits down to sort them out. Congratulations, another great project.

Redhall Play Workers provide holiday a play scheme, and after school club on Redhall. It is an excellent project that came about as a result of the Children's Fund (CF) and liC developing a young people's research group on the estate to find out how the CF money should be spent. The staff is working in partnership with young people to provide this excellent club.

Firthmoor Play Workers, like Redhall provide a holiday play scheme, and a Junior Club at Firthmoor Maidendale House. This came about as a result of a dialogue group set up by the CF. There is clear evidence that Firthmoor Playworkers are involving children and young people in dialogue that has resulted in change.

Full time

If you think you've something that you think everyone needs to hear, or have suggestions about what should be in the next month's newsletter, please write to our editor:

Jane Morgan,
Newsletter Editor

Or e-mail her at iic@durham.gov.uk

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**Copy date for next Newsletter will be
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**Large print copies of this Newsletter are available from
the IiC office 0191 386 7485**

Cantonese, Bengali & Punjabi

The Investing in Children information booklet is now available in Chinese, Bengali & Punjabi. If you require a copy in any of these languages, please contact the above address or telephone the above no.