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Editor's Column by Jane Morgan

Hello again! You may remember in my last editorial I had a moan about the increasing number of exams facing young people, particularly in secondary education. Well I don't wish to be depressing but I have the definite urge to moan again since receiving my AS exam timetable. I was a little perplexed to read that all three of my geography papers were in one morning, followed in the afternoon by both English literature papers. Surely no-one would timetable six hours of exams in one day when given a period of two months over which to schedule them! Well actually, that is exactly what the AQA exam board would do, not only to the astonishment of myself but to many of my teachers also AQA have scheduled six hours of essay writing exams into one six hours and forty five minutes school day. I'm still trying to find out when I'm supposed to find time to eat my lunch in between the time it takes to end one exam and begin the next. To make matters worse AQA have only gone and picked out the last Friday before whit week as the day on which to cram these exams.

It would appear that exam boards wish only to add to the mounting pressure on young people, many of whom are already overwhelmed by the amount and indeed frequency of exams. I may be moaning too much about this topic, but surely it can't be

beneficial to student's welfare to be under this much pressure!

On a happier note I was able to go to the cinema last night, one of my favourite pastimes, and enjoy the recent adaptation of Douglas Adams' novel 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy'. It was not one of the greatest films I've seen so far this year but was nevertheless entertaining. I particularly enjoyed watching Marvin the robot voiced by the extremely talented Alan Rickman. I don't know about you, but one of the highlights of going to the cinema for me is actually viewing the trailers and last night was no exception. I'm sure like me, any of you who are film buffs are eagerly awaiting the release of what promises to be some of the year's blockbusters such as Spielberg's 'War of the Worlds', 'Batman Begins' and of course the long awaited final instalment of Star Wars 'Revenge of the Sith', but until then there are worse things you could do than watch 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.'

I'm in the mood for a film now so I'm off to raid through my videos, but before I do I would like to apologise for the delay of the last issue due to problems in printing. Happy reading!

Jane

Please Note: In an attempt to cut down on the use of paper we are intending to email the newsletter to as many people as possible. Would anyone wishing to receive the newsletter please send us your email address to: iic@durham.gov.uk. If you need a hard copy, please let us know : Tel: 0191 386 7485

NEWS UPDATE ...

Investing in Children Development Plan

After much discussion and drafting and redrafting of reports, the County Council have agreed a development plan for Investing in Children. This means that we can move forward, and talk to other organisations outside of the County who are interested in developing their own 'Investing in Children' franchise. It also means that we will have the resources, in terms of some new posts, to be able to offer prospective partners appropriate support.

This is a big step forward for us. It will allow us to build upon the work we have been doing with the Newcastle Children and Young People's Partnership, with the Durham and Tees Valley Strategic Health Authority, and with Tees Valley Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, to look at how Investing in Children can develop and adapt to different circumstances.

What we are hoping to do is to create a number of 'Public-public partnerships', where we will agree to work with other authorities/agencies. At the start of a partnership, the Investing in Children Development Agency will be prepared to provide a high degree of support. This might include consultancy, staff development, practice support and evaluation of membership applications. But we hope to move quickly to a position where new partnerships are able to look after themselves. They will, in effect, become Investing in Children franchises, with their own, wholly owned, Investing in Children projects.

The only area which will not be franchised will be the evaluation of membership applications. This is because this represents our primary means of ensuring that the **quality** of work across different

Investing in Children partnerships is similar. The credibility of Investing in Children depends upon this.

This is a great opportunity for Investing in Children. In his evaluation report on Investing in Children (The Grit in the Oyster) Bill Williamson advised that we should develop links outside of Durham, so that the organisation stays fresh, and continues to learn.

The Development Plan provides opportunities to do this. It also provides significant opportunities for young people themselves to make contacts, and to develop alliances across local authority boundaries. If we can manage this well, it can only increase the potential for achieving meaningful change.

Liam Cairns

M.A.L.A.P.

My name is Brian Davies and I work for investing in children and I'm a temporary research assistant, I am working on the multi agency looked after partnership or MALAP.

M.A.L.A.P is a project that all services are integrated on changing the provision of services for looked after children and young people.

We have formed a reference group of young people some of which are care leavers, looked after or have had contact with children in need teams from social care and health (social services).

The group meet every 2 weeks, we have just started, we are working with the MALAP steering group. We hope to achieve a lot for looked after young people because there is a lot of stigma attached to looked after young people. Perhaps we can look at the wider picture by campaigning to stop stigma attached to looked after children and young people and make this a universal project.

The reference group are planning agenda days in whit week, end of May to the beginning of June. All looked after young people will be invited to the agenda days. The four agenda days are for different days. The piece of work ties in with every child matters and the five outcomes:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

On the agenda days, looked after young people will be asked for their opinions around the five outcomes and provision of services.

Brian Davies
Newsletter reporter

ARE YOU:

- 1. Aged 16-18?**
- 2. In need of extra cash?**
- 3. Good at art, especially graphics?**

The learning disabilities Person Centred Planning task group would like to employ 2 people to help facilitate young people's plans at Glendene School..

A person centred plan is about hops and dreams.
Could you turn ideas into pictures?

The rate of pay is £5 per hour. Would you like to know more?

Full training will be given.

Please phone me for additional details, or write to me at the liC office.

Tricia Abbott.

Tel: 07789653864

Note from the Editor

We have in this edition the very first music review of the newsletter. Kurt Scott reviewed local band heading for stardom Maximo Park, but I'm looking for different people to write reviews for future editions. Do you have a band at your school or know of a group in your area who haven't yet made the big time? Why not give them some free publicity by writing a review and emailing it to the address on the back page.

Darlington Children's Fund Three Years On

Background

The Children's Fund began in Darlington in 2002 with the aim of:

- Spending the money from the Government on things children and young people wanted to see happen.
- Promoting dialogue between adults and young people as a better way of organising children's services compared with the old "adults know best" approach.

The Fund is jointly managed by Investing in Children and The Children's Society.

Achievements

Since 2002 we have:

- Used the Investing in Children model to run over 16 separate "dialogue groups" - involving more than 120 young people in on-going dialogue about change. Groups have researched issues from fishing and play to school transport and domestic violence – with loads of others in between.
- Funded 30 separate projects - most of them new – in response to recommendations by the dialogue groups. At its peak the Fund supported more than 1000 young people over a period of 3 months.

So what's changed?

When it comes to **opportunities to do things**, it's easy to show what's changed:

- Children and young people on Red Hall can attend activities which weren't there before. There is a dance club, a new adventure playground, trips out and a regular Friday disco.
- The Dolphin Leisure Centre has improved the way it works with children and young people with disabilities. Staff have been on training sessions led by young people and new equipment has been bought.
- The "Timeout" Young Carers club has doubled its membership and now meets twice a week.
- A brand new fishing lake has been built on Firthmoor for young people to use.
- A new play club has been set up in Bishopton where there was nothing before.
- Seven schools have bought new play equipment; improved transition support and developed new approaches to bullying.

When it comes to **changing attitudes towards children and young people** there is still loads of work to be done but we've also had some successes:

- Workers on Firthmoor have raised over £100,000 from the Lottery to develop dialogue with children and young people and improve play facilities.
- Groups of young people regularly attend the Red Hall Partnership to get the support of the community in taking forward their ideas. As a result the main focus of the partnership is now on young people.
- The YMCA in Darlington is now involving children and young people in interviews for other posts not connected with the Children's Fund.

Some quotes from adults involved with the Children's Fund in Darlington:

"Any project involving young people should come from them. They should have the same ownership as anyone else. They need to have a voice"

"I've found that by responding to the needs of children and young people and having them in at the beginning of a project, rather than as an after- thought, the project is more likely to succeed."

"A worker from another agency said that young people involved in a staff interview were excellent and extremely professional throughout the interview. She has said that she is telling everyone how good the interviews were and she is now 'converted' to the Children's Fund way of working. She said that we could quote her as an example of someone who's attitudes have changed as the result of our work and that we could give her number to others if they would like to talk to her direct."

"Members of this group were treated with derision 18 months ago. Now it can be seen that adults in the community are aware of their commitment that they have changed for the better, are no longer treated with the same level of suspicion"

*"I used to talk about "residents" first and then young people separately, but after what you said I've realised that young people **are** residents! At a meeting the other day someone made the same mistake and I found myself challenging him on it!"*

What's next?

The Children's Fund will end in 2008. The big challenge up to then is to do everything we can to get more people to adopt dialogue with children and young people as the way forward. We will be focusing on 3 main areas this year:

- Supporting the projects currently funded by Children's Fund to gain a better understanding of dialogue and to do more to put it into practice.
- Publicising what we are doing better - and promoting dialogue at every opportunity alongside Investing in Children.
- Working with a "reference group" of young people from across the Children's Fund programme to help us determine how the final 2 years money should be spent.

Dan Connolly - Programme Manager, Darlington Children's Fund

Membership News

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

Willington Library
Brandon Carrside Youth Centre

And over in Newcastle : Hartburn Walk
Dinnington First School
Newburn manor Nursery School
WEYES - West end Youth Enquiry Service

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

Crook Library
The Education Welfare Service
Park House
St Hilds Primary School
Bishop Auckland Nursery Centre
Teesdale Youth Theatre
South Moor Library

Once again well done to all involved, we look forward to seeing you next year.
For further information on any of our membership sites please contact the IiC office.

Shincliffe C of E Primary School

Shincliffe Primary have recently become a new member of Investing in Children. They have an excellent school council who have been busy doing a number of projects over the past few years. The children have been involved in putting mirrors in the boys toilets, deciding what sports equipment they want to buy and writing the rules for the playground. All the children in the school were involved in designing the Secret Garden that is now enjoyed by all the children. So WELL DONE Shincliffe, keep up the good work.

By Jenny Cooke

The Gig - Maximo Park with Special Guests
The Time - 25th April 2005
The Place - Northumbria University

The Review -

You may or may not have heard of Maximo Park yet but when the album comes out this month its going to be a sure fire hit, and with singles, 'The Coast Is Always Changing', 'Apply Some Pressure' and 'Graffiti', they have already earned themselves an immense following.

So on April 25th, the band returned to their hometown to play an intimate gig on the 600 capacity stage in the Northumbria Students Union, with support from The Blood Arm.

After the support acts had got the crowd going with some "interesting" shenanigans from the lead singer of The Blood Arm involving wading through the audience and dancing on the bar.

As soon as Maximo Park opened their set it was clear that it was going to be fantastic. With a set including an electrifying rendition of 'Apply Some Pressure' and adrenaline fuelled performances of 'Graffiti' and 'Fear Of Falling' the audience got all they expected and more, with the charismatic front-man Paul Smith praising them for their support.

Despite the slim song list, likely due to the fact that the band have yet to release their debut album, the capacity crowd soaked up every bit of the blistering performance which appears to be a benchmark for upcoming gigs from the local group.

With rumours being passed around that Maximo Park are going to be appearing at the Leeds and Reading Festivals this summer, and their debut album 'A Certain Trigger' set to storm the public with its release on 16th May, the future looks bright for the Park.

Maximo Park aren't "just another indie band", they are a fresh new talent aiming to redefine the sound of the Northeast along with fellow songsters The Futureheads. If you get the chance to see them on their current UK tour then do.

I'm also tipping the supporting act from LA, The Blood Arm to be a hit in the UK. With their energetic style and catchy tunes they look likely to be appearing mainstream sometime in the near future.

Kurt Scott

Newcastle Newsletter Update

What's been happening in Newcastle? Well -

Groups

We have started 5 new groups:

Walker - looking at issues in the local community for young people

School Rules - in secondary schools

Bullying - in secondary schools

School and community issues

'CAMHS' building group - looking at the designs for a new building for children and young people's mental health services

The other groups are at Gala Fields, Newbiggin Hall [Respect and Parks and Leisure] and Dinnington [Parks, Environment and Scary teenagers].

I hope we can get all the findings from these groups on the internet with alreet.com so that we can share information with other groups of children and young people and decision makers.

Altogether we have over 140 children and young people 'on the books' with liC in Newcastle.

Membership

We have now got twenty applications for membership to evaluate. These are from all kinds of places - schools, youth projects, nurseries, a team working with looked after children, a community garden, an advice project, a theatre group. All in all it looks like there are lots of projects in Newcastle that are working in all kinds of participative and innovative ways. As we get more and more members it's helping to raise awareness of liC with organisations and children and young people across the city. Look for the liC logo. If you go somewhere or work with someone that you think should get liC membership, let me know!

GR8 event

Thanks to Laura, Lauren, Nicole and Rachel from Gala Fields. They led a session at the GR8 event in St James' Park, about how young people (13-19) want to get their views across to Newcastle City Council. Even though they were younger than all the people in the workshop, they did a great job getting young people to talk about how they want the council to listen to their views and do something about them. Play and Youth organised the GR8 event service as part of a debate the council is having at the moment.

Turning the curve

Thanks to the young people from Youth Voice who took part in the first 'turning the curve' event with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

The name is a bit of a mouthful, but this is the group that I work for because they fund Investing in Children in Newcastle. Between them they run all the services for children and young people in the city including schools, youth and play clubs, social services, health services among many, many more.

'Turning the curve' is where representatives from all these organisations get together to work out what to do about particular issues where there is a problem. Four members of Youth Voice came along at short notice to make sure that the discussions included young people.

To make sure these debates aren't about an adult agenda for children and young people, we are going to be working over the next few months on putting together a children and young people's agenda for the partnership. Hopefully in future we can have more dialogue with all these powerful adults in one place to make a difference to the things that matter to children and young people.

If you want to know more about any of the research groups, to nominate an organisation for membership, to get involved or to get more info - give me a call or send me an e-mail:

0191 277 4434

nick.brereton@newcastle.gov.uk

Nick

Nick Brereton - Newcastle Investing in Children Co-ordinator

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.