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# Editor's Column by Jane Morgan

Hello, and thank you for picking up this edition of the Investing in Children newsletter, I hope what I write next will encourage you to keep holding it as we have some fantastic articles this month from adults young people alike.

Work experience, a valuable insight into the world of work, or a total waste of time? This was the question buzzing round in my mind last month. As a fifteen year old I eagerly awaited the approaching week of work experience, full of excitement. I had been placed in the infant department of a local primary school, having an older sister who is a primary school teacher the profession had been on my list of possible careers, this seemed like a great opportunity to experience teaching first hand. The week soon came and I enjoyed every minute spent working with the children, however rare these minutes might have been, but more importantly how had this experience affected my ideas about teaching? Well it hadn't really. All I had really gained from the week was the expertise to use a photocopier and the knack of putting up backing paper straight.

A few months ago I was presented with an opportunity to do work experience again, this time a little older and I hope wiser I didn't expect to get to much from it. I was handed a form and asked in what areas of work I was interested, hoping to at least have an enjoyable week if not terribly productive I wrote down journalism and film, together with the places I was willing to travel to as Darlington and Durham. Bearing in mind the details I provided you may be surprised, as indeed I was, to find I was placed at a printing press (basically a card factory) in Shildon, not

exactly what I was hoping for and certainly not a future career.

Well I huffed and puffed to my teachers and begged the question, what was the point? I had no interest in printing, I couldn't get to Shildon, surely they could see this was going to be a waste of my week. Actually they couldn't, and so despite my constant complaints I agreed to give it a try. On arrival I discovered the company understood I wanted to do graphic design and if not there wasn't much for me to do. I didn't plan to waste my time trying to use a computer programme I didn't understand and so instead asked to be put on the factory floor. Rather than bore you with the events of the week, there weren't many worth mentioning, work experience proved to be worthwhile. At the end of the week I was offered a summer job working 20 hours a week which I am now thoroughly enjoying, though I don't think my enjoyment is as great as that of my teachers when they heard the news.

However, I'm still not sure work experience is really needed. I was lucky to get a job but I know many other students felt their week had been totally pointless, why does a girl planning to study zoology and work with animals in the future want to spend a week in an office making cups of tea? I know that hundreds of young people experience work placements each year and teachers love to stress the importance of them, I've told you what I think now I would love to hear your views on the subject. While you ponder this feel free to read the rest of the newsletter, I'm certain it will give you more food for thought!

**Jane**

# NEWS UPDATE ...

## Actions Speak Louder than Words

Jenny Cooke and Jenny Walton, working with a group of 25 other young people, have been working full time for Investing in Children on the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Their contracts have just ended, and they have finished their report, which will now be considered by the Children's Services core group.

The document they have produced is remarkable, both for its depth and its clarity. The two Jenny's and the larger team were able to enter into detailed discussions with hundreds of other young people from across the County, about their views on being safe, enjoying and achieving etc. Their report gives us a glimpse of how the world looks through the eyes of some children and young people.

The challenge now is to the policy makers and leaders to respond to this, and I had a taste of how this might play out at a meeting I attended recently.

The meeting included colleagues from a number of agencies, and was looking at how we build up a picture of what services we have, and what services we need, across the County. As one contribution, I presented a summary of the two Jenny's report.

There were two starkly different responses. On the negative side, the report was challenged as being not objective enough, and not being representative of the view of all children and young people in the County (In the introduction to

the report, the authors explicitly state that they do not claim that the report is representative).

This response is a familiar response, to young people who have used Investing in Children over the last eight years to attempt to have a voice, and an influence over decisions that effect them. 'Shooting the messenger' is sometimes a lot easier than listening to the message.

But much more positively, two other colleagues in the meeting responded to the report by identifying the issues raised which they could work on. David Miller, the new Director of Environment, immediately asked staff in his Department for a response to the specific environmental proposals made by the report authors. Suzanne Lamb from Durham and Chester-le-Street Primary Care Trust agreed to look into the particular suggestions about improving the arrangements for young people to be able to consult their school nurse.

Both colleagues have committed to following up their enquiries, and by going back to the report authors and explaining what they have done.

I think David and Suzanne are to be congratulated, and I think that their response provides a useful model for how agencies can respond to the participation of children and young people in a way that will build confidence, not cynicism, in public services.

**Liam Cairns**

4.8.05

## **On July 1<sup>st</sup> Mark Lloyd took over as the new Chief Executive of Durham County Council. I went along to his office in County Hall to ask him a few questions.**

### **First of all, where did you grow up?**

I came to County Durham in 1999, I grew up in Shropshire, right on the border with Wales. My father is from the Welsh side and my mother from the English, and we literally spanned the boundary. Depending on how well Wales are doing in Rugby, sometimes I'm Welsh and if they're doing badly I'm definitely English, I kind of claim dual nationality. I grew up in a fairly small town called Oswestry and having gone through school, I went to work in Wales and then London, and then Birmingham, Manchester and County Durham, so that's the route I've taken to get here.

### **What was it that brought you to County Durham?**

Work, quite simply I came up here for a job, it was a promotion for me to come and run an organisation called the Training and Enterprise Council. They were responsible for training and enterprise and it was my job to run the council for County Durham. As chief executive I came here in 1999, but soon after I arrived the government changed their views of training and enterprise councils and decided to change them. It was during that change that I moved to the council, I started work here in July 2000.

### **What did you see yourself doing when you were younger?**

My boyhood ambition, I had two when I was a kid. First I wanted to be a television cameraman. My father's a journalist and he did a little bit of broadcast journalism but mostly other journalism and as a consequence I used to go as a little kid trailing along behind him into the television studios, and I was absolutely amazed by all the cameras, and the control panels and the knobs and buttons. I thought hmm I fancy that, never happened. My second boyhood ambition, I guess a lot of kids had this one, was to be an RAF jet fighter pilot and that one never came about either unfortunately, so I end up here today.

### **What qualifications are needed for a job like yours?**

That's a really good question. I have a masters degree but I didn't go through the normal route. I left school when I was 17, after A levels, and went to work. I was very fortunate to get into a training programme for kind of graduates although I wasn't a graduate myself. That was a fantastic programme run by the civil service which gave me all sorts of experience and training which enabled me to get some really good jobs which helped me to develop lots of skills and experiences and they also enabled me to study as an adult I was in my thirties, a masters degree at the University of Durham. So to get the job was about my experiences, skills and no doubt the qualification helped but it wasn't something I got through the normal traditional route, it came later for me.

### **What exactly does the Chief Executive of the County Council do?**

Right, goodness. The job of the Chief Executive is to make sure the council is doing the right things for the people of County Durham. I'm officially the chief policy advisor to our councillors. I work for sixty three councillors who've been elected, they appoint me, I work for them. My job is to make sure that they get the best possible advice about what decisions they should take. So I help them to, I hope make good decisions, I have to implement them and to do this I take responsibility for 16,000 staff who have to be led and managed to do the things the council want to do, and to look after about £600m worth of spending each year. How do I sum that up? To try and help the councillors to make the right decisions about what to do, then to make sure all of our staff and all of our money is used properly to achieve the goals the council set.

### **The recent vote against a regional assembly would suggest that people in Durham are happy with the County Council as it is. What part does the County Council play compared to other local authorities?**

The County Council has a wide range of responsibilities, we're responsible for over three hundred schools across County Durham to make sure all of the young people across the county get a great start in life. We're responsible for all of the transport in the county, the roads, buses and so on. We're responsible for looking after anyone who is vulnerable. So if there is a child who needs fostering or adopting or dreadful issues such as child abuse then we're responsible for looking after them. If there are adults who can't look after themselves, our age or older people we try and look after them too. We provide libraries, leisure, recreational activities, so we kind of touch all sorts of parts of people's lives. The rubbish you produce at home gets collected by our district councils, then the County Council have to get rid of it all, there are all sorts of things we do which touch the way we live our lives everyday and I hope that the county council does all of those things pretty well which is perhaps one of the reasons why the people of the north east said no to a regional assembly. We like our local government as it is because they're doing a pretty good job and I'm proud of that.

**There are numerous forums and school councils across the county do you feel it's important to involve young people in making decisions which affect them?**

Absolutely, the people that know best what services they need are the people who use those services. It's really, really important that organisations such as Durham County Council listen well to the people it serves. We don't always know best, our job is to make sure we open our ears and listen.

**Do you think more could be done to make young people aware of the decisions made by the County Council which may affect them?**

Yes, it could, I'm now 37 and it's a wee while therefore since I was young. We need organisations like Investing in Children to help us to understand the best ways of engaging with and listening to young people so that the decisions that are taken by our councillors are taken with the full knowledge of what young people think.

**When you were younger were you ever given the opportunity to get involved in decision making?**

I think the answer is yes, I think. When I went to college to do my A levels I was elected as the student governor of the college there were two of us actually, I wasn't the only one, and we sat on the governing body of the college. So I was given the opportunity to get involved in decision making, was I listened to? I don't think I really was to tell the truth. I was there but I'm not sure that the people round the table really valued the views of the students at that time. I hope things are changing now, but I don't think they really wanted to hear what we had to say.

**Do you think it benefited you to be involved in that?**

Oh yes, I've got no doubt that that early exposure at 16 or 17 to sitting in a place where decisions are made and seeing how to make and influence decisions was really helpful for my career.

**Finally what do you see as the future of County Durham?**

I think County Durham is a great place, I love it here and I'm really glad I made a move up here for work and now I've made my life here. I hope to be here for a really long time so I've got a vested interest in trying to make County Durham a great place to live, a great place to work, and bring up a family and I think the future for the county is bright particularly if we can help the young people of County Durham to achieve their goals in the county so they don't have to look elsewhere for the things they want, both in terms of jobs and leisure and recreation. One of the things I need to work on with my colleagues is making sure it's a great place for young people to live.

**The Listening To Children Strategy**

**Hello,**

I am currently employed by Investing in Children as a research Assistant but I am 18 so don't worry I'm still a young person. I've been asked to have a regular Article on the listening to children Strategy as well as the Multi Agency looked After Partnership.

The Listening To Children Strategy involves every young person who has the right to participate in dialogue. The project is a universal project like Investing In Children, and is open to all young people in County Durham.

The Strategy has a young persons Reference Group and Maria Brannen, the Children's Rights Officer my Line Manager is part of the reference group and has the budget, however, the reference group have a say in what the budget is spent on.

The reference group are there to develop the strategy with the help of the steering group, which has Social Care and Health Strategic Managers, the Investing In Children Co-ordinator and the Children's Rights Officer.

The aim of the group is to provide support to all young people who want to use their rights. The Strategy involves developing Schemes and Agencies in County Durham.

The Max Card is a scheme for looked after young people, carers and young carers, this scheme provides free leisure for young people and access to some of the museums in County Durham. We want this card to be spread to Children In Need young people and Children, and disabled young

people and children, and eventually evolved into a universal Card for all young people no matter their status.

There is another scheme, which is the Drive Project, which are free driving lessons for 17+ it is only for looked after young people.

The group have worked on Advocacy and Complaints, with NYAS (National Youth Advocacy service), PACT and Natural Allies.

We are also working on access to services and raising people's awareness of young people who are Visually Impaired or have no sight. It's important that people realise that people with a Disability are not a disease but are in fact Normal Human Beings.

We have worked on Investing In Children Membership, we are ensuring that all Children In Need Teams have Investing In Status and well done to those who are being cooperative and are interested in this. The Teams were supposed to have Membership by 2003 but the teams and Investing In Children have been extremely Busy. We are all on the ball.

The group are always looking at ways to make the strategy evolve universally. We currently have a quarterly newsletter 'Listen 2 us 4 a change', we use this newsletter to get across our ideas and an update to the county to all young people using social care and Health yes all 4,000 Young people and Children.

**Brian Davies, IiC Research Assistant**

## Membership News

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

**Interactive Project – Newcastle**  
**High Etherley Satellite Home**  
**West Cornforth Primary**  
**St. Anthony's Children's House – NCH Newcastle**  
**Walkergate Children's Centre – Newcastle**  
**Benwell YIP – Newcastle**  
**Them Wifies - Newcastle**

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

**Disc Young Carer's**  
**Sedgefield Primary**  
**Barnard Castle Library**  
**Redhall Playworkers – Darlington**  
**Cestria Primary**  
**Easington Colliery Library**  
**Laurel Avenue Primary**  
**Framwellgate Moor Children's Home**  
**Murton Library**  
**Spennymoor Library**  
**Tow Law Children's Home**  
**Treetops Children's Ward**  
**The Getting Along Primary Initiative**  
**Tanfield School**  
**Stanley Youth Centre**

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 LiC office.

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As you can see things have been very busy since our last newsletter, I would just like to thank everyone for their continued patience as we catch up with our membership applications and re-evaluations. We have recently employed two new project workers so we will be up to date real soon!

**The Transport Group's exciting ADVENTURE!**

As most young people that are involved in working with Investing in Children know, there can be times when the work you are involved in becomes so frustrating that you feel like giving up. Its unlikely that any one ever does but there is still that little voice in the back of your mind asking why you bother.

This I'm afraid is my chance to have a bit of a rant as it's something that has affected our group quite recently!

The transport group has been going on since the beginning of Investing in Children and many things have happened since, like the Fares Fair report and the introduction of the iC under 16 card. It was decided that a good way to move the group on would be to become an independent pressure group to work alongside key council members rather than just through Investing in Children. This way we could find funding from other sources and look at some of the new matters.

A transport summit was held in October at the Gala Theatre to look at some of the issues around transport and to draw out the key themes that young people felt affected them. We are now looking at bringing our findings into reality.

Anyway, now you have got the jist of where we are in terms of the group, the main reason I am writing this article is to tell you about the quite negative experience we recently had.

We were invited by a youth project to attend a conference in Leeds last week purely based around transport issues and ways of moving problems forward for young people. Obviously we jumped at the chance because it seemed relevant to our work.

However, the problems began when I sent an email asking whether it would be possible for the group to meet with some of the adults before the event so we could clarify what would be happening and what the expected outcome of the event would be. This would have been helpful as none of us had met with anyone that we were

going with, we weren't sure whether we were participating in the event or simply watching. Questions arose such as; should we prepare a presentation? What was happening with train tickets? Where exactly in Leeds was the event going to be held? Did we need money?

When I did get a reply for my question of meeting up, I was lead to feel as though it wasn't necessary and I would be creating a problem for the adults that were leading the event. I admit, some of the above questions were answered over the telephone however not all of them because it was hard to contact the relevant people and even when I did, they didn't know the answer themselves.

In the end, we held a group meeting and decided to prepare a presentation anyway, each looking at separate issues that were important to us. As for the train ticket situation, we found out the evening before we went that there would be a woman meeting us at the train station 15 minutes before the train was going to leave and she would give us our tickets. Were we incapable of keeping our own tickets or being able to board the correct train?

So, I'm lying in bed the night before we were due to leave to go to Leeds and suddenly realised I had not collected the money to pay the young people participating. Totally annoyed with myself, I set my alarm clock so I could go to the office and collect the money before meeting the rest of the group. As I was just about to leave the office with the money, running late, I got a phone call on the office phone, only to hear a woman from the youth project telling me that the adult who has our tickets is also running late and has missed her train to come and meet us and would just see us on the train and give us our tickets then. This is when doubts started coming into my head. So they were putting someone on a train from Newcastle to Durham to meet our group to make sure we got on the train and to carry our tickets? Why couldn't they just post them to us? What if I hadn't called into the office to collect the money, they didn't

have my mobile number so we would never have known to get on the train?

This was a disaster and we weren't even out of Durham station yet.

After what seemed to be quite a short journey down to Leeds, we still Didn't know anyone as no one had bothered to speak to us (not even the adults). A lovely way to treat young people, ignore them!?

The event itself was held in a really nice place. When we entered the room, we were asked to stand in a queue but no one told us why. We eventually found out that they were giving out name badges. When it came to collecting ours, there were only ones made for Michelle and myself so the other members had to wait for someone to go and make them one. Why did they just make us one when they knew the names of all 5 members travelling? Was it because we were the only ones that had direct contact with them through email?

The room that we were in was set out with a panel of tables and chairs at the front and an audience of seats. I automatically assumed that there would be a panel of young people at the front, as I have seen it happen before and immediately decided I would like to be part of it. I found out different. We were sitting in the very far corner of the room amongst 'professionals' that looked no older than ourselves and to our amazement we saw only adults sitting on the panel. We had a chance to do a short talk about the work we have been involved in within County Durham however I felt that the other people didn't really seem interested in what we had done because it didn't affect them.

Needless to say our power point presentation never left the disk either. There were a number of other small presentations from young people about work they had been carrying out such as creating teen cards. Each presentation from a young person lasted roughly 2 minutes. After that the adults had their chance to do some talking.

Each one of them on the panel presented something to us (some interesting and some not so) and it seemed they didn't have a timescale to

stick to, they could go on forever. A lot of the language they used was very jargonistic and I'm not sure about anyone else, but I found it quite hard to understand the points they were actually trying to make.

At the end of all the presentations, there was a question and answer time for the young people to ASK the adults questions. This was terrible as every challenging question that was raised, the adults passed onto each other and no one ended up answering it, it just kept going round in circles. The young people had to sit with their hands up and wait until they were told to speak by another adult.

The thing that shocked me most, was the fact that the young people seemed happy with the outcome of the event and all came out with smiles on their faces. Were they used to this kind of treatment? Did they not realise what was happening in there? It was clear to the whole of our group that the adults were completely leading the event and the young people were there for reasons other than to present. We felt as though, our questions were not answered and we were not listened to and most of all that the whole day was just so some adults could say that they have consulted with young people. I certainly didn't feel confident that there was going to be a commitment of change from these people. The disappointing thing of the day though was to see these young people come out of the day so pleased with the work they had done and feeling as though they were making a difference, when really it wasn't like that at all. The question is how can adults get away with this and do young people actually matter in their eyes?

**Ashleigh Greathead**

**Darlington Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)**

Richard Parkin and Karen Allen work in Darlington at the Mulberry Centre, which is the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). In March they visited two primary schools in Darlington: Corporation Road Community Primary School and Skerne Park Primary. They worked with one class from each school and talked to the children about the Mulberry Centre and mental health in relation to children. They found that the children struggled with the concept of mental health and that most confused this with physical health. Some children similarly to adults expressed negative views about mental health.

During their visit to the schools Richard and Karen also set a competition. They asked the children to design the front cover of a leaflet suitable to give to children who attend the Mulberry Centre. The current leaflet was thought to be too adult-orientated.

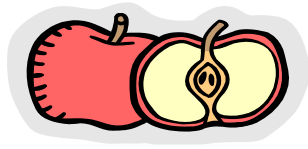
Richard and Karen worked with Investing in Children, namely Margie Piercey and Tabatha Tilley from the organization throughout the process. Both provided guidance and support in helping Karen and Richard involve the children throughout.

When all of the competition entries were received the standard was found to be excellent. They were shortlisted by staff at the Mulberry Centre and then the remaining twelve were presented at a meeting which included managers from the Trust. Karen attended the meeting with Tabatha and the entries were narrowed down to a final two. There were difficulties in choosing between the two as the standard was so high. Tabatha suggested letting a group of children decide which picture they would like to see on a leaflet.

Karen and Richard therefore went back to Corporation Road Primary School as the final two pictures were from this school. They worked with a group of 10 children from another class and asked them to pick the picture that they would like to see on the front of a leaflet. The children were not aware who had completed the pictures. They were asked to write down which picture they wanted to win and place it in a container so they did not copy each other's decisions. The picture chosen was designed by 7-year-old Nicole Raper from Corporation Road Primary School.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> June Karen and Richard visited both schools along with Chief Executive of the Trust Sandy Taylor. Julie Oliver from the Trust and Margie Piercey were also in attendance. Certificates were presented to all of the children who had participated and vouchers worth £30.00 were awarded to the two classes who had competed in the competition. The Northern Echo covered the story and printed this in their newspaper on the 13<sup>th</sup> June. The Darlington and Stockton Times also covered the story.

Karen and Richard found that teachers and pupils from both schools were very receptive to their visit. In the next few months they plan to work with children from other schools to look at producing child-friendly wording for the leaflet. Karen and Richard hope to visit other schools more regularly in the near future with a view to helping children's understanding of mental health making this less stigmatising.



Hi! My name is Shamila Rahman, I have been working alongside the Children's fund for almost three years.

If you were at the Darlington Assembly in June you may have seen me deliver a speech. I spoke about improving the quality of school dinners, providing staff with cultural training and having water dispensers available to all children in classrooms: -

“In the past we have worked on transition issues from primary to secondary and transport issues from Redhall to Haughton, but today I would like to discuss health issues in Darlington.

In an ideal world I would like to see investment in schools particularly around food issues.

I would like the government to finance a healthy eating plan following the path of Jamie Oliver.

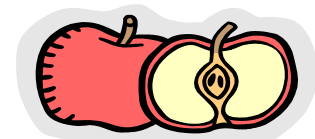
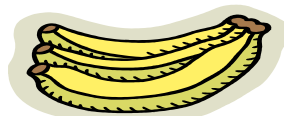
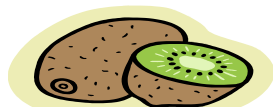
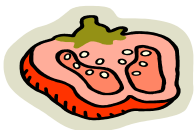
At present we are constantly told to eat five fruits per day but due to budgets, five fruits are rarely provided. The main choice of food daily is; fish fingers and chips with a choice of fizzy drinks.

Speaking from a Muslim point of view, I am asked by the dinner staff what meals I can eat, with a growing Muslim community in Darlington it would probably be beneficial for dinner staff to be given a chance to attend Islam training.

Studies also show that water stimulates the brain therefore water dispensers need to be available in each classroom. We have spoke to different students from schools in Darlington and the general feeling is that water isn't allowed in classrooms.

I believe these small changes could lead to a massive improvement in Darlington for the future.”

**WATCH THIS SPACE EACH MONTH FOR UPDATES ON ANY PROGRESS ON THESE ISSUES!**



# 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](mailto:iic@durham.gov.uk)

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Large print copies of this Newsletter are available  
from the IiC office 0191 386 7485

## **Catonese, 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.