



investing in children

NEWSLETTER

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Inside This Issue

| | |
|-----|---|
| 2/3 | Editors Column by Nina McGregor |
| 4 | News Update – Liam Cairns |
| 5 | Durham Health Initiative Action Research (DHIAR Group) |
| 6 | Urban Renaissance and the Virtual Village Kirsty Hepple |
| 7 | Membership News – New members |
| 8/9 | Claire's Rant |
| 9 | Branksome School Group |
| 10 | Haughton HMS Group |
| 11 | Are you interested in working in TV? The Edinburgh Television Festival |
| 12 | Full Time |

Editor's Column by Nina McGregor

Hello and welcome to my first editorial. No I'm not the new editor but I am this month's guest editor for the Investing in Children's Newsletter! I feel like Carrie Bradshaw, a very Sex and the City moment. I feel as though I should be sitting staring pensively at the computer screen trying to think of something both witty and intelligent to write about. (A trial to anyone who's been anyway from real work for a couple of months!) But my brain is still just about functioning with a few ideas whizzing around so let the fingers do the talking and here goes!

Well onto more practical things before I get totally side-tracked! My name is Nina McGregor and I am currently taking a well-earned rest after my A-Levels. I have just come back from spending 3 months teaching English to children aged between 6 and 18 years old, in a very remote part of Nepal, with the excellent gap year company, Africa and Asia Venture!

There are so many issues that I would like to report on, for example the current war on terrorism and Iraq, the Aids epidemic sweeping through Africa though I think that something much closer to home like the NHS, would be a good start. I am going to talk about or start a dialogue (a very important Investing in Children term!) about a subject that is very close to my heart - insulin pumps.

Now by this stage you may be thinking why on earth am I this month's guest editor. Well for the past few years I have been involved with Investing in Children. A few years ago the Children's Ward

at Bishop Auckland General Hospital asked four other diabetics, and myself to see how the diabetic service could be improved. This was done with Investing in Children and 3 years on the relationship is still going strong! As time went on we decided that a research trip to Sweden seemed to be a good idea. Not just because it was a chance to go on holiday but also because the clinic that we were going to go and visit has one of the most successful rates for controlling young people's blood/sugar. It was also run by world-renowned paediatric diabetologist; Ragnar Hanas.

We had not set out with the intention of campaigning for insulin pumps but that was perhaps our most interesting finding, that and the fact that all the ideas that we had wanted to put into practice at the Children's Ward were already in practice in Sweden.

Between 15 and 20% of diabetic adolescents in Sweden use insulin pumps. So arriving back in the UK we decided that we wanted to find out more about insulin pumps how much they cost what their upkeep was etc etc. The information was duly collected and in May 2003 we gave a presentation to the head of the Durham Dales PCTs as well as the Sedgfield and Darlington PCTs. The feedback that we received was fantastic; they had been very impressed by our presentation. They published an intention some 4 months later, or certainly the Durham Dales PCT published an intention to say that they are committed to "... progressing insulin pump therapy for children with diabetes."

However it was not clear and it is still NOT clear when all this is going to happen. I am currently using an insulin pump funded NOT by the local PCTs but by a charity called "The Friends". This insulin pump made a tremendous difference to my experience in Nepal. During my time in Nepal I was on a drip in hospital with amoebic dysentery and knowing that the insulin pump was keeping my blood glucose levels constant was a massive relief to both my parents and I. This is something that I could not have said had I still been on injections. This is a good example of where the insulin pump proved to be invaluable.

After the presentation in May 2003 we received a lot of positive feedback from the PCT's saying that they would definitely start to do something about it. Almost a year later, apart from the letter congratulating us on the success of the presentation (and a very complex strategy from Alex Sinclair the Durham Dales PCT which, she recently sent to me) I have heard nothing else from any of the other PCT's. At the presentation they promised to keep us informed and so it is disappointing that they haven't.

In the process of writing this editorial I did speak to Alex Sinclair. She briefly told me that Karen Walker (who represents the three PCT's groups, Durham Dales, Sedgfield and Darlington for this project) is working with Dr.Lamb to produce a business plan as to how they should set up a safe and effective system for implementing insulin pumps. This plan would then go through a series of boards before the plan goes into action. I understand their concerns about safety and how it is very important however I am disappointed that this all seems to be taking so long. However we should acknowledge the fact that at least the PCT's are stepping in the right direction - if only they would step a bit quicker.

If you have any views on this subject please do not hesitate to write or email the new editor, Jane. If the PCT's feel that they have been misrepresented by anything that I have said in this article then again please write in and tell us your view.

Nina

News Update....

This newsletter, you will have noticed, has been put together by Nina McGregor, who agreed to be our 'guest editor' in between her international engagements. The next edition will see the start of a new, and I'm sure successful run of newsletters under the editorship of Jane Morgan, so we look forward to that.

I think the newsletter has gone from strength to strength over the past year, and I would like to pay tribute to the work that Jenny Cooke has done as editor during that period. Replacing Mark Tallentire as the first young person editor was always going to be a hard act to follow, but I think Jenny managed it well. Not only did we see a string of well-written and challenging editorial columns, but Jenny also encouraged other young people to write, and this has been an important feature.

Recently I have been involved in a number of discussions where colleagues have voiced concern about the Newsletter content. I think that this concern is misplaced. It seems reasonable to me that we provide a platform for young people to express their views of the world, and their interpretation of events. There will be times when their views don't match ours and their interpretation differs from ours, but that's what you would expect.

It seems to me that this presents an opportunity for dialogue, which could be developed if colleagues were prepared to write to the editor, and have their views published.

Jenny has departed the editor's chair, but is still involved in a variety of projects, so no doubt we will continue to hear from her.

Another significant departure (does this constitute the 'end of an era'?) will occur with the resignation, at the end of this month, of Peter Kemp from the post of Director of Social Services (or Health and Social Care). Lots of people have worked with Investing in Children and helped to make it what it is, but I don't think anyone would disagree that Peter's contribution has been the most significant. In many ways Investing in Children is his creation and he has provided unflinching leadership and consistent support over the past nine years.

Like Jenny, Peter may be about to leave his formal role as Chair of the Investing in Children Stakeholder's Group, but we hope that he will continue to contribute to Investing in Children, particularly through the Development Agency (more of that in the next issue). Debbie Jones is the new Chair, and we look forward to working with Debbie (could this be the 'dawn of a new era' or are there already enough eras in this column?)

Liam Cairns

DHIAR (Durham Health Initiative Action Research) Project

The groups of young people (from the Dales PCT area) working on the project are looking at issue that they feel affect their health, and trying to set up services that will improve their health and reduce isolation (through funding from SRB).

Last year, young people surveyed local schools about pupils access to drinking water during the school day. The results supported young people's view that access was quite poor in most schools. The project then funded a pilot scheme to put water coolers in 5 secondary schools & 1 special school in the Dales area for a year. The initial evaluation showed that the scheme has improved pupils access to drinking water in most of the schools involved (unfortunately, one school has kept the coolers switched off most of the time), the Dales PCT is looking at ways to continue this scheme.

Young people are also looking into school meal provision, they are producing a report about their problems & ideas for improvements and are to be part of a School Meal Action Group being formed by the PCT.

The groups are also working on a scheme to enable young people aged 13 - 18 years in Wear Valley & Teesdale Districts to access some activities (swimming, fitness classes & exercise machines) at local leisure/sports centres for free. They hope to launch the scheme shortly! The young people working on this scheme are also hoping to include free transport (on public buses) to centres in the scheme but are still working out how to do this (the Dales PCT have expressed an interest in funding the transport element)

Another group of young people are working with Teesdale District Council & other organisations to get a skate-park facility at Barnard Castle.

Aletia Roper

'Urban Renaissance and the virtual village'

My name is Kirsty Hepple from Dawdon and I'm a member of group of young people from Dawdon, Seaham and Wheatley Hill who have been involved in a project with Durham County Council called Urban Renaissance. I attended a stakeholder event in Murton recently and I had a great time and got a lot out of it.

The things I achieved were that it boosted my confidence immensely, meeting lots of adults, and I learnt a lot about the basic costs of simple refurbishments for towns and villages. Although we were working on a plan of a made up village, it was just as useful as the ideas that the different groups came up with could be adjusted to any town or village.

There were several young people at the meeting but we got put into different groups and I was the only young person in my group, although this sounds bad, it was not as I was treated like everyone else in our group and given chances to talk and give my ideas.

Whilst the groups were given a drawing of a non-existent village, we first assessed what was wrong with it and then given time to work out what would make it better. We had a budget of £250,000, which sounded a lot, but when we were given the costs of the improvements we found it cost much more than we thought. We had to then prioritise and all had to agree what improvements got done and what didn't, this was not so easy as everyone had their own reasons for improving things that affected themselves or their work.

Anyway we did reach some decisions that everyone was happy with and what I realised most of all that when things get made nice in our areas, there are people in groups like we were, making decisions on behalf of local people, sometimes without them knowing about it.

Luckily young people were invited to this 'virtual village' meeting, lets hope young people will be invited when it is for real!

My thoughts by Kirsty Hepple

Membership News

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

Red Hall Library
Barnard Castle Library
Stanley Youth Centre
The Getting Along Primary Initiative
Sedgefield Primary
North Benwell Youth Project
NDCDP - Newcastle Diocesan Community Development Project
Shildon Library
Firthmoor Primary
Easington Colliery Library
DYCCYP -
The DERIC Bus
Copelaw Activities CATS
DCCYP - Durham City Centre Youth Project
And last but not least.....
University Accident & Emergency Department

.....with special thanks to Caroline Panting, the Sister involved, Caroline persevered for three years with this project. So to all out there who say how long does the process take....we say how long is a piece of string!!

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

South Moor Library
Information to the Public - Children's Network
Belmont Library
Tanfield Comprehensive
Aycliffe Village Primary
Lowhills Day Nursery
And Tow Law Children's Home

Once again Well DONE to all involved, we look forward to seeing you next year!!

Claire's Rant

School Meals

Since becoming a world famous journalist through my monthly Investing in Children articles I have been invited to numerous high profile events over the past few months, the Oscars, the Brit Awards and the prestigious local Pie Eating Competition to name a few. At the majority of these events I must say the food has been rather delightful, however at one event (the World's Longest Little Toe competition) the food was minging, I mean proper minging and as I was shovelling a cardboard chip down my throat I was thinking "do they think we are school children or something?".

On my way home, just after chewing on a well known brand of indigestion tablet I began to reminisce about school meal times, my overall feeling was good. I remembered loosening the lid off the salt shaker and sitting sniggering waiting for the next victim (an hilariously funny practical joke, but not so if a teacher asks politely for you to pass the salt, cue a fast exit), food fights, belching competitions the lot but the one thing that I remember being missing from the deal was the actual food. I mean it was there, they didn't starve us or anything (although I bet they would have if the law would let them) but the actual food was nothing to get excited about.

It wasn't always the case, in my early years the food was actually quite nice, we could get things like mashed potato, shepherds pie, spaghetti bolognese etc, chips were only

served once per week so it was known as treat day because I think we enjoyed them more. And there was also a choice, you could get a hot meal or a sandwich, depending on your fancy. Then a company took over the catering at school, posh signs and menu's were produced and we had to pay with a card, it all looked very professional but when the food actually began to be served we soon became peeved.

Our healthy, wholesome and filling meals were replaced with processed meals which were shipped in in a lorry every morning and kept warm (if we were lucky) under a heater all day. Our china plates and metal cutlery were replaced with cardboard or polystyrene packaging (cue mass fainting from environmentalists) and those pap plastic knives and forks which would struggle to cut through air. I remember once (I was going through one of my numerous vegetarian stages) and I ordered a veggie burger. I'm one of these people who likes that stuff that looks like meat, tastes like meat, but isn't actually meat. Anyway what I got looked nothing like meat and certainly tasted nothing like meat, I would describe it as a burger shaped mass of grey, wobbly, chemical tasting material, not nice. And everything seemed to be covered in fat, deep fried burger, deep fried chips with a side portion of deep fried salad leaves. Which leads me on to my next point, 49% of school aged people think that school meals are unhealthy and 15% of 15 year olds are obese, no wonder.

And another thing, an average school meal costs 35p to make (so I assume the profit from the £1.50 young people actually pay for the meal goes towards providing better facilities for pupils in schools? Maybe not) whereas the average amount of money spent on a meal for a prisoner is 60p, so officially children and young people are seen as lower life forms than murderers, burglars, paedophiles etc.

So would providing healthy and substantial meals actually cost that much more to produce? Well a school in Hampshire

provides healthy meals using a local organic meat supplier and the cost of making the school meal rose from 34p to 43p, which isn't that much considering they charge £1.45 per meal.

So what I reckon they should do is go back to the old way of doing it, which is employing people to cook meals on the premises because firstly there is a choice, secondly it isn't all processed crap and thirdly you get a substantial, healthy cooked meal to set you up for the rest of the day in prison.... Err I mean school.

Claire

Branksome School Group

Hello!

We are the Branksome School group from Darlington. We have been working for IiC for the last 2 years to improve our comprehensive school, to make it more student friendly. In order to do this we have done a number of things. We've produced a questionnaire and discussed the responses with our teacher. We have raised different issues that single students or groups of students have brought to our attention.

We have recently begun to see the effort of our work pay off and changes have been made in our school.

- Vending machines have been installed and are a success.
- Lessons in the library, to help students to revise, this is an improvement.
- Mentors- personal guides for students - this is a useful step.
- Exam conditions are better, we don't have to wear uniforms and the fans have been fixed.
- We can now wear tracksuit bottoms in PE; students have wanted this for a long time.

Although most of us will be leaving school in 2 months, we hope the changes will help students moving through the school and we hope the work we have started continues.

Eleanor Seaver, Diane Cook, Nikita Humphries, Nicola Bone, Gavin Crane, Sarah Neverson, Laura Cook, Cassie Ferguson, Sam Taylor, Heather Lear and Libby Finlay

Haughton HMS Group

Save our Youth Club

We are the HMS group of Haughton Youth Club, in Darlington, and for the past year we have been working towards making our Youth Club a better place!

2 'Raves' have been held there and they were a huge success. A large number of young people went to support Mc Stead, DJ Smurf, Mc Bee-Tee and more MC and DJ's of Haughton. Word got round that the 'Rave' was going to be a great success so 2 MC's from Newcastle came and showed us their talent.

On 14th March MP Alan Milburn came to our Youth Club to discuss with us some issues we had.

Our youth club is going to be knocked down sometime in the near future and all of the members feel very strongly about this! We feel we will have nowhere to go or nowhere we can chill with our friends, so we saw the meeting with Alan as a great opportunity to discuss this. How wrong we were!!! We felt he had no interest in what we had to say or how strongly we felt about keeping our youth club.

Police also came to this meeting and were adamant they were interested in keeping us as young people off the streets but they had no interest in giving us somewhere we want to go.

Our thoughts on this were; Police spending money on sending anti-social behaviour unit out to sort out young people but they won't spend money on giving use somewhere to go.

Our youth club is somewhere that we feel safe and somewhere we like to go with our friends, after it gets knocked down, we feel we'll have no-where!!!

**By.....Louise, Gemma, Hayley, Laura, Carly Stephanie, Stacey and Adam.
Members of Haughton HMS Group**

INTERESTED IN WORKING IN TV?



26-30 August 2004, Edinburgh

Are you desperate to work in television but don't know how to get your foot in the door? Do you have an idea for a television programme? Would you relish the opportunity to work with the creative teams behind the Salon, ITV News, Bad Girls and MTV? If you are aged between 18-21 and have a passion to work in the television industry, you could be one of the 150 delegates selected to attend five days of Masterclasses, Workshops, Career Surgeries and social events. Other than travel to and from Edinburgh all expenses will be paid.

Jobs in TV

TVYP at Work is a scheme that helps TVYP delegates into their first job. After attending TVYP in Edinburgh, you will have an opportunity to apply for a paid six month placement at some of the UK's top broadcasters and production companies. Television and Young People is the educational arm of the MediaGuardian Edinburgh International Festival.

For more info go to

or contact Maria Brannen at the IiC office for a leaflet.

THE EDINBURGH TELEVISION FESTIVAL NEEDS YOU!

The MediaGuardian Edinburgh International Television Festival is a 3-day event (27 – 29 August 2004) that brings together industry professionals to discuss and debate issues at the forefront of television. It is attended by over 1500 people working in broadcasting. Stewards receive travel, accommodation and a daily allowance.

We are looking for media-minded individuals to work as stewards. If you are interested in TV and are available between 24 and 30 August 2004, we would like to hear from you.

Please send a CV, letter and a recent photo by Friday 21 May to:
Kirsty McLaughlan, MGEITF, 1st Floor,
17 – 21 Emerald Street, London WC1N 3QN. kirsty.mclaughlan@mgeitf.co.uk

INTERVIEWS WILL BE HELD AT THE BEGINNING OF JUNE IN LONDON, MANCHESTER AND EDINBURGH

www.mgeitf.co.uk

Full time

If you think you've something you think everyone needs to hear, or want to tell me what should be in the next month's newsletter, please write to our new editor:

Jane Morgan,
Newsletter Editor
Investing in Children
Moor Chambers
23-26 Front Street
Framwellgate Moor
Durham
DH1 5EJ

Or e-mail her at Writebacksoon11@aol.com



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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 on 0191 386 7485

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