



investing in children

NEWSLETTER

March – April 2004

Issue 60

Inside This Issue

	Editors Column by Jane Morgan
	News Update – Liam Cairns
	School inspection at Woodham
	Membership News – New members
	Library Users Group
	CAMHS
	Derwentside Young People’s Forum
	Full Time

Editors Column by Jane Morgan

Hello, and welcome to my very first edition as the new editor of the Investing in Children Newsletter.

First of all let me introduce myself, my name is Jane Morgan. I am currently a Year 11 pupil at Woodham Community Technology College (is it just me or have all comprehensive schools suddenly acquired long fancy titles?) in Newton Aycliffe. I will begin my exams at the end of May so please feel free to keep your fingers crossed for me. I hope to return to Woodham Sixth Form in September, after what will hopefully have been a great summer, (let's hope this weather improves!) and then on to university. Here's where my problems begin.

As I'm sure you are all aware the present government have made education one of their top priorities, hoping to see at least 50% of school leavers enter higher education. So, perhaps you, like me are wondering how on earth they hope to achieve this figure while at the same time introducing top-up fees which place a financial burden, deemed too cumbersome for many, upon the individual, who will subsequently not pursue the education they would have, had top-up fees not been introduced. This basically restricts education for those wealthy enough to buy it, which is intrinsically wrong.

From 2006 (my first year at university) up-front fees will be replaced by top-up fees of up to £3,000 a year. These fees, plus the loan I will need to take out for my living expenses could mean that I like many more in my

situation will start my adult life with debts of over £20,000! This will be paid back in the form of a graduate tax at a rate of 9% of earnings, but the kind government won't make me pay it until I am earning over £15,000- lucky me!

What the government have failed to realise is that, their target for a growing number of people to stay in education is the root of their own problem, they simply cannot afford to pay for the huge amounts of students going to university, as they have done previously. However, top-up fees is definitely not the solution, instead they should be looking to reduce the amount of students, which they will do due to top-up fees, though I'm not sure that is quite their intention.

Today the value of a degree is becoming totally debased as everyone seems to have one, (I mean come on, the study of David Beckham is part of a "football culture" module for a degree) top-up fees simply mean only the affluent will possess them, thus expanding the gap between social classes. Whatever happened to hard work and ability being the keys to a bright future? In my opinion the government are making it easier to get into university in the hope that a growing education system will appear to be a stronger one and forcing us to pay for it! However this is just my opinion and I am eager to hear some of yours so please don't hesitate to email me with your views on this topic, or any other for that matter.

I know how eager you all are to read the rest of this fantastic newsletter, which this month includes an article about the Hear by Right group's very first school inspection conducted by the young people, so I'll leave you now to read on.

Jane

News Update....

Over the past few months, we have been in discussion with Newcastle Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership about supporting the development of an Investing in Children initiative in Newcastle. The discussions have been extremely positive, and we have now begun to get things moving on the ground.

We are moving forward on four fronts:

- Creating activity on the ground. It's fundamental to the whole Investing in Children enterprise, that children and young people are involved from the earliest opportunity. We are planning to run three 'Agenda Days' in different groups of children and young people. Just like with the start of Investing in Children in Durham in 1997, the important thing is to make a start, and develop dialogue with **some** children and young people, as long as there is then a continuous process of development, that includes more and more children and young people.
- Acknowledging existing good practice. There are already lots of exciting and innovative projects in Newcastle. We intend to use the IiC Membership Scheme to celebrate and build upon what is being done.
- Developing the capacity of Newcastle staff. We have agreed to provide 50 places on the Investing in Children Staff Development course. This consists of a two day seminar at the end of which participants develop an 'action plan' to take back into practice. IiC then provides groups of young people who act as 'mentors' to practitioners over the next 9 – 12 months, to assist in implementing the action plans. A final one-day seminar is held at the end, to celebrate and learn from progress made.
- Including and informing key decision makers. Seminars are being arranged, to ensure that key groups in the city are fully informed, and fully signed up to the process.

This is proving to be an excellent opportunity for Investing in Children on a number of levels.

- It allows us to reflect on the last seven years, and to develop new approaches to familiar challenges.
- Working with new partners who have new questions requires us to sharpen our thinking, and to make explicit and clear some of the values and principles we had begun to take for granted.
- Working with new groups of children and young people will present us with new dialogues.
- Working with new groups of children and young people will present new opportunities for children and young people to form new alliances across authority boundaries.

Liam Cairns

School Inspection at Woodham Technology College

As part of the Investing in Children Hear By Right Group, the School Inspection Team was created to visit different schools and assess them from the point of view of a pupil rather than that of an OFSTED inspector, basically we would like to see decent and clean toilets as well as a good Art Department etc.

On Thursday 29th March the group completed its first school inspection at Woodham C.T.C, in Newton Aycliffe. It's probably relevant to mention that headmaster Steve Harness played a very good host to the group and, as well as allowing his school to be the group's pilot inspection, he also gave some handy pointers during the planning process. Although it's obviously going to be at the back of his mind that he wants to get a good report and feedback on his school, maybe that explains the use of his office all day and the free biscuits!

The main plan for the day was for us to look around the school buildings and the various facilities as well as to mingle with some of the students and teachers, at break and lunch time, and to obtain their points of view.

It's very difficult to get a good picture about a school from a student when it's also very difficult to find a student who actually likes school in the first place! This can be seen in some of the responses to the questions, 'What do you think of the school?' - general response 'Crap', 'Do you think anything could be changed at this school in order to make it better?' - responses 'Everything' and 'How long have you got?'

There was the odd pupil who gave a more helpful answer such as 'I like the swimming pool' but as the pool is currently out of use, that didn't really help us either.

Of course students are also unhappy that you can no longer buy a can of Coke or a Mars Bar because vending machines have gone 'healthy'! Now if anyone fancies a sugar hit they have to walk to the nearby Bells Stores, or even further away the new Tesco, or they could always buy themselves a nice bottle of water and a delicious Ryvita snack from the machines!

The questionnaire given to the teachers was again going to be a tough one for them to answer, should they show loyalty to the guy who

pays their wages? Or should loyalty go out the window and their true feelings be allowed to come out? For us the more helpful is the second option so some of us, who already go to the particular school, went on a mission to find only those teachers who generally speak their mind anyway, either because they're constantly angry or just because they couldn't care less, and to ask them for their points of view. To be fair we haven't actually written up the report yet but a lot of teachers appreciated being asked the question, 'What would you change about the school in order to make it better?' Maybe that's because there are so many bad things or they just don't like the fact that there's no on-site bar with free drinks and peanuts!

As already mentioned the group took part in a tour of the building, only given by myself and the two other people who go to Woodham, so naturally we wanted to show them the good areas before the bad or was it the other way around? Anyway the most obvious facility to show the rest of the inspectors was our really trashy and minging toilets, which the school does have a couple of, and then of course the new and improved ones which were recently installed. In fact the new toilets are rated so highly by the students that most of the Year 10 girls actually spend their lunch times in them, using them as a social area! Honestly! It says a lot for a toilet if people would rather spend their lunch break in a place where people relieve themselves of their bodily waste rather than spending it outside in the fresh air having a game of footie!

As far as I know the day was a success in the terms that we found out some interesting toilet habits as well as gathering all the information we required to put together a detailed and non-biased report about the Woodham inspection, which we will be doing over the coming weeks.

Membership News

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

Ferryhill Library **Shotton Colliery Library**
Trimdon Library *Wingate Library*
 Stanley Library *Spennymoor Library*
DISC - Young Carers **Stanley Crook Primary**

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

Blackhall Youth Centre *Roseberry Primary School*
Parkside Community Centre **Mid-Durham Projects Club**
Seaham Family Centre *Gilesgate Youth Club*

Bowburn Youth Project - DJ Evans Centre **Bowes Museum**

Once again WELL DONE to all involved, we look forward to seeing you next year!!
Huge apologies to Caroline Panting for the mis-print in our last newsletter, it should have read 'and last but not least - University Hospital A & E!'

Some of the news in brief..... **Parkside Community Centre** has recently acquired a garden! The young people alongside others in the community are developing plans on what they want in their garden.

Mid-Durham Projects Club - I met with a young men's group called 'Lads on Cue'
Great group and lots of good work!

Disc - Young Carers - In conclusion Iftikhar said in his evaluation 'Not a single young person I spoke to had anything negative to say about the staff, more significantly, they felt their discussions led to positive improvements'.

If you would like to know more about our members and their groups and work please don't hesitate to contact us and we will tell you more!

Library Users Group

The trip to County Hall

The trip to County Hall was fun because as well as choosing the books we went to the World War one museum. We got to eat in a very nice restaurant. We had £50.00 to spend between two people to buy books for Sedgefield Library.



Meetings

In our meetings we discussed how to find books more easily and how to improve the library by putting posters up around the library. We also discussed about choosing a greater variety of books.

Members' Opinions

Thomas liked the library users group because it was fun when they went on trips. He thought the trip to County Hall was good because we got to choose the books we bought. He liked the World War One Museum because he got to hold a real rifle. He liked the meetings but he liked the trips better.

"I liked the part of the trip where we got to shake hands with the mayor of the county," said Thomas Guppy. He liked the meetings because it was mostly their ideas that went into what they did. Pamela said she liked stamping books out and putting the books in order according to the authors' surnames.

"It was really fun," commented Pamela.

by Peter Hammond

CAMHS

My name is Emma and I am working with the C.A.M.H.S group as well as Nadine, Karl, Adam and Emma.

I have been with the C.A.M.H.S group for about 2 years.

I am involved with other Investing in Children groups such as the Housing Group with Graham Bristow and the Social Services one with Andy Whittam.

Since being involved in the C.A.M.H.S group we have had a number of agenda days, which went well.

We started the group by looking at the Mulberry Centre (in Darlington) we looked at what we want to change, we looked at,

Changing the decoration,

New furniture,

New toys,

More shelving,

A leaflet rack,

Some decent music in the building.

So far as we know things are going ahead.

Lately we have been having a few meetings as we have composed a website. The website includes fun and games, advice on any queries you may have.

This can also link you to other websites that could be useful.

There will also be somebody who comes on to the website once a week to chat live and directly on any queries or issues they may want to chat about.

There will also be a page about each one of us and all of our email addresses will be on the pages if any of the viewers would like to leave a message, it could be about our website, do they think it's good or bad, what could be improved etc.

We have also completed an information leaflet/booklet. This is for the young people in the looked after system and it includes the following:

Health

Fun and games

Living

Identity and

Leisure

We are also going to be doing a video for schools, this will be going into PSE lessons. We will be involved in writing the scripts and editing the video.

We are going to a beacon presentation on Thursday 16th April with Liam.

In the future I would like to see the C.A.M.H.S group go a long way as there has been a lot of work been done through out. I would like to say thank you to Annie Wallace and Catherine Simpson for helping us but sadly they have moved on to other commitments and would like to say thank you also to Mark Bradley and Helen Andrews.

The C.A.M.H.S group has been going since 2002. I also hope to continue with IIC with all the groups as a lot can be changed.

by Emma Johnson

DERWENTSIDE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FORUM (YPF) SPICES UP YOUTH GROUPS THROUGHOUT DERWENTSIDE

Earlier this year Durham Constabulary featured in Countrywide on how their new Community Inspectors plan to eradicate "job culture". One Young People's Forum member, Richard Salkeld, decided to take this issue to the YPF. It was suggested that if the YPF awarded financial grants to youth clubs and organisations throughout Derwentside, such clubs would attract youths from the streets and into youth clubs and organisations where they can gain skills and new abilities.



Seventeen youth clubs and organisations applied to the YPF outlining what they would spend the grant on if their bid were approved. Plans ranged from activity days, specialist training equipment to pool tables and arts and crafts materials. All the plans came from the young people themselves. Over 1,000 young people will benefit from the 17 grants awarded by the YPF, with no unsuccessful bids. The YPF feel this reinforces Derwentside Council's dedication to improving opportunities available to young people.

Some of the clubs to benefit include Consett's Air Training Corps, The Consett Detached Churches' Youth Project, Explorer Scouts, CCANA and youth groups from Castleside, Moorside, Medomsley, Oxhill, Leadgate and Crookhall to name a few.

The YPF named this exciting project "SPICE IT UP" and is a guaranteed boost for the many youth clubs and organisations throughout Derwentside.

The other part of the YPF's budget was divided between Harelaw School and Villa Real School.

by Richard Salkeld, Member of the Young People's Forum

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 iic@durham.gov.uk



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

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