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EDITOR'S COLUMN:

In this, my final edition as editor of the Investing in Children newsletter I would like to share very briefly with you what my experiences with liC have taught me. As I'm sure I've mentioned before, if all goes to plan, I will be leaving for Sheffield in September where I hope to study English Literature, and so I am handing over the title of Investing in Children Newsletter Editor.

I was first introduced to liC in May 2002 when the office was at Pity Me and bus drivers found it hilarious to ask you 'why?' As a fourteen year old on a school council, which, like many, formulated grand plans for change that very rarely came to fruition, I was sceptical about youth councils. However, when asked by fellow newsletter editor Jenny Cooke if I would like to get involved with Investing in Children, I decided to go along to a meeting and find out what it was.

The first thing that surprised me about liC was that it pays young people for the work they do! I was at the time a member of many youth councils in Durham but had never before come across this. While I admit that being paid for the work was a great incentive to continue, so was the fact that it was recognised by adults that I was giving up my time to get involved. liC actually seemed to take young people's ideas seriously.

Four years on and I still believe that this is what makes liC appealing to young people, adults really do want to make positive change and most importantly will take the action needed which many of the youth councils I have experienced failed to do.

I've learned that it is possible for young people to inspire change in policy, which affects them, and there are adults who want to actively support them in their efforts. But most of all I've learned that while the process for change can be a long and sometimes very boring one, it is still possible to have a lot of fun along the way. I will eventually leave liC with memories of horror struck teachers being inspected by fifteen year olds, and young people getting excited about projects because they believe they can make a difference.

Before I lay down my pen I would like to thank all those who read the newsletter, I have loved being the editor, and challenge each of you to help spread the word about Investing in Children. I had never heard of it until I was directly involved, and it has become very apparent to me while being involved in the newsletter, that many young people would love to be a part of projects, such as those I have been a part of, if only they knew about them. So if you find the newsletter interesting, or even if you don't pass it along to someone and see what he or she thinks. And now all that is left to say is happy reading!

Jane

NEWS UPDATE:

Respect (Again!)

In the last newsletter I wrote about how the Government's 'respect' agenda needed to be seen in a wider context than policy developments to manage anti-social behaviour. I quoted a piece of research by an IiC group from Ferryhill in 2001 which suggested that young people experience disrespect on a regular basis, but that it goes unremarked.

Over the last few weeks, I've spent quite a lot of time with the two new Assistant Children's Commissioners and their ten deputies (see the article in this issue by Charlotte James), and the issue of respect has come up on a number of occasions.

Firstly, and positively, because here are a group of twelve young people who are so clearly worthy of respect. Their commitment and enthusiasm for this new piece of work is impressive. The way they are working to support each other is a credit to them. They represent a challenge to the popular stereotype of disinterested, disruptive, anti-social young people in need of constant adult direction and supervision.

Indeed I would argue that this could be said of any of the Investing in Children groups, present or past. What really stands out, though, is that when asked **why** they wanted to get involved with the Children's Commissioner and what issues they wanted to address, 'respect' was there, as one of the top items on their agenda.

The thing that really strikes home is just how common is their experience of disrespect. We've highlighted some of the more bizarre practices before – the 'mosquito' youth deterrent for example – but they were talking about for example the shops that restrict access in a way that would be illegal for other groups.

They also talked about some of the more subtle assumptions that imply a lack of respect. They talked about the way some adults define 'constructive' as in the need to provide young people with 'constructive activity', which assumes that young people, left to their own devices, will fritter away their time, or worse, engage in **destructive** activities.

They talked about the disapproval they face when they are meeting and socialising with their friends (an activity that most adults define as positive and sociable) but which gets labelled as 'just hanging out' or 'hanging around doing nothing' or worse, causing a nuisance, when it involves a group of young people.

I think we will hear much more from this group (and through them, lots of other young people, hopefully) about the Respect agenda. It should be an interesting debate.

Liam Cairns - July 2006

Sexual Health Group!

The Sexual Health group had been running since June 05 and has just come to an end with some great recommendations from young people.

We were carrying out 'Mystery Shopping' in family planning clinics in and around County Durham, looking at the clinic's environment/decoration, how friendly and helpful the staff were, how were we treated as young people, was our confidentiality respected? What information had we received, was it useful? - Read our '**Safe Smart Sex report**' (available on the IiC website: www.iic-uk.org) to see full experiences and responses we had received!

The whole experience was extremely eye opening, we had a range of both positive and negative opinions.

We felt Family Planning Services do a relatively good job which is very important in our eyes, and these services do need to change in order to meet the needs of young people.

Changes that we would like to see consist of - brighter environment, comfortable waiting area, attitudes of staff need to be more positive, up to date magazines, water machines, a variety of music, smaller wallet sized leaflets, adapted information for disabled young people, safer locations of clinics so young people feel safe.

A report has been written and sent around to clinics and relevant organisations, we are presenting our findings and proposing our recommendations to the 'Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board' in September, so hopefully changes will happen.

We all had a great time carrying out this piece of work, the young people enjoyed working undercover!!!

Michelle Fenwick
Investing in Children
Children and young people services apprentice.

Assistant Children's Commissioner

Wow!!!

At last we have found two new young fresh minded students to represent the youth culture of the North East of England (Durham). Congratulations to Mia and Thoryn, two young students from Woodham Community Technology College.

After hard thinking and debating and watching these 12 young students strive to impress the Office of the Children's Commissioner and the Head of Woodham and Investing in Children. These young hopefuls had to endure in a series of tests that would give them an understanding into exactly what it is they are participating in and going to represent.



These two young students are going to provide the youth of our area with the chance to voice our opinions; these two will put forth the problems that the youth culture face.

Stereotypically youths of today are portrayed by the media in a negative light. We are portrayed as being "trouble makers" "shop lifters" "thugs" I mean we can only go into some shops two at a time!! What is this telling us?

That people in the society rather judge us for what the media portrays us by rather than who we really are a bunch of young children in society.

Is this fair??? NO!!! Its not.

Adults cause a lot of trouble as well, yet they do not get told only two adults at a time.

We as children should not be stereotyped in this way.

Other problems that could arise before the chosen two will be "fun".

There are not a lot of facilities available for the young people in the area. The park which shuts at a certain time leaves nowhere but the streets for us to hang out on. Yet when we do we get wrong for causing "trouble" or making too much "noise" or just for hanging around in large groups.

These will be some of the problems just to name a few that our young commissioners will have to face.

Good luck!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Look out parliament you have a new set of voices that you can't ignore!!!!!!

Charlotte James

Malap

Hello,

I am the consultant for the **Multi Agency Looked After Partnership** (malap); we are filming a video that looks at a universal approach to statuses and stigma attached to young people in County Durham. We are targeting looked after young people as an example of how services focus on status rather than their individuality. Their individuality should be the main issue not their protective cocoon if you like.

We hired a creative writer to help us with the script and we have produced a script and we are currently filming the video. However we are not missing the main objective, which is for us to feed into the MALAP core group with young peoples views and opinions on what this core group is doing, we have just given our first agenda day report to them, done in June. I know that took a long time but you know how it is.

They found those points raised interesting, we have not been too good at the two way process of feeding each other (smiles). Now that has changed, we are reporting to each other all the time.

We have just organised two agenda days in the October holidays, to get more views from looked after young people on service provision.

Brian Davies
July 2006

Email addresses for Newsletter

Wherever possible, we would encourage you to take this
Newsletter by email to save on paper
If you still get a hard copy and would be willing to have it
emailed to you, please email us at
iic@durham.gov.uk

Listening to Children Strategy

Well to report back there is a newly appointed Director of Children and Learning from government North East (GONE). We or in fact no young people were in the appointment process, well you would think with the word Children in the title we should be involved in the appointment process? However, we are part of the induction for this new post.

Also the Children's Commissioner for England is coming to Durham. Investing In Children have been asked to greet the gentlemen and show him what we do and how we do it, the listening to children strategy Reference group were asked to meet him also and prepare to give him some presentations (winks).

The Max card is available and I apologise for not sending the publicity package out to the young people who are looked after. It is done but all I need to do is send it to CATS (Copelaw Activities), which I shall do a.s.a.p. Children In Need Membership is running fine and nearly all of the teams are taking some part in gaining membership, some teams have had agenda days, they are Stanley teams 1 and 2, Durham, Bishop Auckland, Newton Aycliffe and Crook. Not all of the reports are available yet but soon will be.

The Drive Project is going well and like always any young person that is looked after is welcome to driving lessons for free, as it does cost a lot of money to learn how to drive and if you are looked after take the opportunity it will benefit you in the future, I am always told I should go for it too. There is approximately 30 young people using it and I congratulate those who have passed their theory and who are trying, just keep going you will get there.

The Newsletter 'listen to us for a change' second edition will be out shortly, we have been gathering young peoples views on the newsletter, and we are keen to get young peoples views on it. We have visited some nurseries in County Durham to get their views such as Little Acorn in Newton Aycliffe and also we have visited some residential children's homes such as the Satellite home at West Rainton and a children's home in SpennyMoor. The young people have reported to us and we are ensuring that the second edition is close to what all 4,000 young people want to read.

We are always meeting with the steering group, the Strategic Team Managers from social care and health to report to them any changes in what we are doing.

Brian Davies July2006

Durham Natural Allies Scheme

The Durham Natural Allies Scheme is for children and young people living in County Durham aged up to 24. It is an advocacy scheme to support children and young people in being heard and putting their views, thoughts and feelings across in any situation a young person feels they need support.

The Natural Ally is someone the young person will already know and who **they** can choose to be their advocate.

Maybe there is someone who understands them, they know that they can talk to, who knows about them, and importantly someone who they feel comfortable with.

The people who have been chosen to be Natural Allies in the past have been family members, like brothers and sisters, or an aunt. Sometimes it is a friend, and sometimes it is an adult from school like a learning support worker. It is up to the **young person to choose** someone they feel comfortable with and who understands them.

Lots of the things that young people have needed support with have been able to be sorted out. One young person wanted to get a mobile phone and his Natural Ally supported him in talking to his parents and explaining why it was important to him.

Another young person who lived with his dad felt that he didn't see his mam often enough and told his Natural Ally. She spoke to the people who could help and he now has regular visits with his mam.

A young disabled person told his Natural Ally he wanted to learn to ride a bike. This was talked about in his review and someone from the short break home he went to offered to teach him there as they had a specially adapted bike.

Sometimes small things can begin to feel very big if they aren't sorted out and you feel like no one will listen. A Natural Ally is someone who will help to make people listen and change things that are important to you.

I am the project worker for the scheme and it's my job to help the Natural Ally who has been chosen to be able to support the young person, in whatever way works for them.

If you think you might be interested in finding out more about the scheme please call me on 0191 3867485 or you can email me Lisa.Lines@durham.gov.uk

Lisa Lines

Project Worker - Durham Natural Allies Scheme

Membership News

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

In Durham : Esh Winning Library
The Adoption & Permanence Team
Brandon Library
Education Welfare – East Durham Team
Willington Library
The Fostering Team

In Newcastle: Throckley Primary
Ashfield Nursery
Hadrian School
Sir Charles Parsons School

The good work also continues in the following projects that have been
successfully

re- evaluated:

In Durham : The Behaviour Support Team
Bowburn Junior School
Newton Aycliffe Library
Laurel Avenue Community Centre
Brandon Carrside Youth Centre
Framwellgate Moor Children's Home
Ushaw Moor Juniors
St Hilds Primary
Woodham Comprehensive
West Cornforth Primary

In Newcastle: Valley View Nursery

Development Agency: FCA - South

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

A sad farewell – Valley View Nursery closed its doors for the last time when
the children left nursery on July 20th. However they will meet again at the new
Bridgewater Children's Centre.

Good luck to all from Investing in Children.

If you would like to know more about any of our membership work then
just ask (",)

Newcastle IiC membership award

Hawthorn Primary School in Elswick became the proud recipients of the Investing in Children award, which was presented by Catherine Fitt; Director of Children's Services of Newcastle City Council, (Courtney Ord and Jubair Rahamas can be seen in the picture with Catherine at the bottom of the page).

The award was given in recognition of the school's work to put children's views at the heart of decision-making throughout the school.



Pupils at the school are included in decisions and given the chance to have their say on issues that affect them. One of the main successes of the school over the last year has been the improvement made to the school grounds as part of a Northumberland Wildlife Trust's project.

Head Teacher Judy Cowgill said,

"We are delighted that this award recognises the hard work that has gone into truly putting the children at the centre of the school. The children have had a large input into the designing of the school grounds and the planting within them. This has been very important to the children and how they feel about the school. It is our philosophy that only by respecting the children's ideas, wants and needs can we honestly say that every child matters."

Well done to all the school for creating an environment where children are central to how the school is growing in stature to create friendly and enjoyable experiences for pupils to participate in and feel valued when attending Hawthorn Primary School.



Rob Johnson

Deputy Editor's Babble

Yes it is official I am the Deputy Editor. I am the Deputy Editor only because we have quite a few Editors, which is good because Children and young people move on due to education or are going into the big bad world as some might say of work! Trust me it isn't that exciting. I am going to share with you some things about me so you know who I am, when you see my columns or babble. I am 20 years old. I was born in Darlington and have lived in County Durham all my life. I have had my own place before and now I live at home because its much cheaper, Shhh! I am studying at New College Durham NVQ level 3 in Care. I finish that in May 07 and plan to go on to further study and work at the same time because I love money!!! I have been involved with IIC since I was 14 years old and have built up confidence through IIC in presentations and taking lead facilitator. My specialist subject is Children and Young Peoples Service. When I say specialist I mean I know more about it than NHS projects at IIC.

Some might say I am an old man really as I moan and groan about anything really. I am mad though or some people see me as weird. I like to see myself as mad, naturally. Jane our Editor will be moving on to university soon and I will be Deputy Editor forever Mw ha ha ha.

I am there really in case we don't have an Editor for a period of time. I am like a Guest Editor in a way. When we have a new Editor they have full control but I am there to help really and help them find ways of contacting young people who say our newsletter needs a boost in interest, which I agree with them of course.

This is a chance for me to talk about life. I will of course write about views and opinions of children and young people. To be honest I think Children shouldn't be called Children because some adults use it to undermine young peoples views, opinions and rights. I see them as Young People whether they are under 4 or adolescents, they are young people and are citizens when they are born not when they turn 18. They are the future its time adults realise that. Adults fear political dialogue especially children and young people having a say for some adults it's oh no you can't do that well that's wrong, young people can have a voice it's a basic right from the United Nations Convention Rights of the Child 1951/89. I may seem as boring but I read the 54 Articles in the Convention and IIC supports article 12 by seeing all children and young people as equals.

I think this is enough of me babbling to you! If you would like to be involved in re-vamping the IIC newsletter and you are a young person please contact the IIC Office either by telephone 0191 3867485 and ask for Brian or email me on brian.davies@durham.gov.uk and I will be happy to oblige your involvement in this!

Brian Davies
Deputy Editor

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:

Charlotte James
Newsletter Editor
Investing in Children
Moor Chambers
23-26 Front Street
Framwellgate Moor
Durham
DH1 5EJ

**COPY DATE FOR
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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 the above no.