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**Assistant Children's Commissioners' in London
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**New member
Newcastle City Library
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OUR NEW EDITOR !

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EDITOR'S COLUMN:

Hello, my name is Charlotte James, and I am the new editor for the Investing in Children newsletter.

Well here's a little bit about me. I have moved up from London, which seems to just be getting more and more like action movies these days, the fast life. Don't get me wrong I used to love it but since I have moved up to County Durham its all so much more laid back the peace, the tranquillity, its all so much better.

I have finished my GCSES and I passed all my exams. YEY me!!!

Well I am studying further education at Woodham Community Technology College 6th Form, with hopes of going onto University, which I have the confidence in myself that I will get there.

College life, could it get any better??? NO!!!

We have just had to sit a test, which "apparently" is supposed to determine our star potential, and a rough estimate of what we will get at A Levels. Now where this seems to ring a bell is in Year 7 when we had to sit a similar test, which determined what grades we would get at our SATS and GCSE level.

I do not agree with this personally, because you can't use a test which you only have 4 ½ minutes to answer a question and then 5 to answer the rest, and not only that you have to tick boxes that you think are relevant to what the question is in the book.



Here's **Charlotte**

How can they use this to predict star potential?

To me it's how hard you work and the effort you put into your work, which shows the potential that you have, not ticking a box and writing down information that has no relevance to our education for a example a question was "what qualifications did your parents have when they left school"? Where is the relevance to our education and what our star potential is? I don't see it anywhere.

These tests need to be rid of as well some people may not of understood what certain words mean on the paper and may have put anything down, so if they have done bad, this will then be interpreted as "low achievement" and they will feel as though they have failed

Well I don't want to bore you all with my babble, and I know you all must be waiting to read on in this months article, so I'll leave you to read on...

Charlotte

NEWS UPDATE:

Joined-up thinking

At the Strategic Health Authority, Investing in Children conference earlier this year, I was lucky enough to be able to attend the workshop on school dinners. This was run by students from Woodham Community Technology College, assisted by Phil Goldsborough, the schools catering manager, and Steve Harness, the headteacher.

The workshop considered the Woodham story – how, after a protest by students about the poor quality of meals, and an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate improvement with the commercial provider, the school terminated its contract with the provider, hired Phil as Catering Manager, and now students are able to eat meals freshly cooked on the premises. (All of this is pre – Jamie Oliver!).

The students at the workshop provided an enthusiastic endorsement of the new meals service. They are involved in regular discussions with Phil, covering the range of choice on the menu, to the entertainment available during meal times (there's a large plasma TV screen in the dining room, which was showing MTV last time I was there). Steve explained that the new regime isn't a drain on the schools resources – on the contrary, it has actually allowed the school to develop new services. When I visited after school one evening, Phil and his staff were cooking biscuits with some year 6 students from a local primary, and year 7 students from Woodham as part of the transition process.

I was reminded of this when I read a few weeks ago that the commercial

companies who supply many school meals across the country, are threatening to pull out of contracts, if schools are allowed to remove vending machines (supplied by the companies) offering unhealthy snacks. The reason for this is that there would be insufficient profit to be made without the Monster Munch and Iron Bru income. (I wonder if there is a connection between the level of consumption of junk food, and the edibility of the main menu).

A few days after this article appeared, there was another piece about the health crisis that is looming because of the increase in obesity.

Now I know it's not that straightforward, and school dinners are not the only issue, but as the young people who led the Woodham workshop demonstrated, by focusing on providing good fresh food that young people have said they would like to eat, it is possible to achieve change. They provided convincing evidence that Phil and his team were contributing to all of the Every Child Matters Outcomes.

Two conclusions occur to me. Firstly, it would appear to be easier to achieve 'joined-up thinking' by acting locally, and it seems to get more difficult the further up the chain you go.

And secondly, it seems to me that making profit has no place in the provision of good public services. Unless of course we are happy to accept that every child matters, but not as much as annual dividend.

Liam Cairns - September 2006

Membership News

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

In Durham – Jackass – Youth Theatre

In Newcastle:

Barnados – Teenage Pregnancy Support Unit
Trinity School
Streetwise
John Boste Youth Centre
Fairbridge
Newcastle City Library

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

In Durham:

Groundwork East
Belmont Library
Cats – Cope law Activities
West Rainton Satellite Home
High Etherley Satellite Home

In Newcastle: The Interactive Project
Inline
Sacred Heart Primary

The Development Agency: Foster Care Solutions

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

Lots of our members have their own websites check them out –

www.jackass-yt.co.uk

www.streetwisenorth.co.uk

www.fairbridge.org.uk

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

Well-done Newcastle City Library for gaining Investing In Children Membership.

Newcastle City Library received Investing in Children membership status in September this year because of the positive partnership work with a group of young people on the developments of a new Library to be built in 2009. The group also made changes to the Library by introducing new ideas to the existing Library service which were:



- Book of the Month decided by young people for young people.
- A list of children's books, that children can get on CD and tape, with the introducing of a sticker so that children and young people now know they are available on CD and tape if they would like the book in that format. (see above)



This was another change based on the young people's ideas. Young people can now say if a book they have read is "I'm a good read for kids".

- The Culture Minister David Lammy visited the group when he was recently in Newcastle to find out what the group have been doing with Newcastle City Library. He also gave out the Investing in Children membership certificate for the positive work the library did with the young people, as can be seen in the pictures.



Rob Johnson

SHA Conference

In The Chair's Eyes

“What does chairing a conference mean? What does the chair do? I don't know, but I'll do it anyway”. Those were my thoughts when I volunteered myself to do the job, or was I asked? I can't remember.

Almost everyone involved in the conference seemed (to me) to leave everything to the last minute, including me! My opening remarks weren't written until 2 days before the event because I was more interested in planning my props and how to make the day interesting rather than boring. I made the decision that I would be wearing a hoodie with ASBO printed on it during my opening remarks, just to get everyone in the mood for the conference.

After I had prepared what I was going to say, I refused to tell Liam what I was planning on saying, out of principle. This was my chance to say what I wanted and if Investing in Children (and Liam) were going to stick to their morals then I shouldn't have to tell anyone how I was going to open up the conference. After all, they're only a group of adults that were going to be there!!!

Anyways, when I arrived at The Samsung Centre, where the event was being held, I started to get quite nervous when I saw all the people arriving. There was clearly more than I imagined!!

Once I started I was fine though. I have a tendency to talk quite fast but I purposely tried to speak clear and confidently. I hope it came across that way anyway and I wasn't talking extra fast! The only times when I really freak out is when I start to listen to my own voice – that puts me off straight away and I usually get a mind blank. Embarrassing!

After my opening remarks, everyone split off and went into separate workshops. They were all run by adults along with young people, which was a really important aspect to the whole seminar. Everyone, to me, seemed to enjoy the workshops, including the young people that were presenting in them.

In the afternoon session (after a very nice lunch) I was actually presenting in one of the workshops, so it made my job of collecting info from each workshop, rather difficult. However, with the help of Liam and Peter Kemp, we got there!

To rap up the day, I went through all of the most important things that had come out of the event. I also added a few of my own opinions and suggestions including that events like this happen all the time and nothing ever changes, so I would hope that this would be different.

Watch this space to see what happens.....

Overall, I really enjoyed chairing the seminar. I met some fantastic adults and young people who totally understood the liC principles and where we are coming from, which makes a change.

I'm getting older with every day that passes now (yawn) and I'm sure the day will soon come when I am no longer classed as a young person. I would encourage anyone who is interested or gets the opportunity to be involved in something like this to jump at the chance and take it with both hands! It's a scary thought at first but trust me, it's worth every second of worry when your standing up there doing it.

Ashleigh Greathead

"Injecting Fresh Ideas into the NHS" conference report has now been published and is available at www.iic-uk.org/reports. Or if you would like a hard copy posting please ring 0191 386 7485 or email iic@durham.gov.uk.

New Project! Dales Safety Group!

A new exciting project is being set up within Teesdale and Weardale to reduce the number of accidents on our roads, with a special focus on outside schools. Part of my role as Accident Prevention Officer within Durham Dales PCT is to work with a group of organisations who have a role in this area. The group will work together to reduce accidents in the local area. I am working with Liam Cairns and Ashleigh Greathead from Investing in Children, who will be setting up a new Dales Safety group, organising Agenda Days to find out what young people in the area feel about this. Other organisations involved will be Durham County Council, the Fire Brigade, School Nurses, the Police, and representatives from the schools and Bishop Auckland College.

Pearl Wolstenholme
Accident Prevention Officer

Young Assistant Commissioners Trip to London

Our Diary: Tuesday 1st August 2006(Mia, Maryam, Connor, Mel, Amy D, Amy H Jessica, Gareth and Hugh)

6:30 am - Early start. On the bus down at the Youth Centre. Everyone was really tired and it was freezing that morning, especially if you do not have a coat!

7:30am - Arrived at the train station in Darlington. Really excited about getting on the train. Still too early in the morning to speak, but we were all definitely ready for some breakfast.

8:00am - On the train now. As soon as all of us were seated and the train was setting off, we all rushed down to the bar at the other end of the train to get some food inside of us! That was the good thing about it, we didn't have to spend any of our own money and it didn't matter how much things cost, we could get anything that we wanted!

11:30am - After the long journey, we finally arrived in London. We caught a black cab to the office and went inside. It was a huge government building with lots of busy people wandering around! We were escorted into our office, which was amazing. It was all really modern, new and bright. It had big bouncy, blow-up chairs, inflatable dome chill out areas and loads of different rooms, in which we were all free to wander in and out of.

12:00am - After all the commotion of running around everywhere, exploring our office, we were all given an introduction to what would be happening over the next year and what we would be doing today. This included visiting lots of places in the North East and speaking with loads of young people. We were all eager to start.

1:30pm - We had all had lunch by now, and were just settling into some more workshops. It was a bit hard to settle down because the break was so long. Once we got started the activities were all really interesting! We spent about 30-50mins on each of the presentations, which were about ASBOs (**Anti Social Behaviour Orders**), bullying, looked after children, nutrition and transparency in family courts. We all learned quite a lot, and

I learnt that ASBOs are not always given out for serious things, many of them are trivial.



2:45pm - I was pulled out of the last presentation as Beverly Hughes (Minister for Children), was there for a meeting and they wanted me to be involved and meet her. The Children's Commissioner and his staff only had about 15 minutes to plan out what they were going to try and get across to her and in the fastest possible way, as she was only there for half an hour.

So I listened in on that. It didn't really make much sense and Lisa, who was in charge of us in London, was a bit confused. It was really exciting to be included even though it was a little puzzling.

3:10pm - Beverly was a bit late, so they had to fire away all the important issues. She just had time to meet the rest of the group before she had to go. The rest of the group managed to ask a few questions, but I don't think that they found the answers all that helpful!

4:00pm - Not long left in London now before we are all on our way home. We were all going to go on a Double Decker bus trip around London, but we didn't have time! So instead we split off into groups. A few of us went to Hamley's and other places around there, while the rest of us walked down by London River and past a few of the sites. We passed well-known sites in about half an hour, it was really good. We passed the Tate

Modern art gallery, Shakespearean Theatre, the London Eye...just to name a few, and we were also in view of the houses of parliament and Big Ben!! It was great.

6:00pm - On the train back home. All finished our healthy tea of McDonalds. We all had a really long but fantastic day out, and couldn't wait for the next London trip to get organised!

Overall I had a great day. The only thing I didn't really like was that we were stuck in the office a bit too long as we all really wanted to go on the bus tour. I really like walking by London River, seeing the new office and finding out what was in store for us next.

Mia Wilkinson

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Young Assistant Commissioners – First London Experience

Diary Extract –

Waking up early is not one of my strong points but although most of the group are not morning people, I know that deep down inside we were waiting for our alarm clocks to go off. All of us were so excited to go to London at last! To see the office and meet all of the people who were involved. I think we got the 7:30 train and we were soon on our way to London. Mia, one of the assistant commissioners, had brought a little notepad for all of us to write our thoughts and feelings in. As the group is working on a pilot scheme she thought it would be good of us to write about our experiences as feedback to Lisa, one of the people who work in the Office at London.

When we got to Kings Cross train station we were amazed at how busy it was but we were anxious about what was to come throughout the day. We got a typical London style black taxi to the office, we were on the ground floor of the building and we had to have name tags so everyone knew who we were. Some of us felt rather uncomfortable as some of the people in the office did not seem welcoming but we were just too excited. The modern furniture was a big hit with the whole group and we were very impressed by the blow up chairs and tent. As we had been introduced to Lisa before, she came along and told us what was going to happen while we were at the office. We met 5 or 6 new people, some were extremely friendly and sociable towards us, and others were not.

My personal opinion is that some of these people looked down on us, although we do have a lot of authority. Some of the talks were quite enjoyable and some I could really relate to. A couple of these talks I thought were pointless and had no meaning, some of my fellow deputies thought this also. We had our lunch provided and had small breaks in between our presentations. Many of us explored more of the building while others, including myself, were glued to the computer screen on msn. When the lunch break was up we had one more presentation before we met Beverly Hughes. She is the Minister for Children, and came to see our group as we are going to play an important part in raising the voices of young people and children. The group had mixed opinion on how she spoke to us but the chance to meet her was a privilege in itself. Mia had to show her around and explain to her about the pilot scheme. After Beverly left we had one more talk, by this time we were rather tired as it had already been a very long day.



After a few minutes of "chilling out" with the rest of the group we parted into two groups. One of these took a walk down the river Thames to look at the sites of London and to buy some, as Glenys called it, "Cheap tat". The other group; myself, Amy, Jess and Shelley went to Hamleys - a large toy store. We also walked round a few of the busiest shopping areas and went to a Chocolatier, we sampled a few of their finest (but rather expensive) chocolates.

We met up at the train station and went to McDonalds for our dinner then, it was back on the train to Darlington. The train journeys were not

as boring as expected and the group started to bond a little more, the trip to London really brought us together as I group, in my opinion. The trip to London was an interesting experience although it would have been nice if the entire group had been able to go. The next time we go I think the group will be more confident around the staff of the London Office. Overall, the group really enjoyed the trip and we are all looking forward to our next visit.

By Mel MacPherson.



Listening to Children Strategy

We have had a few problems with the budget we had set out. Do not panic though we are making sure it does not affect us. I have loads to tell you about the strategy. Well, Investing In Children have a membership scheme, which involves children and young people in their services or would like children and young people to be involved. It's a great scheme, which proves that services are involving children and young people in dialogue and change. A service will only gain investing in Children status if children and young people who are involved agree with the changes made. Our children's services teams have to apply for membership and currently 54% of teams have membership. We are working closely with the teams to ensure membership is a priority.

The drive project has rocketed upwards. We have over 130 users of the drive project. However we cannot take any new referrals until April 2007, as we can't stretch the budget. All those who are currently learning continue to learn. I would like to congratulate all those who have passed their practical and theory tests. Well done. Thumbs up. Keep trying everyone you can do it.

The "Listen to us for a Change" newsletter has been completed and we are going through the printing stages of the newsletter which will be sent out to you all soon.

Brian Davies

ROSEBERRY PRIMARY SCHOOL TRIP TO THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

On 13th of June 2006, twelve children from the school council at Pelton Roseberry Primary & Nursery School took a trip to London to visit some of the sights there. Accompanied by ten parents and two teachers, we caught a bus from the school at 7.15am to Durham Railway Station.

When we arrived at Durham station we were met by our guide, Alex Nelson, the station master from Chester-Le-Track train station who very kindly paid £300 of our the train fares. He then became our guide to get us from Kings Cross station to the Houses of Parliament, who would stay with us throughout the trip, allowing us to see all the wonderful sights in London.

The trip to London was fascinating. We got the GNER (Great North Eastern Railway) Inter City train from Durham it took 3hours to get to London. Thankfully we all had magazines and games to keep us occupied throughout the journey.



When we finally arrived in London, Kings Cross station, Alex took us to platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ where we had seen Harry Potter disappearing into the wall many times. However there was no magic in the air and the children unfortunately bounced off the wall, this was just as well as it could have made us late for our Houses of Parliament appointment.

Then we went on the tube which went very fast under a tunnel and it was dark, but there were lights in the tube. After a short journey, we arrived at Green Park where we stopped for something to eat and drink. It was very warm and sticky.

When we had eaten, Alex took us for a whistle stop tour of some of the sights in London. On the way Alex showed us St James palace where Prince Charles lived. We then saw Buckingham Palace where the Queen lives. And we briefly saw the changing of the guards. We also passed by

Trafalgar Square where Alex pointed out Nelsons column which was covered for repair.



Then we made our way over to the Houses of Parliament and on the way we took some pictures of Tony Blair's house. We continued on quite a long

walk until we reached the Houses of Parliament. It was here we were met by Simon Puddick who would be giving us a guided tour of the inside of the building. Before entering the building we were searched to ensure we were not carrying anything dangerous.

Once inside the building Simon showed us Westminster Hall, which is being renovated, where Guy Fawkes was tried for treason against the state. This is the only original part of the building still standing, and many important people including the Queen Mother, Winston Churchill and past Prime Ministers were granted the honour of being laid in state here after they had died.

We were shown statues of some very important people who in the past had helped to shape the government of today. We also saw a few recognisable politicians who are involved in the government today.

One of these politicians was Kevan Jones, our local MP (Member of Parliament), who kindly answered a lot of the school council's questions. We had a private room for the meeting and we asked him questions about being an M.P. We then went to the Lobby and saw the Speaker's procession arrive to open that day's proceedings. When the Speaker came in we had to be silent. A man shouted "STRANGERS - HATS OFF!" It was strange because only boys had to take their hats off and the policeman said that our boys were great because the ones that had hats on all took them off. We were able to get our photo taken with Kevin Jones on the Parliament Terrace over looking the River Thames and the London Eye.

To be continued in next Edition.....

Deputy Editor's Babble

Hello,

You are all back to school, college, university or work I take it. Those lovely early mornings and 20 cups of coffee just to open your left eye. Then you get me running around going roar and singing wake up it's a beautiful morning. Laughing out loud (lol).

I have just got back from holiday. I went to Primrose Valley, I know its not Portugal or Italy but it's a week off and it was warm and sunny anyway so I don't care. I love Windsor's and Jesters is fun. Rory the Tiger is amazing. I felt like a 3 year old. Speaking of 3 year olds, I spent it with my aunt, uncle and their two grandchildren, who are lovely, but I was up at 6am every morning for 5 days with them and I was tired. Its maternal instinct to be honest when you wake up because I am not an early morning person but if I heard them cry I was up and straight in the room and so was my aunt. I am not going to have children too soon, its hard work. I was running around and entertaining the children. I plan to go back in April 2007. So I can't wait.

Well now political face, swish! Do you think County Durham Council is making changes for young people? I personally feel it is because more and more services are realising that you cannot make a service better without involving the younger generation into making changes that will affect them. It's important that key adults are involved in making changes such as heads of services because if we don't have their backing we can not move forward. Investing in Children is expanding to other regions such as Newcastle, Tees Valley and even the Isle of man, not to forget that the strategic health authority, the national CAMHS Support Service and Stockton Children's Fund are interested in the Investing In Children Model which is exciting. Its important that other authorities believe in our principles in dialogue and change. A very famous IIC phrase we use is 'adults don't always know best' and I agree with this.

Well I am going to say good bye and see you later in many different languages, Au Revoir, Adios, Tichaonana, Auf Wiedersehen, Aloha, Ja, Mata ashita aimashow, do svidanja, adjo.

Brian

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:

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**COPY DATE FOR
NEXT
NEWSLETTER.....
24TH NOVEMBER!**

Or e-mail her at iic@durham.gov.uk

**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.