

Contact Centre **Consultation Report**

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Social Care and Health Directorate

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Background

South Tyneside Social Care & Health Department plan to renovate Owen Drive Residential Home and re-open it as a contact centre.

It was decided that research would be necessary to inform the process of creating the new contact centre for Looked After Children. The Young People's Engagement Team aimed to identify what the children and young people would want from their contact and contact centre.

It was suggested that the consultation cover

- Accessibility – Are there any current barriers to children and young people accessing the service?
- Opening hours of the centre?
- What would they like to do during their contact?
- What should the centre actually look like?
- How should we do consultation in the future?

Method

We set out to send a brief questionnaire and Information sheet to all Looked After children who have contact and so all the area teams were contacted in order to find out this information. The sheet also invited them to a Contact Consultation day at Owen drive residential home. The Consultation day was to be the main focus of the project and where most of the young people 's views were to be recorded.

The information sheet contained a few pertinent questions about contact and gave us an idea of how the contact service is viewed at the moment. It also helped us to plan the consultation day. **See appendix one for more details of the form.**

The original Consultation day was planned for the 29th May but it was postponed as the names and addresses of the young people who currently had contact were not received in time. So a second date was arranged for the 17th July.

We planned various activities for the consultation event that were to be completed in a variety of ways depending on the number of children and young people attending.

The day was to be split into different activities and each one was designed to find out a different piece of information. For example we organised a "What's the Worst" activity where we wanted the young people to think about what the worst contact centre ever would look like. This would then give us an idea of how we could ensure a high quality service.

A plan for the day can be found in appendix two.

We actively encouraged participation from the young people by ensuring that there was no upper age limit for the consultation although a minimum age limit of 8 and over was put in place.

The young people were also encouraged to attend by:

- Informing social work teams and asking to publicise.
- Informing family placement team and asking to publicise

Consultation event:

In spite of the invitations and publicity no one attended the consultation day on 21st July, which was very disappointing. This may have been due to a number of reasons.

- 1) Because the initial day had been postponed the second date was very near to the summer holidays. The beginning of the summer holidays is normally a busy time for most people and so the consultation event may have been forgotten.
- 2) The event was to be held at 9 Owen drive and although the address was included on the information, some carers may not have known where this was. Access may also have been a problem as Owen Drive is not on any direct public transport route.
- 3) Even though we attempted to make the day as exciting as possible some young people may have thought it sounded boring and so decided they did not want to attend.
- 4) The complete list of those who had some form of contact with friends or family (over 8 years old) consisted of only 30 young people - this obviously reduces the amount of young people who are likely to attend on the day.

After the event we decided that it was still worth trying to find out what the young people would want from a contact centre and so we sent out a further questionnaire and information sheet asking the young people to tell us their views and enter a competition for C.D. vouchers. The questionnaire incorporated much of the information from the Consultation day. **See appendix 3 for this sheet.** The response to this was more encouraging being about a 70% return rate. This suggests that their reason for not attending the consultation event was, rather than being indifference, one of the other reasons stated above or possibly because a competition was organised.

The Results:

I have set out the results from the information sheets below:

Frequency of Current Contact:

- 6 young people have some kind of contact once per month
- 1 young person had some kind of contact every 2 months
- 1 young person had some kind of contact every week
- 2 young people have some kind of contact every two weeks
- 2 young people have some kind of contact every day
- 1 young person had some kind of contact four times per year
- 1 young person had some kind of contact once per year
- 3 young people never have any kind of contact * (I'm not sure why this answer was put down as according to the area teams all of the young people written to had some form of contact.
- 4 young people did not respond to this question

Where does Contact normally occur at the moment?

- 4 young people said they meet at McDonalds or other similar restaurant
- 2 young people said they meet at a bowling alley or fun park
- 4 young people said they meet at Garrick Street Family Centre
- 1 young person meets at the park

The 8 young people below may have misunderstood the question as:

- 4 young people said they meet at home
 - 4 young people said they meet at school
- this may indicate they meet at these places but then go elsewhere.

They would enjoy contact in a contact centre if:

- 1 young person wrote - if there were toys and games
- 1 young person wrote - if there were rooms with more to do e.g. games and cooking
- 1 young person wrote - if Social workers were not there
- 10 young people wrote they would enjoy it more if they had longer contact and more often
- 2 young people wrote - if there was more to do
- 1 young person wrote - if there were overnight stays.

Types of activities they would like to do during contact are: (these answers were from a prescribed list)

- Playing computer games – 9
- Cooking a meal - 10
- Playing board games - 8
- Watching TV - 9
- Watching videos - 5

Drawing pictures /making things – 9

They also wanted to be able to do the following:

(these answers were not from a prescribed list)

Pool tables
Dance mats
Basketball hoops
Reading
Boating
Bike riding
Skateboarding
Trips to park
Trips to café
Talk about things to mam
Quad biking
Swimming
Help with homework
Outdoor sports
Snowball fights
Talk about stuff

What should the centre look like?

At least 6 rooms – red or blue including lounge, poolroom, computer room, kitchen, office and toilet.

Activity rooms in fun colours.

Orange and blue rooms.

Yellow and blue rooms.

The rooms could be red, purple or blue – big rooms with sofas and sky TV, a place to have snacks and use adventure play stuff for the little ones.

The rooms should be black and white.

There should be a sitting room, kitchen, and games room as well as dressing up room – they should all be bright colours.

They should be purple and yellow.

There should be separate rooms for babies.

A quiet room to talk in.

What would the worst centre ever look like?

Not open on Saturday or Sunday.

No games

Only open at lunch times

Dark with nothing to do, overcrowded, nothing to eat, and only open when we are at school.

No toilets or ones that are busy all the time

Open at unreasonable times

No colours

Only open during the week

Lots of people all at the same time
If parents don't turn up
Full of babies
Lots of little kids running around
Not open at weekends
Nowhere to play with friends
Too many staff hanging around
Only open during school time
Lots of strange people being there
Too many people about
Too many people

Any other Comments

There must be lots of room
Mam and dad to attend

* Carers comment

“ Contact not successful in contact centre in the past.”

Evaluation:

These results show some interesting findings – obviously some requests are untenable but others can easily be looked into. The young people have shown a genuine interest in how the centre is set out and the way that it operates.

Most of the young people stated that they would like to have things to do with their families/friends rather than meeting just to talk. From speaking to some of the young people about this I think that they see talking as important but that it should come naturally while doing another activity rather than being artificially started because “that’s what you do during contact”. This would seem to be the more natural means of communicating in their own homes.

Many of the activities that were suggested would need to take place outside – the facilities at Owen Drive may not accommodate some of their ideas however a back garden would seem appropriate for some of them e.g. playing football, having basketball hoops, and having space to run around.

The fact that some young people stated that they would still like to have trips out during their contact and that currently some young people do have their contact in public places suggests that a stand with information about where you can go during contact (including a list of MAX card accepting establishments) would also be sensible.

Many young people also stated that opening at weekends would be useful. This would also help to reduce the amount of people in the centre at any one time, which was also a priority.

In the future, we must ensure that any events exclusively for consultation or information gathering are seen to be exciting by the young people who attend. This could be achieved by rewarding those who attend with trips out or by having other activities (easily identifiable as being fun) also available on the day e.g. Bouncy castles or sports etc. The consultation can be designed to be exciting once the young people are actually there however if they perceive it to be boring before they attend they will probably stay away. Transport to and from any events that we organise must also be thought out clearly beforehand as not taking this into account may exclude some young people.

The process of inviting young people should have been straightforward but was in reality frustrating and difficult. One of the problems that was encountered very quickly was obtaining an accurate list of all the young people who have contact. It was deemed to be inappropriate to invite children who currently did not receive any contact with family members or friends, in case they became confused and mistakenly believed that they were going to begin having contact.

This meant it was necessary to find out which Looked After young people did receive contact so that we could send out the invites and questionnaires to these young people only.

As Children's Services administration did not hold this information it was necessary to contact the area teams and ask them to check their records and send us the lists of young people who did receive contact. It took a great deal of time to obtain this information and even when we had a list of names we discovered later that it was not complete. Due to the length of time it took to obtain these lists the date set aside for the consultation day had to be changed.

More effective communication and information sharing between the area teams and the Young Peoples Engagement Team is essential if events are to be more successful in the future. The Young Peoples Engagement Team now plan to hold an up to date list of young people's contact details to aid this process in the future. This will also help to ensure that there is sufficient notice given to carers before any events are due to begin.

Recommendations For the Contact Service:

- Ensure there are activities that families can participate in during contact, thus encouraging more "natural" conversations, e.g. cooking, computer games, etc. (see question 4 for more details).
- Provide some outdoor/garden activities that the young people can use eg. Football, basketball hoops, boules or just running around etc.
- Facilities for young people to complete homework with parents.
- Provide information about places the young people can visit during contact, especially MAX card venues.
- Determine feasibility of organising Contact at weekends both within and outside of the Contact Centre.

- Determine feasibility of arranging set times for specific age groups e.g. all babies/toddlers at similar times etc.
- Determine maximum number of families in the centre at one time.

Recommendations For Youth Engagement Team:

- Ensure all consultation activities are seen to be worthwhile and fun/exciting in any publicity materials that are sent out.
- Provide prizes for any questionnaires that are completed.
- Determine transport arrangements before events and publicise how to get to venue or whether transport will be provided.
- Youth Engagement Team will hold an up to date list of young people's contact details, to be updated every month.

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Appendix 1

Contact Consultation Day

4:30 pm July 17th - 9 Owen Drive

What is Contact?

Contact is the word used to describe seeing or speaking to members of your family or friends. It can include seeing members of your family (known as direct contact), speaking to them on the telephone (mobile or otherwise), or writing to them by letter or email. It also includes receiving presents, letters and emails.

What is a Contact Center?

If you are able to meet up with members of your family or friends then the Contact Center will be a place where you can spend time meeting with them. The council is going to be opening a new "Contact Center" in the next few months.

We want to make sure that any contact you have is fun and that you get the most out of it.

YOU'RE INVITED!!

What is a Contact Consultation Day?

It is really important that you tell us what we can do to make the Contact Center the best place possible to meet any family or friends. We can't change your situation—like who you are allowed to meet with or the amount of time you get to spend with people BUT ***we can improve the place that you meet with them and provide more activities to do during your contact time.***

The best way for you to tell us how we can improve contact and give us ideas for the Contact Center is for you to come along to our **Contact Consultation Day at 9 Owen drive at 4:30 pm on July 17th.**

What will happen on the Contact Consultation Day?

We're planning lots of exciting activities which will help us find out your ideas and plans and every young person that attends will receive a free prize as well as drinks and treats!

How can I get there?

Fill in the other side of this sheet and tell us whether you can come along on the 17th July at 4:30pm. If you or your Foster Carer needs directions to Owen Drive, or if you have any transport difficulties then please ring us on the number over the page. Remember - All Looked After Children who have Contact Are Invited!

We've included some other questions to get you thinking about improving current contact arrangements and help us to prepare for the consultation day.

Your Name: _____

Your Age: _____

Your Address or tel. Number: _____

Are you: Male Female

Yes, I can come along to the Consultation day

No, I am unable to come along to the consultation day.

If you can't come along to the consultation day but you would still like to be kept informed tick here

How often would you normally have contact with your friends/family?
_____ times per month

If you currently have contact with your family or friends where do you normally meet them?

Who do you normally meet with - e.g. mam, dad, brother, friend?

I would enjoy my contact more if...

The type of activities I would like to do during contact are:

- Playing computer games
- Cooking a meal
- Playing board games
- Watching television.
- Drawing pictures/making things

Other activities _____

If you have any other thoughts or ideas about improving your future contact sessions then please write them in this space: _____

You can post this form back to us in the envelope provided.

You can also contact Lee Taylor or Jo Weston on — 424 4633

Email us at : ype.newsletter@s-tyneside-mbc.gov.uk

Everyone who sends us this form back will be entered into a prize draw and you could win a £20 Voucher - the draw will be made at the Contact Consultation Day - So make sure you're there!

Appendix 2

Contact Consultation Day

Aims:

- ⇒ Welcome and Introduce Youth engagement Team
- ⇒ Explain why we are consulting
- ⇒ Find out what the children and young people want from a Contact Centre
- ⇒ Evaluate this consultation process

Content:

- ⇒ Welcome and introductions – who are we?
- ⇒ Ground Rules
- ⇒ Explanations – what are we doing? What can change because of what we're doing?
- ⇒ Ice Breaker (1)
- ⇒ What will the centre look like? (2)
- ⇒ What activities will be available? (3)
- ⇒ How can we change contact for the better? (4)
- ⇒ Feedback (5)
- ⇒ What next? (5)
- ⇒ Evaluation of the day (7)

Methods:

- ⇒ **Human Bingo** - 15 mins (1)
The game will be played to mix the group up and give latecomers a chance to arrive. The aim is to let everyone meet each other and speak to everyone.
- ⇒ **Arty Mural** - 20 mins (2)
Using one of the walls upstairs, the young people will be able to draw, write or stick their ideas for how the centre will look. We may have some designs or ideas for them to choose from. We could also do a “what can this room be used for “ exercise for some of the rooms upstairs.
- ⇒ **Dot Voting** - 10 mins(3)
This will be used to ascertain the most popular activities that people would want to do while having contact. The dots will be colour coded for different ages.
- ⇒ **Worlds Worst Contact Centre** - 20 mins(4)
This is a way to highlight the main issues of the contact service by exploring them in their negative extreme.
- ⇒ **Feedback Time** - 10 mins(5)
Time will be given to feedback some of the responses that the young people have given. We will also explain what will happen with the information now that it has been given.
- ⇒ **Evaluation Targets** – 5 mins(6)
This is a quick, non – verbal evaluation tool that can be done just prior to the young people going home. We will have

different questions around the room that the young people can answer.

Itinerary for the Day

| | |
|---------|--|
| 5:00 pm | Arrivals, sticky name labels. |
| 5:05 pm | Welcome and Introduction, Ground rules, Explanations. |
| 5:15 pm | Human Bingo |
| 5:30 pm | Arty Murals – “What should the centre look like?” include things like: decorating, number of rooms, types of room e.g. Kitchen, sitting room |
| 5:50 pm | Dot Voting – “ What activities would you want to do” – provide examples of some possible activities but provide space for their own ideas too. |
| 6:00 pm | Refreshments and Prize Draw – entries through questionnaires |
| 6:15 | Worlds Worst Contact Centre – what would the worst contact centre ever look like? Think about things like – access, opening times, staffing, amount of other visitors etc. |
| 6:30 pm | Feedback time – display the results and explain what happens next with the info. |
| 6:40 pm | Evaluation Targets – questions like” Was today fun? Did you feel listened to? Would you come to another day like today?“ |
| 6:50 pm | Refreshments and Prizes – rewards for attendance |
| 7:00 pm | Finish |

Appendix 3

| | |
|---|--|
| Complete this form and send it back to us and you could win £20 worth of vouchers! | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Contact Centre Opinions</p> <p>This form is another opportunity for you to give us your views and ideas about our new contact centre - we need to know what you think in order to make it the best!</p> <p>What is Contact?</p> <p>Contact is the word used to describe seeing or speaking to members of your family or friends. It can include seeing members of your family (known as direct contact), speaking to them on the telephone (mobile or otherwise), or writing to them by letter or email.</p> <p>It also includes receiving presents, letters and emails.</p> | <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; transform: rotate(-45deg); opacity: 0.5;"> Contact Centre </div> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">What is a Contact Center?</p> <p>If you are able to meet up with members of your family or friends then the Contact Center will be a place where you can spend time meeting with them.</p> <p>The council is going to be opening a new "Contact Center" in the next few months.</p> <p>We want to make sure that any contact you have is fun and that you get the most out of it.</p> | <div style="background-color: magenta; color: black; padding: 2px; font-size: 0.8em; margin-bottom: 5px;"> Remember everyone who sends this form back could win a £20 voucher for books or CD's. </div> <p>Your Name:</p> <p>Your Age:</p> <p>Are you: Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Your Address or tel. Number:</p> <p>How often would you normally have contact with your friends/family?</p> <p>_____ times per month</p> <p>If you currently have contact with your family or friends where do you normally meet them?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Who do you normally meet with - e.g. mam, dad, brother, friend.?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>I would enjoy my contact more if...</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |

What Activities Would You Like To Do During Contact?

The type of activities I would like to do during contact are:

- Playing computer games
- Cooking a meal
- Playing board games
- Watching television
- Watching Videos
- Drawing pictures/making things

Other activities:

Contact Centre

Remember everyone who sends this form back could win a £20 voucher for books or CD's.

The Worlds Worst Contact Centre:

What Should the Contact Centre Look Like?

Use this space to tell us what colours you would like the rooms to be, what type of rooms you would like e.g. sitting rooms, kitchen, games rooms etc, and the number of rooms.

What would the worst Contact Centre ever be like? Think about things like - opening times, the number of staff, the amount of other visitors, the ages of other visitors - Anything that would make it the worst.

If you have any other thoughts or ideas about improving your future contact sessions then please write them in this space:

Thanks for spending time completing this form— please return it in the envelopes provided - look out for updates on how the contact centre is developing—we'll be publishing the results of the consultation soon!

You can also contact Lee Taylor or Jo Weston on — 424 4633 or Email us at : ype.newsletter@s-tyneside-mbc.gov.uk