

Good Scrutiny Awards 2010

Innovation



Cheshire West and Chester Council

The Every Child Matters Select Panel in the new authority of Cheshire West and Chester carried out a review of how to enhance the lives and future prospects of children in the care of the council. Involving young people in such scrutiny reviews is not new – but the way that the scrutiny team went out of their way to engage young people in care and how they did so made this review particularly special.

Impact

- Young people in the care of the council were engaged in the scrutiny review through a series of fun activities such as a trip to the zoo and an activity centre called Go Ape.
- The young people took part in the panel's formal hearings, questioning the executive member, presenting their ideas and commenting on the final report.
- Another positive outcome is that the young people will continue to be involved in scrutiny not just on issues directly affecting them but on other issues.
- This innovative approach has helped build constructive relationships in this new unitary authority, helping embed a positive attitude towards scrutiny.

Why shortlisted

- This entry showed Cheshire West and Chester doing scrutiny in a way that was quite different, with judges commenting positively on the “degree and depth” of young people's involvement.
- It showed that “scrutiny can even be fun”, with young people, councillors and officers engaging in team-building and working together informally.
- Judges were moved by one young person's comment that “what they told us would happen at the start of the review, has happened”.

“ Children from foster care and residential homes were listened to and we were all made to feel important, valuable and that we would be involved in making a difference to our lives and the lives of children coming into the care system in the future. ”

James, aged 17, young person resident in a Cheshire West and Chester children's home

“ ...It's not every day that Councillors go swinging through the trees to gather evidence for scrutiny reviews! ”

Cllr Mike Jones, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council