

## **Interim Report on The Friary Transition Project January 2012**

### Introduction

The project started in July 2011 and the initial concept was to provide a group where children, identified by their schools, as being vulnerable to making an unsuccessful transition from primary to secondary school, and from children's services to youth services could meet. They should all live on The Friary. They would be supported by professional youth workers. Their families would be as involved as possible. The schools (both primary and secondary) would be made aware of the group and would support the group (including receiving progress reports). Other agencies working on the Friary would be made aware of the group. The group would meet weekly. The group would meet in a neutral (non school or youth service) venue.

### Premises/venue

The venue chosen was St Elizabeth Hall, Exeter Street. The Hall has some cooking/food preparation facilities, a large main room, toilet facilities. It is situated on Exeter Street. It was known to most of the children. It was accessible to the children without needing a parent/carer to bring them or collect them.

St Elizabeth Hall was available between 4 and 6pm on Wednesdays.

Unfortunately the Hall was double booked for 2 sessions in November. This meant that we had to find alternative accommodation at St Osmund's Church Hall. This meant that there was a lack of continuity and the children found this unsettling.

### Food

We decided that it would be good to provide the children with a hot meal as the session spanned over their tea time. The kitchen facilities at St Elizabeth Hall were meagre and additional facilities would be costly. WM and EP have prepared the food in advance and brought it to the venue for re-heating in the microwave. This has restricted what has been available.

It has not really been possible to do cooking activities with the children. Chloe is now going to start preparing a pudding with the children as part of the session and we will continue to build healthy eating activities into the programme.

### Staffing

We used the Integrated Youth Service's recruitment procedure and we were able to secure the services of 2 Youth Workers, one trained and one untrained.

Unfortunately SN went on long-term sick leave and decided to resign from her post. Temporary workers have been employed to cover the absence and the

post until the end of the project because it will be unlikely that we will be able to recruit before the end of the academic year.

In addition WM and EP attend the project every week to produce the meal and to support the workers.

A further youth worker in training is gaining valuable work experience with the group. She is not employed.

All members of staff are CRB checked and references obtained before being allowed to work at the group.

As a result of external factors a member of staff will be unavailable for a period of time from March 2012. EP and WM are working closely with Shine In The Community to try to ensure continuity of staff members by looking at recruiting a member of the Shine team to co-work on both the Shine project and this transition project.

It is proposed that we extend the number of employed staff to 3 from September 2012. This will ensure that we can maintain the correct adult:child ratios and ensure the safety of adults and children throughout the session. An extra member of staff would also ensure that we could cover for staff sickness and annual leave more easily.

### Volunteers

As part of the project we have recruited 3 volunteers who are working towards their Duke of Edinburgh award. 2 volunteers have become integrated into the group. The other has taken longer to build a relationship with the children.

### Children

We asked the 2 local primary schools, St Martin's and St Osmund's, for their suggestions of children to invite. The criteria were as above and were also restricted to children who were below level 3 of the Social Care thresholds. We asked them to nominate 10 children each with a view to inviting all of them but expecting a fall-out of some children. Of the original 20 names we contacted all of the families and we have had a regular group of between 11 and 14 children every week.

### Parent Support Adviser

One of the crucial factors in the success of the group was felt to be the interaction between the group and the families. HC, the Parent Support Adviser for both St Martin's and St Osmund's schools has worked to ensure that all of the families were aware of the group's aims and where the children would be and what they would be doing. This has involved making contact with families who often do not wish to be involved with professionals. All

parents have been supportive but very few have actually come to the group. Usually families do not drop-off or pick up their children from the group. All families were invited to come along in October if they needed any support completing their secondary school application forms. No parents attended. HC has also written notes to children when they have not been to the group for a couple of weeks to say that they were missed and we would love to see them again soon. This has been effective at encouraging children to return to the group.

It is proposed that families will continue to be supported during the transition from primary to secondary school as they will be invited into the group as part of the celebration session in the summer. A parent has also been invited to come and cook authentic Asian food as part of a celebration. This will hopefully provide the children with an insight into the food and customs of their neighbours and peers and enable them all to celebrate together.

The Extended Services team offers family transition sessions on the Laverstock site and all families will be invited to attend these with their Parent Support Adviser to ensure that they have a familiar face. HC also provides transport to these events if required.

### The Programme

The routine of the group has now been established. The workers arrive at 4pm and the children are often waiting outside. They are not allowed in until the room is prepared and it is safe for them to enter.

The group meets for a circle time to discuss news, remind everyone of the "rules" (these were determined by the children themselves) and to introduce the rest of the session. The group then has an activity or focus. This is often craft based but can be a game. The children all have their own portfolios in which they keep any pictures/pieces of writing they have produced during the session. We keep these for them and we will give them to the children in July as a record of their time attending the group. Often the children make a pudding for them to eat after their meal.

We break for a meal at about 5.15pm. All of the children sit at the tables and they are served by the adults. The children then eat their pudding.

After eating the group finishes off their activities. All of the children have hot chocolate and then depart at 6pm.

### Evaluation

The group started with a shared meeting for professionals working with children who live on the Friary. This included representatives from both the primary and secondary schools. This report will be presented to a similar meeting in February and also at the Salisbury Area Board in March.

We have collected anecdotal evidence/case studies from children attending the group as we have gone along.

The strongest evidence may be the attendance registers as the children continue to attend regularly and have been known to choose to come to the group rather than spend time with friends or other activities.

## Funding and the future

Initial funding was obtained from Salisbury Area Board. This was sufficient to fund the paid workers, resources for activities and some outings or contingency funding.

Extended Services has funded the costs of the rental of Elizabeth Hall, transport costs for a worker travelling a significant distance, food and drinks. The costs of salaries for the Youth Worker, Extended Services Cluster Manager, and the Parent Support Adviser have all been met as part of their work.

It is hoped that the group will be able to continue into a second year to support the children as they leave primary school and transfer to secondary school. It would be possible for the current group to continue until January and then they could mentor a new group as the original group becomes more confident and begins to access youth services. This project was a pilot and it is hoped that Salisbury Area Board will consider that it will be worthwhile to continue funding the project to enable the children to make a smooth transition.

In addition it is hoped that this project could be replicated in other parts of the city e.g. Bishopdown Farm, Laverstock. This will be dependent on funding and staffing.

## **SUMMARY**

- Funding was obtained from Salisbury Area Board to run the pilot project for a year. The aim of the group was to support children living on The Friary make a successful transition from primary to secondary school and from children's to youth services. In addition funding was obtained from the Extended Services funding and some staff time was given in kind.
- The children were invited to attend the group. They decided their own house rules. They were nominated by their schools. They all live on The Friary.
- The group meets on Wednesdays between 4.30 and 6pm at St Elizabeth Hall.
- A hot meal is provided for the children. This is always healthy and dietary requirements are always adhered to.
- Families were encouraged to support the group and, in turn, receive support from the Parent Support Adviser regarding school transfers. This support will continue.
- Attendance by 14 children has been consistent.
- Staff were recruited to the 2 Youth Worker posts.
- Young volunteers support the group every week
- A youth worker in training is gaining work experience with the group.