

Building change into the process : Effective consultation in designing Rainbow House

Report By Judith Kahn





Photos on front cover:

1. Rainbow House logo – designed by Thomas Firth at Funday August 2008.
2. Model of Rainbow House – at Broom Court Xmas party on 20.12.2008.
3. Rainbow House site before building started – 27.10.2008
4. Rainbow House on Open Day 03.02.10
5. In the disabled bathroom on Open Day 03.02.10
6. In a hard hat at the Funday on 15.02.08
7. Above - Rainbow House with its rainbow
8. Back page – Produce from Rainbow House raised beds

Appendices can be accessed electronically on the Family Hub:

<http://www.thefamilyhubleeds.org/publications.aspx>

- Appendix 1 PFI briefing 1 29.08.07
- Appendix 2 PFI briefing 2 26.11.07
- Appendix 3 PFI Staff Consultation 13.09.07
- Appendix 4 Stakeholder Consultation
- Appendix 5 C&YP Consultation at Broom Court
- Appendix 6 Funday Brighter Future
- Appendix 7 PFI Consultation with Parents 16.10.07
- Appendix 8 Certificate template funday
- Appendix 9 Naming House certificate
- Appendix 10 Rainbow House storybook
- Appendix 11 Parents visit Rainbow house 7.12.09
- Appendix 12 Choosing the name 8.06.08
- Appendix 13 Rainbow House brochure March 2010
- Appendix 14 Feedback on First stays at Rainbow House 14.09.10
- Appendix 15 Opening Day comments 03.02.10

Building change into the process : Effective consultation in designing Rainbow House

Leeds Children's Services developed, designed and built a new short break unit for disabled children between 2007 and 2010 with funding from the Public Finance Initiative (PFI). This paper gives an account of the participation and consultation with stakeholders throughout the process by:

- informing all stakeholders about initial plans, in a way they could understand
- listening to views and concerns, recording and using their views to inform designs, planning and service delivery
- demonstrating how stakeholders influenced outcomes

The approach taken was to:

Step 1: Explain what is going on and why.¹

Step 2: Enable stakeholders to ask questions and make suggestions²

Step 3: Answer questions and consider options³

Step 4: Allow the opinions of stakeholders to shape designs, planning and equipment as much as possible.

Step 5: Inform stakeholders on progress.

This paper aims to answer the questions;

Were the 5 steps followed?

Who were the stakeholders?

How much influence did stakeholders have?

Did consultation improve the experience of change?

Stakeholders 1 : Children, young people and their families

Most of the children and young people consulted had impairments, mostly learning difficulties and several had autistic syndrome disorders. Many children had issues in dealing with change. Work had to be done with them to understand what was happening: the replacement for their short break unit, Broom Court, was being built from scratch. Their contribution to building, naming and fitting out the building gave them more understanding and a greater feeling of power in the process. Involving parents and siblings helped the whole family deal with and contribute to the change.

¹ Briefings : see Appendices 1 and 2

² Consultation events : see Appendices 3,4,5 and 7

³ Funday consultations : see Appendix 6

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This was achieved by:

- Informing and consulting with parents
- Taking the children to see the new site, before anything was built
- Opportunities to meet the people responsible for building the unit
- Putting up photos of the construction as it developed
- Consulting with young people about likes and dislikes
- Consulting about the name of the Unit: see Appendix 11
- Funday consultations and certificates in Feb & Aug 08 see Appendices 6 & 8
- Designing the logo – at the August 2008 Funday
- Taking them to see the site, to watch the building grow
- Consulting them about furniture and colours for bedrooms: at the August Funday and work with Broom Court staff
- Making a story book about Rainbow House which showed the building partly ready for parents and children to share : November 2009 Appendix 10
- Inviting parents to see the building when nearly complete in December 2009: Appendix 11
- Open Day before first stays on 03.02.10: Appendix 15

Stakeholders 2 : Consulting existing staff

- Broom Court and social work staff were consulted on 13/9/07 : Appendix 3
- Broom Court staff were involved in all the consultations with children
- Workshops were held with Broom Court staff in 2009 to prepare for the move.
- Project management, using a Board, Team and Advisory Group structure enabled good communication and depth of consultation

Stakeholders 3: Consulting providers

- Workshop held 25/10/07: Appendix 4
- Invited to join advisory group
- Enabling Leeds Independent Living Accommodation Company (LiLAC) who were the consortium who built Rainbow House and other stakeholders to understand each other at “Meet the bidders day” and 2 Fundays. This interaction was essential to create understanding between different stakeholders.
- Visits to comparable sites in Leeds, Kirklees, Darlington.



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A piece of work was undertaken with staff to look at how different issues would affect each other in designing a new unit.

It was called a tangled web, and showed how the choices made in relation to layout, affects toys and games, furniture, arrangements for eating and food etc.

From this diagram we identified useful areas to consult children and young people who used the existing unit would be:

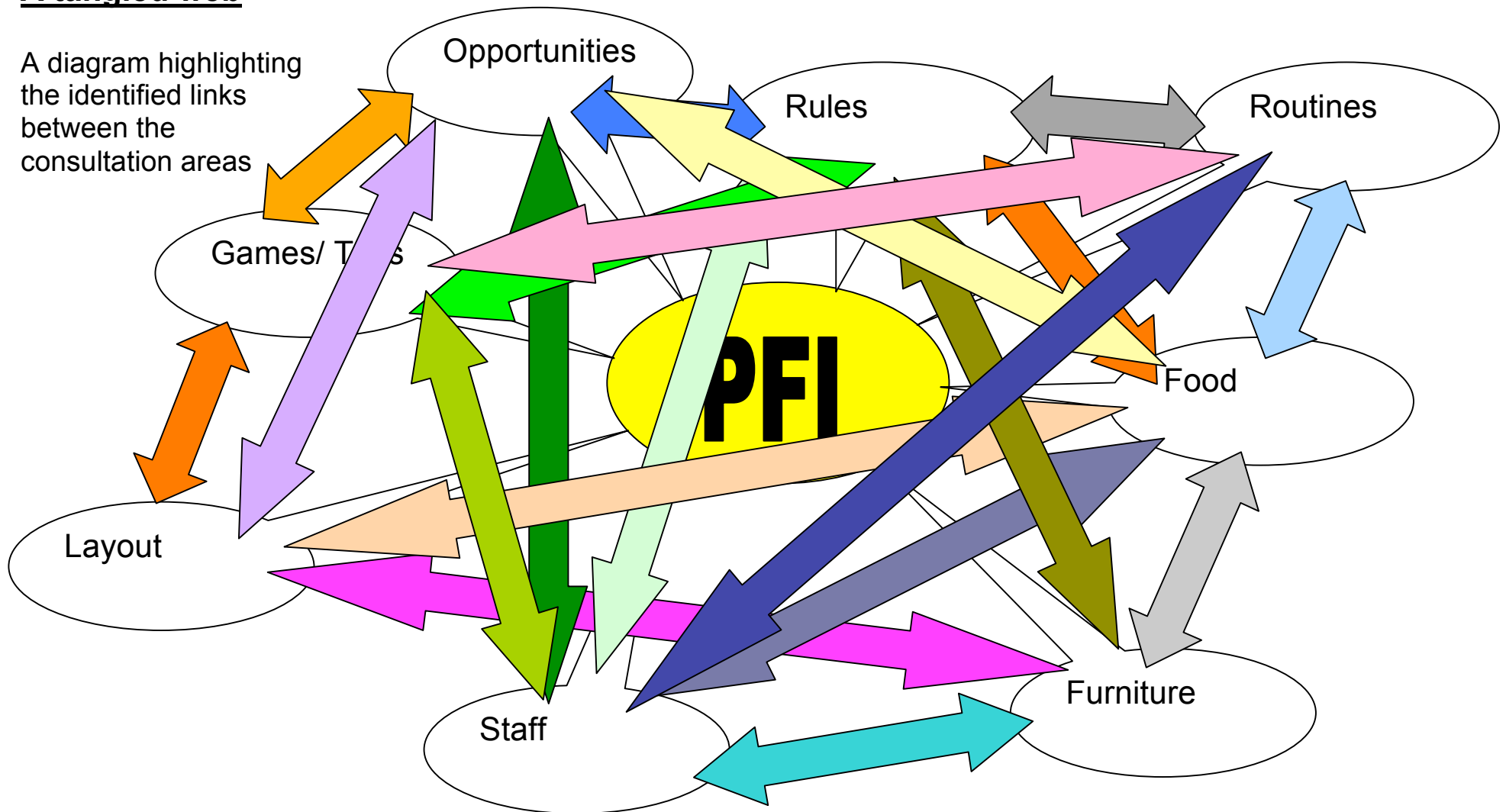
- games and toys
- food
- furniture

See page 6 for the tangled web

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A tangled web

A diagram highlighting the identified links between the consultation areas



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What effect did consultation have?

LiLAC consortium

LiLAC, the consortium building the unit, met children, families and other stakeholders at three consultative events, and also made site visits to Broom Court, Hannah House and Acorn Lodge, which were existing disabled children's short break resources in Leeds.

The architect made a model of the new unit, which was donated to Broom Court (see picture on front cover) and also created a mock up of a bedroom for the Funday in February (see photo below).

The activity was valuable for children and families, as they got to know the plans, the architect and builders. It was helpful to the consortium, enabling them to better understand the needs and capacities of those who would be using the unit.



Naming the unit

At the February Funday people were invited to place in a wishing well possible names for the new unit.

The names were then looked at by a group of children with the Participation and Consultation worker (see Appendix 12) and the name "Rainbow House" was recommended to the Children's PFI Board, who agreed the name.

At the second Funday in August, the young woman who named the unit was presented with a certificate, and children and young people sang a song about Rainbow House and designed a logo (see front cover for logo).

Use of photographs

At every stage of development, from the selection of the site, throughout the building work, at consultation events, during visits, photos were taken and

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displayed at Broom Court, to keep the development in the children's minds and understanding. The story book (see Appendix 10) showing the building in an unfinished state was sent to all families who used Rainbow House. It was very popular with the children and parents, so popular that it got worn out by some children.

On the Opening Day pictures were displayed throughout Rainbow House of all the achievements made.



Play equipment and gardens

Children and young people indicated their preferences for play equipment at the February Funday, staff observed their preference on trips out to playgrounds during stays at Broom Court, and by marking a display at the August Funday. The summer of 2008 was very wet, which restricted some opportunities to try out equipment. Children indicated they wanted a roundabout, a climbing frame and a swing for outdoor play. The playground equipment is suitable for children and young people with or without physical impairments.

Indoors, children and their parents were emphatic about the need for a trampoline. Broom Court staff agreed, and the design of the large play area took this requirement into account, having a significant effect on the architect's design of the building.

Play as a theme runs through the design, with a soft play area, a sensory room, and a computer room, which can be used for both study and recreation. The large play area has folding doors which open into an enclosed outdoor area, giving a large internal area for play.

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The gardens were not ready when Rainbow House opened in February 2010, because of the very cold winter. For the first 6 months, there was not access to the cultivated areas. However there were two raised beds in the self help gardens, and children and staff cultivated these, producing marrows, cabbages, sweet corn and other produce which they could then eat. This was an education for both the young people and staff (see photo on back page).

Change to routine

A serious concern, of both parents and staff was how the children and young people would respond to the change involved in moving from Broom Court to the replacement building.

The building would be different, with a different shape. The bedrooms would be larger with their own bathrooms. Bedroom doors would have to be closed at night. All these were major changes, and even though they might be changes for the better, they caused anxiety. One Mum was perfectly sure her son would not be willing to go to the new unit. Another stood by the door on the Opening Day anxious of her son's reaction. Both boys were delighted with Rainbow House on their opening day visit (see Appendix 15).

Feedback about first stays was very positive. Children did sleep with their doors closed, they loved their bedrooms. Night staff noted that there was less waking at night. Children asked when could they come back, and told their parents all about the new building (see Appendix 14).

Why was it that the anxieties about change were not well founded?

- Children, young people and parents had all been kept up to date with the development of the new building.
- They had influenced the design, and had been made aware of how it would look.
- The new environment was very child friendly.
- There was plenty of light and space to move around.
- There was lots of new equipment and things to explore.
- Bedrooms had new beds- several young people commented how much they liked the beds and bedrooms on their first stays.
- There were hoists for children who needed them, and one young man commented on how pleased and surprised he was about the hoists.

In conclusion, listening to families and keeping them informed paid off in enabling change and developing a good design.

Credit and thanks are due to;

All the children and families who helped in the consultation.
All the Leeds City Council staff who got involved
The LiLAC consortium
Other providers who helped

Judith Kahn, Programme Manager, 23.03.2011

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