

Pinpoint Cambridgeshire is a Registered Charity, No: 1156920

Parent Network Meetings – October 2015

Parent Feedback on Communication with Education Services

Overview

The topic for these parent network meetings was Communication, with an aim to gather parents' views on ways to improve communication with health, social care and education services. Parents worked in groups with providers from each service to answer three questions on communication. After the group work, each service fed back the key points which had been captured on flip chart paper. Then parents had a chance to talk individually with each other and service providers over refreshments.

56 parents attended across the five meetings in Cambridgeshire's five districts. We also received feedback from 10 parents online. Each meeting was well attended by service providers from health, education and social care. Notes from the individual meetings have been recorded and can be reviewed separately on the Pinpoint website under <http://www.pinpoint-cambs.org.uk/get-involved/the-pinpoint-network/for-parents-of-disabled-children>. This is a summary of parents' comments on communication with education services from all five meetings and the online feedback.

Parent Feedback

In groups and with service providers, parents were asked to answer the following three questions on communication with education services:

1. Stop – What communication methods with education services **do not work**?
2. Keep – What current ways and forms of communication **work well** with education?
3. Start – What **new methods** would like education services to use when communicating with you?

The feedback has been collated and grouped into categories as shown below. Numbers in brackets indicate that a similar comment has been made more than once.

Schools

Stop:

- False promises! Frustration when school says they will do something and then don't
- Lack of communication not sharing information with parents and info from parents not being shared with staff (x2)
- Parents having to lead discussion
- Not getting correct info
- Stopping parents at the door (Highfields)
- Waiting for things to fail before interventions and help are put in place (x2)

Pinpoint Cambridgeshire is a Registered Charity, No: 1156920

- Conversations in corridors at school about and to parents and pupils
- Intimidating parents
- Making parents feel bad for wanting what their children are entitled to
- Inviting parents to 'Annual reviews' only to find that they are EHCP transfer reviews.
- Copying and pasting from the statement into EHCP
- School not seeming to know anything about EHCP process
- Schools using pictures of children and young people without parental consent
- Inconsistency
- The patronising attitude that 'the parents' behaviour is to blame', this must be halted
- Not involving parents or ignoring them
- Classifying SEND as one person they are individuals
- Thinking one size fit all (x2)

Keep:

- Keep communication book but make sure info is updated for parent i.e. on issues, explanations, etc., not just smiley faces. Staple letters and doctors appointments in and commenting on behaviour at home very beneficial. All must be respectful around the child though. (x5)
- Email and phone contact with school/ SENCo, regular updates to parents (x10)
- Face to face chats – personal touch (x2)
- Regular weekly communication (Gretton)
- Open door policy with school
- Listening to parents' views and planning and drafting meetings – EHC Plan (x3)
- Newsletters
- Inclusion
- Putting information leaflets in foyers e.g. SENDIASS
- Putting info on school websites
- Paying for things online (instead of sending cheques in)
- Regular IEP reviews to provide an update on progress and ways forward
- Millfield School very supportive.
- Tracey Morris – TA behaviour support, due to her skills a child was able to remain in school. (School not named)
- St John's SENCo's – done more and beyond, will always find support and carry it through

Start:

- Remembering they are 'our children', please have policies that say what you are going to do.
- Putting more information in communication book when young person is not verbal
- Being clearer with how funding is used in terms of TA time and support to parents
- Website to show the conversion funding table i.e. what hours = in £
- Schools to provide SEND information, easily accessible – near entrance ideally

Pinpoint Cambridgeshire is a Registered Charity, No: 1156920

- Home to school book to also have medical info i.e. make more specific (inhaler / medication / seizures)
- Realistic times of meetings for young people
- Relating the positives too – balance
- More face to face daily communication with school staff (especially at secondary), difficult to find out what is happening if children are non-verbal / find it hard to communicate
- Allow parents to come in and observe their child to advise staff. Get permission from other parents to do so.
- Texting parents
- Being concise
- Giving more info prior to an EHCP transfer (x2)
- Training staff more around specific diagnosis
- 'Compulsory' sharing of info from school
- Listening to parents and children (x3)
- Talking about SEN support not just EHCP, lots of confusion in schools and amongst parents
- Accepting responsibility (x2)
- Checking personal details are correct or permitted to be used
- Open meeting at schools to raise awareness of subjects such as self-harm, and services available to support / where to go for help
- School records or information as part of transition needs to be shared when child starts at next provision and make sure it has been (x5)
- More regular time with teacher to discuss progress
- Reply / respond to a parent – Teachers and SENCo at secondary school (St Ivo)
- Information from schools that clearly tells parents what child is accessing e.g. interventions, therapies
- When letters from schools are sent out hard copy with the child, make sure if child is away that they still get a letter – good to send all via email
- Including both parents in communications when requested
- Organise meetings WITH the parents. Don't just inform the when it is.
- SENCo's having up to date information
- SENCo's to have more time to dedicate to individual pupils

S.T.A.R.T.

Stop:

- Panel decisions need to be consistently given to parents but also stop having to go through process again
- Inconsistent support between the start to the finish of EHCP process
- No space being available at local special school and going to tribunal causes great distress in family
- Delays in communication
- Presuming school are sharing information

Pinpoint Cambridgeshire is a Registered Charity, No: 1156920

- The one size fits all/formula view of families
- Parents having to wait on reports
- Parents being left in the dark (x3)
- Assuming parents know the EHCP process
- Issuing final plans without agreed amendments
- Writing letters using difficult language and jargon, very hard to follow
- Not replying to emails, messages, phone calls (x2)
- When going through tribunal, stop sending information through late at night when parents have no time to take it in / prepare for next day
- Leaving voicemails

Keep:

- Email, letters and texts (x5)
- Good support from START to look at complexity of case
- Being transparent
- Replying to phone calls within 48 hours
- Information available on the 'web'
- Need to be able to clearly see who is responsible and who to contact in each situation (Info from website)

Start:

- Parents have opportunity to attend START panel meetings when decisions are being made about future provision / placement of child. Evidence is critical to these meetings and parents are in a strong position to answer / respond. It will also reduce time in extra admin and gaining further evidence as and if required.
- Honest communication about time. If we need to write short emails. Be concise about what they need
- Clearer information as to when parents will receive information re: secondary transfer, panels, etc. = timelines
- Learn more effective communication skills. Parents need their frustration to be diffused, not have angry response from START office
- Allow parents to state what their preferred communication method is. Be flexible. (x2)
- Signposting ALL pertinent information (x2)
- Clear communication about admissions, transport
- Meet the gap in provision between SEN school / mainstream (x2)
- Consistency of worker and information from start to finish of EHCP process (x3)
- Parent friendly letters
- Phone call is better for some as follow up to paperwork or to say it is coming out
- Being told who your START team caseworker is
- Being concise
- Initial letter include process and contact details
- Letter when allocated a casework officer and contact details (transfer)

Pinpoint Cambridgeshire is a Registered Charity, No: 1156920

- Communication after panel
- Looking at individual needs
- Advise where in process you are – let others know what is being done
- Educating schools how to signpost
- Taking care who you send the information to
- Opportunities to talk about difficulties before it goes through to tribunal and listen to parents

Linked working/comments on all services: schools, START and other

Stop:

- EHC Plan – 3 areas not looked at / 3 areas not communicating with each other
- Maze of links between services
- Assumptions – professionals believing they know best

Keep:

- Interventions from other services e.g. SENDIASS + START to help families with school issue
- MDT meetings very important
- SENDIASS (x2)
- Jane Tuck – Special Needs Family Worker. And other family workers, particularly with the lack of CAMHS provision.
- Core Assets Independent Supporters (x4)
- CAF
- TAC meetings
- Pinpoint
- Being very open to amendments over EHCPs
- Parenting courses, but look to see how to expand and extend
- Email, post and phone all organisations.
- The personal touch when contacting parents. It's nice to feel you know our children.

Start:

- Consistency of knowledge and message across all professionals and schools
- Communication between school and START (details of meetings etc.)
- Communication between all services around the child. Everyone's responsibility
- Reports that come to the Local Authority from all involved with the young person need to truly capture their needs
- Better coordination with health services e.g. more multi-disciplinary meetings around the child.
- Including parents in email chains about meetings, we are busy too
- Accountability of different services
- More integration in community for special school pupils (in primary)

Pinpoint Cambridgeshire is a Registered Charity, No: 1156920

- CCC website/local offer not necessarily clear re: feedback
- Communicating
- Listening to parents
- Share details of services
- Letting parents know where the papers about their child are going to
- All service providers put Local Offer on their signature block on emails
- Educating all regarding the Local Offer
- New services introduce themselves and explain role
- Using texts
- Consistency

Summary

- All schools should treat parents as equal partners in their child or young person's education. Reply, respond and communicate as much as possible.
- Keep contact open between all parties. Email, phone, text, letter. But flexibly around the family. Contact even if it is no news.
- Share information about the child or young person between schools and services. Everyone involved with that person should *know* them and their needs.
- EHCP process and timeframes should be transparent so schools and parents are aware and START adhere to them. Keep parents and school informed.
- SENDIASS and Core Assets are vital.

It is recommended that this feedback is shared with service providers and commissioners within Cambridgeshire County Council and all schools in Cambridgeshire. Any changes made to services as a result should be shared with parents via Pinpoint.