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## **Parental involvement network for parents of disabled children**

### **Notes from the Fenland network meeting**

**Date:** 16 October 2013      **Time:** 10am – 2pm

**Venue:** Oasis Community Centre, Wisbech

**Number of parents and carers:** 5

**Professionals joining at 11am:** 6

**Facilitator:** Lenja Bell, pinpoint

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This was the 15<sup>th</sup> parental involvement network meeting for Fenland.

#### **Workshop ground rules**

The workshop ground rules were put up as a reminder for participants at the beginning of the meeting.

- Everyone is valued, we respect the views of others
- Everyone will have the chance to speak, be heard and to hear the person speaking
  - No side conversations
  - No talking over others
- There are not wrong answers or silly questions
- No jargon please
- We respect confidentiality
- Anything else?
- Mobile phone on 'silent' please

#### **Updates**

Pinpoint gave updates from previous network meetings. These are outlined in the document: *Parental involvement network for parents of disabled*

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*children: feedback for October 2013 network meetings.* Additional updates were:

- pinpoint asked parents to feedback on continence services so more information can be provided for parents on the pinpoint website. pinpoint will like to hear top tips from parents and what questions they would like answered.
- pinpoint is running three Talk about Transitions events in early November. The focus is 'independent living'.
- pinpoint is running an Empowering Parents course with Home-Start for parent of children with additional needs 5 years or younger. A course is currently running in March and the next one will be in Cambridge in November. More will be scheduled in the new year.
- The parent well-being and support group that runs in Cambridge once per month on a Monday morning has had its funding extended and will now run through March 2014. Each session has a well-being topic and speaker.

## **Hot topic: changing schools (transitions)**

### **Parents only session**

Cambridgeshire County Council is reviewing its services around school transitions, from early years to adult services. A Transitions Development Manager Anne Richardson is leading the process and is keen to capture parents' views regarding their experiences and what type of support they would like. Parents were asked to look at different stages of transitions:

Early years to primary

Primary to secondary

Other – mainstream to special school, special school to mainstream school, from out of area, from home-schooling, etc.

For each of the areas, parents were asked to feedback on the following questions:

What worked well?

What didn't work?

What was missing?

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What would you like?

Parents answered the questions individually and put their answers up on the sticky wall. We then discussed the answers as a group and added more comments. Parents' comments are listed below. Comments in italics were made by service providers and commissioners during the second part of the meeting when we discussed parents' comments with them. A Burning Issues area was also created to capture more general concerns.

## Early Years to Primary

What worked well?

- SENCo support from nursery to primary school, communication
- Able to request SEN statement as parents
- Appeal

What didn't work?

- Length of appeals
- Nursery couldn't cope, had to pull him out
- Exclusion because of needs
- Out of school waiting for school place (5 months / 2 terms)
- Lack of support means parents withdraw child
- Statement sorted sooner

What was missing?

- Lack of support from nursery for statement

## Primary to secondary

What worked well?

- CAF / TAC
- Great Ed Psych
- Early statementing
- Collaboration cross county on transport – unfortunately changed
- TA's brilliant, youngest got help when moved

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What didn't work?

- Therapists – identified need then not available after these few weeks
- Had to switch schools in Year 3
- Home schooling, not enough hours given, tutor
- SENCo advising to wait for new EHC plans

What would you like?

- Portage (outreach) unit to Ely (special school), plans already put into place before schooling began in early years, communication tools in place

Mainstream to special school

- Good support – Head, Ed Psych, etc. for process and to identify school, made it quicker
- Lack of specialist schools – time taken to find, trips around county
- Wanting special school and mainstream school to agree
- Needs statement and is down to money

From out of area

- Nightmare
- Doctor and postal in Cambs, education in Norfolk, ideal schools in Cambs
- Cross border communication, delays in finding school place leading to long periods out of school
- Lack of special ASD schools in Cambs
- Special to special school, moving into area – very poor communication between LEA's

Special school to special school

- Communication with Cambs between 2 schools was excellent, transition timetable worked out and organized

In year move at primary

- Primary to primary need more help with finding school

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## Burning Issues

- 100 hours
- Funding – short breaks
- Government initiatives undermine teaching
- Fenland Cross Border Focus Group? Single plan meetings. Yaxley also.
- Peterborough PPS – need contact
- Transparency – for some reason initial SEN statement offer 15 hours only because queried, offered what needed (full 30 hours) which said expected me to, without telling me
- Transport – sibling paying for taxi

## Highlights

- Inconsistency across schools
- Is there a list of schools website
- Cross border
- Inconsistency of school views and support of statutory assessment
- Lack of training, understanding of school staff
- Help with finding school
- No information about choice, especially independent schools
- Choice? Influenced by cost
- Speed of process to find alternative school
- Parents need to be listened to and valued

## **Feeding back to service providers and commissioners**

Commissioners and service providers joined the meeting at 11am. After introductions, going over the ground rules, and a short introduction from Anne Richardson, we discussed parents' feedback from the earlier session. Responses and comments from professionals are written in italics in the above section.

The overarching themes from the discussion were:

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- The value of good communication between settings
- The need for staff to be trained to meet the needs of pupils coming into the setting
- The need for support for parents in the transition process as well as the pupil
- Help for parents in identifying the right school for their child
- The need for good quality communication between school and parents – open, honest and timely.
- The difficulties of the statementing process including knowledge of key milestones.
- The need to give support for children not in school and their parents.
- Working in partnership with parents important.
- Transport - crucial for transition to be smooth.
- The need for parents to be able initiate the statementing process
- Difficulties with services cross border
- Difficulties in moving in from out of area
- Lack of specialist placements in the area

## Group work

Anne then asked the parents to work in groups with service providers to review two items:

- An A3 page outlining the transitions process from early years to primary school with specific points of information on childcare / early learning, health care, starting school and co-ordinated support for you and your family.
- A draft website page with information about starting school.

Anne wanted to find out if the information is useful to parents and if the layout is clear. Scribes in each group noted parent feedback which Anne collected and will use to develop the work further.

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The group work ran over lunch, parents and service providers continued to talk and work together over sandwiches.

### **Evaluation**

We asked parents and service providers to feedback on the meetings by answering a few questions on a flip chart. This was voluntary so unfortunately feedback was not always gathered. Comments from professionals are in italics. See feedback below:

#### **Liked this**

Other parents' advice / experiences

Helpful ideas and information

Being able to pass concerns directly to service providers / professionals

*Small group work*

*Range of suggestions from parents*

#### **Didn't like this**

Went too quick

Always time pressure

#### **More of this**

Input from professionals on specific support

More professionals, more areas represented

Professionals from cross border e.g. Cambs / Norfolk

Ask doctors, such as Dr Hart

*Group sessions to discuss issues*

#### **Anything else?**

Borders group

AS and College

Teens and AS

AS Clubs all ages

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### **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013 from 10am – 2pm at the Oasis Community Centre, Wisbech.

### **pinpoint actions**

In response to issues raised at this meeting, we will:

1. Summarise and report findings to the Disabled Children's Action Group and SEND Project Board, and other groups that pinpoint is represented on.
2. Add the network meeting notes and summary report to the pinpoint website. Share the link in our weekly update.
3. Discuss key issues arising from the district network meetings at the county Partners in Commissioning (SEND) Group meeting in November 2013.