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Parental involvement network for parents of disabled children

Notes from the South Cambs network meeting

Date: 14 October 2013 **Time:** 6:30 – 9pm

Venue: Daisy Children's Centre, Papworth Everard

Number of parents and carers: 8

Professionals joining at 11am: 5

Facilitator: Lenja Bell, pinpoint

This was the 14th parental involvement network meeting for South Cambs.

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?

- Excellent support from Early years team
- Extra visits to class but needed more
- Meeting prior to end of previous term
- Communication and meetings (not defensiveness) between key teachers at early years and primary. Listening to each other
- Settling in sessions, pre-visits, info sharing between nursery and school.
- Proper transition discussions with class teacher. EY and primary teachers talking as equals, agreed actions
- Mix of nursery and school half day each, slow transition.
- Supportive statement process, transition from EY to primary
- *Want case studies of good practice*

What didn't work?

- Early years support fantastic, receiving school much less supportive, switching primary mainstream to primary mainstream worked well but still supported by EY
- Receiving school attitudes to support, quite difficult to get student assessment to engage with transition process and get deadlines and supporting documents, need to help to navigate process, timeline.
- At 1st primary school, SENCO was not interested.
- At first primary school, unwilling to spend money (even small amounts)

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- Parent not listened to properly – took him attacking Head Teacher to be taken seriously
- Info from nursery wasn't taken on board
- Pre-school did not give full information to school, child was not on Head's 'radar'. No diagnosis

What was missing?

- A timeline of actions that will give plenty of time, i.e. request for assessment, statement, school visits
- Delay in getting Ed Psych report (summer hols)
- Ed Psych assessment how long with child?
- Over reliance on EP report? Teacher, TA report, other specialists good
- Understanding of child's specific needs – not able to just 'fit in'
- No IEP in place quickly
- Marginalized because son not at preschool attached to school

What would you like?

- To be heard, listened too earlier in the process, TAC meetings earlier, more support/understanding for my child, value parent
- Catchment SENCO come to see us before decision due, more enthusiastic attitude.
- Time-line for parent – when to look, what should be happening
- Realistic feedback
- Constructive conversations with parents and nursery
- SENCO – full time only role
- Professionals turn up to FSP meetings, 3/8 came to ours
- Professionals to record how long assessment has been with child
- Transport a problem but resolved
- EP not a gate keeper
- Getting a statement in time before school.

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- Schools/nursery/health and education professionals - respectful of home programs when assessing a child, more valued, recognizing one to one support being given.
- Keyworker not from nursery to help join up transfer of info if desired, a choice of person
- Can't look round special school without statement
- Allow long visits to school not just a tour, good and bad days
- Mainstream SENCO's not just say 'Let's see what's in the statement' when asked what they can offer
- Allowed to visit special school before statement is finished

Primary to secondary

What worked well?

- Secondary SENCO coming to yr5 and yr6 annual review
- School allowing parents to visit and see lessons whenever
- Knowing other parents with children with SEN already at the school – real feedback
- *How SEN and pastoral dept work together is important*

What didn't work?

- The application form has errors, no space for reasons re: preferences. No leaflets with letter. *On website*
- County council offered us a place at the wrong school, not one we applied for.
- Getting the 'standard' letter which told me I could apply online, child has statement shouldn't get this

What was missing?

- Primary – secondary (special). Both schools worked fantastically – student assessment very poor at publicizing panel dates and deadlines and reading which school – notification, navigate the process, timeline
- Onus on parent to get info on schools
- Red, amber, green, rag system? *Doesn't exist.*

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- Info on transport – staying eligible

What would you like?

- More details about 'catchment' school and access to transport
- Other people's experiences, a chat board? Reviews of schools by parent of SEN children?
- School should be able to specialize with specific needs
- Independent system - parental comments captured
- Honest conversation with people working with child about best school
- Some kind of clear help/guidance about what is going to work for my child. Need advice – honest and open

Mainstream to special

- Both schools planned the transition together

Special to mainstream

- Low aspirations from special school, hard to overcome and to get listened to, parents views dismissed
- High aspiration and enthusiasm (Impington Pavilion)
- Transport was very good taxi driver
- EP initial interaction with parents and child was bad. Planned without cancelation.
- Difficult to get academic levels assessed/agreed
- Mainstream school offered a lot of support and individualized program

From out of area

- Infant to junior – info from previous teacher needs to be taken on board, level of change needs to be appreciated even at same school.
- Parent Partnership quite good.
- Didn't work – where to start? Crazy slow statementing process. No leadership to help.

Burning Issues

- **None listed**

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Comments from professionals

- Admissions and SEN Code of Practice not in line
- Term between finalized statement and school term
- Mainstream school needs to be applied for first
- SEN and pastoral care together
- Schools to publicise Parent Partnership events more
- Early notification of school needs in moving into area
- Moving in from another county with child with need – lack of documents
- No information on SEND on website re: secondary transition, needs chasing
- Special free schools go through same process as other provision

Feeding back to service providers and commissioners

Commissioners and service providers joined the meeting at 7:30pm. 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:

- The need for the transition process to start early
- 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.

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- Working in partnership with parents important.
- Transport - crucial for transition to be smooth.
- The role of the Educational Psychologist in the statementing process
- The ability for parents to visit schools including special schools
- Administrative difficulties with local authority paperwork

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.

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

No comments made

Didn't like this

No comments made

More of this

No comments made

Anything else?

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No comments made

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 10th March 2013 from 6:30 – 9pm at the Daisy Children’s Centre, Varrier Jones Drive, Papworth Everard CB23 3XQ.

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.