

#SENDtogether Collaborative Workshop 2

The second #SENDtogether Collaborative Workshop was on Friday 3 March 2017. The theme of the day was education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Introduction

Brendan Lee, the head of the SEND Service welcomed everyone to the second Lancashire Send Together Collaborative Workshop and outlined his vision for the day.

He said he hoped the day would be enjoyable and it would help all those involved to work together in the future.

Exercise 1

The first exercise of the day was focused on self identity. Everyone wrote their height, eye colour and one other feature of their identity on a piece of paper. From this others in the group had to match a description to a person. Some people were easy to find and others less so. This demonstrated we can see ourselves differently to how others see us and that the way we see, think and perceive things can be very different to the way that others do.

This showed the groups that in order to work together successfully we need to find the things we have in common which sometimes means we have to compromise to make things work.

Presentations

There were presentations from a parent and a young person about their journey through SEND in Lancashire:

"My name is June McCombe. I am the single parent of two young boys with additional needs and gave my journey through the conversion from statement to EHC plan process.

"When this was achieved with me, my oldest child at the centre of the discussion, it made the process much easier and much less daunting than I first imagined, with help from SENDIASS and Barnardo's.

"The 'All About Me' section helped me and my son to move schools and explain his and my needs and wishes."

"My name is Emma Riley. My education journey has been very hard with many stops upsets, pauses, frustration and starts.

"With the help of Barnardo's and Lancashire County Council my future now looks brighter. I have drawn a line under the past, there has been many lessons learnt.

"My wishes are being heard and I look forward to making a difference in the future for young people, adults and professionals."

Representing your views

The people at the workshop were reminded they represent others from a range of support networks across Lancashire and that sometimes it can be hard to represent conflicting views. The workshops can help everyone to be heard.

There are other ways you can present your thoughts and ideas. The Lancashire Parent Carer Forum can help parents express their views on SEND services either at a local or a strategic level. The young people POWAR can listen and be your voice for you.

Exercise 2

Budgets are stretched for everyone at the moment. To show how hard it is to manage a limited budget successfully, an imaginary town called Lancaswell was created.

The task was to deliver a range of services in Lancaswell, including education, emergency services, a place of worship and a range of things for residents to do. All within a limited budget.

People were split into small groups, where they discussed how they would fund each service in order to meet the needs of all the people within the town.

It soon became clear the groups weren't able to agree how the money should be spent and that hard decisions would have to be made that not everyone would agree with.

The groups were shown how additional funding requirements such as a budget cut and the introduction of a new transport link in Lancaswell could put huge pressure on already limited resources.

This exercise was designed to make the groups think about how we can work together to provide what a community needs within a reduced budget, and what we need to know about each other in order to achieve this.

Shaping services in Lancashire

The collaborative workshops are about shaping the services in Lancashire for children and young people with SEND.

One of the first ways it was agreed we would do this was to review the EHC plan processes. In order to do this a survey was distributed online through social media and websites and at local forums.

This showed one percent of requests for education, health and care needs assessments came from multi-agency 'Team Around the Family meetings'.

Forty-one percent came from parent and carers and three percent from young people themselves. This means that just over half of the requests for education, health and care needs assessments have been made by schools and other professionals.

In addition, 64% of parents and carers thought an EHC plan was important because it helped them to work alongside schools to ensure any support needed would be in place.

Parents and carers also felt that the EHC plan should be made simpler, shorter and more functional and that there should be a guidance booklet for all those involved in the process.

The survey produced many different responses that sometimes contradicted one another and so it was hard to get a good picture of what was being said. We need to learn from this when carrying out surveys in the future so that we are able to get a clearer understanding of people's fears.

The feedback from this survey also led the SEND service to develop a new EHC plan document. This work is still in progress and the draft document was given to the collaborative workshop. In groups we continued to make Lancashire's EHC plan a better document.

It was agreed that all partners need to have a voice in the process to make sure we work in harmony and to achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families.

And so people present at the workshop will need to work with members of the whole community to make this happen. It's clear we need to work in partnership and collaborate so that we build on and use each other's strengths, abilities and expertise to make a real difference in Lancashire.

Next steps

What we have learned from this workshop is that we still have work to do. Going forward we will start to use our own networks to raise awareness of this work and encourage others to act as our representatives, so that more voices can be heard across Lancashire. We will:

- promote the Lancashire Parent Carer Forum as the agreed representative body and voice of parents and carers
- promote and enhance the POWAR network as the representative body and the voice of children and young people
- use these forums to seek ideas and bring them back to the next collaborative workshop.