FEEDBACK FROM THE WHO HEARS US? – TOUCHING BASE – WORKSHOP EVENT ON COMMUNICATION.

The first section is a reminder of some of the barriers identified both through conversation, consultation and feedback in the past 12 months and during the event.

Some of the Barriers identified to effective communication with children/young people and their families.

- Some parents find it difficult to allow their child to be seen alone – even when they are over 14.
- There are some language and cultural barriers, in schools, courts, care, health etc.
- A significant proportion of parents of those with learning needs have a disability or learning need too.
- *"Why is it always our job to make sure every service knows what is going on. We do not have admin support to allow us to contact everyone all the time if things change slightly. I hope the hub will help this."*
- Some parents have a stereotypical view of social workers – ie they are going to take the children away.
- Some parents refuse to engage with social care visits, refuse to attend meetings (and then complain that they know nothing)
- Non-verbal children. Some parents feel that no one else knows or understands them and it may be a challenge to spend time doing so.
- Some children and young people are scared to speak out – they are afraid of or do not trust the services trying to help them.
- Time restraints on staff mean the case load is far too high and engagement is reduced.
- Parents ask for information. But don't read it when it comes! Then it's is somehow our fault for not telling them individually.
- *"We should have a family's communications person who can just call up people when meetings are cancelled or deadlines are missed. I bet it would be more than part time"*
- Services identify a lack of resources or communication tools, but recent work has identified that most things are available when identified for individual children/young people. But often only for schools.
- *"We can never get hold of social workers, and then they don't know what is going on either. "*
- Parents have said that the tools needed to enable their child to communicate are available but that it takes a lot of time to access some of them.
- Mainstream have little understanding of the resources available but then there are some who ensure that there are a variety of ways to communicate.
- Parents and services do not seem to feel that the outcome for the children is actually a SHARED responsibility. Information sharing is vital.

Pupils advice to services

- *"Listen to people."*
- *"Everyone needs to be treated fairly even if you don't like them."*
- *"Tell us and each other where things are not going to plan. Mum and dad get mad when they don't hear reasons."*
- *"Sometimes my mum/social worker or teacher is not the one who knows what I want."*
- *"You need to try to help everyone even if they are not your friend. "*
- *"reat people how you want to be treated. "*
- *"Didn't we look at quality standards for this?"*

- o *"Work with us and for us not at us. "*
- o *"Ask me to help you. If you just ask everyone I will think you don't really need me."* (My mum says that.)

What do we do well ?

- School engage more with parents – engagement – communication – trust.
  - o 1:1 time
  - o Staff availability
  - o Ipods and apps.
  - o Eye gaze
  - o Time and space for families and children.
  - o School diaries – websites
  - o Information sharing
  - o Safe Places
  - o Confidential discussions
  - o Ensure CYP is always sought as part of meetings and assessments / reviews either prior to or during meetings
  - o Special schools have lots of tools are and working together more and will be sharing training more.

- Ed Psych, IRO's are most effective in including a 'child' throughout the document they are writing for. There is still a need many services to ensure that it is actually the 'voice of the child' that is in their 'comment' section or through the document. However, there is a closing gap.
- Foster carers communicate well
- NYAS – take time and get to know child and family – learn child's communication so parent is not only translator S
- Ed Psych, communication is good
- It is good when a service ensures that they are:
  - o Making time and space to work with children and families
  - o Adapting for the needs of each family and child.
  - o Residential trips – time and space, professionals create games to encourage participation.
  - o Adults modelling wellbeing and being aware of social cues.
- Foster Carers communicate well
- Adapting methods of communication to individual children. -parents have said that there is often support to ensure that they can communicate with their child.
- Clarity of meetings
- It is really refreshing when agencies work together
  - o Pupil Passports and
  - o 1 Page Profiles
- Youth socialisation –
  - o Mentoring

- o BBQ on the beach – and trips /residentials
- o Time to ask questions, time to create and think about holidays – transport – How we get there.
- All present found it useful to come together to discuss issues. Most would like to do so again if we can get Mgrs to agree/be involved.
- The Donna Louise Trust has some great resources and will often allow other services to book to use them.
- The Free Spirit PVI group has some great resources, has anyone asked if they will allow others to use the ones they don't?
- The Special schools have resources and training that they are starting to identify where they can share.
- Health service and Speech and Language therapy hold massive resource inventories. Do any of them get shared though?
- SEND Services and SENCOs can help in schools and colleges. They need to know what is wanted and will try and make sure it is able to help communication happen.

What don't we do so well and what are some of the key issues?

- Social workers, health workers and other's do not always take the time to get to know individuals and how they, and their parents, communicate with each other.
- Translators for ESL /sign/Makaton not always available, particularly when sharing information or during phone calls which excludes YP
- Taking the time to explore which communication method may suit the child and the parents/carers
- Dealing with perceptions of LA or others.
- *'Some services are slow to act, parents are left with no information as to why and are struggling. '*
- Short term respite. By time the child settles and the staff learn to communicate effectively there are limited opportunities to make a difference.
- Working together with other services
- Children and not given enough time or opportunities to give a considered view for reviews/assessments.
- Quality of reporting of those views is often poor in many schools/services.
- Body language is hard to control for many of our young people and children, and indeed some of the parents who have their own challenges.
- Parents will often try to skip the line of communication to get direct to senior managers, causing significant delays in action.
- *Why are the views of the child not included throughout the reviews, not just in one place?*
- *'Why do we always hear from the same few parents at meetings. I don't always feel confident to speak out if my view is different. '*
- PEGIS is not the only group working with parents and with children who find it hard to communicate.
- GDPR is becoming a barrier to information sharing.
- GDPR is the new excuse just like Data Protection.
- Overpowering personalities in some youth clubs.
- The voice of the child in EHC Reviews is not what it could be.
- Forcing reluctant speakers to communicate verbally .
- Communicating timescales for transitioning and enabling / funding access.
    - o Wishes vs reality..
    - o Time to get advice and ehcp with turning 18
    - o Who is paying for what

- o Assumptions of unrealistic expectations.
- o Priorities
- o Switching social working is disruptive
- o
- We add to the bullying of children by singling them out in the school day.
- There are parents and voluntary groups who will offer to help with readying but some schools turn down the offer.
- Services do not necessarily understand the particular communication needs of the youngsters, and do not have the 'time' to get to know them effectively. This means that communication is sometimes 'guessed' or 'misinterpreted' with no ill intention.
- Peers not understanding communication systems across service provision.
- Different services have their own acronyms and languages and often have different timescales e.g. Transition
- Bringing agencies together often does not happen – e.g. EHCP plan reviews / passing information if not attending a meeting.
- Transition from children to adult services, including medical
- Agencies seem to be in conflict or competition.   Some agencies think is it someone else's role to communicate effectively and 'train' the others.
- Understanding of the different services and what is out there.
- Don't read resources when they are made available – or don't have them notified.
- Middle management barriers to communication. (draw bridges, workloads – etc)
- Having options for communication
- Teasing
- 'Why don't parents show respect to the services that are trying to help them?' - Young Person
- When someone dominates the conversation
- Bullying – lack of clarity of what services are doing
- People who do not respect others who are trying to help
- Arguments between services at meeting (and between parents and services.)
- Speakers should have stayed for the discussions to clarify their presentations and to add to the outcome of the event.
- *'Parents who advocate for their children often feel like 'THAT PARENT'.'*
- 'Managers don't always produce outcomes in a timely manner.'
- *'Parents sometime use the wrong route to get services to work with them and go direct to managers. We cannot facilitate things any faster than using the service routes.'*
- Alongside communication needs are the emotional needs and overflow of families, and sometimes staff too. But staff can't insult or shout at parents.
- Some people are scared of challenging the behaviour of parents in meetings.
- Lack of transparency with some education and care reviews mean that personal experiences are unable to be shared member of staff who spends a child over time should have a voice in their review.
  (Remove excess/unnecessary people with relevant information / choice of comfort.

Some things that will help

Using Social Media and U Tube help understanding of communication of children with complex needs.

- From the professional stand point – not appearing nervous or uncomfortable. Be willing to try.

Be aware that some staff are uncomfortable and nervous and may be new to their roles or to the families or may not have come up against forceful others

- The word 'complex' is overused and services like CAMHS need to understand that not every child with a disability has a learning difficulty.
- Allocate time – Managers need to know the challenges of communication with some children and families take longer than with others.
- As part of lifetime planning… bring service time frames together for transitions.
- If you feel you are not able to contribute effectively to reviews – send information. If not be prepared not to like the resulting actions.
- Understanding of the different services and what is out there.   Hold an event in 2019 for the services to explain what it is they do and what tools they have to promote effective communication
- Ensure that we ask advice, tips, information from those that know the child well
- Take time – 1:1
- Get to know the child/young person through the phone, picking them up from school or just after school, and taking the time to 'listen' regardless of the method they use to communicate.
- 'Mainstream children need to be included more – actually all children need to be included '
- *'I worry that the LA will only hear the views that it wants to hear.'*
- Use Social Media more effectively such as u-tube to help enhance communication and understanding of children with complex needs. (Baring in mind that many u-tube clips are American and they use different sign language.)
- Services need to communicate and work better together AND with children, young people and their families / care settings.
- Communication training for services, support staff and separately parents may well provide an opportunity for them to understand and control their body language and expressions during meetings and events.
- Stimulate during holidays – beyond holiday hunger.
- Make EHCP reviews more focused on the child's contribution. They contribute to their lives every day.
- More activities (Aiming High and Space)
- SEND Advisors need to learn BSL and Makaton – or learn the basics at least.
- Children need to be encouraged to communicate differently in different environments
- Reluctant speakers – allow them to communicate with others (in their own way?)
- Use visual prompts
- Use other means – e.g. hand up instrument to answer register.
- How useful is the EHC Hub, when is it ready?
- Share passports and templates with mainstream schools, share info regarding service transitions.
- Need access to staff who have had previous dealings with the child.
- EHC Hub needs to be 'out there'
- Young people's newsletter – do we share with everyone or EHCP ?
- Parents could buddy up with new people – or we could have a parent's as mentor's scheme that is independent.
- Review dates and times of meetings – **let's not just bring children out of class and make their school day even more difficult.**

- Services need to be more aware of their own resources and how to use them.
- Open days should be opened up to other services who work with children
- There should be better stimulation for children at meetings/reviews – look at reasons for poor attendance.
- EHCP/assessments include those key people who spend time with the child or young person, including friends and youth workers.
- Take account of the views of playground and dinner supervisors. They often talk to the most vulnerable children during break times.
- Send resources, or offer specific small grants to schools and nurseries to improve understanding of body
- language – social stories – BSL and perhaps Makaton.
- Raise awareness of alternative ways to communicate with young people and gains views – eg tools and resources.
- LA and schools should make training available outside – (No Empty Seat policy.?)
- Look at flexibility of hours.
- Look at ways of improving communication – need to have a working group to look at inter service communication and what resources – follow on from event in September?
- Educating families and those working with children with communication challenges the importance of prioritising communication methods to enhance life chances for the future.
- We need to support mainstream schools and children in communication – mainstream schools need including in gathering the voice of SEND. Representation awareness workshops already available on request from LTMV project.   Perhaps we could advertise this.
- Someone should have access to all the schools to hear any child.   (Perhaps 'open door' at schools – potteries – Hospital as well as schools – LTMV?)

So, what happens next?
- Touching Base - The Communications and Engagement Strategy/toolkit to include 'What – where and how resource list, will encourage respect for all – children, young people, families and services supporting them and identify training available to support engagement of children and families where there are significant challenges and signpost to resources and services.
- We will hold a communications event in 2019/20 to identify change and explore the roles of the different services engaged with our most challenged families.
- Friendship Posters will aim to include alternative form of contact within layout to promote additional communication.
- We will explore the use of social media to engage children. The Listen to My Voice FB page is almost ready and we are exploring a bespoke children/young people's web page to feed into the Local Offer LTMV page. We will encourage services and schools to share their good practice stories and CYP views through this media.
- Working together with parents is important but we need other parents to engage at events and with consultations. We are exploring ways of doing this with individual services. Future plans include engaging parent champions for services from among users to enhance communication through local conversation sessions.
- We will explore with the Milton Youth Group the potential development of a bi annual regular newsletter, 'Did Good' stories, Role Model/Care, School Leavers input?
- Strategic managers do want to engage and listen, so we will explore an annual communication conference and annual young people/parent carer conference to enable that to happen in a focused way.
- Teachers are more on board around finding different ways to support children, so we will continue to encourage them to continue to share that practice through SENCO forums and annual conference

- We will explore with schools and trainers enabling other services to places if there is a possibility that the course will run with vacancies.
- Needs led service development relies on all those relevant to young people/adults and children being able to contribute in some way to EHCP/Transition planning and review. We will explore ways to enhance this and ask for advice, tips, information from those that know the child well
- Mixed group and parents specific communication / body language training has been offered to PEGIS and service staff and will run between February / June 2019. This training will be offered free of charge to parents and carers.
- Feeling Supported, Welcomed Safe and Happy documents and leaflets for young people will include a section of the importance of effective communication.