

Informal Meeting with Parents4Change

23 November 2021

Attendees

Parents4Change

Kath Allison - Chair of Parents4Change
Kath Mellor - Vice-Chair of Parents4Change
Ruth Johnson - Treasurer of Parents4Change
Nicola Pearson - Member of Parents4Change

Local Authority

Councillor Dennis McCabe - Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel
Councillor Luke Mason - Vice-Chair of Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel

Caroline Cannon - Strategic Lead for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service
Kerrie Scraton - Head of Service for Children with Disabilities

Georgina Moore - Democratic Services Officer

Discussion

At the meeting, in summary, the following points were made:

- Parents4Change is a parent forum group. The group offers help and support to parents/carers of children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs.
- Parents4Change has organised several conferences over the past few years, since the implementation of the SEND reforms. The next conference is scheduled for March 2022. Conferences are planned jointly by Parents4Change and the Local Authority. Each conference aims to provide important information, advice and guidance to parents/carers. The topics selected for discussion reflect the concerns of parents/carers, which have been reported to Parents4Change such as transport; the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The conference planned for March 2022 will primarily seek to improve co-production and encourage parents/carers to join the workstreams of the SEND Strategic Group. The conferences provide valuable information and are well attended by parents/carers across the town. To attend conferences, transport is provided by Parents4Change to those parents/carers who do not have access to a vehicle.
- Currently, a primary concern for parents/carers is transport, due to a shortage of drivers. Although school transport is being provided to enable children to access education, arranging transport to access respite care is proving difficult.
- Parents4Change is involved in the SEND Strategic Group and its workstreams. By working in partnership with the Local Authority and Health, Parents4Change has been involved with developing and reviewing:
 - the SEND Strategy and sharing it with families;
 - the EHCP process, updating paperwork and introducing a single point of contact for parents/carers;
 - the neurodevelopment pathway, which is a new pathway to support children and young people who are on the autistic spectrum;
 - the Local Offer to produce a directory, improve the accessibility of information and advertise the support and advice available for parents/carers;
 - a Parents4Change newsletter aiming to recruit new members to the group, highlight issues raised by parents/carers and provide information on the Local Offer and drop-in sessions;

- the speech and language pathway;
- the framework for short breaks and the commissioning process for identifying providers;
- the eligibility criteria for children with disabilities;
- the early years service to provide greater support in the community and increase the number of children and young people with SEND being educated in mainstream provision; and
- supported internships in the local area to assist with getting young people with additional needs into work.

Parents4Change provides constructive challenge to the Local Authority and Health and the forum's input enables the local area to identify problems and implement solutions, ensuring families are well supported in Middlesbrough.

Parents4Change is a vital advocate of parents/carers and the work of the forum is commended. The involvement of Parents4Change in developing/improving services and practices is highly valued.