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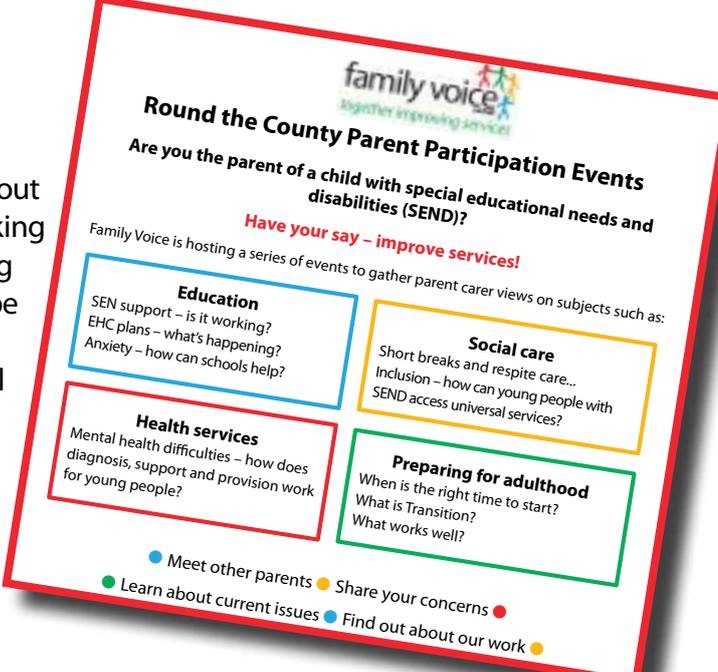
If there are issues you'd like to see in future newsletters, contact admin@familyvoice.org.uk or 0753 589 5748.

Family Voice parent participation events

Family Voice has been busy in November running events around the county to find out what you feel about services – what's working for your family and what isn't. We're putting what you told us into a report, which will be shared with the Local Authority, Health and Social Care services, as well as national government and bodies who have an influence on how services are provided.

If you were unable to attend but would like your experience or views to be included (completely anonymously) please do contact Kate, our membership administrator, at membership@familyvoice.org.uk or ring 07950 302937.

Making sure your views are heard is what Family Voice is here to do, so if you have any comments about where and when our Parent Participation events were held and how you prefer to let us know what you think and feel, then please tell Kate about that, too.



family voice
together improving services

Round the County Parent Participation Events

Are you the parent of a child with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)?

Have your say – improve services!

Family Voice is hosting a series of events to gather parent carer views on subjects such as:

- Education**
SEN support – is it working?
EHC plans – what's happening?
Anxiety – how can schools help?
- Social care**
Short breaks and respite care...
Inclusion – how can young people with SEND access universal services?
- Health services**
Mental health difficulties – how does diagnosis, support and provision work for young people?
- Preparing for adulthood**
When is the right time to start?
What is Transition?
What works well?

● Meet other parents ● Share your concerns ●
● Learn about current issues ● Find out about our work ●

Season's Greetings
from all at Family Voice



The role of a Family Voice representative

If you're not already a Family Voice rep, have you considered finding out more about becoming one? Your skills as a parent could be exactly what are needed to represent the view of families to decision-makers and providers. Family Voice reps are paid for their time and reasonable expenses and the work is very varied. You need to be:

- the parent or carer of a child or young person with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).
- keen to make sure our children and young people have the best possible provision.
- willing to learn how to be effective and objective in communicating parents' concerns.

Representatives receive training and support and the chance to discuss things with each other. We encourage new reps to 'shadow' an experienced rep to begin with. The role could involve just a couple of hours a month or several hours a week. It is up to the individual and the kinds of work that are in progress. The quotes below will give you a flavour of what might be involved. If you would like to know more, speak to a Family Voice ambassador, email Kate on membership@familyvoice.org.uk or ring 07950 302937.

"I helped to interview prospective nursing students."

"I give a parent's view about Local Authority leaflets and newsletters. Sometimes they don't realise they're not being clear or not using language everyone understands."

"Having parents on a committee changes everything. Decision-makers can't forget that their policies are going to affect real people and real families. They usually haven't walked in our shoes. We can make sure they understand what we need."

"Sometimes in a meeting there are abbreviations flying around: CCGs, LSAs, EHCPs, etc. 'Sorry,' I say, 'What does that mean?' and half a dozen people round the table don't know either. You never need to worry about asking for things to be made clear."

"I don't talk about my daughter in meetings, but I do talk generally about children like her and her friends, and I feel I'm helping them all if my input changes just one thing for the better."

"I don't have much free time – none, really! But being a Family Voice Rep reminds me that as well as being A's mum, and making a difference to his life, I can make a difference for other families like ours, too."

"Being a FV Rep has made me feel much less cynical about decision-makers. I wasn't expecting that. They want to help – they need us to make sure that help is what we really need not what they think we need."

"I've learnt such a lot. Seeing provision from both sides gives me a better understanding of what should be possible."



SAVE THE DATE

Annual Conference
Saturday 18th March 2017

John Innes Centre, Norwich NR4 7UH



Local Offer consultation

Norfolk County Council is very interested to know how people currently use the Local Offer website and how they would like to see it developed in the future. They are organising a series of events across Norfolk so that you can give your views. The dates and venues are:

24/02/17 King's Centre, Great Yarmouth

28/02/17 West Norfolk Professional Development Centre, King's Lynn

03/03/17 Fakenham Academy

07/03/17 Ayton House, Wymondham

15/03/17 Green Britain Centre, Swaffham

21/03/17 Norwich Professional Development Centre

28/03/17 The Bell Hotel, Thetford (provisional)

30/03/17 The Atrium, North Walsham

Three sessions will run each day at 10–12, 1–3 and 4–6. If you would like to book on to one of these events, please email send@norfolk.gov.uk

SEND e-Newsletter

Have you signed up for the e-Newsletter from the Local Offer? All you have to do is go on to the Local Offer website (www.norfolk.gov.uk/send) and click the Newsletters tab on the home page. It's full of news for families with children and young people with SEND and also highlights parts of the Local Offer you may not have explored.

Family Voice Steering Group

You may not know that Family Voice is run by a steering group of members – all parent carers of children and young people with SEND – who take on responsibility for particular aspects of our work. They are:

Chair: Tracey Sismey

Vice Chair: Alison Furniss

Treasurer: Trevor Wang

Ambassadors Lead: Rachel Clarke, supported by Tracey Sismey

Representatives Lead: Alison Furniss, supported by Tracey Sismey

Admin Lead: Cheryl Bould

Policies Lead: Lorraine DeVere

Communications Lead: Nicola Baxter

Conference & Events Lead: Emma Parncutt with Claire Jack

Safeguarding Lead: Cheryl Bould

We also have two key posts that make our work possible:

Membership manager: Kate Draycott (membership@familyvoice.org.uk and 07950 302937)

Administration Manager: Bernadette Pallister (admin@familyvoice.org.uk and 07535 895748)



Changing places

A Family Voice parent has made representations to the Local Offer about the lack of Changing places (fully accessible toilets) in Norwich and in Norfolk generally. This is an issue that affects many families.

Norfolk County Councillor Emma Corlett has offered to put forward a motion to the full Council that it should be a condition of granting planning permission for new public places that fully accessible toilets are included.

It would help very much if parents support this initiative by leaving their feedback on the Local Offer SEND website saying this is an important issue, not just for our children, but for adults in the community as well. The link to the website is:

<http://online.norfolk.gov.uk/localofferfeedback/default.aspx>

Lee Scott's SEND report

In March 2016, the former Secretary of State Nicky Morgan invited Lee Scott to undertake a short project looking at the experiences children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and their parents, have of schools and colleges. Lee Scott has years of experience working with young people with SEND – he was the former Prime Minister's Special Needs Tsar in 2014, and has been an advocate for disability campaigns, including the UK Autism Foundation. His fieldwork put him in touch with more than 200 parents and young people.

In summary, Lee Scott's findings were:

- effective communication with families is critical to securing trust and more likely to result in a good experience of the system and agreement in defining support and outcomes for children with SEND. Effective communication between agencies is also key and the report says that government should continue to promote the importance of this and help share good practice.

- there should be more consistency across the country in how the law is being interpreted and the SEND system applied.

- schools and colleges should be encouraged to provide support for children and young people with basic health needs – such as medication.

- there could be more transparency over how SEND funding is used.

- more could be done locally to support young people with SEND into training and work.

The publication of the report was announced at the Contact a Family / National Network of Parent Carer Forums Conference on 1 November by the DfE. (Family Voice Norfolk is a member of NNPCF.) The full text of the report can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-experiences-with-schools-and-colleges>

New Interim Director of Children's Services

As you may have seen in the papers, Andrew Bunyan is the new interim Director of Children's Services following the departure of Michael Rosen. He is from a social work background and has previously managed all aspects of children's services work and has worked briefly at the DfE.

