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If there are issues you'd like to see in future newsletters, contact admin@familyvoice.org.uk or 07535 895748.

Family Voice Norfolk's Seventh Annual Conference 18 March 2017



Emma Parncutt, Conference and Special Events Lead for Family Voice Norfolk, reports on this year's Conference:

As in previous years, the Conference was held at the John Innes Centre (JIC). 212 delegates and a further 80 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) professionals, providers and charities, joined the Family Voice team to take part in this extremely popular event that focuses on the sharing of information and experience. Also in attendance were invited guests, including Dr Wendy Thomson, Chief Executive of Norfolk County Council, and other elected members of NCC.

From the moment the doors opened, there was a hive of activity as parent carers queued to be registered and the speed-dating bookings were snapped up. The stand-holders immediately swung into action, offering advice and support to delegates.



The 'market place' this year featured 34 stands, covering a wide range of topics of interest to parent carers. Having so much information gathered in one place is something that delegates particularly appreciated.

The key-note speakers were Dr Nick Hammond and Nicola Palmer, both from the Educational Psychology and Specialist Support Service (EPSS) at Norfolk County Council. They spoke about the Person-Centred Review (PCR) project they have been working on for the past two years in Norfolk, giving key information on the



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research and pilot studies they have conducted around the county. The result of this work will be to roll out PCRs across Norfolk with the SEN and Virtual School teams later this year. This speech stirred much debate late into the day, with parents interested to find out from other professionals how this approach might help their child.

The morning's workshop sessions covered five topics: Short Breaks; Legal Aspects of Transition into Adulthood; Complex Care; Education, Health and Care Plans; and Family Voice: who we are and what we do.

The Short Breaks workshop led by Rachel Gates was full to capacity with standing room only, showing what an important service parent carers consider this to be. The Legal Aspects of Transition Planning session was also very well attended; Frank Crowdy gave an extremely informative presentation, leaving his audience with much to think about.



The Complex Care workshop has ensured that new links have been forged between the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and Family Voice Norfolk. The Education, Health and Care Plan workshop broke down barriers between parents and Children's Services by being open and honest around its ongoing operational issues. We were also delighted by the number of parents who attended the Family Voice presentation and ultimately joined as new members.



Lunch was this year held in the Atrium, a wonderfully relaxing space to the side of the Conference Centre, providing much needed seating for all the attendees and a chance to refresh and refuel.

At lunchtime, once again, we held our speed-dating sessions in the Auditorium. As in previous years, these appointments were snapped up within the first hour of the day. For the uninitiated, the speed-dating event allows individual parent carers to book a one-to-one session with a professional. There were 16 speed-dating professionals and thus 64 sessions available over the hour.

After lunch, the afternoon workshops quickly filled up and were as follows: Short Breaks; Adult Outcomes: Realizing a Shared Vision; Norfolk's Local Offer; Starfish: Learning Disabilities, Child and Mental Health Service; Family Voice: who we are and what we do.

The Short Breaks and Family Voice Norfolk presentations were repeated from the morning sessions, providing a second chance for parents and families to take part in these very interesting workshops. Claire Jones and Wayne Doman from Norfolk's Local Offer gave us a fast-paced tour of the website, imparting much knowledge and information to their audience, while the Starfish Clinical Psychologists talked us through the intricacies of living with and



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supporting children and young people with learning disabilities and mental health issues. Finally, Frank Crowdy gave a second excellent but different workshop on the Transition Services available to families in Norfolk.

The 'market place', comprising 34 stands, included sports charities, local forum groups, many local and national SEND charities, healthcare organisations, NHS service providers, services from the Local Authority, educational organisations, and others. The stands provided many opportunities to network, swap ideas and gather information. This is a very useful resource for parent carers and professionals alike.

This year, Dan Grimmer, public affairs correspondent for the *Eastern Daily Press* and *Evening News*, joined us for the morning session. He was very impressed by the positive impact of the Conference on parent carers and the work of Family Voice Norfolk. Subsequently, articles appeared both online (EDP) and in the *Evening News* ('Help at hand for families of young with special educational needs': 18/03/17 and 20/03/17 respectively).

A new addition for this year was the Family Voice Norfolk area in 'The Link' exhibition space. Here, our Ambassador team worked tirelessly to create a relaxed and informal area where parent carers and their families could find out more about the work of Family Voice. Families were invited to listen to our team presentation, chat with the Ambassadors, and look at the exhibition boards, which were crammed with information.

We also asked for feedback from families: there were conference feedback questionnaires; the Parent Carer Journey banner; postcards asking for comments; and opportunities to share information and top tips with other families.

This was a definite success that will be developed further for next year, not least because it helped us to gain many new members.



The Family Voice Norfolk area gave parent carers the chance to find out more about Family Voice, exchange tips and strategies, and give important feedback about what is currently working well – or not so well – for their families. This kind of information is vital to help Family Voice to represent the views of parent carers and work to improve services for our families.

Our feedback questionnaire was completed by parents and practitioners alike. We had 147 responses, giving feedback on what was most useful about the event and what could have been better. The highlights were that a massive 93% of those feeding back would definitely recommend the Conference to a friend, and 90% of the respondents would like to attend next year. This is a wonderful endorsement of the day.

Full details of workshop content and feedback from families and practitioners will be published on the Family Voice website in April. If you would like a copy, please email admin@familyvoice.org.uk or write to Family Voice (Norfolk), PO Box 1290, Long Stratton, Norwich, NR15 2HD.

Family Voice Norfolk would like to thank all the families, professionals and volunteers who helped to make the Conference such a success.

See you next year!



It's never too early to save the date...

Family Voice Norfolk Eighth Annual Conference

will take place on

**Saturday, 10 March
2018**

You are invited to...

Family Voice Norfolk AGM

on Wednesday, 17 May 2017
at Ayton House, Ayton Road,
Wymondham NR18 0QQ

If you would like to come, contact
Bernadette on 07535 895748 or
admin@familyvoice.org.uk

Family Voice Parent Carer Participation Events 2016

Family Voice Norfolk organised a series of nine Parent Carer Participation Events in November 2016 at venues around the county. The aim was to gain feedback about the experiences and views of families of children with SEND in Norfolk across the full breadth of services provided or commissioned by the Local Authority, Commissioned Health Services, Early Years, Schools and Further Education Providers. It's vital that Family Voice has as full a picture as possible of how things are working for parent carers in order to work with decision makers and provision planners to improve services for families in Norfolk.

Parent carers spoke about a great many issues that concerned them, among which the following points, both negative and positive, were most prominent:

- generally, a more negative view this year than previously about their child's experience in school
- a perception that they had to apply for an Education, Health & Care Plan to get reasonable adjustments made within school/college

- some positive examples of families being involved in EHCP reviews at school
- but a sense that it is a post-code lottery as to who gets an EHCP
- concern about the inaccessibility of Plan Co-ordinators;
- a lack of advice on personal budgets;
- some improvement in transport problems, but increased concern about the practice of subcontracting;
- frustration at having to battle to get access to Health Services;
- a desire for formal diagnoses in order to know how to help their child;
- difficulty in accessing funded Short Breaks;
- overwhelming support for the county's transition forums.

The full report can be found on the Family Voice website at <http://www.familyvoice.org.uk> under Parent Carer Participation Events 2016. If you need a printed copy, contact Kate on membership@familyvoice.org.uk or telephone 07950 302937.



The awards below are for schools and colleges, celebrating really good SEND practice. If you feel that your school has worked very well in partnership with parents (see category 2, below), they will need you to help them enter. A link to the entry form can be found on the Local Offer at www.norfolk.gov.uk/send

The Root Of It National Special Educational Needs Awards 2017



Celebrating good special needs and disability practice across the UK



We know you are amazing and put in all the effort to make the real difference for those children with SEND in your setting. We understand the late nights, the early mornings, all to see the impact in your students. Now is your time to celebrate!

Your chance to share the wonderful practice happening in your school or college. Tell us how you go above and beyond to make your setting stand out.

Enter the 2017 National SEN Awards

Show how you go above and beyond in one of 4 categories:

1. Most inclusive practice across a school;
2. Partnership with Parents (must be co-written with parents);
3. Most innovative special needs intervention;
4. Best use of external special needs professional.

Judges from:



Download your entry form here: <https://df186.infusionsoft.com/app/form/get-entry-form>

For more info and previous winning entries, please go to www.senawards.com

Make sure you enter the 2017 Awards before 30th April!



