



Family Voice Norfolk Conference
Saturday 10th March 2018 at John Innes Centre

With over 40 stands, 10 workshops and 15 speed-daters, Family Voice Norfolk's eighth annual Conference for parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) was our largest ever. As usual it was held at the John Innes Centre and more than 300 people attended. Our Conference has become an



important event for parent carers and this was highlighted by Wally Webb, who came along to feature the Conference on Radio Norfolk just before the start. The keynote speaker, Jonathan Stanley, gave a presentation on redesigning the mental health system for children and young people in Norfolk. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is a hot topic nationally and has been under a great deal of scrutiny in Norfolk, so it was fitting that we gave it centre stage at this Conference, both through Jonathan's presentation and our workshops.



As usual, following the keynote speech, the first five workshops took place, co-hosted by a member of Family Voice and a speaker from the local authority or health services or a service provider, service manager or commissioner. These covered Personalised Travel Payments (PTPs), Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), Preparing for Adult Life (the most popular workshop), Health Services identifying Pre-School

Age Children to Norfolk County Council, and Speech and Language Therapy services. The last is under review currently by Norfolk County Council and has been raised as a concern by many parents. The provider, East Coast Community Healthcare, gave a well-received presentation and fielded questions from parents.

In the afternoon sessions, there were workshops on Independent Travel Training, Health Transition and Annual Health Checks, the Children and Young Person section of the Local

Offer, Carers Matter – What Matters to You?, and Questions and Answers on CAMHS. All the presenters were very knowledgeable and engaged, which was appreciated by parents. Two hundred people attended the workshops and most of the presentations will shortly be available on our website.

Since we were able to expand into an additional area of the conference complex, we increased the number of stands compared with previous years. There were sports charities, many local and national SEND charities, healthcare organisations, services from the local authority, educational organisations, care homes and many others represented.



During the lunch break, the ever popular and always oversubscribed event – ‘speed-dating’ with a professional from health services or the local authority – was held. This allowed individual carers to have a short one-to-one session to get their questions answered. This year we managed to fit 15 into the auditorium to answer all your questions. Throughout the Conference, we also had our own information available at the Family Voice stand.

This year our children with SEND were looked after by The Clare School, Norwich, with help from staff at other special schools and from providers. Although the school is a short drive from the conference centre, it allowed us to look after more children, including children with a wider range of needs than previously.

There was much positive feedback about the childcare. It was fortunate that we chose this venue as, just a few weeks before the Conference was held, part of the facility we normally use was damaged by bad weather. This meant we couldn’t take up that area to accommodate our extra stands and had to double up in an area also used for workshops – not an ideal situation as some of your feedback noted!

As always, we invited feedback from every participant, whether parent carer, professional or practitioner. You provided comments on what you found most useful about the event, what could have been better, and many other issues. We were also able to get your updates on the reviews we have carried out over the last year. Half of the individual parent carers attending and many stand holders gave us their responses and we should like to thank you all.

Of the parent carers who responded, 90% said they would definitely recommend our

Conference to a friend and we were given an overall satisfaction rating of 95% from parent carers for their Conference experience. Next year we will aim to make it 100%!

Details of the feedback from everyone can be found in an appendix accompanying this report and will be available on our new website (www.familyvoice.org.uk/articles-reports/conferences). If you would like hard copies of this or any of the materials from individual workshops, please email admin@familyvoice.org.uk or write to Family Voice at Family Voice (Norfolk), PO Box 1290, Long Stratton, Norwich NR15 2HD.



Thanks to all who attended for making it such a successful day again. See you next year!

Trevor Wang
Treasurer and Administration Lead
Family Voice Norfolk
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