



Family Voice Norfolk Conference

Saturday 16th March at the John Innes Centre

The conference began with a “real buzz” when Sara Tough, the Director of Children’s Services at Norfolk County Council, opened Family Voice Norfolk’s ninth annual Conference for parent carers of children with special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND). She spoke about the SEND Transformation Programme and how this investment will provide more spaces for children in Specialist Resource Bases (SRBs) and new special schools. Many parent carers came to the Conference specifically to see Sara’s presentation and to find out more about the Transformation Programme. Some were disappointed that there was not more time at the end for questions. We will bear this in mind when planning next year’s Tenth Anniversary Conference.



Over 370 people attended the 2019 Conference, making it our most popular conference to date. Of this number, over one hundred were professionals offering stands, workshops and the opportunity to talk to parent carers one-to-one. There were eight workshops, over 40 stands and more than 60 speed-dating sessions.

The morning workshops covered the popular topic of Preparing for Adult Life, the new Health digital platform called Just One Norfolk, a presentation on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pathway (standing room only) and the local authority’s guidance for educational settings on the Provision Expected at SEN Support level.

Our ever-popular and over-subscribed speed dating sessions were held over the lunchtime period. Fourteen professionals offered their time to talk, one-to-one, with over 60 parent carers, many who feel that this is the most useful part of their day.

The afternoon workshops included a question and answer session with professionals about Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), a presentation about new service available for Young Carers, an ‘engaging’ workshop for young people to capture their views in the Local Offer and a presentation about Reviewing an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Nearly 200 parent carers attended the workshops and presentations will be available on our website shortly.



As well as the many stand holders who regularly attend our Conference, this year we included several new stands to give parents increased variety, including local and national SEND charities, healthcare organisations, NHS service providers and services from the local authority. Stand holders value the opportunity to meet and talk to parent carers and network with other professionals.



The Family Voice Norfolk ambassador team ran our own stand where parent carers were able to find out more about the work that Family Voice is involved in and sign up as a member or to join the team. It is excellent to be able to talk directly with parent carers – after all, expressing families’ views to decision-makers and planners is what we are all about. Our motto is ‘together we are stronger’, so

the more voices we can represent through our membership, the more we can positively affect the services that we all need for our children and young people.

Each year we ask parent carers and professionals for feedback about the Conference, which assists us with preparation for the following year. This year 100% of parents, who filled in their feedback forms, said that they would recommend the Conference to a friend and 95% said that they would come along next year. The other 5% have children that will be over 25.

It was lovely to see the friendly faces of parent carers who have been to many of our Conferences over the years and continue to get so much from the day. We were also delighted to welcome over 80 parent carers to attend for the first time. Many parent carers are not aware of all the services and support available and the Family Voice Conference is an important annual event that allows parent carers to come together and realise that they are not alone. Many find the Conference day as a wonderful chance to network with other parents and catch up with old friends.

Details of the feedback from parent carers and professional can be found in an appendix accompanying this report and will be available on our website. If you would like a hard copy of this report or any of the presentations, please email office@familyvoice.org.uk or write to us at Family Voice Norfolk, PO Box 1290, Long Stratton, Norwich, NR15 2HD.



We would like to thank all the parent carers and professionals that attended for making it such an amazing and successful day. Next year is our Tenth Anniversary Conference so we welcome any ideas you have to make it an even more memorable experience.

See you next year!

Bernadette Pallister,
Administration Manager, Family Voice Norfolk
April 2019