

Let's talk... with Tim Eyres

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Monday, 7 September 2020

Attendees

5 parent carers representing at least 7 children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) ranging from 4 to 17 years

2 parent carers were unable to attend but contributed questions, which were asked during the session and responses fed back afterwards

What were the main topics in the session?

Parent carers agreed that communication is key. This session showed that insufficient or unclear communication from and within the Local Authority and Health services means that families do not have the help and support they need.

Even into early September, parent carers were still unaware of SEND transport arrangements for their children and young people returning to educational settings this term.

Parent carers are concerned about the long gap in speech and language therapy (SaLT) provision during the pandemic and reports that services will not recommence before 2021.

Parent carers are spending far too long navigating a complex system to find the right mental health services and support for their children and young people (and this is before any increase in demand for support due to COVID-19).

Key points

- When communication between EHCP coordinators and the Passenger Transport team breaks down, parent carers are not aware that their request for SEND transport has not been received. No news is not necessarily good news.
- The late arrangement of SEND transport means that parent carers, children and young people do not have a meet-and-greet session before the service starts. This vital meeting can alleviate stress and anxiety for families.
- Informing parent carers that there is no change to their child's SEND transport would help to reduce stress for parents at the beginning of the new school year.
- TITAN training needs to be Norfolk-wide, especially to prepare young people for independent travel once they start college.
- Parent carers are concerned about speech and language therapy not being available for their children and young people until January 2021.

- Parent carers are having considerable problems finding the right help for their children's and young people's mental health. Two years is not an uncommon length of time for parent carers to be moved from pillar to post to try to find the right help. GPs are ill-equipped to offer the correct signposting.

Parent carers said:

- "We were worried that we'd not heard about transport for our daughter starting a new school, so two weeks ago we called the EHCP coordinator who had been dealing with it, and they assured us that it was all in hand. We then phoned last Wednesday (2 Sept) as we still hadn't heard only to be told by Transport that they had no record of our daughter."
- "The lateness in telling parents adds so much more worry and stress to parents who are already worried and stressed."
- "It would make our lives much less stressful if we received a quick phone call to say that there's no change in our transport from one year to the next."
- "Meet-and-greets are fabulous. Ours happened on Friday (4 Sept) and were with my son for 50 minutes. It was really reassuring to be able to meet and talk with them."
- "There seems to be a theme of lack of communication."
- "Parents really need a help desk for access to EHCP coordinators and transport staff. Even if it's someone that just acknowledges that their child is on the radar."
- "We've had a two-year, absolute slog to get my son help for his mental health. Crisis team came in. We kept getting palmed off because he has ASD. We were told to go away and get on with it. It took talk of suicide for people to get involved."
- "There needs to be better signposting. We wasted a lot of time finding the right person to help. When you find the right person, it's great, but it's so difficult to find them."

What Family Voice Norfolk will do to make sure parent carers' views are heard:

- Post the school transport brochure on the Family Voice Facebook page
- Send a report to the Head of Passenger Transport outlining areas for improvement
- Raise the issue of lack of services for children and young people with autism who present with poor mental health at the Children's Health Integrated Commissioning Group (CHICG) and the Children's and Young People's Mental Health Parent Carer Forum (CYPMH). We have also raised this directly with Rebecca Hulme, Associate Director Children Young People and Maternity at Norfolk and Waveney CCGs and Norfolk Children's Services.
- Raise the issue of GPs not signposting children and young people with mental health problems to the right professional at CYPMH.