

OUR VOICE COUNTS

North Somerset Parent Participation Forum

20th April 2010

Education Workshop

NOTES

Facilitator : Jackie Oxley

Agenda Item 1: Statements

Parents are still being told that schools cannot provide the provision outlined in their child's statement. How and in what ways does North Somerset scrutinise the way that provision, written into children's statements, is made available by settings?

Discussion:

We discussed the issue of whether Schools are meeting the provision outlined in statements, including the legal requirement to fund statements and who enforces the school to meet the provision in a statement.

Local Authority (LA) Officers stated it was ultimately the LA responsibility to ensure a child's needs were met as described in the Statement. However on a day to day basis the responsibility for delivery of provision is shared between the Head teacher, the Governors and the teachers (esp. in secondary setting).

A LA Special Educational Needs officer said she had worked with a school, undertaking a point-by-point discussion of the statement to meet provision. There is a code of Practice on Special Educational Needs (SEN). Parents discussed the problems they had with Audit Funding, with secondary schools meeting the statement provision, and how to address these.

Many parents expressed the important of the ethos of school in having children with SEN, some parent's spoke of their experience in moving their child to a school with a more understanding ethos.

The LA SEN officers spoke of their work behind the scenes with schools, and that SEN funding has certain restrictions on it, and that it should not fund the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, (SENCO). Finally the LA officers also stated that they knew outcomes were not as good as they could be, but were working hard to improve them.

Agenda Item 2: Individual Education Plans

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are not working! There is huge variability across schools, which parents find unacceptable. Parents are not confident that their child's needs are fully understood and appropriately provisioned/supported. IEPs are only useful when they are SMART, employed as a planning tool by staff and regularly reviewed as part of monitoring achievement/outcomes. Parents need to be involved at every stage of planning and development of IEPs. How does the Local Authority ensure that IEPs are valued and effective documents? What prevents schools providing parents with transparency as to how they meet the needs of each child?

Discussion:

We discussed the issue of Individual Education Plan (IEP), how they are working, and the variability across schools.

A parent asked the LA officers present if schools had training on writing IEP's, we were told new teachers do as part of their training, and that SENCO's have training in "target setting". Discussion took place on how parents would know if it is a good IEP for their child. We discussed that they are sometime written by format and by asking the question " what would make the biggest difference?"

LA officer spoke of new "Structured Conversations" pilot scheme in Gloucestershire, with schools and parents meeting 3 times a year to

increase communication between home and school. The 'Structured Conversation' is a pilot scheme development by the Department for Children, Schools and Families Achievement for All programme (AfA) in conjunction with the Lamb review of SEN, see <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/lambinquiry/>

Achievement for All is a programme designed to ensure the greater inclusion of all pupils with SEND. (special educational needs and disabilities). If the approach is working well, parents of SEND pupils will be actively engaged in their child's learning and achievement; SEND pupils will participate more fully in school and community life; they will narrow the gap in achievement between themselves and their peers and have a clearer idea of what will constitute good progress for them. The structured conversation is intended to support the greater engagement of parents by enabling them to make their contribution heard and understood by teachers and the wider school.

Exert from The National Strategies | Achievement for All The Structured Conversation Handbook to support training.

For more information on 'The Conversation', see the special educational needs (SEN) Achievement for All (AfA) structured conversation DVD, <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/307019>

Agenda Item 3: Homework

Homework is a huge problem for children with complex additional needs and their parents. How can this be tackled? Could schools be encouraged to make work available online? This is a particular problem at Secondary school when communication generally becomes more challenging between home and school.

Discussion:

An LA officer spoke of a secondary school who has undertaken work on pupils with SEN and homework, and developed some new good practice, for example setting homework at the start or middle of lesson, setting home work online – we asked if this work could be made available

to the forum. Parents and LA officers spoke of homework “after school clubs” held in the learning support unit of a secondary school.

The DSCF have issued new booklets about homework, but these have no mention of issues for children with SEN, or their parents, and should the forum write to ask why we have been ignored?

Agenda item 4: Access to Professional Advice

Access to professional advice and assessment seems to remain a problem, even in the most challenging circumstances when children’s placements are at risk. What are the limitations on schools accessing specialist advice and support? Specialist services still tell us that they can only advise and recommend. Schools say that they haven’t always got the resources to carry out the advice given. This seriously affects parental confidence. How is this being addressed?

Discussion:

An LA officer was able to tell us that the Educational Psychology department now has more staff, and that they have restructured their working practice, grouping the Consultation Planning Meetings, (CPM) into groups around school clusters to enable more direct time to discuss children. New CPM guidelines state that permission must be sort of the parents to discuss a child at these meetings. We discussed at what point advice can be sought, either from a parent or school from professional services and we discussed the CAF (Common Assessment Framework).

Agenda Item 5: Education for High Functioning Autism

Have there been any developments regarding the establishment of an “enhanced provision” for children with High-functioning ASD/AS.

“ Enhanced Provision” for children with High functioning ASD/AS

Discussion:

We were delighted to hear from Jane Routledge, Complex and Additional Needs Service Manager (CANS) that North Somerset (NS) was funding a

pilot scheme for 1 primary and 1 secondary – to work on a “hub” basis with the proposed target start of September 2010, with no more than 8 pupils in the hub at any one time. NS was in the process of appointing a lead person, with more details to follow.

The Workshop discussed rolling Item 2 and 3 together for the Education Subgroup to work on. To include IEP’s, Home work, and investigate work around possibilities of developing a “Structured Conversation”. Working towards early inclusions of some of the “Lamb” recommendations.