



DURHAM

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Making Changes Together XVIII Conference Report

Ramside Hall Hotel & Golf Club, Carrville,
Durham

Wednesday 17 May 2017
(Evening Session)
Thursday 18 May 2017

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The Conferences

To encourage as many parent/carers as possible to attend the eighteenth Making Changes Together Conference, a shortened evening event was held prior to the main full day conference. This gave parents who were unable to attend the full day event, especially working parents, the opportunity to gather important information about what is happening locally and nationally for children with disabilities and their families.

Parent/carer questions and comments from both the evening and day conferences are captured within this report.

Welcome and Introductions

Lileen Cuthbertson welcomed everyone to the Making Changes Together conference.

Making Changes Together is the recognised parent carer forum for County Durham. They have a steering group made up of parent/carers who have children with disabilities and additional needs and are always keen to welcome new members. This is especially so this year as this conference is Lileen's last after being involved since conference two. Her son is now 23 and so she will now be moving into involvement in adult services and hoping to develop a model similar to Making Changes Together as everyone's children will eventually move into adulthood and parent participation and engagement is equally important here too.

Young People's Event 2017

Chris Nash gave a brief update on the young people's event that had been held earlier in the year following the last Making Changes Together conference where young people from the eXtreme Group at Investing in Children had first come up with the idea of holding a similar event to these conferences but for young people in County Durham, rather than parent carers.

Over 70 young people attended along with 18 services that provided information, advice, workshops and support. These included CAMHS, the police, recycle, Cheesy Waffles, and Durham Sports.

The day was extremely successful and well received by everyone who attended and engaged in the event.

Safe Places and Reporting Hate Crime

Mark Lumsden, Community Cohesion Officer

Hate Crime

Hate Crime Definition

Any incident or crime which is **perceived** by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice

Perceived is the important word; if a person feels or thinks it is a crime, then it is a hate crime.

Protected Characteristics

Race	Religion
Age	Gender Reassignment
Sexual Orientation	Disability
Marriage/Civil Partnership	Gender
Pregnancy & Maternity	Alternative lifestyle/cultures

Community Cohesion Officers

- Support victims of hate crime
- Single point of contact for investigating officers
- Promote the reporting of hate crime
- Raise awareness of hate crime

Officers would come out and see the victim and their family to offer support; their role is not to investigate the crimes but they would link with relevant officers and any other agencies and be there to help you if needed and hold your hand if a case is taken to court.

They also ensure offices and police do what they are supposed to do when someone reports a hate crime.

Their most important role is in promoting reporting as we all know that unfortunately, bullying takes place on a daily basis but hate crimes are rarely reported so sometimes police bosses do not see that there are problems out there but this is because of underreporting rather than people not experiencing hate crimes in County Durham.

In the past, it is acknowledged that there have been problems with the lack of support people have received when they have reported crimes to the police but we all need to move forward together and address these issues so we get it right for people and build up trust in the police. This will help more people to report crimes and get the support they need when they do.

Issues identified have been call handlers not dealing appropriately with callers and not asking the appropriate questions to determine if a hate crime has taken place. This is especially an issue when the young person reporting an incident might not be aware that this is actually a hate crime.

There is awareness that more training for call handlers and staff is required so if families find initially that a case has not been handled correctly, they are encouraged to contact the police again and tell them clearly this is a hate crime so it can be logged and reported correctly and so the Community Cohesion Officers can then ensure it is dealt with appropriately.

The more reporting of hate crimes, the more money will be invested in helping to offer the right support to victims and their families.

An independent advisory group including a young disabled man and his mother meet regularly to help raise awareness of the needs of disabled people within the work of the police force.

A suggestion was made to involve more parent carers who have had negative experiences in training delivery, especially in Autism Awareness sessions being delivered to staff. One of the issues that is difficult to cover in training is that every child or young person with Autism is different though so one set of responses for a call handler to use may not be helpful for all people.

The police are aware they need parent/carers' help and support to improve their services for children and young people with disabilities. Parents can help by educating their children and young people so they know what they need to say if they report a crime with the police.

A good example was shared where a call handler asked a young person if they were vulnerable and used a basic bullet point conversation to gather the information required. This resulted in a family's excellent experience when reporting a recent incident.

Fundamentally, people should be allowed to live safely in their local communities and this is what we will all strive to achieve by working together in County Durham.

Why Report It?

It affects not only the victim or witness but family, friends and the wider community.

Don't Delay, Report Today

Police 101 or 999

www.report-it.org.uk

Safe Places

The Safe Places scheme is designed to help people live in their local community.



This poster is displayed in places across County Durham by those organisations who have signed up to the scheme. This means that any vulnerable person (not just those who are disabled) knows they can go into this place and they will receive whatever level of support they need. This could just be a seat and a glass of water, or if they been the victim of an incident, then the place will call the police or an ambulance etc.

If anyone knows of any organisations who would like to sign up to be part of this growing scheme, they are asked to call 101 and ask to speak to Mark and he will ensure they are added to the scheme and provided with posters to display.

Preparing for Adulthood Partnership (PFA) - what has been happening?

- Developing **new education, training and employment opportunities** for young people: Supported Internships, NEAS Employment Futures; Future Focus
- **Autism Review** – reviewing the current support services and provision available in the county
- **Transition from school**, e.g. eXtreme group report & recommendations on the experiences and expectations of young people transitioning from school to further education
- Developing a **new Transition Protocol for young people** - Local Authority colleagues have worked closely together with Schools to develop a robust system of information sharing protocols
- **Jobcentre Plus** – action to identify how the Local Authority and Jobcentre can work closer together to help prepare young people with SEND for adulthood, including developing understanding of Jobcentre Plus staff and Jobcentre Plus work with young people in Schools

Within County Durham, what works well is the support young people receive when moving into further education but what doesn't work so well is trying to support them moving into employment so this has been a big drive of the work of the partnership to increase these pathways of support.

Supported Internships are a structured study programme based primarily at an employer. They enable young people with an EHCP to achieve sustainable paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work, through learning in the workplace. Supported internships are unpaid, and last for a minimum of six months with. They include the chance to study for relevant substantial qualifications, if appropriate, and English and maths. Task Group achievements to date are greater understanding of Supported Internships across partners and how we can develop more of these in County Durham; agreement to fund a new post to help improve the number of employers engaged to offer more Supported Internship opportunities; "Health Education" in conjunction with DCC ALSS will be delivering 12 Supported Internships within the NHS in Durham from September 2017.

NEAS Employment Futures (DW) - the course aims to identify the skills and abilities of individuals with an autism spectrum condition and/or LLDD and support them to apply these strengths to finding and sustaining suitable work. The 12 week programme will include a supported work experience placement.

Future Focus (ALSS) is an accredited programme course that has been designed to address the needs of SEND learners. The programme ensures that all learners are given the same opportunities to access appropriate and relevant education and improve their life chances. The intention is to develop skills and abilities that will contribute to increasing independence and self-determination and in doing so will enhance the learner's life experience.

Autism Review - a further Task Group has been set up to work on reviewing current support services and provision. Work to date has included working with groups of young people with SEN to gain their views (which included the need for the Local Offer to include information on Autism specifically for young people their age to help them understand their own conditions better); County Durham Carers are undertaking some research with parents on their views; and lots of partners have identified areas of work and gaps in support for young people in particular those who are higher achievers but who suffer from severe Mental Health/anxiety issues and those with more complex and challenging behaviours. Recommendations for action will be made as a result of this work and feed into the broader review taking place.

Transition from school - The eXtreme group have just completed a report following consultation with 43 young people from both school and college on their experiences and expectations of transitioning from school to further education. Recommendations have been made such as; working with young people to plan their career choices and post 16 plans much earlier e.g. from year 9, more opportunities to develop life skills and independence and work preparations such as interview skills, developing buddy systems for moves to college and much more... These will now be discussed at the next PFA group with actions agreed on how to develop these further.

Development of a new Transition Protocol for young people. Local Authority colleagues from SEND Casework and One Point teams have worked closely together with schools to develop a robust system of information sharing protocols. These are to ensure as smooth a transition as possible for young people moving from school to further education. In particular this is for young people across a range of support needs from those with an EHCP, to those with a SEN Support Plan and some who are simply identified as more "Vulnerable" and at risk of becoming NEET.

This was launched with the SENCOs of all Secondary Schools across Durham and will be monitored by the Improving Progression, One Point Service and the PFA group to ensure it is a success.

Jobcentre Plus. Meetings have taken place with the Jobcentre to identify ways of working closer together to help prepare young people with SEND into Adulthood. It is early days but a number of actions have already been achieved including:

- Joint work has been identified to upskill some Jobcentre staff on key SEN work. E.g. how to identify if a young person may have had or does have an EHCP, what some terminology may mean, what support services exist in the Local Authority etc..
- New Jobcentre initiative has been launched in County Durham for them to work in schools to help prepare young people for the world of work. These representatives attended a recent PFA group and have since started to work in some of our Special Schools to help young people with their interview skills and knowledge of the world of work.

Outcomes

- New post-16 learning provision in County Durham.
- Fewer young people attending specialist learning provision outside County Durham.
- Improved transition from school to post-16 learning provision.
- Continuing increase of young people with SEND participating in post-16 learning – 79.2% (2014/15), 80.6% (2015/16), 83.4% (2016/17).

DurhamWorks Update

17 million pounds of European funding was awarded to DurhamWorks to help and support any unemployed young person aged 16-24. The funding has to be used by July 2018.

DurhamWorks ensures those who need this help the most receive it as they look at the whole person and what support they need to help them make progress. A team of workers work with employers from across County Durham to try and develop more job opportunities for young people.

- 2,203 16-24 year olds are being supported through DurhamWorks.
- 610 of these are young people with SEND and/or a mental health issue
- Of which, 217 young people have made a successful progression into an Apprenticeship, employment, study programme, other further education, or personal development opportunities.

The most effective way of demonstrating DurhamWorks success is through individual case studies of young people who have used the scheme.

Zoe

- Zoe joined DurhamWorks after hearing about the Programme through the Jobcentre.
- She wanted a hospitality role and her Employment Advisor helped to secure a work experience placement at the Park Head Hotel, Bishop Auckland.
- Having proven herself to be hardworking and committed, Zoe has subsequently joined the team at the hotel and is undertaking an Apprenticeship.

- Zoe is working front of house and is enjoying the new challenges that her role brings: 'Since starting at the Park Head Hotel, I have grown in confidence in my abilities'.
- Claire, hotel manager, said: 'We wanted to help Zoe and give her an opportunity to work within the business. She is now an integral part of the team and it is wonderful to see how she is developing and growing in confidence'.

Ian

- Ian is an articulate, shy autistic young person who had withdrawn from social situations.
- His SEND Caseworker had suggested starting a film academy programme at Jack Drum Arts.
- With a lot of help, support and reassurance, Ian is now attending the course.
- His confidence has grown considerably and his mum says: 'Ian is like a different young man...he is full of smiles and when he tells me what he has been doing, it is heart-warming to see the look of pride on his face'.

Jane

- Jane is autistic and has a range of disabilities, both physical and mental.
- Jane had been NEET for a long period after college and her SEND Caseworker spent a lot of time building a relationship with her.
- Although initial meetings took place in Jane's home, they subsequently progressed to meeting at a local café.
- Jane is now attending a Future Focus course with DCCs Adult Learning and Skills Service and is using public transport with support from her mum.
- Jane said: 'I am proud of myself as I didn't think I would be able to do this'.

Matthew

- Matthew is 23 years old and has severe learning difficulties.
- His SEND Caseworker helped Matthew to apply for ESA (Employment and Support Allowance).
- He has started a course at Springboard which includes a work experience placement and 1:1 support for literacy and numeracy.
- Matthew is making excellent progress and he continues to receive support from his SEND Caseworker.

Andrew

- Andrew is 24 years old and has Asperger's Syndrome.
- He had been volunteering at Real Choice College for over six months.
- Although Andrew enjoyed his placement, he was frustrated at the lack of employment opportunities.

- Andrew's manager wanted to offer Andrew a job but there was no funding available.
- His SEND Caseworker supported Real Choice College to access a DurhamWorks Learning, Working, Earning Grant to create an Apprenticeship opportunity for Andrew.

This feedback demonstrates the difference DurhamWorks can make to young people and the progress they can make with the right support in place. It is really important that one of the legacies of DurhamWorks if the funding ends is that there will be a wide range of employers across County Durham who will be open and accessible and want to employ more disabled young people because of the positive experiences they have had.

DurhamWorks

- Tel: 03000 262930
- Email: durhamworks@durham.gov.uk
- Website: www.durhamworks.info
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/durhamworks

Parents were encouraged to contact DurhamWorks if they know of any young person who would benefit from the scheme. Also, if anyone knows of any employers or if anyone works for a small company themselves and could offer young people an opportunity, then again, they were asked to contact DurhamWorks and apply for one of the grants that are available to help support a young person in a work place.

Questions

Q - Would Durhamworks support people who have left university? For young people who have got lots of qualifications but no job experience?

A - Yes as long as they are aged under 25 when they start the process

Q - Is there anything out there for young people who will not be able to be employed; for those who are only given the option of attending day centres?

A – The funding for Durhamworks is focussed on employability but the Local Offer should have more information about other opportunities available for these young people including activities and volunteering options

Q - As a DurhamWorks provider delivering courses for those who are NEET; can we put these young people through to Supported Internships?

A - At the moment there is more demand than places available. When new opportunities are available, DurhamWorks providers and delivery partners will be advised (Young People have to have an EHC Plan though to access a Supported Internship)

Q - What about children and young people without an EHC Plan?

A - All other aspects of DurhamWorks are open to everyone apart from Supported Internships. This is because of how they are nationally funded. There are also other providers who will help develop employment skills for all young people (not just those with EHC Plans).

Q – As DurhamWorks are funded by European Funding, how will the UK leaving Europe affect this? How are Durham County Council going to fund this if needed?

A - European Funding is available until 2020 (a commitment regardless of Brexit) including £5 million for County Durham. No one knows at this stage what will happen after this time. European funding has been made available for 15 years, we will need to look at having this funding allocated directly through central government in the future.

There are not just financial issues to consider in the future though; DurhamWorks is about developing social and cultural attitudinal changes. Even if there is no future funding, it is hoped that the learning for employers will mean they can see the benefits of employing young disabled people; it is as much about increasing understanding and workforce training so they understand additional needs and disabilities and do not automatically see this as a barrier to a young person gaining meaningful employment.

Other comments made:

Maths and English were mentioned but for many young disabled people, they will never have these academic skills but may have more practical skills that could be valuable for employers; this areas needs to be developed more and less importance placed on areas such as Maths and English.

Schools need to be more flexible about allowing individual pupils to progress without needing basic Maths and English but by providing the right practical environment for children and young people to flourish and reach their potential.

Healthwatch

Denise Alexander, Engagement & Signposting Lead

Denise is also a parent of a disabled child and welcomed the opportunity to speak at this conference and share information about Healthwatch and the support they can offer to families who have children and young people with additional needs.

Healthwatch is the Consumer Champion for Health and Social Care – they talk to anyone who uses primary care services and acts like a watchdog to improve service delivery based on your experiences and views.

Partners

Healthwatch is a statutory service, currently with a 2 year contract (hoping this is extended to 3 years)

Durham County Council awarded the contract in July 2016 to:

- Pioneering Care Partnership
- Citizens Advice County Durham
- Durham Community Action

Main Aims

- To listen to peoples' experiences of health & social care services
- To advise those people
- To speak up on their behalf
- In order to make recommendations and publish reports that will make a difference to services

They listen

- To patients or service users, their family, friends and carers
- To those who don't normally get heard
- To both positive and negative feedback

Healthwatch organise drop-ins and workshops and send out a number of surveys to try and get a wide range of feedback about services in the area. The majority of people who contact Healthwatch do so because they have had a negative experience but they are currently also compiling reports to profile two excellent local GP surgeries to share good practice and service delivery with others.

The service covers a wide geographical area but tries to target communities to ensure everyone has equal access to the help, advice and support available.

They advise

- By signposting people to services available
- By guiding people through the complexity of 'the system'
- On what to do when things go wrong

Healthwatch signpost but will not just give you details of who you should contact instead of themselves, they will support you in contacting that other service.

They do not deal with complaints but will talk to the people who do on your behalf. They can act on a person's behalf in contacting a service such as a GP or dentists if there are particular issues being faced.

Systems can be complex so an online directory of primary care services is available through the Healthwatch website; if you still can't find a service though you can contact them and they will search for you.

They Speak Up

- By amplifying the voices and views we've heard
- By publishing reports
- By making recommendations to service providers and commissioners of services
- By challenging stakeholders to take a patient point of view

When you have shared your experiences, Healthwatch will compile a report to present to the relevant body (including the NHS or an individual service provider) and make recommendations for how to improve your experiences and the services provided.

An example was shared about a report that was compiled on how many young people with Learning Disabilities were taking up the offer of an annual health check. This was undertaken because it was found that in County Durham, only 52% were (the regional average is 56%). Healthwatch therefore did lots of work with surveys and attending events and from their report found that one of the main reasons for the low numbers was simply because people did not know these checks were on offer.

Healthwatch then worked with GPs to raise awareness of how to share this information with families. Other recommendations included making surgeries less scary, possibly offering health checks in alternative locations and using easy to understand language when information is shared. Good practice was also highlighted, for example one surgery sent details out of the annual health check as an "18th birthday card" to a young person so they knew this was available for them.

Healthwatch will now be monitoring this to see if there is an increase in the number of health checks being taken up by adults with Learning Disabilities in County Durham and to see if GPs take on board recommendations made.

Legal Requirements

- Being written into the 2012 Health & Social Care Act is important as it means we have the power in law to influence local decision making

Healthwatch are independent even though they are commissioned by the county council; they speak up for the public though not for the commissioners or service providers.

Because there are legal requirements, Healthwatch has some teeth and CCGs and service providers have to address the issues that Healthwatch raise (more importantly the issues you raise and Healthwatch have done on your behalf).

The following case studies were shared to highlight how Healthwatch could help parent/carers and families:.

- A mother who has a daughter with complex needs who is a wheelchair user contacted Healthwatch. Her daughter's consultant had recommended a new wheelchair otherwise she may require an operation in later life. The mother visited wheelchair services in County Durham but was told that there was a spending freeze so she would be unable to get a new chair. Healthwatch spoke to wheelchair services, to the physiotherapist and to the CCG on the family's behalf and it was agreed that it was more appropriate to spend funds on providing this chair rather than the young girl needing to have an operation further down the line
- A woman who had paid for dental treatment twice as she had to return to the surgery when the initial work wasn't successful contacted Healthwatch. The dentist was within their rights to charge again but because the woman had not received appropriate dental care plan information, she was refunded the second charge

A survey was available at the conference for parents to complete around oral health services particularly for children with SEN. The results will help to identify barriers stopping young disabled people accessing oral health services.

Questions

Q- Are annual health checks for all children?

A – Just those with learning difficulties aged 18 and over

Q - What about younger children who don't register pain? Why don't they do this and offer a general annual check for children too?

A - If Healthwatch get enough queries about this issue they can investigate as there is to be an evidence base so parents were encouraged to contact Healthwatch and ask about this

How to get Involved:

- Get in touch to tell Healthwatch about your experience of health & social care services
- Become a 'Friend' to receive monthly newsletter and invites to events (annual event will be held in June)
- Become a 'Healthwatcher' to spread the word about our work in your community

Getting in touch

Office	0191 378 1037
Freephone	0800 304 7039
Text	07756 654218
Email	healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net

Review of Complex Communication Needs including ASD

Janet Crawford, Principal Educational Psychologist

Janet manages a number of support teams including Sensory Support, Autism Team, Portage; all individuals whose job it is to support schools in identifying needs in developing the outcomes of children and young people in County Durham.

The title of the review is long but this is deliberate so as not to exclude those children and young people who do not have a diagnosis of Autism. The review includes children and young people with Asperger Syndrome, Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) and other Communication issues – all those who need support and intervention. (In this report, Autism is used for conciseness but all those above are included in the review).

Scope and aims of the review

- To use available evidence, and local and national information to identify what 'good practice' looks like
- To understand how well we identify and meet the needs of children and young people with complex social communication needs and autism in Durham
- To use this information to action plan as a Local Area

The review team were very aspirational at the start and looked at what the world/County Durham would look like if it was truly Autism Aware and Autism Friendly

To inform local practice, legal duties are helpful including the Autism Act and the Equalities Act alongside the good guidance of a number of organisations including Autism Educational Trust, National Autistic Society and Council for Disabled Children.

There is a requirement for each Local Authority to have an autism strategy which is being led by adult services so this team will ensure the work being undertaken here dovetails into this work for those aged 0-18.

Where to Start?

- Short job descriptionlarge task!!
- Scoping meetings in the Autumn term with representation from:
 - Families
 - The Local Authority
 - Health providers and commissioners
 - Schools (mainstream and special)
 - SENDIASS
 - Etc.
- Agreed themes and working groups
- Gained strategic approval

Once the review team had pulled themes out they moved from talking about their own smaller fields (e.g. health, education, parental experiences) to talking about age ranges as all the activities they were discussing were linked to the child and the family rather than to the particular services. The following themes were therefore identified based on age ranges:

Working group and themes

Themes:

- The individual child/young person
- Their family
- Education, training and employment
- The broader community

Working groups:

- Early Years
- Primary
- Secondary
- Transition*
- Health**

Young People:

- Focus groups

*Transition and health are asterixed because they run through all of the themes.

Each group is tasked with looking at identifying good practice, where there are gaps or where improvements are needed and how we get there with regards to ensuring these improvements are made.

The review team are really trying to capture as many voices and ideas as possible from a wide range of groups in County Durham. Already a survey has been sent to all parent/carers on Making Changes Together database and there was a 40% response rate identifying some really good data with regards to the challenges families are facing

Chris Nash from the eXtreme group will be working with children and young people to gather their views too.

Surveys were available on the day of the conference and attendees were encouraged to use this opportunity to feed into the review and add further comments and views.

Progress so far

- Best practice ideas shared
- Local needs discussed
- Report to steering group
- Children and young peoples' focus groups set up

There are strong feelings that we should be doing more at a very local level; we need ALL of our schools to understand autism, ALL swimming pools, ALL services and ALL families so there is a need to ensure that everything being done is accessible and open to a wider community.

Next Steps

- Establish the picture in Durham
- Identify gaps
- Report to Strategy and Accountability Group on 3rd July 2017

But also.....

- Quick wins
- Your views

For quick wins, funding is not necessarily needed, we just need to think about things differently and work smarter together. Examples

- In the Dales, work is being undertaken with a group of parents who will be offering others mutual support in their local area
- Ensuring that information on the Local Offer is pulled together in one place around Communication Needs and Autism
- Working with One Point to offer joint training and identifying what support parents need, ideas being driven by parents themselves

Themes across the board are family support, workforce development, transition between phases and developing independence and resilience in children and families including siblings.

During table discussions, parents were asked to identify what is currently working well and what else can be done to improve things. Lots of issues were raised about challenges faced and these will all be used to feed into the work of the review moving forward.

SEND Toolkit

Teri Corsan Bland, SEND & Inclusion Manager, Durham County Council

Teri leads a small team who work with schools to help them initially embed the SEN reforms and over the longer term, continue to ensure improvements are made in provisions across County Durham.

Background to the SEN Toolkit

- Approximately 270 schools, plus early years and post 16 providers in County Durham.
- A lot of separate guidance already published for different educational settings on the 'For providers' page of the Local Offer site.
- To ensure consistency across our settings, feedback from our settings was that guidance should be in one place.
- To complement SEND Parents Information file (SENDIASS) and parents leaflets.

The Code of Practice is national statutory guidance that has to be followed and the toolkit will be County Durham's guide for professionals.

1st Edition of SEND Toolkit

- Working party of SENCOs, and other educational staff from early years, mainstream schools, special schools and Post 16 settings
- Consultation with 'Writing group' of Making Changes Together
- Accessible and practical for providers
- 1st edition published December 2016

The working party was made up not only of a wide range of workers but also a wide range of parent/carers.

Content of SEND Toolkit

- Section 1: National and local context
- Section 2: General SEND provision (early years, schools and post 16 settings) focussed on graduated approach and making sure inclusive and accessible provisions are available to meet the needs of children and young people and what should happen before a child may need an EHC Plan
- Section 3: 'How to...' guides (How to apply for top up funding, how to go for statutory assessments) – important for parents to know this is available so they can reference this section themselves when communicating and liaising with SENCOS in schools
- Section 4: Other relevant SEND information – which services and teams are available to offer support

The toolkit has been developed so you can just go straight to the section that is relevant to your setting, without needing to wade through the whole document

Feedback

Some of the feedback received from professionals who have used the toolkit includes:

"I found the How to Guides useful to use a checklist for ensuring I had all the necessary evidence to submit to panel." SENCO

"I LOVE the SEND Toolkit!!! I've had a good flick through it and it just looks so much like what I need. Thank you to everyone who has been involved in pulling it together!!" Early Years Leader

"Brilliant to have everything in one place." Head Teacher

"Wow that's impressive and it's something that SENCOs in Durham have needed for a long time." SEND professional

2nd edition of toolkit

- Reviewed 1st edition and action plan produced
- More explicit guidance on early years and different sectors of post 16 (14-16, 16-18, 19+) - more focus on preparing for adulthood
- 'Top tips' for professionals to be added in **from parents (MCT writing group) and young people (eXtreme)**
- More information for educational providers about working with others in health and care
- Planning on publication for settings- July 2017

The team wants this second edition to be enhanced with more information particular about Early Years and Post 16. Transition needs to be embedded in all strands and how to prepare children along transition pathways (e.g. with independence and living skills).

From consultation undertaken with Making Changes Together, it was decided that there shouldn't be just one section which had parent views and top tips but that these should run throughout the whole toolkit. Parents' top tips around what they would want SENCOs to know will therefore be included alongside those of children and young people too identifying what has worked well for them. This information will help to improve everybody's practice and help workers to navigate systems effectively.

Making Changes Together will send out a survey to help to gather the "top tips" to be included.

The toolkit will also be broadened out too not just with SENCOS and education but also to health and social care information too and further links can be developed across all sectors.

It is hoped that this second edition will be available and publicised on the Local Offer by the end of July 2017 ready for educational settings to use from the new term in September 2017.

"Understanding SEND" Training

Health and Social Care colleagues consistently said they did not know too much about SEND reforms or the Local Offer so to address this issue, training has been delivered to relevant staff. This also helps to address the problems associated with parents being given inaccurate information from other professionals.

The training has been very successful in raising awareness amongst a wider range of professionals who in turn have been impressed with the range of support available for children and young people in schools.

- Need for other professionals in health and care to be updated on SEND 'in practice', since the reforms.
- 350 places offered Feb/March 2017
- 360 places - June
- 360 places - Sept
- Main priorities: understanding the graduated approach to SEND, utilising the Local Offer and 'mythbusting'.
- Two e-learning packages now available for professionals: 'An overview of SEND' and 'SEND in Practice'.

The e-learning overview for all Durham County Council workers and the SEND in practice offers more in depth information for those working directly with families with children and young people with additional needs and focuses on practical information about what needs to be done.

The team will be looking at developing these packages and offering them to parents too in the future.

It is hoped that every parent/carer and every professional will know about Durham's Local Offer and how to access the SEND toolkit form there.

The links for these are as follows:

Local Offer

<http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info/kb5/durham/fsd/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0>

SEND Toolkit

<http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info/kb5/durham/fsd/site.page?id=H4w6UEGaXf4>

Other relevant initiatives

MCT Writing Group & professionals:

- Parents' leaflets across 4 areas of need (school age).
- Personal profiles for children and young people for universal and targeted 'Short Breaks' providers and follow up SEND awareness training.

There are already a suite of leaflets available on issues such as Speech and Language Therapy, Visual and Hearing Impairments and what should be done in schools to support children and young people. They are available on the Local Offer.

Providers were saying they want to do more to support families and children so this team is working alongside short breaks and Making Changes Together to work on children and young people's personal profiles (for those with lower needs not EHC plans) so the provider has all this information to hand quickly so they can identify needs and strategies needed to support these children and young people appropriately.

It is important to bring everything together and ensure there is consistency as there are often lots of people working on the ground in local settings so it is really important to ensure everyone is aware of the needs of the children and young people they are working to support.

Teri Corsan Bland
SEND & Inclusion Manager
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If any parent/carers have issues with schools and settings; they should initially contact County Durham's SENDIASS team but they can also contact Teri and the team too.

Decision Making & Mental Capacity Issues

Katie Thackray, Irwin Mitchell

Katie's presentation aimed to give a brief overview of Decision Making and Mental Capacity with regards to finance issues but she was keen to stress that as each family's circumstances are different, the possible routes families may need to take could be different, depending on these individual needs.

The Office of Public Guardian website has lots of useful information and guidance on these issues including making decisions on behalf of someone else and how to make a lasting power of attorney.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-public-guardian>

There are different tests that would be done to determine if an individual has capacity and we should never assume someone does not have capacity based on their individual circumstances, for example those who do not use regular communication methods.

In terms of finance capacity, an individual has to be able to understand information, weigh up information and most importantly, retain the information given to them.

Solicitors cannot formally assess individuals for capacity; it has to be healthcare practitioner. GPs are usually asked first but increasingly they are saying they are unwilling to do this; particularly if an individual is borderline (when the reasons they might not have capacity are complex) so consultants are therefore being asked to undertake assessments too.

Parent/carers are unable to manage their child's finances without taking this route of assessing capacity; you have to have the piece of paper confirming the individual has been assessed as not having capacity; even if it is plainly obvious that this is the case.

If a young person does have capacity and can manage their own finances then for most people, they would not need to do anything; particularly if only small amounts of money are being considered.

For individuals who may lose capacity in the future, it is really important to get a Power of Attorney in place (as this would not be possible once an individual is deemed not to have capacity)

Local Authorities can help families if it is just about managing a person's benefits.

If they have other money and you need something doing, for example you need to take cash out of an account of someone who does not have capacity or if they inherit money then you need to ensure a Deputyship is put in place. This can be costly, time consuming and onerous but might be the only avenue available to you as a family.

Setting up a Deputyship in order for parent/carers to open bank accounts for their children or young people is heavy handed as in theory it is needed but if you took your son or daughter to the bank they may well open an account for them without this.

For those who may inherit money from grandparents for example, you need to be aware they can't get this money if they lack capacity.

It is therefore important to think about the future and act now. If they have capacity now, get a Power of Attorney put in place as this is far less onerous than needing to apply for Deputyship.

Examples of parent attendees:

One family said they have 2 children, one of whom is disabled. The mother paid money into both of their bank accounts and for the child without the disability; he was able to take receipt of this money when he reached 18. The son who lacks capacity could not do the same so the mother has to go through the process of deputyship so that he can have access to this money.

Another parent advised that from her experience, as all charges paid are based on the income of the person who you are applying for (and not the parent/carer) then they were able to reclaim all of these apart from a £90 bond cost. It had been a very long and drawn out process and she encouraged everyone to get help and support to do it but not to look at costs involved as something that would put families off going through this process.

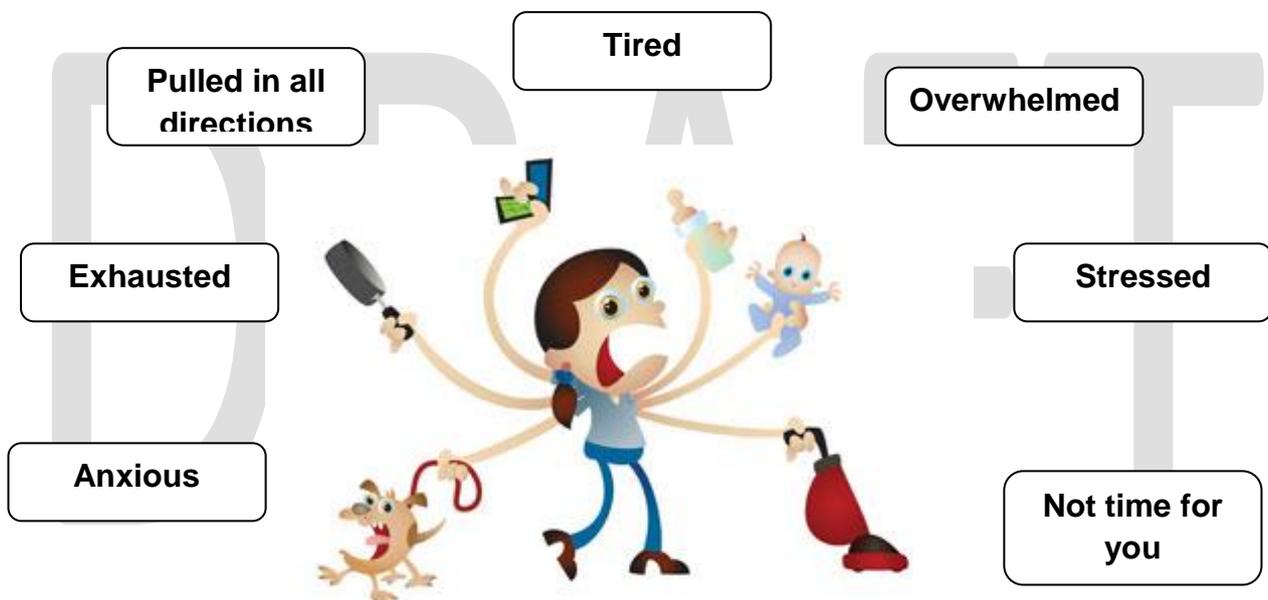
The difference it has now made is that mother was able to take the court order to the bank who have now changed the details so she has responsibility for this and not her son who lacks capacity and also, as a deputy, she is able to sign a tenancy agreement on his behalf as he is unable to do so.

Very brief information was then shared with regards to wills and trusts and the need to set up discretionary trusts to ensure that someone who receives means tested benefits does not lose these in the future based on money they may inherit. As this is a far more complex issue, it was agreed to look at putting on a separate workshop for parent/carers in County Durham to attend.

Short Breaks

Mark Smith, Strategic Commissioning Manager for Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

Do You Sometimes Feel?



Durham County Council knows that looking after children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities can be exhausting for parents/ carers. And they sometimes understandably feel like they need 'time out' from their demanding caring roles. For many parents, just having a break can make all the difference.

A video was shown at the conference which had been filmed at a provider's activity where families were all enjoying a short break together. Feedback from parents and young people in the video illustrated the benefits of a short break for the whole family. Some of the key points made:

- Short breaks help to develop confidence and increase young people's life and independent skills
- Parents can come together and meet others, share experiences and ideas and can offer each other mutual support

- Fun and friendship
- Children and young people enjoying activities in a safe, supported environment
- Increasing family's resilience without having to resort to a more formal approach
- Welcoming and open
- New environments away from home
- Have a positive effect on children and young people's lives in the Community
- Non-judgemental
- Helps end some of the isolation parents can feel
- Leads to signposting to other services that families can access if they need advice and information in other areas.

There is an acknowledgement that adult short break provision needs to be improved and also that families find it hard to access mainstream services across County Durham. We all have a role to play to increase awareness and understanding in the wider community to ensure more disabled children are welcomed in wider settings.

How Can I Get This Break?

- You can explore family members and wider support networks.
- You can explore opportunities for your child/young person to participate which will allow you a '**SHORT BREAK**' whilst these are taking place.
- You can also refer yourself to **Durham County Carers Support** who will work with you to understand your needs as a parent/carer and can provide advice/guidance and signposting to short break opportunities. There may also be opportunities for you to access a short break yourself.

Durham County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group commission a wide range of short break opportunities. Some families choose to use provisions that are already available within their community but for every parent who is able to do that, there are others who have already tried these options but providers are not inclusive and are therefore unable to meet their child's needs.

Funding comes through statutory services to Durham Carers to offer short breaks for carers (and example shared was a grant received for a carer to attend a spa for the day which resulted in an extremely positive experience)

So what is a Short Break?

A **SHORT BREAK** is something that a child/young person can access which provides 'parent/carers' with a break from their caring role.

A short break can range from a couple of hours taking part in a local activity with friends to holiday schemes or specialist over-night hospice care.

The type, length and cost of a short break can vary to meet the needs of each family.

Short Breaks in County Durham

How do we know what families want?

We work jointly with parent/ carers and children and young people to understand what families want

How do we understand needs?

We consider information available to us from families registered on our voluntary register “**the Children and Young Peoples Network**” and by studying our SEN/D population data in Durham

How do we know that what is on offer is meeting needs?

We work with families and professionals to understand if the current offer is meeting needs. We jointly work with service providers to understand what is on offer and identify any gaps in services

Mainstream activities

You can arrange access to these activities directly with Providers. These could include football sessions, brownies, drama groups, holiday schemes etc.

You can work with these providers to help them understand the needs of your child/young person and agree if any adaptations should be made or additional support required so that they can take part.

The Local Offer

We know that access to mainstream activities is not always possible or that children may prefer to take part in activities with other children and young people with SEN/D. Needs to continue to work with broader providers to make mainstream activities more inclusive.

‘DURHAM LOCAL OFFER’ will set out a range of activities for children and young people with SEN/D. You can access these activities directly with Providers.

Costs associated with taking part in mainstream and Local Offer short breaks will be advised by individual providers

Commissioned Short Breaks

Commissioned Universal Short Breaks

The Local Authority and Health Authority commission local out of school clubs/ activities for children and young people with SEN/D.

You can gain access to these through self-referral to providers for your child/young person and you will receive a short break from caring whilst they attend these sessions. There are also some activities available that the whole family can take part in together

There are Short Break out of school clubs and activities that can be accessed by children who have an Education Health and Care Plan or Statement of SEN. These are mainly delivered by special schools for children who attend the school. For children who do not attend special school we are working with the voluntary and community sector to develop local community provision to meet your needs. You can contact Providers directly to arrange access from June 2017.

Commissioned Targeted Short Breaks

There are Short breaks for children and young people with sensory needs who may require some additional support to allow them to take part in activities.

Whilst the Local Authority provides funding to these services to ensure that they are affordable and accessible for families you may also need to make a contribution.

Specialist short breaks

Sometimes the Local Authority and Health colleagues will identify families who require early help or have a range of complex needs. An assessment of the family may identify a '**need**' for specialist short break provision.

Commissioned Specialist Short Breaks

Short Breaks to meet assessed needs—these are delivered during the day and can be accessed through an identified need for a short break through a social work assessment. Referrals to these breaks providers are made through social care staff

Short breaks for children with complex needs that are identified through a social work assessment. These provide intensive and specialist breaks which include direct payments, domiciliary care and over-night provision.

There may be some additional costs associated with these services for families including transport, entry fees, activity costs etc.

Next Steps:

- Further develop inclusion in mainstream activities and understand any barriers to access
- Map existing local provision and check that this is included in the Local Offer
- Understand quality of provision and identify gaps
- Review what families think of our existing commissioned short breaks offer and determine what we do in the future

If a provider does not have the skills or the provision is not accessible or they are unwilling to be more inclusive, parent/carers were encouraged to let the Short Breaks team know

How can you be involved?

Durham County Council will be inviting participation through:

- Making Changes Together – parent/ carers
- Investing in Children – children and young people
- Durham County Carers - parent/ carers
- Children and Young Peoples Network - families

There will be a number of opportunities for parent/carers to get involved and help develop future short break offers including a mailshot which will be distributed to all members of Durham Children's Network.

Useful Contacts

Parent/ Carer Participation

Making Changes Together – info@mctdurham.co.uk

Children and Young People Participation

Investing in Children – info@investinginchildren.net

Voluntary Disability Register

Children and Young People's Network – <http://www.durham.gov.uk/cypn> and childrensnetwork@durham.gov.uk

The Local Offer <http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info/kb5/durham/fsd/localoffer.page>

The Short Breaks Statement is on the Local Offer.

Max Cards

If you now register with Durham's Children's Network, you will receive a Max card as these are now available for families who have children with disabilities to give discounted access to activities and leisure provision across the county. Max Cards are available for children up to the age of 18 (the Network however is for those up to age 25).

Making Changes Together

Tribute to Lileen

As this was Lileen Cuthbertson's last conference, the Making Changes Together steering group paid tribute with a video of highlights and thanked Lileen for all her efforts and hard work over the many years of her involvement with the forum.

Question Time

A number of questions from parent/carers had been submitted prior to the conference and Paul Shadforth Strategic Manager, Durham County Council attended to give answers to these alongside other professionals from Durham County Council who had delivered presentations.

Q – Why is an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHC Plans) so hard to get? When a plan has been requested why can't someone from County Hall go out and assess a child in their setting? Why is it a tick box exercise?

A – A child's needs might be better met through a graduated approach and quality first teaching (where minor changes made can often make the big difference). If this does not work then it moves to an SEN Support Plan. Schools will assess and make sure appropriate adaptations and support is put in place to meet a child's needs. They can request top up high needs funding to help them do this. If a child still doesn't make any positive progression then an assessment for an EHC Plan would be undertaken.

It should not be difficult to meet a child's needs but the EHC Plan is last in the process as it might be that needs are met without the need for this plan.

It is important that schools receive the right guidance to ensure needs are being met throughout these procedures.

Q – Why, when ASD is diagnosed, this information isn't given to all departments, e.g. Occupational Therapy who do not know about my son's needs?

A – There are 3 opportunities to coordinate support across an EHC Plan.

Education – the plans' review process should include all professionals who are aware of what is going on and how to move forward

Health – make sure there is a multi-disciplinary team formed around a child's needs and the care package is understood by all so this issue shouldn't be happening

Social Care – there should be a single assessment framework and opportunities to wrap all services around

Each family as their own individual experiences and if professionals are not fulfilling roles or the above is not happening then please let us know at Durham County Council so we can put this right.

There are problems with individuals not turning up for Team around the Family (TAF) meetings and some parents in attendance at the conference expressed their frustrations at having to make complaints in order to get the professionals to even turn up at these review meetings.

More training has taken place to accelerate the practice and Durham knows we need to ensure people are engaging as they should so that if people are invited, they have a real stake in the process.

Q – Why is it classed as full time education when a young person is only in college for 3 days a week?

A – The time spent studying and learning for young people post 16 depends on the setting they are attending. In Further Education provision is offered a lot over 3 days a week but the other 2 days should include other positive activities that the young person could be taking part in. It does all depend on the needs of the child as for those with complex needs, some providers do provide over 5 days so there is no one simple response to this question.

Parents need to seek other activities that are in County Durham (using the Local Offer for this information) to help young people to access these extra activities.

Q – In light on the ongoing pay dispute, how can we aim to protect the invaluable teaching assistants' workforce for our special needs children?

A – There is a Local Authority official response to this on the council's website. The Council are undertaking a review of roles and responsibilities. This will then go back out to consultation (following the usual consultation process) and teaching assistants will be included in this wider review. Parent views are encouraged and so please take part in the consultation when made available.

Q – Why does my child need a statement to get support or adaptation at schools they need?

A - Since 2014 statements have been replaced with EHC Plans (there are just 600 statements left to be transferred over to EHC Plans in County Durham). All adaptations though can happen in schools without this plan as previously outlines through the graduated approach.

Q – If health issues are affecting our child’s education, why can’t anything be done about long waiting lists?

A - Durham’s Designated Clinical Officer Kim Lawther advised that waiting lists are monitored against national targets. Lengthy times can be as a result of terms and conditions, thresholds and the types of services involved.

However, practitioners do not wait for a diagnosis to make adaptations in a child’s learning environment; they look at a child’s presenting needs and adapt the curriculum to make adaptations before a diagnosis is made.

For parents who do not know about Designated Clinical Officers, it was suggested that there should be more of a presentation about this role at the next parent conference.

Closing Remarks

Lileen thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the conference.

All attendees were encouraged to complete their evaluation sheets to help improve future events.

A summary of evaluation comments is attached as Appendix One.

Appendix One – Summary of Evaluation Comments

A summary of the evaluation comments received from attendees follows:

Something I have learned from today

- Most respondents mentioned a number of specific issues from presentations that they had heard about for the first time
- Other parents particular highlighted that they had learnt about support and services that are available in the area for families with children with disabilities and additional needs

“All the presentations had information that I hadn’t come across before”

Something I’ve felt/experienced today

- A lot of parents felt happy with the positive, friendly atmosphere at the conference
- A number of people focussed here on their admiration of Making Changes Together and the volunteers out there supporting families

“Camaraderie and optimism; meeting others MCT, volunteers, foster carers and other professionals and “old friends”

Something I’ll take away from today

- Most people here said that they would be taking away lots of new information from services and organisations
- Some parents said they would take time to look at County Durham’s local offer

“So many people I can turn to for help “

Something that was not so good about today

- Comments here generally mentioned how they felt some of the presentations were rushed and how there was a lot of information to take in

“Long day but hey, I’m new and have had a lot to take on board but I will be back”