

Richmond SEND Parent Panel

6.30-8pm

25/11/2019

Twickenham Training Centre

Attendees:

Parent / carers

Ana Daruwalla (Co-Chair)

Kristina Dale (Co-Chair)

Kevin Sears

Dave Leeman

Minta Townshend

Staff

Ashley Whittaker, Programme Director (AW)

James Thomas, Director of Children's Services (JT)

Javade Khan, Head of Communications (JK)

Nada Hassanatou, Digital and Improvement Delivery Lead Officer (NH)

Apologies:

Parent / carers

Ann-Valancha Brown

Louise Edwards

Joanne Chidwick

Alison Sears

Oksana Clancy

Katy Stannett

Suzy Rowland

Staff

Anna Chiva, Associate Director for SEND

1. Introductions:

James gave an update on staffing. He will be leaving Richmond at the end of December. Ian Dodds will be the new Director of Children's Services from 1st January. Jessica Thom will be starting at the start of March as AfC's Director of Commissioning and Partnerships.

Parents and carers thanked James for his contribution.

2. Actions from last meeting / matters arising:

a. Makeup and needs represented on Panel

AW went through latest data on parents still active on the Panel, together with needs represented. Of the 26 parents and carers signed up to the Panel, 14 have been actively involved this term, attending meetings, participating in workshops / co-production activities etc. Needs represented across the 26 parents are as follows (note total of 38 as some parents identify more than one need):

Autism	13
ADHD	6
SLCN	4
SPLD	1
MLD	0
SLD	3
PMLD	1
SEMH	1
PD	3
HI	2
VI	2
C. med	1
Dyslexia	1
	38

Action: AW was asked to update next meeting with needs represented across the 14 parents who have been actively involved this term.

- b. **Parent Panel and Parent Carer Forum future working arrangements** (includes additional discussion at end of meeting on next steps for same topic)

The meeting was updated regarding the meeting of members of the Parent Panel (Dave Leeman and Oksana (Roxy) Clancy) with representatives of the Parent Carer Forum (PCF) steering group (Claire Richmond, Minta Townshend) on 14th November. They met to discuss the potential merger of the two groups. They were in agreement that this should happen, and that their view should be discussed at the Panel meeting on the 25th November.

The meeting was also updated with events since then. On 21 November, the PCF steering group, now expanded with the inclusion of DL and OC, met to formally agree their constitution and vote in some key positions. The PCF formally adopted its constitution, and voted Claire Richmond and Dave Leeman as co-chairs. In addition to the co-chairs, steering group members were identified as including Oksana Clancy, Minta Townshend, Louise Edwards, and Aaron Guiver, with a number of other parent / carers having expressed an interest in joining. Kevin and Alison Sears are to be Associate Members (due to their son being aged over 25).

In very general terms, parents and carers will be able to choose to be involved in the PCF at one of two levels. At the steering group level, parents / carers will be responsible for the strategic direction and activity of the PCF. The alternative is to be part of the wider Ordinary membership. This will be less time commitment, more flexible, and these people will be able to become as involved in operational matters as they wish / can manage given other commitments etc.

The meeting then discussed whether the Parent Panel should merge with the PCF. There was some debate about whether the Parent Panel was always intended to be an interim arrangement pending the establishment of a Parent Carer Forum, or whether the Parent Panel could actually continue alongside the Parent Carer Forum in view of the fact that the Parent Panel members were involved in various workstreams identified by them during the course of its activities. JT confirmed that this is a decision for parents and carers and not AfC and confirmed that AfC would support whatever decision parent / carers made. It was confirmed by the Panel / AfC that following suggestions that the Panel could potentially merge with the PCF during previous meetings, no objections had been received from

any parents / carers about this happening. The draft PCF governance documents had been shared with Panel members who had attended the last meeting.

There was a view that the workstreams that arose from the Parent Panel have contributed a significant amount and an orderly transition is vital to make sure this good work continues. The group discussed whether the Panel was a necessary aspect of the workstreams now that they have recruited parents and carers and they are up and running. The conclusion was that they are now functioning relatively autonomously of the Panel.

The meeting agreed that a merger of the Parent Panel and the PCF should happen, and that the Panel would cease to operate at the end of December 2019, once the PCF was up and running. Until that time, AfC would continue to support the Panel.

Post meeting note: The existing meeting booked for 13th January would remain, and include PCF members plus all Parent Panel member and any other parents / carers who would like to be involved and / or find out more about the plans for the PCF.

Of note is that Ana Daruwalla has decided to step back from both the Parent Panel (at the end of its existence) and the PCF due to potential conflict of interest due to her involvement with other local organisations. Ana has not only co-chaired the Parent Panel since earlier this year and been very active in a number of the workstreams established by the Panel, she has been instrumental in the establishment of the PCF including driving the creation of documentation and arranging for the identification of a possible umbrella voluntary group to support the PCF's operational needs. All present thanked Ana for her contributions and hard work. Ana will continue to be involved in the workstreams that she is part of.

Kristina Dale, who co-chaired the Parent Panel with Ana, has since the meeting also confirmed that she will not be seeking a role within the new PCF's steering group. This reflects her existing membership of the steering committee of another local voluntary sector group and her desire to avoid any conflict of interest. She will however remain active within existing workstreams and pieces of work. Huge thanks are also due to Kristina for her contribution to the Parent Panel since its inception.

Minta explained that the PCF are keen to reach parents / carers who have in the past not been involved in SEND parent groups, and to make sure that the PCF is truly representative of children, young people and families impacted by SEND. They are thinking about how they can do this, how they can build a mailing list and will put together a marketing strategy when they are established. They are thinking of using Eventbrite going forward. When Parent Panel members are informed about the merger they could be offered the option to be automatically transferred to the PCF database.

Actions:

- a. PCF co-chairs to agree which docs to share with all Parent Panel so they can understand PCF (DL, CR)
- b. PCF co-chairs and Panel co-chairs to agree wording to go to all Parent Panel members re merger and invitation to join meeting on 13 Jan (CR, DL, AD, KD)
- c. Karen Lowry to send out a. and b. to all Panel members (KL)
- d. Letter to go out to all families, as it did at the start of the Parent Panel process, to tell them the Panel will be merging with PCF on 31 Dec (AW)

c. Knowledge Hub.

NH gave a tutorial on the Knowledge Hub. A user guide will be circulated with these minutes.

3. Local Offer website

JK gave an update on the Local Offer website. The Local Offer website was co-produced from the start and came top in a peer review of local offer websites a couple of years ago. Lots of development and changes have taken place since then, but given advances in technology, changes to how people use technology, and feedback received from users over recent months, the time is right for a more fundamental relaunch. As part of this process, we now need more user feedback, and last week met with a different group of parents and a group of young people.

Feedback received at the meeting included that the amount of info is overwhelming and that it is hard to navigate. One person had not heard of it, and another had been directed to local offer but did not know what it is - too much jargon including the term "local offer" itself. An explanation of what the "Local Offer website" actually is needed. There was a view that the term "local offer" is unhelpful.

Action: all to test and feedback with comments to sendlocaloffer@achievingforchildren.org.uk

4. Local Offer website Chatbot

JK gave summary of the proposed Local Offer Website chatbot. It is not a "real person", but having been pre-programmed it uses artificial intelligence to learn from user activity to help a user access the information they need. The chatbot will take you to a place on the website and does not answer the question themselves.

NH showed the example of a chatbot in use at another local authority. Demonstrated importance of information being used to pre programme chatbot before it is launched.

JT flagged that this is just one route for communications with parents out of many and will not replace them e.g. parent champions. JK exemplified this by saying also aiming to have audio input to website to make it as accessible as possible.

The chatbot would not be part of the LBR website, AfC only.

Feedback from parents:

- Must give a phone number at start so that if the user wants to speak to a real person they can. Linked to one parent asking what would happen if a parent tried to speak to it at time of crisis
- Within chatbot should be able to get access to person / leave a message.
- What about collecting information? If you ask a question then submit email / phone. (Answer: AfC does not collect info / have cookies and don't need to log in).
- Parents questioned if a chatbot was really needed.

Actions:

- Feedback to sendlocaloffer@achievingforchildren.org.uk with any views on chatbot (All)
- Soft launch of chatbot to be flagged to Panel / PCF when it happens (JK)

5. Assessment and Planning

- AW and JT presented this item
- Quality assurance of the EHCP process and of EHCPs themselves is key and is currently high priority within AfC and the CCG. Resource has been strengthened this term. Heather Stack has been focusing on education, Alison Stewart (the new Designated Clinical Officer) on Health, and Andy Gill (new Associate Director for Practice Learning) on children's social care. This brings an enhanced critical eye on to what is happening. Needs continued systematic assessment of quality. The numbers of EHCPs being audited are still small but numbers are building. The new audit process will need to become business as usual and this includes SEN caseworkers.
- Kevin Sears shared a past practice where adult social care invited in experienced carers, showed them anonymised cases, and asked them to consider if plans were "right or wrong" from parents perspective.

Action: AfC to think about using experienced parent / carers to check quality of EHCPs. Worked really well in adults social care (AW)

- A focus is the need to have higher profile of health and social care needs and outcomes within EHCPs. A parent suggested case workers need more understanding of health needs
- **Action:** AW to discuss this with Alison Stewart
- Feedback from a pilot with children and young people shows that surveys result in relatively low response rates and comments lack depth / clarity. Focus groups and one to ones will therefore be used more going forward.
- Easyread guides are now available on EHCP plans and the process.
- Feedback from parents / carers:
 - Re LGA SEND Peer challenge, need to add Council response to what we doing about findings of LGA report (parent suggestion)
 - We are being overloaded with consultations and questions. If you want quality answers need to be more coordinated / streamlined.
 - Need to make sure we hearing stories from harder to reach parents and children and young people with most needs

Meeting ended 8.15 pm