



Department
for Education



Doncaster SENDIASS: Partnership working with the local Parent Carer Forum

The context

Doncaster SENDIASS and the local Parent Carer Forum - known as Doncaster Parent's Voice (DPV) hold a mutually respectful relationship and have consistently implemented different ways to work together to maximise the effectiveness of each service and the offer to local residents. However, findings from the local area SEND inspection in 2019 identified that while the Information, Advice and Support families and YP received was good – too few parents across the borough were aware of the support provided by SENDIASS and the local Parent Carers Forum. SENDIASS and DPV began to work together more closely to ensure that all families accessing either SENDIASS or DPV were informed of the other.

The story

To promote both services, joint 'drop-in sessions' were offered in libraries and community centres across the borough. The sessions began to gain some good momentum with families accessing the sessions and benefitting from a holistic range of support. For example, DPV volunteers were able to provide emotional support, counselling, access to support sessions, hypnotherapy and life coaching. Meanwhile, SENDIASS were able to help families navigate the sometimes-complex SEND processes including the graduated approach, the EHCP process, exclusions and dispute resolutions (to name only a few issues). Shortly after initiation, the Covid-19 pandemic hit and all face-to-face service delivery was suspended. However, SENDIASS and DPV continued to work together to ensure that both services were accessible and shared all relevant information to CYP and their families. All social media posts were cohesive and complementary and shared. A Thursday evening offer was introduced, which involved both services being available until 8pm to enable signposting to each other if necessary. This collaboration also extended to the development and co-production of a new training programme which covered presenting issues such as transition to school, school exclusions, SEN Law with a range of guest speakers such as the Local SEN team, Educational Psychologists and clinicians from the NHS Autism Pathways team including a local Paediatrician.

The difference made

The work completed together has had a positive impact on a wider range of service users who now have a broader understanding of each services' remit. The numbers of service users is increasing and both services are experiencing higher numbers of service users than pre-pandemic levels. More families have been reached through this collaboration and shared training offer. The plan is to maintain this successful collaboration by ensuring future training is a mixture of face-to-face sessions as well as utilising technology thereby meeting a wider range of needs. The offer of evening sessions has increased service reach by making it accessible to working parents. Ultimately, the hope is that the joint working and greater understanding of the services will result in service users getting the right information, advice and support earlier, thus reducing unnecessary stress and anxiety on some families and the escalation of some cases that can be resolved earlier for example through mediation.

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