Case Study:
Effective Partnership Working in Leicester

This case study illustrates how local services in Leicester worked together to ensure that parents/carers and young people have access to the right level of information, support and advice without having to ‘tell their story’ over and again.

The partners

- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) - Leicester
- Independent Support Leicester
- Leicester Parent and Carer Forum
- Special Education Service, Leicester City Council
- Leicester Choice Advice Service
- The Local Offer - Leicester

In Leicester we brought together services working alongside the existing Parent Partnership Service: the Choice Advice Service, Independent Support and the Local Offer, to form one integrated team and enabled parents/carers and young people to access all strands of the service through one single referral point - SENDIASS Leicester. All services work closely with the Local Authority Special Education Service to contribute to and influence policy and procedures for Education, Health and Care Assessment and Plans and SENDIASS (including Independent Support) attend all Parent and Carer Forum meetings.

How it works

A parent approaches the Local Authority to raise concerns about the support their child is receiving. They are worried about attainment levels and the type and level of SEN support within the school.

The Local Authority Special Education Service signposts them to SENDIASS Leicester who provide immediate telephone advice which results in the parent speaking to appropriate person at the school and additional support being put in place.

The parent did not require any further support at that time but attended the Parent and Carer Forum following encouragement from a fellow parent and met the SENDIASS Leicester Team Manager who had provided the initial telephone advice. During discussion it transpired that the school had made a request for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment as a result of the discussions between the parent and the school’s SENCO on the advice of SENDIASS.
The parent was unsure what this meant but the process was explained during the SENDIASS surgery at the next Parent and Carer forum meeting and the parent felt confident to proceed. The local authority agreed to carry out an EHC needs assessment and referred the parent for Independent Support. As the parent was already known to the SENDIASS a Leicester Independent Supporter was allocated and a home visit arranged to capture the views of the child and parent. During this visit the Independent Supporter identified that another child in the family needed to apply for a school place and made an immediate referral to the Choice Adviser in the team. The Choice Adviser supported the parent to apply on time for the school place with the support of the Independent Supporter. This ensured that the parent did not have to tell their story again. Drawing on the Local Offer the Independent Supporter contacted the Disabled Children’s Service and practical help was offered to the family and a vital wheelchair ramp fitted at their home. The Independent Supporter also put the family in touch with a local support group and they are part of this. With the Independent Supporter’s continuing involvement throughout the whole process the family was fully supported without having to be referred to another agency.

The assessment led to an EHC plan being issued and the Independent Supporter met the parent and school to discuss how the plan would be put into effect and to support them in making a request for a particular school. The Independent Supporter helped the parent to view potential schools and the parent requested a place in a particular specialist setting which has been met. The Independent Supporter attended an implementation meeting at the new school with the parent before ceasing their involvement with the family. Ongoing support is available to the parent through the wider remit of the SENDIASS should they need it.

The partnership arrangements in Leicester ensure that parents/carers or young people:

- Are placed at the centre of the process from the very start
- Only have to ‘tell their story’ once
- Are equal partners in the EHC process, empowered and given an equal voice
- Have accurate information and support to make informed decisions throughout
- Have control over information shared and decisions being made on the principle of ‘no decision about me, without me’
- Have choice regarding the level and type of support they access to best meet their individual needs
- Know their experiences and views inform and influence wider policy and practice

A unified approach by all partners underpins local practice and decision making. This avoids mixed messages for parents/carers and young people and leads to effective provision (the right service at the right time). Streamlining of services has led to better value for money in meeting the needs of parents/carers and young people.