

**Independent Support Board Meeting  
Thursday 03 December 2015, 12.30 – 3pm**

**Present:**

Kevin Williams (KW) – Chair  
Maureen Morris (MM) - National Network of Parent Carer Forums (Deputy Chair)  
Patrick Agius (PA) - Department for Education  
Kathrine Everett (KE) - Orchard Hill College  
Barney Angliss (BA) - School SENCO, Surrey  
Martin Bull (MB) - Independent Support, Council for Disabled Children  
Dan Ellitts (DE) - Independent Support, Council for Disabled Children  
Christine Lenehan (CL) - Council for Disabled Children  
Rob Greig (RG) - NDTi  
Nic Crosby (NC) – In Control  
Natalie Nariane (NN) - Independent Support, Council for Disabled Children  
Debbie Smith (DS) - Campaigns Manager, Council for Disabled Children

**Apologies:**

Jill Wellings (JW) - Wolverhampton Council  
Clive Harris (CH) – NHS England

**Approval of previous minutes**

To add LGA representative to members present in previous minutes

The Board approved the minutes.

**Action 1: To publish minutes**

**1. Progress on Independent Support**

MB presented to the Board progress and an overview of activity for the Independent Support programme from the period of July to November.

Good progress is being achieved by service providers during this period with 8,737 requests/referrals of which 2,429 EHC plans reported as completed (in draft form). The number of completed draft plans being less than the number reported in the previous period. This is due to the exemption clause 9.42 being applied and 4 week closure over the summer period.

In this period the IS team have delivered less conflict resolution and advice But will be conducting a further round of investigations in the period ahead.

The IS team have updated all existing training materials and started to produce a 1 day 'refresher' training offer - intended to allow trained independent supporters to update their knowledge and skills, reflect on progress and share their experiences.

The Quality Assurance survey has now reached 1,000 responses from parents/carers and young people. The feedback remains positive – MB shared the figures with the Board.

**2. Update on CSR**

PA gave the Board a brief update on the impact of the comprehensive spending review in Independent Support

CL asked if there was any indication of what the timescales will be for announcing funding for Independent Support. PA informed the Board that, now that the Spending Review across the whole of

Government had concluded, the Department still needed to work through the detailed implications and how to allocate resources. His best prediction would be no earlier than mid-January.

MB stated that by the next Board we would know if we are exiting or continuing with delivery, therefore MB will bring a paper to the Board that sets out the options and the risk for each scenario. If necessary an additional Board meeting will be convened.

**Action 2: MB to bring an options paper to the Board in March or February 2016.**

### **3. Independent evaluation report – emerging findings**

RG gave an overview of the findings from the report, looking at the central messages, outcomes and critical success factors.

There are two central messages;

- Firstly, the impact of independent Support is governed more by the effectiveness of the services system in which they are operating and less by how Independent Supporters are set up and organised.
- There are early indications that Independent Supporters are a catalyst for the reforms to head in the right direction. What has been shown is that there isn't a right way or right model for Independent Support, it is more about attitude, flexibility and approach.

Some gaps were also identified, such as a lack of understanding as to how the delivery and resulting impact of Independent Support connects to the wider reforms, for instance links to personalisation and personal budgets.

There was also some discussion around how a culture of self-evaluation across Independent Support providers may be a useful addition going forward.

The Board discussed the findings of the report and anecdotal feedback from both Independent Support providers and the wider sector. One area that has regularly come up is personal budgets and how there are still issues, particularly with local authorities, in making it clear how these can be accessed and used in conjunction with the development of EHC plans. CL expressed the need for a stronger emphasis on utilising the Local Offer and the need for self-evaluation.

NC shared that In Control have the *POET* data that may be useful in capturing data regarding Young People's views on their experience with Independent Support.

### **4. Independent evaluation report – next steps**

The report will be published mid-January, once there is clarity about the Independent Support programme going forward. NDTi will publish the report in collaboration with CDC and DFE.

### **5. A.O.B**

The Board discussed if an extra meeting will be required after March. It was agreed to set a provisional meeting date in May: Monday 9<sup>th</sup>.May

**Action 3: Circulate provisional meeting date of 9th May 2016.**