Early Support and Independent Support Board Meeting
Friday 12 June 2015, 12.30 – 3pm

Present:
Kevin Williams (KW) – Chair
Patrick Agius (PA) - Department for Education
Nic Crosby (In Control)
Martin Bull (MB) - Independent Support, Council for Disabled Children
Maureen Morris (MM) - National Network of Parent Carer Forums
Kathrine Everett - Orchard Hill College
Barny Angliss - School SENCO, Surrey

Apologies:
Chris Easton (CE) - NHS England
Christine Lenehan (CL) - Council for Disabled Children
Jill Wellings (JW) - Wolverhampton Council
Liz Hobson (LH) - Local Government Association
Peter Ellis (PE) - Richard House Children's Hospice

1. Approval of previous meeting minute
Minutes approved.

2. Review of Action Log items
All actions closed apart from NDTi to provide the theory of change document for uploading onto the CDC website.

Action: NDTi to be invited to next Board meeting to provide an update on progress for the evaluation project.

3. Matters Arising
See AOB.

4. Independent Support update
MB reported that good progress is being made on Phase 2 of the IS programme, with the vast majority of KPIs programme currently RAG rated as green. The next reporting round from IS Agencies and IASSs is due on the 17th of July.

The IS training offer remains on track and currently delivering its 6th cohort with the 7th cohort planned for September 2015. It was suggest that MM circulate the offer of training to NNPCF steering group members and offer them the chance to undertake the training.

An overview on the uptake of the new online training modules will be presented at the next Board but members were made aware that the same level of granular reporting available on the IS core modules will not be possible as the new modules are not assessed and are predominantly an information resource.

A programme of advice and conflict resolution for IS agencies facing difficulties with local delivery is under way. MB reported that himself and DE are starting to organise visits to a number of IS providers and will be able to share the learning from these visits both with the board and other IS providers.

Action: MM to circulate the offer of training to NNPCF members.

5. Feedback on the highlights of latest DfE statistical release
PA presented a brief overview of the latest SEN2 DfE statistical release but with the caveat that as the reporting period only represented four months of the reforms being in place it was limited in what this particular release can tell us. PA will present the next release in more detail to the Board. In the meantime DfE continue to use a variety of information sources, including the CDC IS reports to monitor the impact and progress of the reforms.

The release can be found here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statements-of-sen-and-ehc-plans-england-2015

6. Future of IS (survey feedback)
MB presented the summarised data from a survey of IS agencies and IASS around the future of IS and what the perceived impact may be if the programme were to end in March 2016 (when it is currently scheduled to end).

The survey showed that the overall feeling was one of support for the continuation of IS post March 2016.

The survey responses also highlighted the need for IS to mirror the government reform implementation timetable.

A concern was raised by the board that some small IS providers were already becoming too reliant on IS funding and a main sources of income.

The board stated that a decision would need to be made as soon as possible by DfE around the continuation of the programme to prevent delivery being affected as agencies effectively go into end of programme mode. PA said he was mindful of that point.

7. Expanding IS communications

There is anecdotal evidence that more work is needed on raising sector awareness around Independent Support, what it does and how it can be accessed. SENCOs need particular focus as awareness is low.

It was suggested that the IS training be made available to SENCOs, however it was decided that this would not be practical due to the limited number of places available on IS training in this period. It was therefore suggested that, as SENCOs already attend IPSEA training, IPSEA might be approached to mention IS in their training sessions.

The Board felt that it may also be useful to make more of local authority communication routes in order to reach SENCOs, with a communication in September being most effective.

Action: MB to approach IPSEA about mentioning IS in their current training programme.

8. AOB

MB mentioned that Jane Harrison (Aspire) has been developing a quality assurance system for EHC plans. This is currently being piloted in the NE but MB asked the boards opinion on whether this should be piloted more widely? The board seemed open to the idea of the tool being used more widely across the programme.

Action: MB to Liaise with Jane on the progress of the tool and the outcome of the NE pilot.