

Working Together for Change

Dudley Parent Carer Forum

Steering Group Meeting

2 June 2014

Present:

Tina Cartwright
Emma Taylor
Joanne Weston
Georgina Homer
Hayley Pearce
Anne Davies
Jessica Tinsley
Susan Cresswell
Ingrid Whitehouse

Support

Donna Roberts
Rob Franklin
Nicki Burrows

Visitor

Becky Pickin – Dudley CVS

Governance Structure

Becky Pickin, Small Groups Development Officer from Dudley CVS came to talk to the group about governance structures and constitution. Becky commented on the great start the group had already made and the progress made in terms of establishing our aims and objectives, our membership structure and our Terms of Reference. The benefit of being more formalised is that it gives greater autonomy, enables us to build relationships with the public and enables us to access more funding.



There are three things you need to become more formalised

1 – You need a management committee or steering group. They should be clear about the group's aims and objectives. They need to understand what needs to be done and how they are going to get there. You need to consider your strategy, how will you deliver your business plan over the next year, over the next three years? The committee will be responsible for the organisation, they will consider legal obligations, policies and procedures and roles and responsibilities. All which can feel a little overwhelming, but Dudley CVS is happy to support the steering group through this.

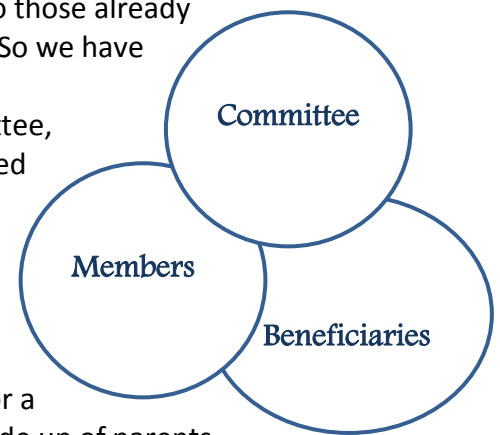
2 – You need a constitution, a set of rules that set out objectives of the group, how often it will meet, and how the meetings will run etc. The constitution should state the name and purpose of the group. It needs to state how the committee is appointed and how it operates. The constitution also contains rules around how finances are managed, and how the constitution can be amended or what happens if the group comes to a close.

Many of the items needed within the constitution will be similar to those already agreed within the Terms of Reference that the group already has. So we have made a great start

3 – Most groups usually have a structure which consists of committee, members and beneficiaries. The **members** are the people interested in the group's success and they have a say on who is on the committee and big decisions such as changing the constitution.

The **committee** governs the group on behalf of the members and is answerable to the members. You need at least 3 committee members to form a group. Working Together for Change currently has 24 names on the steering group, which can feel a little large for a committee.

However it is recognised that the steering group is made up of parents with limited time and extensive commitments so a larger number could be beneficial. The group could decide they want a smaller group to make up the committee? The number of members and committee members needed for the group to be 'quorum' (able to make decisions) need to be considered. It may be the group agrees two thirds needs to be present for a decision to be carried forward or it could state a % that needs to be present.



The **beneficiaries** are the people you're here to support, your reason for existing.

There could be some overlap between members, committee members and beneficiaries in reality. One possibility is that members = Parent Carers / Beneficiaries = your children.

The question was raised about having to have a charitable status if the group are constituted. We don't have to be a charity, but contact a family does ask that the group is formalised. It makes the group more credible and gives the steering group more weight when challenging or influencing decisions.

Roles and Responsibilities

Traditionally groups elect a chair, secretary and treasurer. However this can mean that there is a lot of responsibility on a few people and also some may deem this role as being more important so feel they have less of a voice. Becky informed the group that we could take a liberating leadership approach, which is based on sharing roles and which focus on the skills and assets people have.

Launch Event Feedback

Overall parents were pleased with the event, however there were mixed feelings around the voting and the results. A lot of feedback we received told us that participants felt only parents should have been able to vote. The point was raised that we are assuming it was the parents wanted more information, what if it was the professionals that did not feel fully informed? One parent commented that she had clicked A) a few times because the question had been answered, although it may not be what she is experiencing or wanted to hear, it

was answered. It would have been useful to be able to split parent and professional's answers. It was felt that the voting was a good way to manage the question session at the launch, sometime it can get emotional and turns aggressive.

The response to the SEN Reform pin pointed on the "Dot activity formulated from the DFE questionnaire" indicated what parents thought about the Local Offer. Most parents think that the Local Authority has made a start at engaging with parents. The Local Authority has received a similar questionnaire have been asked to respond to the same two questions as parents so that the DFE has both LA and Parent Carers perspective.

The Forum has received an excellent sign up from parents wising to get involved in the task and finish groups where conversations can be continued and parents influence the shaping of the personalisation agenda, integrated care and shaping of transition for 16 – 18 year olds.

It was commented on that there was a lot of heart and care at the event from parents, but it felt like it was just a job for some of the professionals. It was full of jargon and same old, same old.

There was mixed feelings in regards to the presenters, however everyone agreed what an achievement it was to get the entire panel on the stage same time.

The group asked what was happening with the video of the event. This has been edited because of sound technicalities at the start, it has been uploaded but permissions have been set to invite only. We are hoping to get this rectified in the next week.

What was really great news is that contact a family are really impressed with the amount the forum has achieved in a short space of time they mentioned using this example of best best practice.

Next Steps

It was felt that more information is needed around the Local Offer. We may want to start to collect feedback from parents who have had statements withdrawn. Do parents know that responsibility has been withdrawn from the Local Authority and is now the responsibility of schools? Will the needs of children be met? Who will hold schools to account? What happens to statements during transition from primary to secondary school? It should be enforced that schools need to share information with all parents. If money the school receives for these children is not ring fenced, how do you know the child's needs are being met? Do Governors understand these changes and how it affects their role?

Currently 1500 children have a statement; this may reduce to just a third.

It was felt that this was a good opportunity to work with schools, especially mainstream and colleges. The forum needs to build a relationship and trust amongst SENCO. We need to work with SEN Governor, to help them understand they need to hold the school to account.



Suggestions include

- Sending out information / meeting with SEN governors
- WTFC attendance at parents evenings and open evenings
- Develop case studies so that SEN Governors can understand what the situation is really like.
- Coffee mornings / drop in sessions within schools for parents

Nicki told the group that the tender for independent supporters should be advertised in June. Hopefully whoever the successful applicant is will align with the forum and help forge relationships between the forum and schools. They should also support with mediation between parents and schools.

Emma informed the group that parents within Solihull found that the EHCP was working well. Parents said they felt more involved however there is some work to be done with mainstream schools.

WTFC Township Clinic 25 June 2014

Any parent carer is invited to these sessions; the first one is due to take place in Sedgley / Coseley / Gornal area from 10am-12pm.

Ideas for Township Clinic

There were some suggestions to include more information around the Local Offer, and explore what the legal obligations and the process and change in duty from Local Authority to schools there are concerns particularly about primary and secondary mainstream and their responsibilities it was agreed that a mainstream head teacher be invited to speak giving their perspective and offer parents an opportunity to answer questions.

Other business

If any steering group member is interested in specific areas of business their contribution would be most welcome including finances and budgets where there is an opportunity to work with Nicki to manage these to meet Contact a family monitoring arrangements.

Actions

- On the 16 June 2014 the integrated care task and finish group will meet. Any parent who is interested in attending, or wants more information contact Donna
- The week beginning 9 June is Carers week. WTFC steering group has an opportunity to be involved in "tea and Chat" sessions at Russell's Hall hospital within the children's out patient department. Sessions will run on Tuesday 10 & Wednesday 11 June, from 1:30 – 4:00pm. If you would like to be involved in either or both of these sessions let Donna know.
- The Local Authority has produced a SEN Reform parent's guide and has asked the group for general comments. Responses need to be received in the 24 hours following the meeting

- The Local Authority is producing a website of which a section will be populated by the forum. We would like to compile a list of know organisations or groups that support parent carers or their children in Dudley borough. This will also link into the family information service directory and community information directory.
- Can we add a 'Did you know' section to the website, so we can share all sorts of information with parents who might not know?
- Can we look at getting information about the forum into information pack that are given to all parents whose children are starting nursery or are in the transition from nursery to primary or primary to secondary school?
- On 26 June 2014 Nicki has invited one parent to accompany her to the regional meeting which is being held in Birmingham.
- There is a place for one parent from the steering group to sit on the Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board. This group looks strategically at the SEN reform and implements changes. They would need to attend bi-monthly meetings and Nicki would support them. Tina Cartwright has put her name forward could other parents do the same or support Tina's application in email to nicki at nicki@dudleycvs.org.uk by 14th June 2014

Prepared by Donna Roberts
5 June 2014