

Parents' Inclusion Forum

Meeting of parents and Tom Kelly regarding developments in the Inclusion, Voice and Influence Strategy - 22nd May 2007.

1 Present

Sharon Ellis- ASAP, Tina Freeman- VIP's, Nicky & D Dabell- VIP's, Paula Barrett- Parent, Sue Green- Parent, Diane Cookson- Parent, Cheryl Wilson- ASAP, Catherine Bridge- VIP's, A Ward- ADAPT, E Gascoigne- ADAPT, T Casswell- VIP's, AS Badger & D Badger- VIP's, Tom Kelly- Director of IVI, Pip Wise- Parent Partnership, Kath Horsfield- Parent Partnership.

2 Apologies

Iftica Ahmed- BME Parents Support Group

3 Membership and working arrangements for the group

3.1 A draft copy of the Membership and working arrangements is attached.

Tom requested members commit to attending the meetings for at least 6 months, this would reduce the need to cover the same ground for new members.

3.2 It was agreed to produce the minutes in a newsletter format to make them interesting and accessible to a wide group of parents. It will include the agenda for the next meeting as agreed with Andrew (Chair). It was suggested future agenda items could include:-

- Finances
- Disability Equality Duties
- Quality Mark for Inclusion
- Training
- Developments in Role of Special Schools
- Communication between Inclusion and Parents

3.3 Several parents asked about action for problems happening now. It was agreed this group will focus on strategic issues for long term outcomes (within next 10-15 years). Separate meetings could be arranged for acute problems happening now. It was agreed there may be some overlap at times. Tom is to visit the ASAP Group in June and may share information from this group with the Inclusion Strategic Group.

3.4 ACTION: Name for Group—please bring suggestions to the next meeting.

4 Inclusion and changing roles of Special Schools

4.1 Feedback from parents regarding their hopes for Inclusion was circulated.

4.2 Input from Tom - Inclusion is a relatively new word used particularly over the past 15 years. Prior to this Integration was used but integration means that child has to fit provision while Inclusion means provision has to fit the child. Before 1971 some children were regarded as uneducable, the term *Special Educational Needs* was introduced in 1979 and replaced labels such as Educationally Sub-Normal. Tom emphasised that all children regardless of difficulties have a right to be included and treated the same in society. Some parents have been told by schools that Statements are no longer being issued. Tom confirmed Statements are still written in Rotherham.

5 Funding arrangements for supporting those with LDD

5.1 Input from Tom re. School Budgets:

- £170m goes into Rotherham schools, this pays for everything except pensions.
- £160m goes into the 120 mainstream schools. £10m of this can not be used for anything other than Special Educational Needs
- The 7 special schools have a combined budget of £9m.
- 85 children access outside independent schools including 20 as a result of social care needs. This costs £4.1m
- 23 attend Robert Ogden School costing £760,000

5.2 Within Rotherham there are 650 children and young people diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. There is a wide variety within this group, not all have significant additional needs. Each child has individual needs. Tom suggested Rotherham is one of only a few Local Authority's with an ASD diagnosis level of 1 in 100.

5.3 There was concern about the level of training on ASD for school staff; some parents suggested all head teachers should be sent on courses for ASD to raise the level of understanding. One parent suggested the Visual Impairment Service be used as a model for an ASD service.

5.4 Tom suggested the majority of time things are going right in school and only a small number of children in Rotherham come to his attention. Members of the group argued that although he was only hearing of a few cases this was really the tip of the iceberg. They advised of other parents going through very similar problems and getting frustrated and fatigued. They advised often parents don't know what to do and follow the guidance of head teachers. It should not be assumed that because things are not brought to Tom's attention that things are generally going right.

5.5 Tom suggested the linking of funding with Statements had been a disaster and had prevented a lot of early intervention work taking place. Parents argued the funding of statements had been a disaster from a "funding point of view" however from a parent's point of view the statement was often the only legal document they had to ensure that their child received the help they needed in school. Statements and associated funding are essential parts of ensuring that parents are aware that provisions are available to fully integrate the child in mainstream education. There was discussion around the rate of change which may have been difficult for some schools and the limited consultation which led to significant ill feeling at the introduction of delegated budgets.

5.6 Some parents said the lack of KS1 places in special schools was preventing some children accessing early intervention. Some parents said mainstream schools don't have the manpower to deal with problems in the way special schools can. They felt children have to be seen to be failing to access special school.

6 Next meeting

Wednesday 18th July 10 am at the Bailey Suite, Bailey House, Rotherham.
Please contact Pip Wise (01709 823627) by July 9th if you will be attending the meeting and need a Crèche place.

Agenda item: Statementing