

## Hampshire Parent Carer Network 2020 to 2021

### **Outputs**

Our outputs have been significantly affected by covid, as much of our activity is face to face. Despite this, we have continued to run our core services using virtual platforms such as Zoom/MS teams. Which has been received well by our parents and carers, reaching a harder to reach membership such as working parents.

Our biggest expense this year has been remunerating our parents. Since Ofsted visited, requests for reps at meetings has soared and we are attending over 50 meetings each quarter. We send 2 reps per meeting which shows better participation and coproduction as great views and feedback can be given across a wider remit. We have saved on meeting room hire and travel but have had lots more meetings to remunerate.

Staffing costs remain the same, with 3 paid staff members – the Programme Manager for Parent Carer Forums, the HPCN Administrator and our HPCN Coordinator.

### **Get Togethers**

Get Together sessions have been well attended. These are 2 hours sessions which used to be face to face and now they are on zoom. We hold 6 sessions per month (5 during the day & 1 in the evening). An advisor from SENDIASS is invited, as well as a speaker from Education, Health or Social Care. Topics have included the Local offer feedback about the therapies service and how to get support from the Early Help Hub. From these sessions we record feedback on what is happening for families of children with SEND, which is shared with the parent reps who attend strategic meetings.

To keep a local focus there are different Get Togethers for the following areas, as well as a county-wide evening Get Together.

Hart and Rushmoor

Winchester, Eastleigh & Alresford

Test Valley & New Forest

Fareham, Gosport, Havant & East Hants

Basingstoke

### **Future In Mind**

These sessions were run out of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) centres in Hampshire. We moved these to a virtual platform and run 7 per month (6 during the day and 1 in the evening).

Any parent or carer that has a child waiting for a Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)/Mental health assessment can attend. We have a clinician from CAMHS that offers workshops on subjects such as anxiety, eating disorders, and depression. These sessions give us the opportunity to increase our membership by reaching families that might not think that a parent carer forum was applicable to them and give them support during the wait time which is at least 2 years. We have been heavily involved coproducing the ASC/ADHD pathway in Hampshire and these sessions have been vital for us to understand the needs of the service and get feedback from parents and carers.

### **Meet the SEN team**

We hold a Meet the SEN Team virtual meeting monthly - Health/Education/Social Care attend meeting and give presentation. There is opportunity for a Q&A from parents and carers. Again, this is useful to attract new parent carers and inform them about Parent Participation.

### **Parent led Engagement event**

These virtual meetings have no pre-planned agenda. Parents and carers join an online session and we have a rep from the LA and SENDIASS to answer their questions. It allows us to hear the issues that parents and carers are facing.

### **Workshops**

We have held 2 per month from SENDIASS/LA discussing consultations, training, information etc.

### **Interviews**

We were involved in the hire of the new SEND manager at Hampshire County Council.

### **Outcomes**

Although challenging, this year has seen some positive outcomes for Parent Carers:

- Access to up to date information throughout the covid pandemic. We were able to break down and simplify the information generated from Department for Education to keep our parents informed so they didn't have to read complicated letters/websites. Parents were more informed about COVID and school attendance for example.
- Parents had access to managers from Education, Health and Social Care to keep informed and ask any questions. This meant that issues could be resolved more quickly and parents could see the human face of the local authority and health teams leading to improved relationships.
- Workshops from Hampshire SENDIASS kept families informed about things like annual reviews, EHCP process and Tribunals so that they were better able to participate in decisions around their child's education health and care.
- Continuation of local Get Together's and Future in Mind sessions alongside our social media presence encouraged peer to peer support, enabling parents to feel less isolated. It also enabled us to hear vital feedback about what experiences people were having and any gaps in services to inform our parent carer reps attending strategic meetings.
- Parents had opportunities to have a say at local and national level

**For our Steering Group/Parent Reps:**

- Autism Ambassador training offered leading to a better understanding of autism spectrum conditions and how they affect individuals.
- Online courses to improve resilience and wellbeing

**Co-production has been furthered greatly this year through:**

- Going virtual and taking out travel to make participation more accessible
- Support from HPCN on how to take part in consultations, workshops etc

**Service Development:**

- Record number of meetings being attended
- We received almost weekly requests to review policies/documents and give feedback from a parent perspective
- Continued effective partnership working with the Local Authority and improving relationships
- Feedback mechanism between local groups and workstream meetings working well
- Increased membership and social media

**Greatest Achievements**

In what has been probably the most challenging year any of us have faced, we are beyond proud of HPCN and what we have achieved.

Not only have we continued throughout the pandemic, we have adapted, grown and expanded through challenging times. As lockdown began, we made the decision to continue all of our sessions via zoom. We amended our marketing and made it clear that parent carers were welcome regardless of interruptions from children etc.

We made the decision to group together some of our areas, going from 10 get togethers (a new Havant session) to 5 as being online reduced the need to travel- we will relook at this once physical meetings recommence. Numbers have fluctuated, but lots of parents have been so grateful for support during this time. As well as continuing our current sessions, we have also launched an evening get together for all parents in Hampshire. This has been well attended and was born from parent feedback that if you work, you cannot attend morning sessions.

Future in Mind has also continued to run well online, also with the introduction of an evening session and a new group in Havant. Our links with health are so strong and FiM attendance continues to soar, with this vital support for parents and carers on the CAMHS waiting list.

Our steering group has continued to meet monthly, and we must acknowledge our incredible team here. Despite their own challenges, our steering group have continued with the same passion and determination throughout- attending meetings with professionals, giving feedback and continuing to shape the strategic form of HPCN.

Throughout the pandemic, we have run a series of workshops. From our termly Meet the SEN Team sessions to Post 16, we have offered over 20 workshops in the past year. We have adapted and offered workshops on things like returning to school post covid, as well as regular opportunities to hear from education, health and social care so parent carers can keep up with the frequent changes and communications since covid entered our lives.

As a team, we have kept our families supported and informed. We have sent covid specific newsletters and introduced a daily 'things to make you smile' post on our facebook through lockdown to keep everyone positive. We have checked in with our members, steering group and team mates- putting mental health and wellbeing as a focus to get through.

We have seen an incredible show of resilience from families that we won't ever forget, and at a time when the world stood still HPCN have been busier than ever- on more workstreams, running more workshops and seeing more parents than ever join us to make a change.

## **Challenges**

The greatest challenge for us has been the covid-19 pandemic. We have had to adapt to a completely new way of working, which hasn't been easy.

Our first challenge was deciding what to do about our sessions, as they are at the forefront of what we do. These were all physical meet ups in local areas. We made the decision to move all of our sessions- including workshops, steering group meetings etc.

A huge challenge for us was that our local authority continued to run some really important consultations despite lockdown and the pandemic. We challenged this, but the consultations continued. We knew that families were already stressed and at breaking point with having the children home, so we tried our best to support them to still have a say, through engagement events. We offered to help families complete the consultations and did our best to break it down and make it simple. With 2 big consultations, this put a strain on the team at a time where we were adjusting to different ways of working.

The next challenge was that all of our team and parent reps are of course parents, and having the children home/schooling was tough all round. We supported each other through, doing what we could, when we could. Many of our reps had to step back during lockdown, as they simply couldn't give any time with challenging children at home. We are pleased that they have started to come back now :)

In terms of meetings, we are in a great position with education and health- lots of strong relationships. Engaging with social care continues to be a challenge, but one we are working hard to resolve.

Despite being the most challenging year we have faced as a forum (and personally for many) I think we are much stronger for it.

## **Relationships**

There have been two consultations within the Education team this year, Short breaks and Banding. We were consulted with prior to the consultation and our views were heard.

Our relationship with health has improved this year. Funding the forum this year and plans to do so next year. We are involved with the mental health in schools project and the redesign of the ASC/ADHD pathway.