

8th July

July 2015

EHC Process and Out of Year Group Documentation Focus Group


family voice
peterborough
together improving services
for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs

Introduction

This was the third in a series of focus groups looking at different topics; this particular focus group concentrated on EHC process and being taught out of year group documents. The documents themselves were examined during the focus group. Any comments, details on the processes/ procedures themselves were captured on flip charts however this was not the focus of the session.

The focus group was well attended with some parent carers who attended other focus groups and two parent carers who attended a focus group for the first time. Feedback across all focus groups has been positive with requests for more of the same in terms of methods of participation.

Method

Participants

There were 10 parent carers in attendance all of whom were women. 8 had attended other focus groups. The parent carers reported their child/ young person's (CYP) needs as autistic spectrum disorders apart from one parent who listed learning disability and behavioural needs. The ages of the CYP ranged from 8 to 15 and schools attended were Southfields x 3, Bushfields x 2, Nenevalley, St Augustines, Jack Hunt, Marshfields, PRU and Eyrescroft

Details

The following documents were taken to the focus group:

- a) Request for outcomes focussed advice [from education professionals]
- b) Request for an EHC needs assessment
- c) At a glance guide to the Annual Review of EHC plan
- d) At a glance guide to transferring children and young people from statements to EHC plans
- e) Proposed policy on 'out of year' schooling

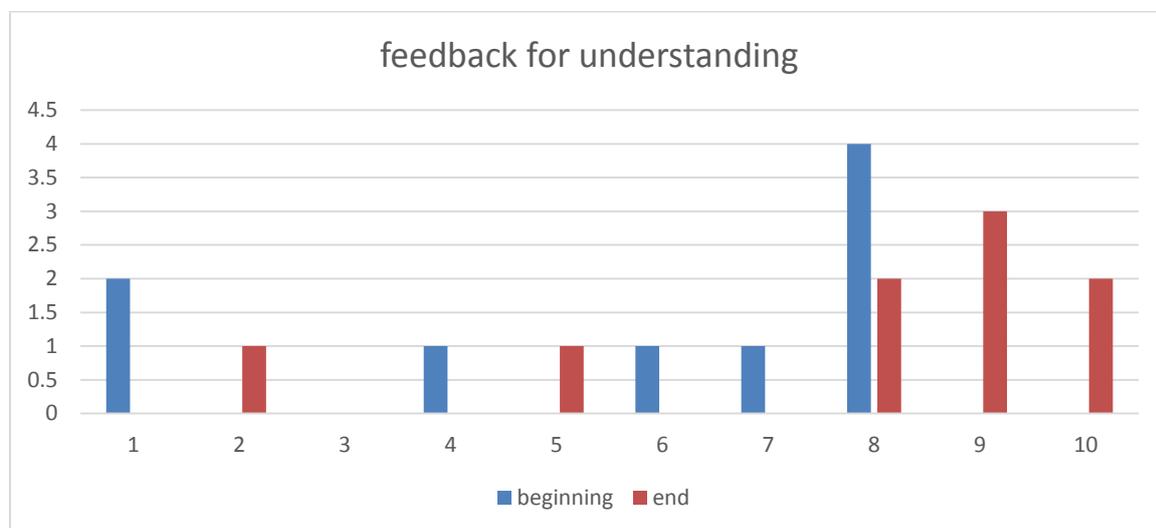
There were 15 copies of each document and these were numbered in the top left corner 1 to 15 to keep track of them on the day and ensure all copies given out were returned at the end of the focus group.

There were two facilitators on the day for the focus group work; the SEND project manager and the designated clinical officer. The FVP participation lead also assisted on the day.

The parents were split into two groups and allocated different documents to look over. Group 1 started with a) Request for outcomes focussed advice [from education professionals] and group 2 started with b) Request for an EHC needs assessment. Notes were written directly onto the documents and they were collected in by the SEND project manager who was acting as one of the facilitators. After a break group 1 looked at e) Proposed policy on 'out of year' schooling and group 2 looked at c) At a glance guide to the Annual Review of EHC plan and d) At a glance guide to transferring children and young people from statements to EHC plans.

Results

The parents as in previous focus groups were asked to rate their understanding of the topic at the beginning and end of the event



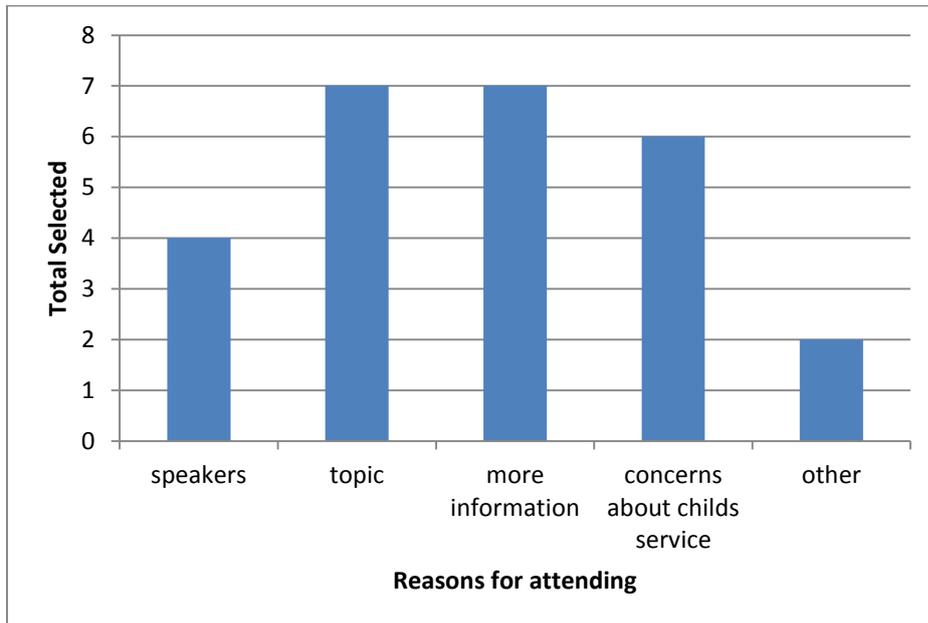
	low									high
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
beginning	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	4	0	0
end	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	2

- a) 9 forms were returned out of 10 parents who attended = 90%
- b) 4 at the beginning scored themselves as 5 and below in their understanding
- c) At the end the majority had switched their understanding to over 5 and all had rated an increase in their understanding

Where parents were asked to provide details on their CYP the following details were recorded

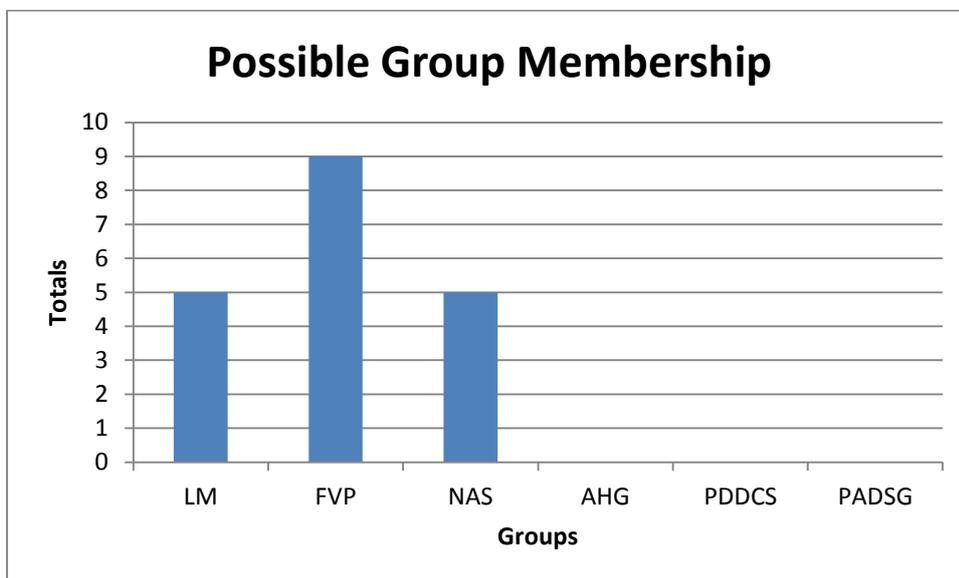
age of child/YP	Disability	nursery/school college
9	Dyspraxia, Aspergers, Sensory Processing Disorder	Southfields
14	Autism	Bushfields
10	Autism	Southfields
10	Autism/ Tourettes	Nene Valley
11, 8	Autism, Aspergers/FASD (possible)	St Augustines
15	Dyspraxia, Aspergers	Jack Hunt
13	Aspergers/ Dyspraxia	Bushfields
10	Aspergers/ Tourettes	Southfields
15,13,8	LD, Behavioural, ADHD	Marshfields, PRU, Eyrescroft

Another question asked on the feedback forms related to reasons for attending the focus group



The main reasons for attending were topic and more information followed closely by concerns about child's service.

Attendees were also asked to identify what groups they feel they are members of and the following results were gathered



Respondents could select more than one option

- a) 4 respondents chose FVP only
- b) 1 respondents chose LM and FVP
- c) 4 respondents chose NAS, LM and FVP

Comments

- a) Discussing the guidelines to teach children out of year group and EHC what should happen in an ideal attracted me to this session
- b) to boost my knowledge for my role in FVP
- c) Great to be able to give parental views on forms that will be used going forward for the EHC assessment. Also good to put forward our views on children out of year group
- d) Good meeting
- e) I've really enjoyed it

What was said about reports (Taken from report of focus group by SEND project manager)

“The feedback ranged from interpretation, grammar, the order and the way some questions had been asked. There were some questions that attendees were pleased to see included.

Parents did say that the “at a glance” guides needed a visual representation / diagram of the process and timelines” (see appendix for full report)

Examples of other issues raised during the focus group and responses from PCC

Poor Customer Service

Comment: *Call backs not received from educational psychology service*

Response: *We will review processes in the Education Psychology team to ensure call backs are placed in line with corporate policy.*

Comment: *Documents for transfer review meeting not provided in advance*

Response: *From September 2015, we will be notifying the other statutory agencies in advance which reviews are due, so they can prepare accordingly and ensure they are able to produce advice and reports in line with statutory requirements. We will monitor the timescales and chase late advice, and we will also publish figures to show the timeliness of advice from statutory agencies.*

Communication

Comment: *There has been no communication from schools regarding the children that were on School Action and School Action+ – what is happening or supposed to happen per LA guidance? SEN Support in general – parents wanted to know more about the wider SEN provision and how it is supposed to work now School Action and School Action+ have been withdrawn*

Response: *We are planning training for schools in Autumn 2015 in relation to the schools information report which will clarify their duties, and where the Local Authority will set out its expectations. The statutory duty is on individual schools to work with parents, and we will be working with the schools about how they can ensure parents have appropriate and accurate information in relation to SEN support.*

Complaints

Comment: *If the process has taken way over the legal time given, what actions can one take?*

Response: *There is a corporate complaints process, and the form is available on the Council Website or via the Local Offer – see below. However, where there are delays currently, there have usually been good reasons and the Local Authority has endeavoured to maintain contact with parents. All Local Authorities have been struggling with timetable for transfer reviews, and in recognition of this, the Government has extended the process from 14 to 20 weeks from September.*

Comment: *Who is the correct person to complain to?*

Response: *The form is available on the Council Website or via the Local Offer – see below.*

The full list of comments and responses can be found in the appendix.

Analysis

The focus group was well attended with a good mix of participants and feedback was positive. Data has been captured that demonstrates a good mix of participants although as with other focus groups recently the main disability/ need of the participants CYP are being reported as autistic spectrum disorders. This focus group only had one attendee from the hard to reach groups FVP is working with.

The draft “out of year group” document caused some contention in terms of its inclusion in the focus group and what was expected in relation to it. It was explained to all those who attended the focus group the main objective in terms of all documents was to establish if they made sense, were they written in a manner that could be understood, were any amendments required. The session was about the documents themselves as opposed to processes and procedures they referred to.

The amendments to documents will be made by the SEND project manager for signing off by PCC management. Once finalised all such documentation reviewed will formulate a suite of documents that will be available via the Local Offer. Generally participants were happy with the documentation and amendments related to grammar, interpretation, lay-out and questions being asked.

Recommendations

1. Feedback from PCC should be provided to those who attended as to what changes have been made and how/ where
2. A separate focus group should take place to discuss the processes/ procedures behind being out of year group, the development of the guidance and the opportunity to raise personal concerns/ experiences.

Appendix

Details from report produced by SEND project manager

Other Issues

During the course of the focus group, some other issues and concerns were raised, which are all listed here. Direct feedback has been provided to the participants, and where appropriate, we will update the Frequently Asked Questions document with these responses.

Poor customer service – call backs not received from educational psychology service

Response: We will review processes in the Education Psychology team to ensure call backs are placed in line with corporate policy.

Poor customer service – documents for transfer review meeting not provided in advance

Response: From September 2015, we will be notifying the other statutory agencies in advance which reviews are due, so they can prepare accordingly and ensure they are able to produce advice and reports in line with statutory requirements. We will monitor the timescales and chase late advice, and we will also publish figures to show the timeliness of advice from statutory agencies.

Is there any support for parents to review the draft plan when it is issued? 15 days is not very long.

Response: Independent Support is available to parents, through the additional contract with Scope or through the locally provided support from the SEN partnership service. This is the first point of support for parents.

There has been no communication from schools regarding the children that were on School Action and School Action+ – what is happening or supposed to happen per LA guidance?

SEN Support in general – parents wanted to know more about the wider SEN provision and how it is supposed to work now School Action and School Action+ have been withdrawn

Response: We are planning training for schools in Autumn 2015 in relation to the schools information report which will clarify their duties, and where the Local Authority will set out its expectations. The statutory duty is on individual schools to work with parents, and we will be working with the schools about how they can ensure parents have appropriate and accurate information in relation to SEN support.

How long does it take to change over from a statement to an EHC? How will you ensure it is done well in advance of a key transition point (for example starting at secondary school?)

Response: The statutory guidance is this is a 14 week process (this has recently been extended to 20 weeks. There are a series of planning meetings at the start of each school year and each term with the schools, and the purpose of these meetings is to review the timetable and prioritisation for completing the transfer and annual reviews that need to be undertaken to ensure the appropriate deadlines are met.

If the process has taken way over the legal time given, what actions can one take?

Response: There is a corporate complaints process, and the form is available on the Council Website or via the Local Offer – see below. However, where there are delays currently, there have usually been good reasons and the Local Authority has endeavoured to maintain contact with parents. All Local Authorities have been struggling with timetable for transfer reviews, and in recognition of this, the Government has extended the process from 14 to 20 weeks from September.

Who is the correct person to complain to?

Response: The form is available on the Council Website or via the Local Offer – see below.

What could my expected outcome be from this? Can anyone get compensation for the lack of correct care and education due to the EHC process being ‘mishandled’?

Response: It is not possible to give a specific answer to this question, as much would depend on the details of the case, whether the complaint was justified and whether the complaint was upheld. In some instances, the Local Government Ombudsman can provide a final decision on complaints that cannot be sorted out through the complaints process of the organisation involved.

What if the EHC has been completed yet none of the agreed processes / resources are included [being provided]?

Response: Initially, this should be referred to the school, who will have local procedures to manage complaints. The SEN Officer could be asked to attend an annual review meeting, or there is Independent Support who can support parents in discussions with the school. Contact information for Independent Support can be found on the Local Offer – see details below.