

FAMILY VOICE

Peterborough Expects

Parent Participation and Engagement

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Family Voice Expects Documents parent Participation and Engagement

1. Introduction

Family Voice has conducted a qualitative and quantitative research on the expects Document over the summer holidays this is a reflection of the participation and engagement work carried out with families of parent carers (questionnaire filled in partnership, more than one parent carer per family) from different socio-economic-cultural background.

This article argues what families expect schools to have as part of their educational offer that will translate the growth of social competency and adulthood skills. The dwindling of the support from other services, such health and care is translating into a shift of the needs from previous mentioned areas to education. The extra pressure to meet those needs on the educational settings to offer that support to the Child-Young person, are itself presenting challenges to those settings.

Ethical Guidelines need to recognise these facts and services need to modify their action plan and procedures such that the advantages of more openness, services working together and accessibility are exploited further.

2. Methods

2.1 Population

All the parents in attendance range from age ranged between 30 and 55, no specific data was collected and therefore a mean cannot be found. Out of the 21 parent/grandparent carers in attendance, 17 were from the feminine gender and 4 masculine.

The total of parents of the in attendance were all Peterborough residents or county borders as well as Peterborough service users, from different socio-economic and cultural background that due to the ethnicity (ethnic minority) and socio-cultural and economic background factors can be considered as included in the seldom heard families. Families had a varied ethnic background including white British, Portuguese, Kurdish, Pakistani, Zimbabwe, and Gambia.

Disabilities reported by parents: Language impairment, Autism, ADHD, OCD, Food allergies, Asthma, motor coordination difficulties, Anxiety disorder, 16p11.11, Goldhear syndrome, sensory Processing disorder, Dyspraxia, Learning disability, hearing loss, global development delay.

2.2 Method

The methods used two different questionnaires that were analysed using a qualitative and quantitative method, revealing a comprehensive analysis of the document from a parent user perspective.

The qualitative data was based on the questionnaire given by the Local Authority to parent carers that family voice carried out on their behalf, based on parent carers discourse analysis trends were identified and it should translate into statement of intention on the document due to its legislative and pedagogic influence in the educational system but also into the preparing for adulthood skills (emotional resilience and independence).

The quantitative data was based on the actual do document and how parents found language /information and content in terms of the information provided, language clarity, and potential accessibility of the document by parents.

3. Qualitative Results and Discussion

By using a discourse analysis of the questionnaires, it unable us to identify some key themes as follows:

1. Family and child resilience

The above trend was found on the families reporting:

- “Support, encouragement, guidance.”, “building confidence by supporting families...”, “encourage them to join in “, “ Showcase their art and talents”, “give them confidence they can achieve.”, “to let them know they can achieve anything they want to do in “, “Believe and encourage them.”, The school should help him to believe in himself and have a positive outlook in life.”, “By helping them in many ways , care , love and keep them safe.”

The totality of the questionnaires collected by FVP on a family activities mentioned emotional resilience as an important factor, which should be part of the support given on schools.

Building resilience in young people is an important goal if we are to strengthen capacity and promote skills that help to reduce mental health problems. One way to foster resilience in young people is through meaningful youth participation; that is, decision-making by young people that involves meaning, control, and connectedness. Whilst youth participation may occur in recognition of young people’s rights to be involved in all decisions that affect them, meaningful participation can itself enhance a young person’s sense of connectedness,

belonging and valued participation, and thereby impact on mental health and wellbeing (Oliver et al., 2006).

Resilience frameworks for practice or policy apply the findings and ideas from research to provide or strengthen the resources available to individuals or families, in order to promote well-being and coping (Stein et al., 2000; Ungar, 2001, 2004a, 2004b), a socio-constructivist stance (Luthar et al., 2000; Gilligan, 2001) define resilience as the positive adaptation, the need for families, children and education settings to adapt to the new climate are essential for the success of the child outcomes.

The theme at hand can be yet divided in two subthemes the need for the family to have resilience and the need for the child to build resilience as part of the readiness for school and for learning. Hill et al. (2007) points as crucial factors, parent, family, environmental and children factors and the interaction of this factors are crucial to build of resilience, this view is a pertinent one as CaF (2014b) puts the child and the family and environmental at the centre of the educational system and how those are crucial for the success in the attainment of educational outcomes.

2. Respect for individual differences

The above trend was found on the families reporting:

- “Making sure they are happy listening to their voice.”, “ encourage them to focus on what they are good at.”, “To show them respect , lead them down the right path .”, “value their opinions.”, “instead of putting everyone into one box fits all , make another box which works for each child.”, “support their confidence and it will be fine.”

The perceived quality of both parent and peer attachments is significantly related to psychological well-being (Armsden et al., 1987), with young person´s reported greater satisfaction with themselves, a higher likelihood of seeking social support, and less symptomatic response to stressful life events, creating this way a core skills to the development of successful education outcomes.

The parental recognition of this skills indicate that parents are aware that their children and services need to address this skills and that success will only be accomplish in education if those are addressed.

There is a relationships found to exist among all factors that are supported when individual differences re recognised and previous support given which leads to the theorizing about the development of empathic tendencies (Hoffman, 1975). That is, greater perspective- taking ability is associated with greater feelings of empathic concern for others and less feelings of

personal unease in the face of others' negative experiences, arguments that supports previous paragraph.

Some relevant connections are:

1. the causal connection between reading ability and the efficiency of a cognitive process is bidirectional-and organism-environment correlation—the fact that differentially advantaged organisms are exposed to non-random distributions of environmental quality, (Stanovich, 2017).
2. A positive correlation was also found in implicit cognition (Greenwald, 1998) for language development, particular in individual and collective evaluative differences.
3. Reappraisers experience and express greater positive emotion and lesser negative emotion, whereas suppressors experience and express lesser positive emotion, yet experience greater negative emotion, when individual differences were pointed out to children and young person's (Gross et al., 2003).

3. Independence skills/ preparing for adulthood

The above trend was found on the families reporting:

- “teaching to look after themselves and everyday skills.”, “the school should help him to cope in the community”, “keep them from harm and guidance.”, “to value their opinion.”, “good preparing for adulthood despite of having special educational needs”, “encouragement , guidance, praise , support preparing for adulthood life skills.”

This has emphasised a “can do “attitude and has highlighted the individual dysfunctions (Aldridge,2010). In the last few decades, there has been a move away from this view of incompetence and low expectations to consider how to empower people with LD and support them to participate and be included (PMSU, 2004). Empowering people with a disability increases to move away from a view of incompetency and lower expectations.

This was the vision behind the government's white paper “valuing people” (DH, 2001), this was taken a step further with the Children and Family Act 2014 and the Code of Practice 2015 with children having the right to make decisions for them. The previous legislation clearly states that CYP should be given support, information and skills to help them gain independence and for future adult life.

Theories on psychology of development and change can ensure the help of a differentiate curriculum (Atkinson , Dunsmuir , Lang & wright, 2015) to elicit CYP and parental views during transition process and encourage collaborative working (Meyer et al., 2008).

Independence is now a key area of the CYP development under the new SEND current legislation.

4. Positive reinforcement / emotional resilience

The above trend was found on the families reporting:

- “ help them to ask how things are going for them.”, “ offer support when is needed “ , “ to help them feel confident in everything they try and show that they can feel safe.”, “ for him to make his choices as much as he can.”, “ give them direction as well as keep harm away.”, “ she feels safe.”, “support with behaviours and when she has difficulty with certain environments.”, “confidence they can achieve.” , “ encourage them to join...what’s safe , etc”, “focus on the positives.”,

The definition as, “The process of effectively negotiating, adapting to, or managing significant sources of stress or trauma”. Assets and resources within the individual, their life and environment facilitate this capacity for adaptation or ‘bouncing back’ in the face of adversity.”, (Windle, 2011) reflects that parent carers are in tune with health and are looking for ways to improve the wellbeing of their CYP’s long term and the fact that a child spends a good part of their life at school leads to parent carers seen this a joint outcome.

Positive reinforcement is at its core and behavioural technique that many use as underlying skill of building relations and interaction, being closed interconnected with point one above in this part of the questionnaire, families feel strongly that this is a skill that will help their child into adulthood as a lifelong skill, with its impact being rated at the top of educational priorities.

Resilience is operationalised as a significant challenge; an obvious sign of (di)stress; maintenance of a life of meaning and satisfaction (a sign of bouncing back); active participation in life (a sign of managing); and a sense that current life is positive (a sign of adaptation), (Bennett, 2015).

Perhaps a shift that education is not anymore just about core subjects such English and Maths, and also that those subjects loose its relevance if not substantiated with skills that will allow the CYP to apply education in a working environment, the ultimate goal why someone gains education.

On the other hand it is a recognition that such is crucial for independence and to be able to have or be social savvy, one of the biggest fears that a parent of a SEND CYP has in their life’s and also one of the biggest challenges that families have to overcome, therefore the factors of resilience, individual, community and societal, have be understood within an ecological framework (Windle and Bennett, 2012; Donnellan et al., 2014).

5. Family child centred approach

The above trend was found on the families reporting:

- “buddy families up with existing families .”, “ Try to understand families /child’s needs and wants.”, “where family members can feel free and safe to talk regarding any concerns.”, “Build confidence by supporting families.”, “ services should together for our family to be supported as unit.”

Family-centred practice is a way of working with families, both formally and informally, across service systems to enhance their capacity to care for and protect their children, families are defined broadly, and families highly value this practice (King et al., 2000).

Family centred practice is based upon the belief that the best way to meet a person’s needs is within their families and that the most effective way to ensure safety, permanency, and well-being is to provide services that engage, involve, strengthen, and support families. Family centred workers strive to preserve families and prevent out-of-home placements when this can be done safely.

The family-centred model, which views families as having the capacity to make informed decisions and act on them, differs from models in which professionals make decisions alone or with only the assistance of the family. The purpose of working with families who have a child with special needs is to enhance the quality of life for all members (Fewell & Vadasy, 1987).

Key components of family centred practice include:

- Engaging with family members to understand their lives, goals, strengths, and challenges and developing a relationship between family and practitioner working with the family to set goals, strengthen capacity, and make decisions, providing individualized, culturally responsive, and evidence-based interventions for each family.

Family centred practice spans the community-based services continuum and is not restricted to a specific service or model.

6. Training

The above trend was found on the families reporting:

- “ individual needs, better knowledge.”, “ help them to develop social skills.”, “Learn to lead them the right path.”, “ to know what is not acceptable.”, “ education ,more understanding of additional needs.”, “ keep us informed and make information accessible.”, “ educate other parents of the world of ASD/ADHD.”

Families feel that schools are not prepared to receive the diversity of needs that are emerging due to the advances of science and the improvement of life expectancy. This theme is interconnected with the respect for individual differences and the fact that each and every

child should be not only seen as child but also as individual with specific needs that may impact on the four areas of need, cognitive, emotional and social, communication and interaction and sensory and physical needs, for which should be ready to receive under the diversity and inclusion umbrella.

The new SEND system is a process that has at its heart co-production , therefore this is an issue that should be addressed by the different identities that are system participants , this has to involve services, forums and other third sector organizations, parents and the CYP.

Again as mentioned previously, austerity measures can be seen as challenge to these implementations and adaptations creating a rift between duties and reality. Never as before, the need to have a single mind-set that is imbedded in practice with a shared accountability and innovative ways has been felt by parent and CYP's.

7. Inclusion

The above trend was found on the families reporting:

- “for others to treat them the same way all the time as normal people.”, “ help , sharing , love , caring , get them included in activities.”, “help them in many ways .”, “ more safe guarding classes in school for children with special needs.”, “kind, understanding acceptance, to be able to be pushed to their full potential.”

Inclusion is one of the bases of all educational system the equality of opportunities should be given to everyone according to their level of need to attain the results that a child in similar circumstances would.

The research on inclusion found on an analysis by Baker, Wang and Walberg (1994) concluded that "special-needs students educated in regular classes do better academically and socially than comparable students in non-inclusive settings."

The same is stated on the research done by Hollowood et al. (1995) found inclusion was not detrimental to students without disabilities. The study also concluded that students within each of IDEA's 13 categories of disability, at all levels of severity, have been effectively integrated into general education classrooms. NCERI also reported positive outcomes and high levels of professional fulfilment for teachers.

Moreover is reported to "Special education placement for students with disabilities has failed to demonstrate substantive advantages over regular classes despite lower teacher-pupil ratio and specialized teaching. Special Education has not proven to be academically and socially stronger than would regular class placement." (Bunch & Valeo, 1997).

4. Quantitative Results and Discussion

Specifications - that is, documents that precisely describe what something should do, and how it should act, perhaps in response to various inputs and whether this document should be seen from the developer or read user point of view. Who ultimately will benefit from this document and how or what is the expectations of it use. The need to establish a standard of what is expected in education derives from the need that parents have to know what can they expect from an education setting and what are their rights, providing this way a short version for providers (early years, schools, colleges etc) and users (parents , young person's , and other relevant services) of the different legislation that everyone should comply with.

The expression on most parents is that this should be a “live” document, which will enhance the views of parent and the family expectations. Parents felt very strongly that this document should have their input and they would like to be part of the system that is supporting their CYP. The fact that is a written document was mentioned as a certainty and accountability factor to families and educational settings.

The data was broken down in how the information was presented and how accessible families found such data as well as the relevancy of the information content.

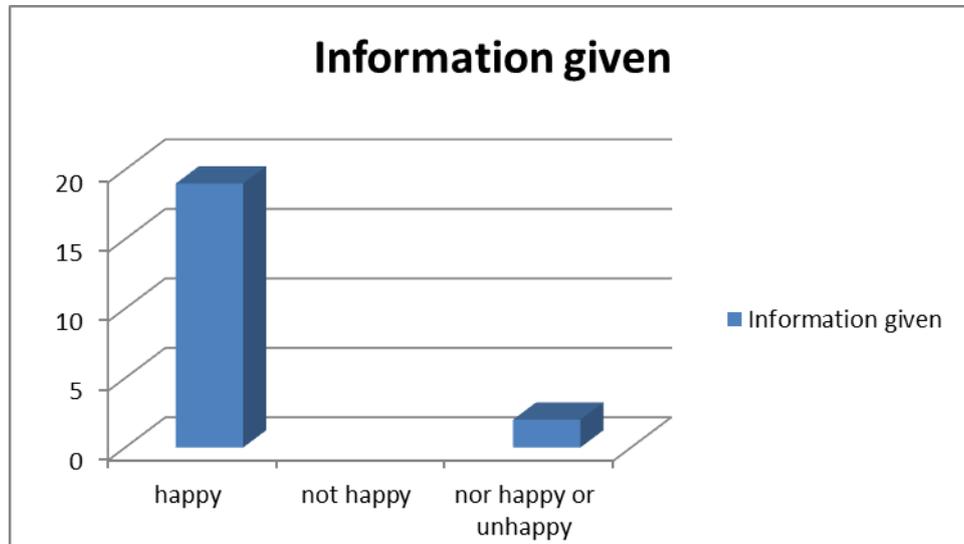


Fig. 1 quality of the information presented on the document

Out of the 21 parents, 19 were happy with the information content of the document and found it helpful, and have commented that the document was: “inclusive document to everyone”, “Fantastic expectations and outcomes for children”, “well presented document”, “The document is concise but should have space for information to add on.”

Two (2) parents found the information hard to follow and would expressed “this booklet should use a different language to parent carer” , “ found hard to read at parts.”.

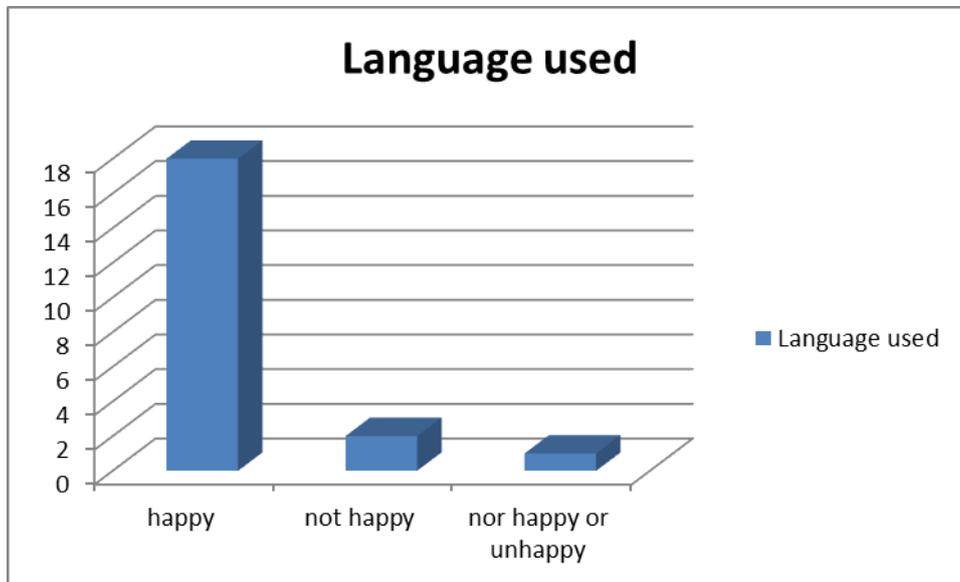


Fig. 2 how clear was the language used to parent carers

Out of the 21 parents, 18 found the language accessible and the document self-explanatory, 2 parents found the document confusing and 1 parent did not had an opinion formed.

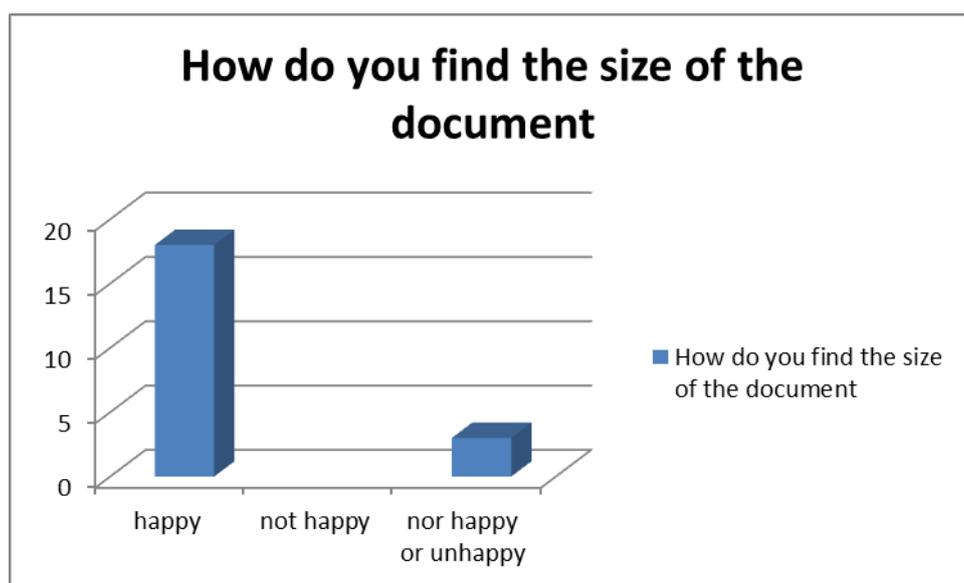


Fig.3 did the parents found the document easy to handle and useful

Out of the 21 parents , 18 parents found the document useful and reassuring and met the family and CYP needs , with only 3 not sure about or still unsure how it could help them and their child. Some of the comments made were: “I am happy with the areas chosen that will benefit parents and CYP”, “schools accountability is important”, “Fantastic expectations and outcomes for children”.

5. Recommendations

It is Family Voice recommendations that:

- ✓ Both the results should be reflected in the body of the document and it is reinforced that educational settings should take the relevant trends as good practice within their setting
- ✓ Documents should reflect the ethos of the SEND system and be dynamic , enabling everyone to participate and feel included
- ✓ Perhaps a parent carer version should be considered on possibly have an easy read version of it to parents that have themselves learning challenges
- ✓ The harmony of educational settings and parents expectations should be present in the document, as public service, an educational setting should listen to their service users, i.e., parents and Children and young person’s.

6. Literature

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