



Chair's Annual Report 2014/15

Overview

Working with Professionals

Following on from our successful parent and professional events in 2013/14, the 2014/15 year started off busy for ourselves in organising our Health & Social Care Solutions event on Tuesday 25th November. The event used feedback from our previous Meet & Greet sessions with many professionals and our parent seminar.

The main aim for the day was for parents and professionals to be working together to find solutions and positive ways through the changes that are coming in the future

The findings from this event and our previous Education event were collated and have influenced various working groups within Northamptonshire County Council. In particular, feedback has been shared with the Disabled Children and Young People's Delivery Group (DCYPDG) and as such has been used to influence their Strategy and Action Plan for 2015-17.

NPFG representatives have regularly attended the DCYPDG meetings and play a key role in shaping various policies and documents.

Further work from NPFG has helped in the revision the SEND Commissioning Strategy, which is currently available for consultation.

We are very pleased that more and more departments within the Local Authority, Health and Education sectors approach us to seek parental views. NPFG have proven to give constructive criticism to improve the services for SEND children and YP in Northamptonshire and we feel we are making a difference. In total NPFG is engaging with/ or participating in 18 work streams/focus groups.

Website/social media

This year has seen a progression on our website with a move to the npfg.co.uk web page. The move was made as a necessity due to the service that we were previously being provided. The website now enables parents/carers/professionals to register for our newsletter and will empower us to provide greater communication channels.

We have taken the leap into social media this year and have created a Facebook page where a lot of our immediate communication can be made. This has proved successful and in a year we currently have over 300 followers.

Membership

Although membership had increased this year via our webpage and social media presence, the numbers within the steering group have decreased. Due to personal reasons we have had several key members step down from the forum group which has left a lot of work to be covered by a few members. This year has seen David Johnson volunteer for the role of co-chair of the group which will help share the responsibilities of this role for myself.

Co-production event

This year saw an idea of the group become a reality. Whilst previous events had been well attended, it was felt that a more family orientated event would help encourage more families to attend and be able to find out more information of services available to them whilst in a relaxed and fun environment. Thus the SummerSENDSation event was created, as such an event would be difficult with the numbers of the group to organise, we started to work with the Local Offer, IASS and Northamptonshire Sport on putting this event on. Several planning meetings were held for the event and although the event took place in the 2015/16 year, we would like to report this year that it was a huge success with well over 500 people attending the event and an incredible amount of positive feedback was received.

2015/16 Aims

For 2015/16, the aims for NPFG are:

- An increase in the number of parents/carers involved in the steering group to help the running of the group especially with cover for key roles within the group. This will help us to share the workload and help reduce the possibility of burn out of certain members of the group.
- An increase of our associate members would be critical to enable more consultations and involvement in service groups become more of a reality. Training therefore will be critical to ensure that these members are confident at such meetings.
- Whilst our membership increases via our social media and website, further members are needed to ensure that we are capturing as diverse a voice as possible. Attending various events, parent meetings etc will continue throughout the county to ensure that we are continually letting parent/carers know of NPFG especially for new parents/carers.
- The success of the SummerSENdsation event proves that there is a real need for this and therefore we should be investigating holding another in 2016.
- Funding of the group may become more difficult if the government grants currently available are cut or removed. This will mean that we will need to find other revenue sources or NPFG will need to reassess what events it will be able to facilitate in the future. Working/alignment with other voluntary services even more will be key going forward.
- Professional co-production and involvement will be key as budgets are cut further and services come under more pressure. The work of the group will be vital for the families of Northamptonshire and therefore we must continue to be the first port of call for all professional services when consultations are being looked at.
- Continue with improving our current website and continue development of the newsletter so that we are able to increase our digital presence and be able to provide an information area for parents/carers and professionals.

Author: Paul Meadows, Co-Chair, 20th October 2015