



SEND Strategy Response...

The Shropshire SEND Strategy - Listening to SEND Families and Joining Things up

Developing the new SEND Strategy has been quite a journey. It started in May 2019 when children and young people with SEND and parent carers were given a chance to participate in an event where they could share their thoughts, ideas, hopes and dreams for the future. This workshop was facilitated by the Shropshire Educational Psychology Team and held at the Shrewsbury Town football ground and approximately 75 children and young people from both mainstream and specialist settings attended, along with 25 parent carers. During this event what stood out for us was when describing their 'dream life', the things identified were everyday things, that others might take for granted as being part of their future, a job, a home of their own, friends, to be listened to.... You can read more about this event in the report on the PACC website <http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/cd-content/uploads/files/SEND%20Strategy%20Vision%20Day%202019%20Report.pdf>

By the beginning of 2020 there was a draft version of the strategy, which at the heart of it had a commitment to creating the same opportunities for children and young people with SEND as experienced by those without SEND. PACC discussed the draft strategy at our 'Housing and Employment' conference in Feb 2020 and shared a short survey requesting feedback from parent carers on the strategy, asking if the outcomes identified in it were the right ones. We were told that they were.

Just as the strategy was being finalised two things happened, Shropshire had its SEND inspection and Covid 19 hit. Inevitably these two things combined, changed the next steps but in fact while they created some difficulties, they also offered opportunities.

The SEND Inspection resulted in Shropshire being required to develop a Written Statement of Action, it recognised that there was some positive work being done, but there were also significant areas of weakness in terms of the SEND offer, including; poor strategic planning across education, health and social care, a lack of co-production within health and in particular excessive waiting times for Autism assessment and support. The SEND Inspection provided a much needed, local focus on improving SEND services and support and has acted as a catalyst for making change happen. The impact of Covid 19 of course presented some



challenges in getting things done, but the move to online meetings in fact helped to bring people together and the flexibility and need to consider new approaches required by the pandemic, benefited the work on the strategy.

We are now at the point where the new SEND Strategy is ready, so what does that mean for Shropshire SEND families? Most importantly the system now understands what it needs to help SEND families achieve, it is clear what a good life looks like for our community. The strategy provides services across education, health and social care, in fact all services, a clear picture of what they should be working towards in

terms of outcomes, and it creates a framework by which we can measure progress towards these outcomes. This is particularly important for PACC's work since it provides a single, clear message for us to share with local decision makers and supports the need for a more co-ordinated and joined up approach. It means that SEND families have had their voice heard, and this will continue to help shape services and influence decision making into the future. Of course, the strategy in itself will not make the change needed but it is an important step on that journey. The real challenge will be making sure that everyone takes the opportunity that the strategy presents, the opportunity to truly work together, with a shared vision and to commit to delivering the lives that young people with SEND have told us that they aspire to.



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