



Coventry
One Voice Parent Group
.....working together for change

Parent Participation Guide

September 2012



The Voice Parent Group is a group of parents of children with disabilities who have joined together to help influence and shape services for disabled children in Coventry.

We aim to:

- raise awareness of the impact of a wide range of disabilities
- influence decision makers
- provide views based upon personal experiences
- share information and provide support to other parents and carers

We work to empower parents/carers to enable them to work in partnership with services, organisations and professionals.

This guide has been produced for your information to ensure that parents/carers are working together to improve the choices for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs.

One Voice Parent Group works in close partnership with Coventry Parent Partnership Service who assists with the facilitation of the group.

You can contact us on:

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You can also follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CoventryOneVoice

There are three levels of participation, these are essential for successful partnerships between parents/carers and services:

1. Information

All parents and carers need to be provided with relevant and current information which helps them as a family to access services and support that they need for their disabled child/young person. The better informed the parents/carers are, the more confident they are in making informed choices for their children.

It is important to recognise that parents/carers need this information in a variety of formats to enable them to understand fully what is available and how to access it. Written information should be distributed as widely as possible to reach as many parents/carers as possible. It is important to ask parents how they would like to receive information.

2. Consultation

Consultation is a two way communication between professionals and parents/carers. The professionals will ask the parents/carers to share their opinions, ideas and expertise to help them plan their service delivery.

It is very important that at the start of any consultation professionals explain clearly to parents/carers how much influence their views will have in shaping the new service development

To get the best results from a consultation parents/carers need to be involved from the outset and this will ensure the highest possible response rates. There are several ways to do this other than a standard meeting.

Other consultation methods include: surveys and questionnaires, public meetings, focus /task groups, individual responses or fun days and events

Feedback to parents/carers regarding consultation outcomes is essential to ensure parents /carers views are valued.

3. Participation

Parent Participation is a commitment from parents/ carers to become engaged at a high level. Empowered parents/carers are able to be actively involved in service planning and decision making. Professionals are able to use the expertise and knowledge of the parents/carers to further develop services.

Ensuring Effective Participation

Parent participation is not just professionals consulting with parents/carers; it is also about parents/carers working alongside and in partnership with professionals, having a voice and being heard. For parents/carers and professionals to work effectively together, it is crucial that parents/carers views are respected and parents are represented on decision making boards.

The National Standards advice is that there should be at least two parent/carer representatives on each decision making board.

How you can make meetings accessible to parents/carers

Parents/carers are often stopped from participating due to meeting times and locations. The National Standard is for meetings to be held between 10am and 2pm (avoiding the school run) on a weekday, avoid school holidays and occasional meetings to be held during the evening and weekend.

It is important that families are given all information necessary before the meeting in a format that is best for them. Information should be clear and easy to understand and should not use acronyms/jargon.

Parents/carers have very busy lives and don't always have time to read and fully digest lengthy documents prior to the meeting.

When at the meeting we ask that professionals fully support the parent/carer during the meeting, we also ask you to use the practitioners meeting checklist (enclosed) to ensure the best possible outcome for a successful meeting.

To ensure transparency and accountability professionals should ensure there is an appropriate paper trail e.g. agenda, minutes of the meeting. This will enable parents who cannot attend meetings to be kept informed.

Feedback from meetings is essential and parents/carers should be informed about what has or has not changed and the reasons behind the decisions. If professionals fail to respond to parents/carers they will become disillusioned with the process and may not engage in the future.

When parents/carers are invited to meetings they may incur expenses.

The One Voice Parent Group currently applies for government grant funding. Whilst this funding remains in place parents/carers who are representing the One Voice Parent Group at strategic meetings may claim reasonable expenses in line with the One Voice Parent Group expenses policy. One Voice parent representatives must also follow the agreed "designated parent lead and feedback" protocol.

Practitioners Good Practice Checklist Things to Consider



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| <p>Are there at least two places for parents/carers representatives?</p> <p><i>It is good practice to have parents who have children of different ages, different needs/disabilities, and represent different groups. They can also support each other.</i></p> | |
| <p>Have the representative parents/carers received information for the meetings in the most accessible format for them?</p> <p><i>This may be via e-mail or by post. Papers will need to be printed off for parent/carers ready for the meetings and sent out well in advance.</i></p> | |
| <p>Is there an identified key professional who has responsibility to support the parent/carers representatives?</p> <p><i>These key professionals can:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Meet parents/carers beforehand to answer any questions and discuss the agenda.</i> • <i>Explain the purpose of the meeting, terms of reference, objectives and overall structures.</i> • <i>Outline what the group can and cannot do.</i> • <i>Let parents/carers know about members of the group.</i> • <i>Explain how the meeting is to be run i.e. formally or informal discussion.</i> • <i>Discuss what to do if they are unable to attend.</i> • <i>Identify any training the parents/carers may benefit from to help them in the meetings.</i> • <i>Deal with paying any expenses to the parents/carers.</i> • <i>Thank the parents/carers for giving their time.</i> • <i>Ensure appropriate feedback is given to any parents who give their time.</i> | |
| <p>Are the meetings planned at a time which enables parents/carers to attend?</p> <p><i>The National Standard is meetings to be held between 10am and 2pm (avoiding the school run) on a weekday, avoid school holidays and occasional meetings to be held evenings and weekends.</i></p> | |
| <p>Is the language is used in all the meetings and in all paperwork jargon free and easy to understand?</p> <p><i>Parents may need an explanation of terms / abbreviations</i></p> | |
| <p>Have parents/carers received reasonable out of pocket expenses for attending strategic meetings?</p> <p><i>Reasonable expenses include travel costs, photocopying/printing costs and any other out of pocket expense incurred to enable parents to attend the meeting.</i></p> <p><i>For parents representing the One Voice Parent Group and undertaking the “designated parent lead role” on strategic groups or meetings payment will be made in line with the agreed policy whilst Government grant funding continues.</i></p> | |

One Voice Parent Group Designated Parent Lead Action Checklist



| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Name of Task Group | |
| Name of Designated Parent Lead | |

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| Task group members: |
|----------------------------|

| Parents Names | Contact (Email) |
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| Local Authority Lead Officer (s) Names | Contact (Email) |
|--|-----------------|
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| Things to consider: | |
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| 1. Have you collected all of the contact details for members of the task group? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. What is the overall purpose of the task group and have you agreed this with the Local Authority lead officers? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Have you agreed who is recording the action points of the meeting? What action points are there from the meeting? Who will be responsible for following these up? | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Have you agreed who will create future task group meeting agendas? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Have you arranged another meeting date? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Have you informed all the members of the task group of the next meeting date? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Have you reported back to the One Voice Parent Group? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Have you put a copy of any paperwork into the Participation Grant evidence file? | <input type="checkbox"/> |

One Voice Parent Group



Task group feedback form – to be completed at the end of any piece of work

To ensure we collect evidence of the Group's involvement in helping to shape services we need to receive feedback from designated parent members who are involved in task groups.

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| Name of Task Group | |
| Name of Designated Parent Lead | |

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| Purpose of the task group: |
| Dates of meetings: |
| Brief overview of areas discussed: |
| Outcomes – what has been the result of parent involvement: |

