



snapp

(support network for all parenting practitioners)

Summary Document

**Thursday 23rd April 2009 at The Bridge
Centre**

*'Working with Children & Families for
Children & Families'*



It was GREAT to hear Jeff speak telling his story from a parent perspective about people who have helped him including us at Homestart. Makes me feel more positive about the work we deliver.

Practitioner

Aim of the day:

- ✚ To give anyone working directly with parents the opportunity to network / make links and find out about other people in similar roles
- ✚ To provide information on 'Reaching Out to Everyone' and give practitioners opportunities to attend workshops around this subject

Support Network for All Parenting Practitioners – SNAPP is to give anyone working directly with parents the opportunity to network /make links and find out about other people in similar roles as well as share examples of good practice and ideas for supporting parents and access training.

The event was attended by 71 Practitioners and 12 organisations provided displayed about their services.

Speakers:

- ✚ Jagdish Singh Shemare – Senior Regional Policy Officer, Equality and Human Rights Commission

Jagdish opened the event and gave everyone a lot of things to think about; he set the theme for the day as he talked about diverse communities and the uniqueness of Stoke. These themes focused around the fact that individually and organisationally we have a responsibility for developing responses that meet needs:

We need to understand the people we work with – children, young people, parents and carers – to do this we need to communicate with them and engage with them on their terms, this will enable us to learn from each other – practitioners and parents. Enabling and empowering further learning is another key theme along with supported doing – helping children, young people, parents and carers to become actively engaged

- ✚ Jeff Gwineth - Single Father and member of the City Dads' Network

Jeff gave a very personal account of his particular journey – he stressed how important the relationship was with practitioners and that persistence pays off. He felt that practitioners having a belief in him and not giving up enabled him to progress on his journey and encouraged all practitioners to 'stick with them' when they are working with parents.

- ✚ Lesley Boughey – Engagement Service Manager and Parenting Expert

Lesley spoke about the Parenting Implementing Change Group and how the restructure will give front-line practitioners an active role in ensuring issues, needs and challenges are passed up to managers and strategic leads in order to make a difference for the lives of the community in Stoke on Trent. Practitioners were encouraged to become part of the new Parenting Network to enable that to happen.

Workshops:

Reviewing the Hard 2 Reach Strategy:

The Hard 2 Reach Strategy is one of many in the City. The strategy was due for review and it was felt that practitioners needed to be involved. The review was done as a whole group exercise and practitioners were given a series of questions asking what they have already in relation to engaging with Hard 2 Reach communities, what is missing, what they want and what they would like to see in a toolkit.

It was concluded that there are a large number of services both from the Statutory and Voluntary Sectors offering many different initiatives to engage 'Hard to Reach' families; there is not however one common method or model of good practice. When practitioners were asked what was missing in this city in relation to 'Hard to Reach' the responses varied from funding / resources/capacity and training through to a lack of information provided around these communities and no generic toolkit to support practitioners in accessing and building relationships to support engagement. Practitioners would like to see a variety of different approaches / resources in their toolkit that are jargon free, easy to understand and regularly updated, including ideas and models of good practice through to information on partnerships that could be developed with services and an holistic agreement from all services to use the toolkit city wide.

Recommendations:

- ✚ The Champion for Children utilises the information collated to review and redevelop H2R Strategy into a useful toolkit.
- ✚ The toolkit is produced and disseminated by September 2009.

Engaging with Gypsy and Travellers:

This workshop delivered by Diane Rowles (a member of the Gypsy and Traveller Community) gave practitioners an overview on the different Gypsy and Traveller communities residing in Stoke on Trent and looked at barriers to engagement while giving a personal insight on what it is like being a traveller living in Stoke on Trent.

Main points that came of the workshop were that while some agencies and practitioners do engage with the community there is still along way to go; practitioners need to gain the trust before they will be invited to come onto the Site and meet the families. This is often not recognised by the employers and if practitioners try to engage too soon then communication will break down and it is then very difficult to re-establish.

Successful engagement requires in-depth knowledge about the community; their traditions and the differences in relation to traditional roles (see full report for more information)

Recommendations:

Children and Young People's Trust:

- ✚ Outreach Workers - look at employing someone from that community not only to save on time and resources but also ensure that engagement will take place and is successful
- ✚ Effectively evaluate the impact of cutting funding for different initiatives - For example, the translation service at the CAB was a lifeline for many gypsy and traveler families, without this service not only can they not read any correspondence sent to them in relation to benefits but they can't correspond with services which will have a significant impact on the ECM 5 outcomes and child poverty for their families as a whole.

Schools:

- ✚ Spend time building trust with the women of the community - invite them into school (verbally as many can't read) get to know them over time.
- ✚ RSE education - parents need to understand what it is and what their children will actually be taught

Education Welfare Service:

- ✚ Know the literacy levels of families you work with - families can't read the correspondence and therefore may not respond to attendance letters.

Job Centre:

- ✚ Translation service – required for gypsies and travelers in order to attend interviews and back to work help and advice.

Engaging With Fathers - delivered by Ruth Mason-Tooth, Senior Project Officer, Gingerbread gave practitioners an overview on working with fathers in Stoke on Trent and looked at why dads matter, barriers to engagement and work tips and tools.

Main points from the workshop were that dads need to be seen as equal to mums and require the same help and support, even if they are single dads; they are positive role models and if they are separated from the child's/children's mother then they should have every right to see that child and play and active part in their lives. Dads contribute vastly to their children's lives and feel uncomfortable going to groups when they are titled mother and toddler (please see full report for details)

Recommendations:

Children's Centres:

- ✚ Make all parent groups inclusive and do not use gender specific titles

- ✚ Health visitors – Include dads in the practical aspects of being a parent
- ✚ Activities delivered that are flexible to fit in with working hours

All Services:

- ✚ Think about dads when you are planning activities and ask them what they would like
- ✚ Flexible appointments – Some dads go to work in the day
- ✚ More male staff – Dads like to speak to other men

Schools:

- ✚ Flexible meeting times for dads that go to work

Engaging with LDD (Learning Difficulties & Disabilities) - Delivered by Lynn Crocket, Inclusion Policy and Planning Manager, gave practitioners an overview of Aiming High, the transformation agenda, challenging assumptions and case studies

Main points from the workshop included the core offer – Information, Transparency, Participation, Assessment and Feedback (see full report for details) while looking at perceived risk, minimising risk and the way forward

Recommendations:

Universal Services:

- ✚ Ensure information for parents is open and accessible
- ✚ Ensure disabled children control their own decisions where possible

Housing:

- ✚ Ensure documentation indicates that disabled people have been involved in decisions about who enters their home

Understanding Equality and Diversity - Delivered by Jagdish Singh-Shemare from the Equality & Human Rights Commission, the workshop consisted of an overview of diversity, understanding DNA (genetics) – who you are, barriers and aspirations

Main points from the workshop included examples of diversity and how you can't tell just by looking at someone what their background is and that by improving understanding, communication and insight, equality and acceptance will follow. (See full report for details)

Recommendations:

Schools:

- ✚ Translation service – Required to enable all children, young people and parents can communicate

🚦 Education – All staff need training to understand the communities that they are working with

All workshops and the event as a whole were evaluated to inform future practice:

100% of practitioners were happy with the pace and delivery style of the conference and all were also happy with the speakers and the topics covered. (Please see full report for all evaluation responses)

Main points of the evaluations:

“The issue we face is that they are not hard to reach, it is us that are not reaching them properly”

“Because of this workshop we will have more of an understanding and be able to dismiss the myths around Traveller / Gypsy communities”

“I will now think more about what dads want and ask them what services they would like”

“By doing this workshop it’s made me more determined to not operate separate groups and be inclusive”

“From today I am going to take a closer look at identity barriers of all individuals and find out what services are available in community”

And finally.....

Practitioner feedback about this **snapp** event has raised a lot of issues and ideas, the next event will developing the event to take practitioner suggestions into account.

If you would like to receive regular information updates about the **snapp** please get in touch...

For a full copy of the report, including presentations, workshop information and appendices please get in touch ...

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