

## Forum Success Story

### Swindon SEND Families Voice - Sunflower Lanyards

A hidden or invisible disability is a term used to describe disabled children and young people whose disability may not be immediately obvious to other. Conditions such as autism, epilepsy or mental health conditions may not have any visible symptoms. However, children and young people with 'hidden disabilities' may need additional support when attending hospitals and GP surgeries.

The 'sunflower lanyard' has been used in UK airports to discreetly identify passengers who may need some additional support from staff without having to declare their condition. It is becoming a recognised symbol of a hidden disability with Sainsbury's and London North Eastern Railway also joining the scheme.

Swindon SEND Families Voice has been working with their Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to introduce the Sunflower Lanyard in their area. As a result of Swindon SEND Families Voice's work, Great Western Hospital (GWH) is now the first UK hospital to pilot the use of the sunflower lanyard. On their website they say "As soon as we saw the difference the lanyards were making to children at airports, we knew we wanted to replicate that success in the NHS and we're extremely proud to be the first area in the country to introduce such a worthwhile initiative." In addition to the pilot in GWH, the forum's work with the CCG has also resulted in almost all GP's in the area joining the scheme.

The introduction of the lanyards has resulted in a better understanding of children's individual needs, and that support is offered when visiting hospital and GP surgeries. Parent carers or the young people themselves do not have to repeatedly tell health practitioners what their disability is and how they would like to be supported. This results in better care and less stress and anxiety for the family as a whole. Following GWH, other hospitals are now considering using the sunflower lanyard scheme thereby providing improved care for many more children and young people.

This is an example of a simple solution making a big difference. The sunflower lanyard has become a recognised symbol of hidden disability, so very little advertising of what the lanyard was intended for was required. It is a simple solution that used an existing scheme and expanded its use to places children and young people might find difficult to navigate.

For more information, please contact Swindon SEND Families Voice at [swindonsendfamiliesvoice@outlook.com](mailto:swindonsendfamiliesvoice@outlook.com) or [www.swindonsendfamiliesvoice.org.uk](http://www.swindonsendfamiliesvoice.org.uk)

