

Making sure new hospital meets the needs of disabled children

Parent carer Forums: Shropshire – PACC – Parents and Carers Council Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin – PODS (Parents Opening Doors)

Background

A new women and children's unit is to be built at the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford to replace the one at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. Public meetings were held to tell people living in the area about these changes. Two committee members from the parent carer forums in Shrewsbury and Telford attended to find out more. People attending the meeting were invited to become members of various focus groups and work with professionals on guiding this development.

What happened?

The two forum committee members agreed to get involved in the focus groups and input the views of parents of disabled children. They sought the views of members of their forum and a number of parents, who had not been actively involved before, also became involved. At the focus group meetings parents had the opportunity to input their thoughts about different aspects of the build including décor, access to services, signage, toilets and parking.

On reviewing the overall decoration of the waiting/out-patients area the parents asked for consideration to be made regarding sensory issues, especially for children with autism. The architects were not aware of these issues. As a result a suitable colour palette has been chosen for these areas which will include quiet areas with subdued colour schemes. The parents also suggested the architects' link with the Sensory Inclusion Service run by the local authority and draw on their expertise for this development.

Other elements of the build they have been involved with include the outside play spaces, ensuring that there will be a covered play area for use in all weather – sun or rain. The parents have also made sure the play areas are accessible to all children, particularly those using wheelchairs. On discussion regarding artwork, they made the suggestion that they contact a local art group called Kreative Kidz who is currently designing for the new Telford Town Park.

The parents have been influential in other ways. Waiting spaces will be designed large enough for wheelchairs.

Families of children who are tube fed will have somewhere private to feed their children when attending the hospital. Toilets will be more accessible.

Particular concerns from a parent included the suitability of the Oncology Ward due to the risk of infection. These have been addressed and fed back to the parent who is now sitting on the focus group and attends meetings. There are to be en-suite bathrooms on this ward, and the parents have been influential in ensuring that consideration is made for those children who are disabled and may need to use lifting devices.

The parents are continuing to work with the hospital and the architect team and the next meeting will include patient rooms and wards.

Why this works

- The forums were proactive in sending a representative to attend the public meeting and find out how they could be involved.
- The forum could find the view of parents of disabled children covering a range of conditions and hospital experiences by consulting with their members.
- Parents who were interested in this project were invited to attend focus group meetings, increasing the number of parents actively involved. One parent has since become a member of the parent carer forum steering committee in Telford and Wrekin.
- The focus group provides a simple mechanism for the architects to learn from a diverse group of patients their requirements early on, in the design of the building. This is much more cost effective than finding out after work on the building is finished that it does not meet patients' needs.
- Parents hear what has happened as a result of their input. Information from the architects is shared via the forum websites and PODS have invited the hospital to give a presentation at their AGM in July. The architects will also use this as an opportunity to gather additional feedback. PACC have worked with the Hospital Re-configuration Team to include regular articles on the progress of the project in their termly newsletter.
- The parents are making sure the new hospital will be more accessible for disabled children and their families.