

Improving Children's Therapy services across Hampshire

Forum: Hampshire Parent/Carer Network (HPCN)
Web: www.hpcn.org.uk

Email: info@hpcn.org.uk
Tel: 01962 832580

Background

Hampshire had numerous different Health Trusts providing children's therapy services across the county. This meant some families got a better service than others depending on where they lived.

Families reported the following problems:

- Some children had to wait a long time to be seen.
- Children sometimes had to attend appointments with different therapists (speech and language, physiotherapist, occupational therapists) in different settings.
- Communication and coordination between the different therapists wasn't always effective.
- After their first assessment, children were not regularly reviewed or their plans regularly updated.
- If a child or young person was discharged, they had a long wait if they needed to be seen again.
- There was a reducing speech and language therapy (SALT) service within special schools across the county.

What Happened

Hampshire County Council (HCC) had been receiving a high volume of complaints around inequity of access to the service. Hampshire Parent/Carer Network submitted a report to the Hampshire County Council and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

After consultation with a range of organisations, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee reported on the problems and asked Hampshire County Council Children's Services to report back on how they intended to respond.

Hampshire County Council set up a Children's Therapies Programme Board to better understand what the problems were and agree on what a new service should look like. The Board was also responsible for the new Hampshire County Council speech and language therapy service for special schools and children's centres which came into effect in April 2013. Hampshire Parent/Carer Network was invited to sit on this Therapies Programme Board as well as therapists and two GP leads for children with disabilities from the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

The Board looked at how therapy services were provided in other areas and agreed to develop a service using a model similar to that used in Wiltshire. The model was presented to various parent/carers groups and other stakeholders for feedback and Hampshire Parent/Carer Network ensured that their views were expressed.

The health commissioners negotiated with the five Clinical Commissioning Groups in Hampshire to commission a joint contract for children's therapy services. This was to avoid the situation where people received a different standard of service depending on where they lived in Hampshire. This also had the potential to reduce contract management overheads for the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Tender documents including the specification for the service were developed based on the recommendations from the Paediatric Therapies Programme Board. Parent representatives from Hampshire Parent/Carer Network were then involved in scoring specific parts of the tenders received and interviewing suppliers as part of the tendering process.

Outcomes

The requirements written within the service specification aim to address the problems that previously occurred; the key difference with the new model is the single point of referral and that referrals can be made by either practitioners or parent/carers.

There will be a telephone helpline manned by qualified therapists with a triage type service to expedite referrals and minimise waiting times. The new service is to be delivered by a multidisciplinary team working from the same centre.

Children and young people are expected to be seen within set waiting times, receive regular reviews and have their plans updated. This should lead to families receiving a much better service, and stop the postcode lottery.

Children will be discharged once their targets have been met but can be referred back into the system.

Hampshire Parent/Carer Network will be involved in monitoring the new service to make sure it is meeting the standards set in the service specification.

Why this worked

Parent carers were involved right from the start and through the whole commissioning process so they could influence what was included in the specification, rather than simply being consulted once the service had been commissioned.

The parent carer forum understood that the process of bringing about change takes time and remained engaged. The whole process took three years from raising the issue with the Overview and Scrutiny committee to seeing the new service being commissioned.

What next

Hampshire Parent/Carer Network were very happy to have been part of this process. It's very early days for joint working with NHS professionals but they are confident the NHS staff are keen to work with them more in the future.

They would like to see this process of involvement extended so it becomes the norm, with Clinical Commissioning Groups providing a list each year of contracts coming up for renewal, so the forum can identify which ones they felt were important to input into and to enable them to plan for this work and provide suitably knowledgeable and experienced parent/carers reps.

About Hampshire Parent/Carer Network

Hampshire Parent Carer Network is a parent carer forum, run by a dedicated team of volunteers who are committed to working with the local authority and health to improve outcomes for children with additional needs and disabilities (0-25yrs). Hampshire Parent/Carer Network is part of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums and has been heavily involved with the SE7 pathfinder programme, trialling new ways of working relating to the forthcoming Children and Families Bill which will come into force in September 2014. Hampshire Parent/Carer Network have played an important role in shaping the reforms both regionally and nationally.

This is one of a series of case studies showing how parents helped improve health services for disabled children. You can browse all of these in our Success Stories section at

www.cafamily.org.uk/parentcarerparticipation

Contact a Family

209-211 City Road, London, EC1V 1JN

Tel 020 7608 8700

Fax 020 7608 8701

Email info@cafamily.org.uk

www.cafamily.org.uk

Incorporating The Lady Hoare Trust
Registered Office: 209-211 City Road, London, EC1V 1JN
Registered Charity Number: 284912 Company Limited by guarantee
Registered in England and Wales Number: 1633333
Charity registered in Scotland Number: SC039169
VAT Registration Number: GB 749 3846 82