

# PfA Forum - Week 2

## Engagement of young people and families



The Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) team would like to thank everyone who posted on this week's forum. One of the reasons we have established this forum is to share information and direct young people, families and professionals to resources that will help them to understand the changes and to get involved in the developments in local areas. If there is anything that you feel we have not covered sufficiently or you have any further questions please contact us at [info@preparingforadulthood.co.uk](mailto:info@preparingforadulthood.co.uk).

The engagement of young people and families will be critical to the successful implementation of the SEN reforms. The new system and new ways of working must be informed by the experiences of, and designed with, young people and their families. There are a number of ways of engaging young people and families and it is vital that opportunities are available for everyone.

More needs to be done to involve young people. The best way to ensure that all young people and families are fully engaged, well informed and more in control is to make sure that person-centred practice is further developed. Person-centred practice makes sure that the young person's views are understood and taken seriously in whichever way works for them and that families are supported to talk about their aspirations, what is working for them and what is not working so well. The Local Offer provides us with the opportunity to make sure that young people and families have information about support for employment, independent living, community participation and friends and good health, welfare benefits and personalisation so that when they are planning, they are aware of what is positive and possible.

We would advise any parents or young people who have concerns that things are not progressing in their area or would like to find out more about how to get involved to contact their local Parent Carer Forum [www.nnpcf.org.uk](http://www.nnpcf.org.uk) and/or their local Parent Partnership Service [www.parentpartnership.org.uk](http://www.parentpartnership.org.uk).

For examples of good practice please see the Preparing for Adulthood website [www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk](http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk) and sign up for our e-bulletin [www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/ebulletin](http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/ebulletin). There is also an information pack called 'Engagement and participation of children, young people, parents and carers' which shows learning from the pathfinders available from [www.sendpathfinder.co.uk/infopacks](http://www.sendpathfinder.co.uk/infopacks).

**Q** • As a member organisation, we are keen to engage with young people and their families throughout our work. I would be interested to hear about innovative ways in which people are effectively engaging with those 'harder to reach'/harder to hear groups. Including those with English as a second language and non-verbal young people.

**A** Pathfinders and other areas have tried Planning Live which brings a group of young people and their families together with some professionals to begin developing their plans. The facilitator explains that we are learning to plan more successfully with young people and talks people through the person-centred questions one at a time, giving people time to work in their family groups and to share ideas with the bigger group as they think about what is important to them now and in the future and what their longer term aspirations are. Young people and families feel more confident and informed as they move on to develop a full Education, Health and Care plan.

Planning Live event in Surrey pathfinder area.



Another approach has been Working Together for Change which brings young people, families, commissioners and service providers together to co-produce future support. The young people share the information about their future support needs that has come out of their person-centred planning and the information is themed around the key supports that young people will need around housing, employment and community participation. Everybody then puts together an action plan of all of things that need to change and how it might happen, with timescales. Helen Sanderson Association have developed an [animated video](#) which demonstrates the Working Together for Change process.

In some areas families are being supported to become involved in high level strategic groups and genuinely co-producing new systems. Support for this work is from the Parent Carer Forums, and programmes such as [Families and Personalisation \(Better Lives\)](#) and [Partners in Policy Making](#).

The Council for Disabled Children Participation Team said:

We have recently run several focus groups with 'hard to reach' groups of young people as part of the consultation on the Code of Practice. In order to do this we made the content relevant to their experience and focused discussion on what they could be experts on so rather than what services should there be ask 'What do you enjoy doing?' 'What help do you need or want?'

Depending on the young people it may be useful to go in to discussions with ideas from parent groups or other young people and look at agreeing or disagreeing with ideas to open up discussion.

When you are working with groups with higher support needs you will need to allow more time. You will need to consider how you are recording responses and what you are asking them to react to. Responses are not likely to be direct and are most likely to be gained through observation.

For more information on participation of young people please see the [Involve Me project](#). Involve Me is a three year project about how to creatively involve people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) in decision making. The project is supported by Renton Foundation and is run by Mencap in partnership with the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD).

Q

- The understanding and visibility of reform information to parents/carers in accessible and plain English formats. Through information and open evenings I am increasingly aware of the lack of knowledge and understanding around what the reforms mean to them and the extent of the changes.

Some key areas of concern (in relation to no/little knowledge)...

- The statutory duty up to 25 where educational progression is evident
- Single Plan
- Personal Budget
- Raising of the participation age and the options that are available; common misconception that the only option is school!

Penetrating compulsory school age young people and parents/carers with impartial and clear information, advice and guidance around the reforms.

The 'local offer' template proposed within my locality seems to be comprehensive although I worry about the accessibility and comprehension for parents/carers that have learning differences and disabilities themselves. Information seems to be in-depth and very detailed. If all providers showcase their offer, does there then become competition to try and package/offer 'the best'. Surely that's what all parents will be wanting to achieve for the young person - it doesn't mean that this is what they will get. I wonder whether local offer should be based on support bands, only making visible the providers/options that are obtainable and open to that young person? Whilst the 'local offer' provides transparency, does it also raise false hope and unrealistic expectations of what 'could' be?

A

Please contact your local [Parent Carer Forum](#) for more information about how to get involved in the implementation of the reforms in your local area.

For more information about what must be included in the Local Offer and how this should be developed please see our [FAQ document on the Local Offer from last week's forum](#).

There is accessible information on the reforms being developed by the Department for Education in consultation with disabled young people. The draft Code of Practice states that the local offer needs to be accessible.

Next week's forum will be focusing on Education, Health and Care Plans and Personal Budgets and will focus on sharing good practice and information.

**Q** • I find it interesting that my local council has done nothing to engage with statemented young people regarding the Local Offer. This is par for the course - I live in a county which has consistently left families to get on with it themselves. The charities in the county pick up some of the pieces but I have seen no engagement with any of the various departments for the last 14 years apart from a few info sessions which sadly come back to the same criteria - your child is not in danger you sort it.

• In Bradford there is a meeting in March in respect of the local offer but no real explanation as to what it means and how it will affect people.

It's all well and good having meetings, bombarding people with information. But it needs to be information that is useful and relevant and at times when people could attend. I find there is a culture of pretending and doing lip service to engaging young people rather than a thoughtful approach that takes into account the difficulties and barriers many face.

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More needs to be done to involve young people. The best way to ensure that all young people and families are fully engaged, well informed and more in control is to make sure that person-centred practice is further developed. Person-centred practice makes sure that the young person's views are understood and taken seriously in whichever way works for them and that families are supported to talk about their aspirations, what is working for them and what is not working so well. The Local Offer provides us with the opportunity to make sure that young people and families have information about support for employment, independent living, community participation and friends and good health, welfare benefits and personalisation so that when they are planning, they are aware of what is positive and possible.

We would advise any parents or young people who have concerns that things are not progressing in their area or would like to find out more about how to get involved to contact their local [Parent Carer Forum](#) and/or your local [Parent Partnership Service](#).

Between Monday 17th and Wednesday 19th February 2014 we would like people to submit their questions on Education, Health and Care plans and Personal Budgets. To submit a question visit our forum and sign up for an account at [www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/forum](http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/forum).

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## Thanks

We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who took the time to submit questions and answer them.

The Preparing for Adulthood programme is delivered by:

