



Gateshead Council's Early Years SEND service aims to put service user experience at the heart of their planning.

Feedback was sought from local parent carers regarding their experiences of using local SEND early years provisions.

Working in partnership with local parent/carers allows services to be coproduced and fully informed by their experiences

Members of Gateshead's Parent Carer Forum were invited to join virtual meetings of the Early Years steering group.

An online survey was developed in order to capture wider feedback.

Feedback:

Feedback from PCF members and survey responses suggested a fairly positive experience.

Most of the respondents were complimentary about the individuals involved in the delivery of services, but problems arose when people described their experiences of the system as a whole.

Information sharing and communication between services was identified as a particular weakness.

Communication with parent carers could be improved, particularly when sharing information regarding what services and provisions are available for young SEND children.

Individual 1:1 work is very important to families. This type of personal communication from services to individuals helps to break down barriers and allows families to see past 'the council' and recognise the positive work we do.

The survey illustrated many family's focus on 'special schools' and specialist education as a be-all and end-all outcome for their child. The council needs to do more to promote the positive outcomes of ARMS provisions and inclusive education, hopefully reducing demand and disappointment if children don't get into a 'special school'.

Co-production of resources and a resolve to put the opinions and experiences of parents, carers and children at the heart of the planning and delivery of services was seen as an effective way to start overcoming such issues for the future.

Outcomes:

PCF members are now represented on each SEND sub-group - including Early Years - ensuring that strategy and service delivery is directly influenced by service user experience.

To help information sharing between families the PCF have organised a regular series of coffee mornings and open days with representatives from Health, SENDiass and the council SEND team present when appropriate.

The PCF now release a monthly newsletter-style communication which promotes events, activities and services for parent carers and families.