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SEMH – Research Project
Dinnington Campus Question and Answer / Listening Event Report - 15.6.21

Contents

Background – Page 1
Methodology – Page 1
Opening Statements – Page 2
Questions and Responses (including arising questions through the chat facility) – Page 3.
Recommendations from the Session – Page 4
Closing Statements – page5
Useful links – Page 6

Appendix A – Additional Questions and updated Responses from February event.

Background

A number of families contact RPCF directly with experiences around the SEMH offer in Rotherham, especially at this time of creating new provision.

RPCF are committed to facilitating the voice and lived experience of families to reduce isolation, gather a collective voice and ultimately enable better outcomes for our young people. We are committed to working in partnership with services to shape the delivery of services our families receive. The aim of this session is looking to facilitate and address the collective priorities of parents across Rotherham through lived experience.

RPCF are aware of some questions/queries families have around the new Social Emotional and Mental Health free school on the Dinnington Campus and shared this at the SEN sufficiency Phase 3 Board – Colleagues suggested a Q and A session for parent/carers.

A previous Q+A was held in February 21, the report of which can be found on our website. Several of the questions asked in February could not be addressed completely as the provider was not in place. This event was held with a representative from the new provider, Wellspring Academy and RMBC director for Education.

Methodology

RPCF held a second virtual session to facilitate effective communication, update families and invite further questions. Families were invited to submit questions and comments via MS forms.
A further Q+A was then held on Tuesday 15th June 11:00 to 13:00

21 parents were in attendance.
Questions were asked via RPCF staff due to the volume of questions and to ensure the contribution of those unable to attend was included. (all questions are at Appendix A)
Participants remained muted throughout with option to use the chat facility for clarification and further questions. Colleagues in attendance were.
David Whitaker – CEO of Wellspring Academy
Nathan Heath - Assistant Director: Education - RMBC

Opening Statements

Jayne F - strategic manager for RPCF opened by welcoming parent carers and thanking them for sharing their experience. Jayne thanked Sarah, Trudie and Kayleigh for supporting this event as facilitators. David and Nathan were welcomed, and thanks were given for their time and commitment to communicate and work with families in the development of the new provision and SEMH in Rotherham.
Context.
Jayne explained that as with all listening events there will be a report published and shared with everyone who left details on the MS form, as well as published on the RPCF website and shared with the SEMH Free school Board.
Everyone recognises the importance of focus on social emotional and mental health and the impact this has on our children and young people and families. This is reflected in the national agenda and priorities coming through from NHS England, DfE and other partners. Locally, Rotherham has a focus through the SEMH Board, SEND health group and recently the SEN sufficiency phase 3 Free school Board – all of which feed into the SEND strategic Board. SEN sufficiency is one area of work for the SEND strategic Board which monitors all areas of SEND locally and has representation from all local partners. SEMH free school is phase 3 of SEN sufficiency. SEN sufficiency means looking at provision for our children and young people, this is an ongoing journey.
Jayne thanked everyone for attendance and invited any parent carers interested in being part of further work in this area to contact RPCF at kayleigh@rpcf.co.uk

Sarah A – RPCF Volunteer - Good afternoon everyone, thank you for joining us – Sarah explained her role as a volunteer for RPCF working alongside other members of the team, families and young people. Sarah explained that she had been asked to focus on the new free school at Dinnington and the wider SEMH offer within Rotherham. Sarah was the lead consultant in the SEMH research project which included our initial Q+A in February. Sarah explained that anybody not previously involved or any new attendees this time will be able to access all previous reports, this is an ever-evolving piece of work, and we are hopeful that

these Q+A's and this partnership will continue. Sarah went on to say that any questions put in the chat box today would be forwarded on to Nathan and David for a response.

Kayleigh H – Participation coordinator RPCF - Family voice and lived experience is the reason we do what we do, it is the most important voice in shaping both the new Dinnington provision and the wider SEMH offer. Kayleigh thanked all those who have taken the time to be involved and submitted their questions. As some questions were left unanswered last time, she explained that these would be revisited for an update, (Any answers such as these can be found in Appendix A clearly marked Update), Kayleigh then went on to explain the next steps, we are hoping to do more listening events and gathering people's views as the SEMH program proceeds up until the opening of the new free school. Please watch the website for the dates of upcoming listening events, your voice is valued and makes a difference.

Nathan Heath -Director for Education - RMBC – Nathan Introduced himself and gave thanks to the parent/carers & to RPCF for their dedication and commitment to this project. Nathan then explained that the key element today was to give parents and carers an overview of the progression of the free school, give any key updates that align to the questions. I really appreciate people taking the time to really think carefully around those key areas and focus a priority and then wider than that the work we will be doing in partnership with Wellspring Academy Trust to support the actualisation of the provision.
Nathan again gave thanks and said that he was feeling very positive, the ongoing dialog has been very supportive in shaping the free school process right from the beginning and all the way across the process. Nathan expressed hope for the continuation of this and said that he felt it t be extremely beneficial.

David Whitaker – CEO of the Wellspring Academy Trust – David gave thanks for the Invitation to take part and expressed his gratitude and his enthusiasm at working in partnership with the Parents, Carers as well as the wider community. David went on to explain a little more regarding the background of Wellspring Academy Trust, the numerous years of experience and their work so far in other provisions and areas as well as their values and key aims. (Links for the wellspring academy and some of the other provisions they currently have will be found on page 6) David feels that their key values fit in line nicely with our 4 Cornerstones. David expressed an eagerness to build strong links and relationships with other service providers within the Rotherham Borough as well as with Rotherham Borough Council themselves expressing that at the root of all that they aim to achieve will be **the wellbeing of our children and the partnerships they hope to have with everyone connected to each Individual child.** We are in hope that the children will be proud to attend the school, we will do everything in our power to make this transition as smooth as we can with as little distress as possible. By working with the child and their extended support in a way in which the Child will feel included in the decisions being made. Transition's will be Individually assessed, and person centred.

Questions and Responses

28 questions were submitted, collated into **4 main themes** and shared with colleagues prior to the event.

1. **Is this a new Provision?**
2. **What is the Offer?**
3. **Practicalities?**
4. **SEMH sufficiency – forward planning and developments?**

All contributions were anonymised and responses from the conversation are published to the wider membership and relevant sites with a view to facilitating ongoing Frequently asked questions as the project continues.

The questions and responses can be found in full at **Appendix A** please click this link

Further Questions arising from the Chat facility during the session
Please note: these arising questions were answered by RPCF and David in the chat facility, and if answers are incorrect will be modified.

Will the Uniforms be adaptable for those with sensory needs?
Answer: yes, although we feel that a uniform is important, we will work with the child & family to ensure that it is comfortable & does not cause distress

What are your expected class sizes, and will the children be placed in their classes by age or capabilities? Also, what ratio of staff will there be in each room.
Answer: Our class averages at around 8 pupils although this has not been confirmed yet with a main teacher, a teacher assistant & support staff. We believe that interaction with their peers is a vital part of their social development therefore they will be classed per age group. Working at their Individual levels and capabilities.

When will parents be able to start visiting the site for a look around. And will the children be provided with maps to find their way around a large site.
Answer: Unfortunately, we do not have a date for this at the present but as soon as we can we are looking forward to everyone being a part of the process. All Children will be familiarised with the site and given support and aids wherever needed.

What time will school start & finish & will there be a crisis team, how will you help a child in crisis.
Answer: The practicalities such as start & ending times have yet to be formalised, but you may find it of interest to have a look at some of our other facilities online the links to which will be included in this report. All our Staff will be highly trained and capable with each room having a quiet room attached. We encourage you to keep working with your current education providers who will also update you as information becomes available.

How will the Transition look, will it be done in one movement or gradual?
Answer: The Transition will be done on an individual basis working closely with Rowan and Aspire and with the families/support and the young person themselves.

Please note that both David and Nathan were able to answer most questions in the chat box at the time of the Q+A and you may find that they were answered within the context of another question if they were relatable.

Recommendations from the session

- For the continuation of this dialogue and what is important to families with plans to revisit in the Autumn Term and provide updates, strengthening partnership with parents and young people.
- RPCF and RMBC to plan half termly Listening events to address parent priorities, gather voice and inform service development regarding SEND.
- Families in the cohort of the new provision are encouraged to keep working with Rowan & Aspire.

Closing Comments

Nathan Heath- We are fully committed to this ongoing dialogue. Everyone has a significant investment and at times it is difficult to see ahead in some of the elements of where we are sharing some of our experience or investing in that, but people doing that, coming together, that commitment to the four corner stones has driven us into this space where we are working together.
I feel strongly that a key partner as we move forward with Wellspring Academy will be the Parent Carers Forum, that is right and appropriate, and the forum will hold us rightly to account across a number of variants to make sure we are driving the strategies forward. It is not a full stop position and there is so much work to do to get it right, it is important that we are open to this dialog right the way through the process. There is no element where we will say it fits with the free school model that is the end of it. I think that we have opened the door and I will make sure it remains open right the way across the Piece.

David Whitaker – These are significant projects setting up new schools, moving children and working with communities. It cannot be successful unless we work together. It is our intentions at Wellspring Academy to work with parents and carers as much as we possibly can in the same way that we work with the Local Authorities.
It is all about partnerships and if we are getting it wrong tell us and we will try to put it right. I am more than happy to attend more of these Q+A Listening events and answer any questions.
Let us hope that very soon restrictions will lift, and we will be able to get on site for people to come and look around the school and be part of that development also.
We are really looking forward to working in Rotherham. It is an exciting project for us, and part of that excitement is working with the families. Regarding the practicalities school starting times etc. It is important to understand that we would not do any of that without talking to the families and we will do that. Rowan and Aspire, the whole process will be

managed from Rowan, the leadership team there and we intend to continue with this open communication around what we intend to do and the plans for that as they develop over the next few weeks and months.

Jayne F – I would like to thank both Nathan and David and a massive thankyou to all those who have been a part and continues to be a part of this journey. As a Forum we are an independent charity, we are all parents ourselves. What we find key is communication and this type of communication is the key to understanding what is going on. We can't know everything because people don't know everything, we are on a journey and we are about to open a new school, but we can know everything everyone else knows so that we are in it together and we are equal partners in that. Because the most important thing is that we get the best that we possibly can in Rotherham for our children and young people. And that means working in communication which is one of our key corner stones. So, with that in mind as Nathan has alluded there are plans in place to do half termly Q+A's Listening events. We would welcome your suggestions based on your lived experiences.

- What is it that we want to know?
- Which practitioners do we want to Invite along to answer those questions?

To make sure that lived experience is at the core of shaping policy in Rotherham and shaping provisions and services so it better fits our young people. Despite frustrations and we have plenty as families , we also know that practitioners have them too. We can come together and work in partnership so that our young people get the BEST possible outcomes.

If you have any suggestions, please email kayleigh@rpcf.co.uk

Thank you to all who contributed to this session – Together we make a difference!

Useful links –

(To read more about 4 Cornerstones go to RPCF Rotherham Parent Carers Forum

To look at some of Wellspring Academy's other provisions visit Wellspring Academy Trust

To leave your views on the free school process go to -
www.semhfreeschool@rotherham.gov

4 outcomes for preparation for Adulthood *(Employment, Independent living, Community Inclusion and Health*
www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/SiteAssets/Downloads/yeded5wb636481748062535810.pdf