

Participation briefing series.

6. Reshaping Conversations – Inspiring change through positive language



Reshaping Conversations is a project led by Swindon SEND Families Voice, the parent carer forum for Swindon, and was collaboratively produced with other local parent groups Mums on a Mission, Swindon Down's Syndrome Group, SCWAD and Swindon Autism/ADHD Facebook group. The aim of the project is to inspire positive change in the language used by professionals when speaking to parent carers.

Reshaping conversations

Inspiring change through
positive language

This project isn't about criticising professionals. What this project is about, is working **WITH** professionals to help create an environment and culture where families feel listened to. In the 2020 Annual SEND Survey almost a third of parents/carers and young people said they didn't feel listened too. The best way to change this is to work in collaboration.

A new training module has been created by Swindon SEND Families Voice in coproduction with the LA and BSW CCG. The module will form part of the mandatory training by Children's Services and will also be shared within the CCG and NHS. It is also important that this is not just a one off project, but that the training remains mandatory for all staff. It's time for a change in culture and we all need to be a part of that change!

Our booklet, video and website has been designed to show you different ways to reshape the conversation. For example, instead of saying "Don't worry I'm sure he'll grow out of it" how about reshaping it to "Research often shows that as they get older often children can present with less and less of these kinds of behaviours but let's talk about some strategies on how to cope with them now as I can see they are causing difficulties?" You can download the booklet and watch the video via our website below.



Over 200 parent carers told us that they have felt the impact of words said to them by professionals that they believe to be unhelpful. The language we use everyday has the power to influence our perception and attitude. By reshaping some of these conversations we can start to foster better working relationships between parent carers and professionals. Through allowing the language we use to guide and inform effective changes.

We recognise that a lot of the words said to parent carers come from a well-intended place, and perhaps there is a lack of understanding and awareness through not enough training opportunities. The project aims to support you to understand the impact unhelpful language can have on SEND families, and by inspiring reshaped, helpful ways to have these important conversations. If in doubt please ask and if you feel like you have made an unhelpful comment, please own it, apologise, and ask how you could have said it better?

It's not me, they must be talking about someone else...actually it is you! It's teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers, police officers, even your next door neighbour! If we are all completely honest, it's all of us at some point, and it's been like this for years! We need to take a moment to think about whether what we are about to say is going to have a positive impact or not – "Hello again, what are you here for this time!" reshaped to "Hello, how are things?" It's a tiny change that can make the difference between a parent going home feeling hopeless or hopeful.

Further information to enhance this briefing: www.reshapingconversations.com
<https://localoffer.swindon.gov.uk/content/send-local-offer/landing-pages/your-voice-landing-and-content-pages/your-voice/>