

Family Voice Surrey Action Cards

Card Number	2
Project	N/A
As	Parent Carers
We want	When communication is made about a child, parents are copied in wherever possible, unless there is a safeguarding concern.
So that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents are kept updated as to the actions that have been taken • Parent do not need to be chasing to find out who is speaking to who and what the outcomes are • the need for SARs and complaints is reduced • professionals consider their language about families more carefully
Allocated to	Benedicte Symcox
Accepted by	Julia Katherine
Outcome measure	<p>SCC to model communication to parents by cc'ing them into any comms, wherever possible</p> <p>Communications to families to be discussed at the Additional Needs Partnership Board with a view to agree a “policy decision” in accordance with the action card request</p>
Date Received	April 2022
Dates of updates	

Notes:

13/5/22 Response from JK

Response: Communications are shared with families, wherever possible, however there are some concerns about parents being copied in to every communication due to the volume of correspondence and the impact of this on families’ in-boxes. In addition, the increased email traffic would, in turn, increase the risk of GDPR breaches. It is therefore important that copying in parents to emails remains proportionate. In the near future (September onwards) there will be a new ‘single view of the child’ data system, which you may have heard referred to as EYES, as part of this system the family will be able to view the child’s file in real time, this is likely to remove the need for tracking through emails.

FVS reply

Parents have no idea what EYES will look like in practice. So they are potentially right but there needs to be a different answer. For example: When EYES is in place from September (do make sure that’s a real date lol), parents will be able to see all communications about their child within the system.

1. Is this actually true?
2. One concern is that it doesn’t address the potential for inappropriate language about a family to be used in emails among colleagues.

In terms of the volume of emails it's a very good point, but I would be very wary of assuming that families will be overwhelmed. I do think that parents want the choice at the very least. Parents are going to hate the rather paternalistic approach implied in "the impact of this on families' in-boxes". Is there a way of adding this issue to the conversation a caseworker has when "meeting" the family? (sorry, I'm assuming that caseworkers make real contact with their families, I know that's not actually the case... but I think it should be 😊).

GDPR breaches. Yes. But. The thing is that we still hear from families who've been sent someone else's paperwork... or whose EHCP has details about another child intermingled with their own child's data. So. This is going to land so so badly, because parents are asking for their child's data – so in a way, this action card is in one sense a request for personal data which is an intrinsic part of the GDPR regulations. And if we're quoting the risk of GDPR breaches by an organisation in the pursuit of answering a request for personal data, I worry that it's all a little uncomfortable.

I think that the points are absolutely relevant, but they don't address parents' main requests:

3. To be made aware of information about their child (and themselves at times), so as to avoid having to make SARs
4. To ensure that professionals remain professional in their language about families.

For me, the concerns raised are valid, but would easily be addressed from a family perspective by asking them. This also raises a side issue for me that we hear of a lot. When a child is identified as having SEND, a school often asks parents to sign consent for.... A huge raft of things. They rarely go back and remind the parent that consent was sought, so parents are told after the fact that an EP has been to assess their child, or other professional. While expedient, it's not transparent, and it's one of the things that has triggered this action card.

I've now had chance to give this some further thought, and to discuss again with colleagues. Here are my thoughts:

1. EYES – there will be some information sessions for parents, planned as part of the roll out of EYES. This new system will really help with transparency and sharing of information. It won't include all correspondence (see below) but it will include the name of the caseworker and key information that parents need to know.
2. Volume of emails/correspondence – it will not be possible to copy parents into every email/correspondence. There will be occasions when this correspondence might include reference to than one child (e.g. in discussions with a school about placement of a number of children etc). There will also be correspondence about finance etc which it would not be appropriate to share more widely. The best we are going to be able to do is to agree to copy in parents wherever possible and to look to EYES to increase transparency.
3. GDPR breaches – it is not possible to eradicate them completely, but we also should not take actions that will increase the risk.
4. Language – we do need to ensure that the language we use is always appropriate/inclusive etc. There is a programme of ongoing training and staff development to address this.

So in summary,

Yes, we need to make sure that our language is always professional and that we build parents' confidence by being open and transparent with families. We believe that the best way to achieve this is via the introduction of EYES, continued staff development and the other changes we are introducing e.g. parent representatives on decision-making panels etc.