



Reaching Out To Families

5th March 2021

Today was our 2nd Reaching Out to Families meeting facilitated by Rebecca from Inclusion North on Zoom.

6 carers came along and together we talked about why we thought that the Reaching Out to Families group was a good idea.

People said:

- *Its something social, a place to talk to people, to see people and somewhere where we have something in common*
- *Really important because being a carer is part of 'me' and I am able to talk to like-minded people*
- *A place to share information*
- *A place where people will listen*
- *This is some social input for me, it has been a challenging year*
- *I can have a hot cup of tea, be listened to, to have friends*
- *Even though I have friends some of them haven't really got a clue what I go through*
- *Sharing problems, a good way to overcome some of them*
- *I am grateful for the kindness of strangers – that's what saved me*

I'm not going anywhere – if you need me, I am here. Everything you have said I can recognise too

Carer to carer

Confidentiality

We said that it was really important that to create a safe place to talk we need to think about confidentiality and all agreed what can be shared in the notes, and that anything else is not discussed outside the group.

As carers we are always learning

People shared that as a parent you feel that you are responsible to know everything. *'We are experts in some things but not an expert in everything'*

One carer shared that as a carer they are always learning and that they understand the person rather than the label they have been given. *'I have learnt more about my son in the lockdown'*.

Covid

Because everyone has been through Covid there seems to be more of an understanding from others. When we come out of it some people will adjust and it will become 'old news'. Will people's difficulties still be considered? Even before Covid people were experiencing the same difficulties.

There have been a lot of review and evaluations but what about advocacy for the whole family?

Good new stories

Some day services are starting to re-open. One carer shared that their son/daughter had recently returned to day services after quite some time. They did not hesitate in returning and were so excited!!!

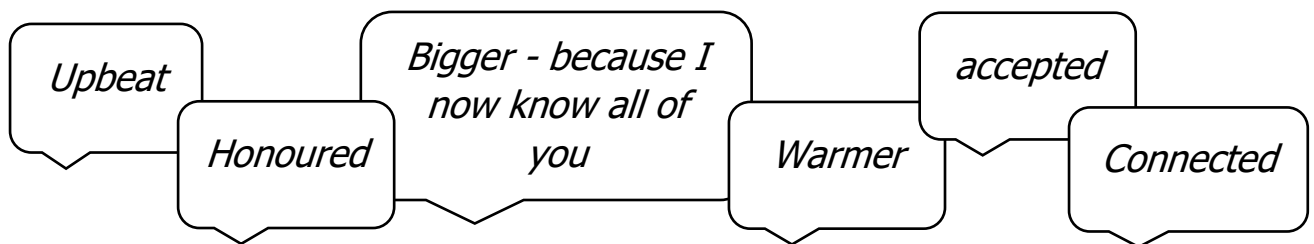
In other areas some services have been supporting people through lockdown and where possible people have been taking part in Zoom meetings.

What types of things would we like to look in to in other meetings?

- **Working Together** – people shared that sometimes you can feel as though you are talking a different language. Organisations and professionals have another language.
It can be really hard to get a diagnosis of autism – people want a diagnosis so that they can get the right help and support
- **Emotional support** – caring is a lifelong thing and the responsibility you feel can be difficult for families to make the first approach for support. Getting help is hard as you are often defined by your difficulties

- **Advocacy for carers** – some carers shared that it would be good to have the number of an advocate as difficulties arise. Professionals constantly change and some people have not had the same professional input for longer than a 2-year period. Its important to know what to say and how to say it *'I want to be the best advocate for my son'*.
One carer shared how they needed a counsellor to know and understand about neurodiversity.

We ended the meeting by sharing one word to describe how we were feeling



- *It's been lovely listening, relaxing, I've really enjoyed it*
- *Opportunity to learn from other families*
- *Good to meet new people*
- *Adding to my knowledge*
- *I was interacted – I thought I would say nothing*

We agreed that it would be good to start our meetings by asking 'how are you?'

Our next meeting

The next meeting will be on **16th April at 10.30am until 12pm**

To book your place and for information to join please contact Rachael

Rachael.MunroFawcett@inclusionnorth.org or telephone: 07960 388628