

MINUTES

Best Practices in Teaching and Learning

APPG on Cerebral Palsy meeting, 06 July 2021

Chairs: Mary Kelly Foy MP, Co-Chair of the APPG on Cerebral Palsy and Paul Maynard, Co-Chair of the APPG on Cerebral Palsy

Guest Speakers:

- Martin Ingram, Principal, Treloar's
- Rachel Carter, Student from Treloar's
- Simon Yates, Headteacher, Chailey Heritage School
- Dr Melanie Brown, Chief Executive and Director of Services, Conductive Education
- Di Caesar, Project Manager, pdnet
- Amanda Richardson, Chief Executive, Action Cerebral Palsy

Parliamentarians in attendance:

- Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie (Conservative)
- Ian Mearns MP (Labour)
- Office of Dr Lisa Cameron MP (SNP)
- Baroness Finlay (Crossbench)

Minutes

Mary Kelly Foy MP welcomed everyone as the Co-Chair of the APPG on Cerebral Palsy. She recommended Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie as an Officer for the APPG and the parliamentarians on the call approved this. Mary introduced the agenda for the meeting and spoke about the progress of the APPG since the last meeting, including writing to the Minister for Care to ask for an update into NHS England's implementation of the APPG's report into Early Identification, and that the APPG had met with the Early Years Healthy Development Review team to discuss how the report can inform their work.

Mary added some opening remarks regarding the context of the meeting and how the experience of children with cerebral palsy in the education system varies wildly and how the meeting would be hearing from speakers in the field of inclusive education regarding best practice.

Paul Maynard MP added some opening remarks as Co-Chair of the APPG on Cerebral Palsy. He spoke about what further needed to be done around education and cerebral palsy, and that how every child learns differently, particularly those with cerebral palsy. Paul then introduced the first speaker, **Martin Ingram, Principal at Treloar's school, and Rachel Carter, Student at Treloar's.**

Martin introduced Treloar's and the kind of the work they do with both day and residential students. Martin spoke about the multi-disciplinary learning Treloar's offers, coordinating physio, speech and language therapy, and physical therapy into the programmes of learning, which maximises the outcomes for individuals. Martin said they had put a huge amount of work in the last couple of years into multi-sensory impairment and some of the hidden disability that wasn't always obvious when students arrive. Martin then posed some questions to Rachel. Rachel said she learned independent skills in residential housing that would be useful when going to university in September. She said these skills included domestic skills like washing, cooking and cleaning.

Amanda Richardson CBE, Chief Executive of Action Cerebral Palsy asked Rachel what qualities of teaching and learning she had benefitted most from. Rachel said her learning plan was highly personal and that things could be rescheduled for her if necessary.

Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie asked if Rachel found transitioning between levels of school easier because they were situated at Treloar's. Rachel said she did find it easier and that she was able to gradually get used to things, rather than all in one go. Martin clarified that not many students transition from primary to college all the way through at Treloar's but that many came for temporary placements, and help was on offer for transitional periods.

Martin said that the best environment for a young person was where they had the support and help they needed, and for some that was for Treloar's, and that residential living could help them return to daily life much better equipped.

Ben Sutcliffe asked what barriers Rachel still faces in moving from Treloar's into a community or employment setting, and what work needs to be done still. Rachel said the biggest challenge was self-advocating for herself with local authorities, but that Treloar's had prepared her for this. Martin added that it depends how much support a young person had from their family in things like applying for grants or support, and that some universities struggle to provide suitable accommodation, or a choice of accommodation. Martin said the transition from child to adult services can also be quite traumatic for young people and their families as they lose touch with people they've known for a long time, to completely new people, often with a smaller budget.

Paul thanked Martin and Rachel and introduced the next speaker, **Simon Yates, Headteacher, Chailey Heritage School**. Simon spoke about some of the young people with the most complex needs, with many students at Chailey unable to speak and always using equipment of some kind. Simon explained PMLD - Profound and Multi-Learning Difficulties - but said his students had a huge range of cognitive ability. Simon said that there are young people who present who have PMLD and who are then put onto what schools might call a Sensory Pathway, but these students want to learn to read, do maths, basic skills etc. but that they are not always recognised as this because teachers don't necessarily have the ability to observe and find this out.

Simon said that some schools have very PMLD young people, but senior leaders think that national curriculum areas still need to be taught, and so young people who have little concept of anything beyond themselves are taught geography and science. Simon said myth-busting would be helpful, perhaps from the Department of the Education. He said the New Engagement Model from the Rochford Review is quite clear but that senior leaders don't always know. Simon said it was important for all PMLD young people to have someone trained, or training, in the educational practices required for the most complex learners, and that SLT also needs an understanding of the needs. Simon said Ofsted launched a new framework for inspecting in September 2019 which is led by subject-based deep dives which has reinforced unconfident headteachers' belief that they need subjects in place, which has not helped. Simon believed a debate with Ofsted would be good to explore how subject-based deep dives could be managed in specialist settings. Simon said Chailey doesn't have subject areas, which makes inspections difficult. Simon added that there aren't that many trained inspectors at the complex end of difficulties.

Paul thanked Simon and introduced the next speaker, **Dr Melanie Brown, Chief Executive and Director of Services, Conductive Education, NICE**.

Melanie spoke about the approach of conductive education (CE) as a way of teaching and learning. Melanie said there are around 100 qualified conductors and over 1,000 children and adults with cerebral palsy accessing CE, through a range of settings. Melanie explained that it is the teaching techniques that are fundamental to CE, not just how a person learns but how they are taught. Melanie said CE has an approach that centralises the person, and what strategies they might need to create potential, across the spectrum of human development.

Melanie said within CE a professional is trained to coordinate and deliver that approach in many different settings. This might include embedding learning in a classroom, in a real-life setting, and making movement and meaningful. Melanie said that for adults this can exploring movement and learning new skills, such as problem-solving. Melanie said the right learning environment can draw out potential and that CE maximises the teacher and learning environment to help the young person make sense of themselves and their potential and what they can be.

Melanie said specialist training in cerebral palsy is very rare in the UK and that people working with young people with cerebral palsy might not know what diagnoses the young people have, or what the implication on learning is. Melanie said autism is much further ahead in this aspect. This is not the fault of professionals but the fault of the system more broadly.

Melanie added that charities have found that families who want specialist services such as CE have ended up in tribunals, fighting to get these specialisms, which makes many of them inaccessible. Melanie said CE isn't for everybody, but the system should be about choice. Melanie said that nobody knows what most of these young people are capable of and nobody should have the right to put a cap on their education.

Mary spoke about her own experiences with CE with her daughter, Maria, and how Maria wasn't able to access this once she started school.

Paul asked why there was such controversy over CE. Melanie said that when CE first came over from Hungary, it came over with a lot of media publicity, and it challenged the system in the UK. Melanie said it is a different approach and that a lot of the controversy was historical, rather than current, and that many conductors are part of multi-disciplinary environments. Paul then introduced **Di Caesar, Project Manager, pdnet**.

Di explained Physical Disability Network (pdnet), a free membership network, and the work they do for people aged 0-25 years in mainstream and specialist settings. Di spoke about the national benchmarking audits carried by pdnet which showed that every year 3,000 people with physical disability start school for the first time.

Di said there are risks for disabled children being in the education system, including that 30% of disabled children will have a mental health problem established by the age of 14, and that 17% report being bullied at school in relation to their disability, and 3 times more likely to leave school with no qualifications.

Di said it was hard to get it right and that, while every child is an individual, this is even more so the case with a child with physical disability. Di talked through the impact of cerebral palsy on the individual from fine motor skills to personal care to independent and learning and attainment. Di said the impact on learning and attainment can range from cognitive difficulties to attention span, sensory processing difficulties, and even fatigue and pain.

Di said that mainstream teachers might only come across a child with a physical disability once every four or eight years in urban and rural settings, respectively, meaning that teachers lack training and understanding and can struggle to deliver their responsibilities as teachers. Di asked what practically is going to work and have an impact so the aforementioned risks are reduced and outcomes improved. Di spoke through the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and a simple model produced by pdnet of pre-requisites to learning, made up of physical needs met, social and emotional needs met, and being ready to learn. Di spoke through the components of each set of needs such as medical intervention, mobility, and particular challenges for a teacher managing a child with physical disability.

Di said pdnet thinks there needs to more shared practice, strengthening of specialist support, CPD and training, and a strengthening the community of practice. Di added that in the national SEND arena, the DfE holds the contract for delivering SEND education in schools and that many fall outside the contracts meaning there is no opportunity to bid for funding and that this could be corrected.

Mary thanked Di and asked if anyone had any thoughts on how best to solve the issue that there was no mandatory CPD qualification. Di spoke about how Level 1 training and Level 2 is available but that's as far as it gets and that more training does need to be more accessible. Mary then asked **Amanda Richardson** for any remarks on the session.

Amanda thanked the speakers for excellent presentations and said she felt the key point was the quality of expertise needed to really hit the nail on the head for all young people. Amanda said multi-disciplinary, expert teams were so few and far between that few young people were provided with this all-round support. Amanda stressed the need for professionals who understood the holistic need of cerebral palsy and that she supported all the calls for improving access to teaching and learning training for children with cerebral palsy.

Amanda added that the system needed to be open to a wider breadth of offering for children with cerebral palsy, and that families should be able to access what is right for their child, at the right time in their life, without any battle. Amanda said the system should be looking at the co-sharing of practices and skills between sectors and providers, such as private and state, and that the system can work harder to bring those skills together without a sense of discrimination between sectors.

Paul opened up the session for Q&A. Paul asked attendees what role sport plays in education for those with cerebral palsy. Amanda said she was concerned by the reduction of specialist local authority teachers, especially for physical impairments, as these teachers can move between schools and share their ideas. Amanda said the system needs to include the parents on how to involve and include the child.

Paul referred to some comments from attendees in the chat about boccia, but it depends largely on what was available in the local area and that if it wasn't in the educational offer, it gets lost as soon as the young person leaves education. Paul said it would be good to examine what happens post-16 in wider life quality and opportunities.

Di said she was surprised how much sport young people did outside of school but hardly any in school. Di brought up the DfE potentially rewriting the PE curriculum with more opportunities for SEND and that pdnet submitted a tender with another organisation.

Simon referred to the most complex end of cerebral palsy and that while the role of sport was great, it needed to be thought through, and that with older PMLD students Chailey had moved onto "enhancing their capacity to experience joy", learning what they liked and didn't like and giving them all kinds of opportunities to experience this, and documents to record this to pass onto wherever the students went onto in the future.

Joran raised a point that a lot of newbuild school didn't include programmes and room for specialist services and that guidance from the top for adequate spaces to meet the needs of those with cerebral palsy. Joran added that there had been a dilution in the specialism of the service due to broader cuts which was a sustainability issue.

Mary said this discussion had raised lots of points and perhaps physical activity could be covered at another APPG meeting. Philip Green raised a question about boccia at Treloar's and the difference it made to students' lives and opportunities after. Simon said boccia was useful if a

young person's cognitive ability was there to recognise what they were doing and what it meant but that for the most complex, it may not bring them any joy or connection.

Joran added that creativity in the curriculum needed to be considered, rather than just functional skills such as maths and English, and that this can lack fun, and some young people can become disengaged learners if these skills plateau.

Mary thanked all attendees and said that all the information from the meeting would inform the next APPG report, to be published in October, and reminded attendees of the call for evidence. Mary and Paul both thanked the speakers and secretariat and closed the meeting.