



Independent Parental Supporter Programme Initial Training

Programme ID: 5002

Norfolk Parent Partnership is a Local Authority funded service working with the voluntary sector to support parents/carers of children who have special educational needs.

You can contact the Parent Partnership Office at:

**Woodside Road, Norwich. NR7 9QL
Tel: 01603 704070**

Background Information

Parent Partnership

“The aim of Parent Partnership services is to ensure parents of children with additional needs - including the very young – have access to information, advice and guidance in relation to the special educational needs of their children so that they can make appropriate and informed decisions....

....Parent Partnership services are expected to provide a range of flexible services, including access to an Independent Parental Supporter for all parents who want one, and referral to other agencies, voluntary organisations or parent support groups, which can offer advice and support.” [Code of Practice for the identification of Special Educational Needs – Parent Partnership Services.]

Special Educational Needs

Children may have special needs involving learning difficulties, communication difficulties, emotional/behavioural difficulties and physical/medical difficulties. Norfolk Parent Partnership offers support to parents/carers of children between the ages of 2 and 19.

The special educational needs of most children can be met effectively in mainstream pre-schools and schools. For some children a special school placement may be appropriate. A small number of children with more complex needs may require a full assessment involving a number of professionals, which may lead to a Statement of Special Educational Needs. This statutory process can be found in the Education Act of 1996 and the Code of Practice on the Identification of Special Educational Needs.

The Independent Parental Supporter

The volunteer’s role is that of facilitator, not parents’ representative or advocate. Their responsibilities are as follows:

- ?? Supporting parents whose child has special educational needs;
- ?? encouraging parents to be fully involved as partners in their child’s education;
- ?? listening to parents’ concerns and help and encourage them to express their views;
- ?? helping parents to access relevant information;
- ?? explaining procedures, choices and the implications of choices to parents;
- ?? helping parents prepare their advice/contribution for their child’s statutory assessment;
- ?? supporting parents at meetings about their child’s special educational needs;
- ?? taking notes at meetings, helping with letter writing and form filling if requested.

Programme Aims

IPS training enables learners to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes to be effective in their role of supporting parents of children with special educational needs.

The programme is accredited with the Open College Network. This will help to ensure the professional quality of the training through external moderation and provide assurance of its independence.

The knowledge acquired through participation in the programme leads to an understanding of:

- ?? the responsibilities of education, health and children services in the pre-school years;
- ?? the school-based support of special educational needs;
- ?? statutory assessments and statements of special educational needs;
- ?? annual reviews, year 9 reviews and transition plans;
- ?? parents' rights and role in all of the above;
- ?? the role of the Independent Parental Supporter;
- ?? mediation, rights of appeal and tribunals;
- ?? Norfolk practice and procedures in all of the above.

Learners are enabled to develop good practice from knowledge of:

- ?? disability issues;
- ?? child protection issues and local arrangements;
- ?? personal health and safety issues;
- ?? the nature of a voluntary role in the home and public domain.

The skills that will be developed include:

- ?? active listening;
- ?? accessing information;
- ?? effective communication of information;
- ?? time management;
- ?? boundary setting;
- ?? record keeping.

Who can be an IPS?

Individuals who wish to train as an Independent Parental Supporter usually come from one of four main groups:

- a) those who have experience of children with special educational needs in their own families;
- b) those who have contact with such children/families in a personal or professional capacity, e.g. Portage home-visitors, classroom assistants, speech and language therapists;
- c) individuals who through retirement, redundancy or unemployment wish to offer life and work-related skills to others in need of support;
- d) individuals who may be either returning to work following a career break or starting on a new career plan. They may not be ready to commit themselves to employment and may wish eventually to move into further/higher education or the helping professions. Accredited training would be a valuable contribution to their portfolio.

Equal Opportunities

Equal opportunities are an integral part of this programme. It focuses on the rights of parents to information and support, enabling them to play a full part in the education process.

When applying to take part in the training programme, volunteers are asked whether they have any special requirements. Appropriate arrangements can then be made to enable them to access the course. (e.g. adapted materials, support with learning, a special diet, or access requirements.) Assistance with childcare expenses will be considered on an individual basis.

There is a recognition that all social, cultural and special needs groups are not always represented on the register. Norfolk Parent Partnership are committed to continuing to recruit and train volunteers who may have the experience or particular background to serve such client groups.

Admission Criteria

The course would hope to attract individuals who are:

- ?? interested in learning about special educational needs;
- ?? interested in developing good communication skills;
- ?? able to respect confidentiality and the views of others;

- ?? reliable, resourceful and positive;
- ?? willing to commit time to support families as a volunteer.

Learners must have a good standard of literacy up to “basic skills level 1”. This will be demonstrated through the completion of an application form. Learners who require support will be referred to the Norfolk Adult Education Service as well as receiving support from the programme coordinators.

Experience of special education is an advantage but not essential. On completion of the initial application form, learners are asked why they want to do the course and what they feel they have to offer as a volunteer. This is followed up in a short individual discussion at the pre-course briefing, when one of the course coordinators (a Parent Partnership Officer) will establish the learners’ experience and commitment to the points above.

When learners have been accepted for the course, there is a formal pre-course group briefing by a Parent Partnership Officer and a member of the Parent Partnership Management Group (usually a representative of a local voluntary organisation). There will be an experienced Independent Parental Supporter at this meeting who will be available to answer questions. This meeting ends with a brief individual discussion with each learner in order to agree a final commitment to the training.

If either the Independent Parental Supporter role and/or the level of the qualifying course are not appropriate, learners can be referred on to staff at Norwich and Norfolk Voluntary Services (NNVS), who are skilled in working with volunteers and giving guidance about other opportunities. These opportunities are either courses for personal or professional development (Adult Education or Further Education courses) or other volunteering roles.

Contact time includes individual and small group work as well as whole group sessions; the whole group is usually 8-10. Learners have the opportunity to speak with course coordinators individually each week.

Learning Support

Learners are supported during the course by the coordinators who are responsible for their learning and have a management role on completion of the training.

If learners are in need of learning support they can discuss their concerns with the parent partnership officers. Where appropriate, course materials can be adapted to enable the learner to access them. If further guidance is appropriate then advice and information is available on a wide range of basic skills classes from **Hanni John, Curriculum Manager, Basic Skills, at County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DL Tel: 01603 22254.**

Study Facilities

The Norfolk Parent Partnership office has a well- stocked resource base containing books, information packs, audio and video tapes which are available to be borrowed both during and after training.

Personal Support

There is generally no fee for the course and learners' travelling expenses may be reimbursed. Supporting materials are offered to learners free of charge.

Assistance with childcare expenses will be considered on an individual basis.

Progression

On successful completion of the training, most learners will progress to the register of Independent Parental Supporters.

Quality Assurance

Learners are encouraged to give informal verbal feedback both individually and in a group throughout the course. A simple questionnaire will be completed by learners at the end of each day's training. This will be discussed at regular meetings to enable the course coordinators to modify delivery if required during the course.

A system of internal verification is used to help evaluate the training and helps to ensure that all learners receive consistency and fairness from course tutors.

Venue Details

The course is offered during school hours. Once a year the course will be held in Norwich. We hope to hold the second training course in other venues around the county. Appropriate venues include Community Health Centres, NNVS premises, Teachers' Centres, Area Education Resource Centres, or Adult Education premises. Details of current venues can be requested from the Parent Partnership office.

Programme Team

The training is co-ordinated by Parent Partnership Officers Sarah Merrick and Jan Eastwood. Their input involves the nature of the role, information, research, record keeping, time management and practical arrangements. They also contribute to sessions on education information and workshops on Norfolk statements.

As well as the Parent Partnership Officers, a variety of other people are invited to deliver specialist input. These include:

- ?? Local Authority personnel;
- ?? school staff and governors;
- ?? health and children's services staff;
- ?? voluntary sector representatives;
- ?? parents;
- ?? experienced Independent Parental Supporters;
- ?? independent trainers.

Pattern of Study

The course is delivered in 5 whole day (5 hour) training blocks.

The course generally runs twice a year in the summer and autumn terms. With increasing demands on our register of volunteers, this is likely to increase in the future.

Normally, 80% attendance is expected for course completion.

Programme Structure

Style of course delivery includes discussion groups and workshops.

Study Requirements

Unit No.	Unit Title	Credit Level	Credit Value	Contact Time	Self Directed Study
1	Initial Training	Two	1	25 Hours	10 Hours

Methods of Assessment

- ?? **Observation** – learners are observed in simulated situations by both peers and tutors.
- ?? **Question and answer** – learners demonstrate their competence by being actively involved in both small and large group discussions.
- ?? **Production of portfolio of resources collated during the course** – learners need to produce an easy to access portfolio for future use in their IPS role.
- ?? **Written work** – learners are asked to produce a number of pieces of written work to demonstrate their understanding of a number of areas of the curriculum.
- ?? **Interview** - A half hour individual interview at the end of the course to allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the role of the Independent Parental Supporter. This interview is conducted by a member of the Parent Partnership's Management Group and a Parent Partnership Officer. At the end of the interview all parties will reach an agreement about the learner's readiness to be placed on the register.

Support for Learners

Learners are assessed throughout the course. Methods of assessment are explained to them at the beginning of the training. They are supported throughout the course by the Parent Partnership Officers (PPOs), who make sure that they have sufficient opportunities to meet assessment criteria. PPOs meet with learners on an individual basis each week to discuss their progress and make sure that they understand what is expected of them.

Record-Keeping

Learners compile a portfolio of evidence, which also contains pre-printed record sheets. Observation sheets are used as evidence for practical demonstrations of competence. Learners are informed that pieces of their work may, with their permission, be viewed by the external moderator.

Health and Safety

At the beginning of the course learners, are made aware of Local Authority practices and procedures, plus those relating to the venue being used.

The course contains information about personal safety as volunteers will be out in the community and will often travel alone. Fact sheets are provided for learners and protocols are agreed by the Parent Partnership Management Group.

Learning Outcomes

The learner will be able to:

- ?? describe the main principles of the SEN Code of Practice and the implications of the resulting practices and procedures for parents;
- ?? describe the model which the SEN Code of Practice recommends for meeting special educational needs;
- ?? discuss how arrangements are made locally to meet the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice;
- ?? select local sources of support for children with special educational needs and their parents;
- ?? demonstrate appropriate communication and negotiation skills in role-play situations;
- ?? demonstrate skills in observation and recording in simulated situations;
- ?? name the factors which may indicate a child protection issue and describe what should be done;
- ?? understand the importance of personal safety, disability issues, and equal opportunities;
- ?? describe the role and responsibilities of the Independent Parental Supporter including ethical considerations;
- ?? identify her/his own strengths and limitations in the role.