



INVOLVEMENT ENABLES ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES

My name is Jean Boyle, Senior Social Work Practitioner within the West Belfast GP Federation. I work closely alongside my colleague Julie Annesley, Social Work Assistant. Involvement and Community Development is a key element of our role, working with the residents of West Belfast to identify healthcare needs of the local community, and, using GP Federation seed funding to focus on addressing areas of healthcare where there are gaps in services or limited provision.

My colleague and I have involved a group of parents to identify a service improvement that would fulfil the needs of the local community. The aim of the improvement was to further develop and enhance a model of support my colleague already established - a parent peer support group for parents and families of children who have a diagnosis or are awaiting an assessment/diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The group was established following a course Access Communication 'Embracing Neurodiversity' delivered by a Social Work Multi-Disciplinary Team. The need to support parents who are struggling to cope with their children's behaviours and the impact this is having on them and their families' daily functioning/emotional well-being. Timely access to support services and resources for parents and families of children with ASD or those who are waiting on an assessment is a significant challenge.

The number of parents and families seeking support for themselves and their children who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and those waiting on an assessment is significant.



We involved parents from the GP practices within West Belfast, three of whom are the Founders of the 'Better Together' group who have and continue to demonstrate what individuals, local communities and services can achieve when they come together to address healthcare needs.

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HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE DRAGONS DEN INITIATIVE

Three mothers with plenty of lived experience and motivation joined Julie and I as we entered the Health and Social Care Dragons Den initiative and won.

The Dragons Den funding has enabled us to establish a much needed resource and service; it will also provide an environment that gives parents an opportunity to speak in confidence and it will enable us to promote the health and well-being by bringing on-board organisations such as Mind Wise, AWARE Defeat Depression and Menopause Matters to further support parents.

We built the resilience within the community by involving and supporting parents and families. This helped secure Dragons Den funding and enabled additional resources for the community.

“Better Together” meets on a Tuesday evening 6:00 to 8:00 PM (once per fortnight). If you would like to find out more please contact Jean Boyle Jean.boyle@belfasttrust.hscni.net or Ann O'Rourke ann.orourke@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Involvement Aims

We aimed to achieve the following through involvement:

- Grow and develop the group by facilitating it out of hours, in a venue within the community that will form a much needed resource for parents and families
- Become furthermore integrated into the local community, building resilience and supporting parents/families to function better by empowering them through peer support and connectivity with each other and the GP Federation
- Co-produce with local Community and voluntary sector groups to address various themes the parents have identified such as: Mind Wise, Aware Defeat Depression, Self-Care, Mindfulness, Arts and Crafts
- Create a sustainable peer support group for parents and families that is co-produced with the GP Federation and co-delivered with service users

