



CHAIR'S REPORT

Warrington Parents and Carers Forum Annual General Meeting 2023

INTRODUCTION

2022/23 was another excellent year for WarrPAC, we achieved many things that we had included in our annual grant monitoring and application process for that year.

We are stringently monitored by the Department for Education (DfE) and CONTACT around the limited funding of £17,500 we receive annually from the government to help our work with families living with SEND. Our remit is to offer information, advice, guidance, as well as a shoulder to cry on but gathering your feedback to ensure you have a voice at the highest level is our main objective. The combined voice of parent/cares is what will change the landscape and narrative around SEND to make the changes that's needed.

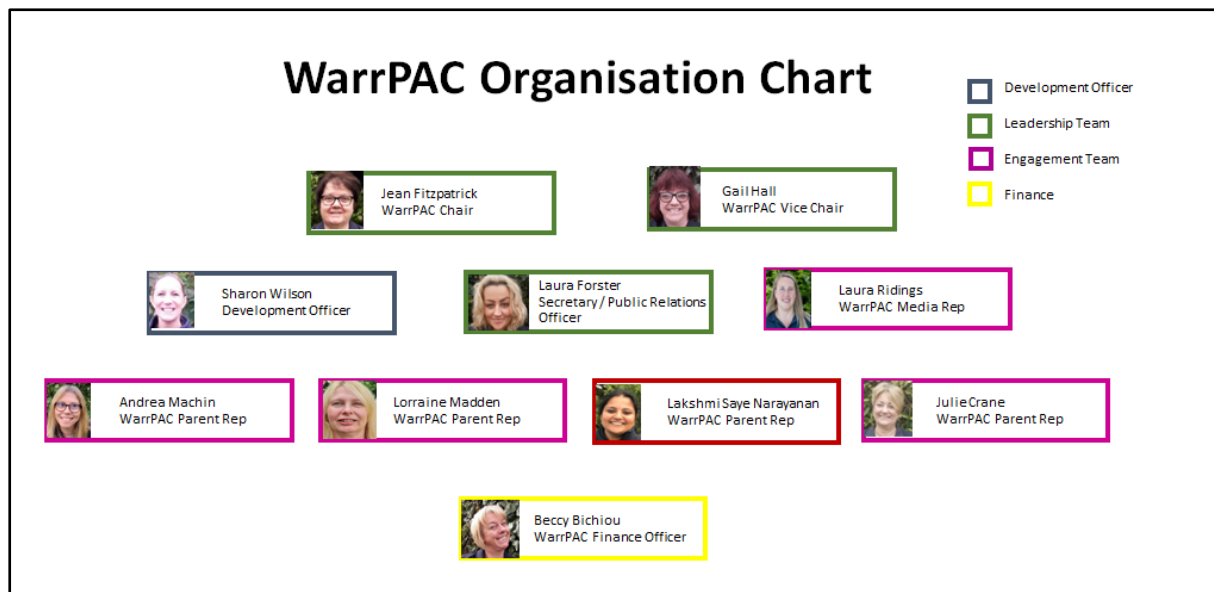
The government, as well as professionals who work for them on the ground, including our own Local Authority and Health service... have realised that the expertise you have is not only crucial in developing and shaping services, you cannot do without listening and involving families that use services. We know what works and what doesn't, we know what our children and us as families need. Getting it right first time instead of professionals working in silo only to be challenged by WarrPAC when its presented to us as information not coproduction... we categorically have and will continue to refuse to sign off something that has not been coproduced with Parents, Carers or the young people who are going to use these services. The realisation that the parent carer and young person's voice is essential to getting things right hasn't gone unnoticed. Since the reforms in 2014 the Code of Practice states;

“Local Authorities, in carrying out their functions under the Act in relation to SEND....Must have regard to the views, wishes, and feelings of the child or young person and the child's parents”

It isn't just good practice it is mandatory for LA's and health Services to work with parents carers and Young people as equals, to design, plan, deliver and review support and services in order to achieve shared outcomes.

One of the things we identified for our Grant monitoring was growing the forums membership and media reach in order to achieve that wider parental voice. We did this by providing every rep with a toolkit to have with them when supporting parents and carers, so whilst supporting families we could invite those who weren't already members of WarrPAC to fill in our membership form. We lost all our membership data when GDPR came into play...its been difficult since to get back to the numbers we had. We also lost our website last year after the company supporting our platform crashed without warning which resulted in us losing everything overnight. We are currently in the process of rebuilding that. our membership has grown from 90 to 202 members an increase of 124% ... and our media reach currently stands at 2065

TEAM PERSONNEL



This is our Team personnel chart as it stands. We are a very knowledgeable and experienced team with skill sets in all the areas that are required to run a very professional and successful Forum. We are all volunteers with children or young people with SEND, however, we have one paid post, WarrPAC's Development Officer who combines her volunteering role with a part time post.

We are one of the more proactive forums in the North West which has been recognised recently when we were asked to chair the Cheshire and Merseyside Cluster entailing the eight other forums to oversee North West Regional work which ultimately feeds into the national agenda.

A YEAR AT A GLANCE

We have continued to work on your behalf. Between January 22 and December 22, we attended over 150 meetings linked to workstreams across Education health and social care. We Had weekly meetings with our SEND link at the local authority when we get the opportunity to share intel on mutual concerns, good news stories and have the opportunity to bring specific issues brought to us by families to the LA directly on a regular basis. We have held around 24 Chat sessions during the day so you can meet with professionals across all areas. We've also held a number of evening sessions, some just for fun like the laughter therapy and mindfulness... but others based on what you have asked for, preparing for adulthood. We dealt with issues around the post 16 provision last September that left students without a places. We brought both parties together in a room with parents and carers whose young people were affected to address accountability and allow those families and young people to have their say. We attended regular meetings in preparation for the Area SEND Inspection to ensure parents and carers were well represented. We have been invited into schools for coffee mornings. My reps and I have completed training for their professional development in areas they've shown an interest in, learning and keeping up to date with SEND is essential to provide the right support. This is just a snap shot of work we have been involved in across this 12 month period.

JUST SOME OF OUR PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

I will just highlight a couple of achievements that made a massive difference for families. We were instrumental in bringing ADDvance solutions into Warrington to support families living with Nuero diverse differences, pre, during and post diagnosis whether they received a diagnosis or not that support was there because the problems families are facing when they start the pathway don't go away when a diagnosis is not forthcoming....

We were involved fully in the development of the ND Pathway a number of years ago and are still working with health to get this right.

We are currently running chat session regularly to bring you face to face with some of those hard to reach professionals. These sessions are always very well attended. We gather great feedback so it's something we will continue to facilitate as long as it's working for you.

We have, and always will, approach all our work on your behalf with a "you said...we did" approach. You wanted more information around EHC plans and the Annual Review process....so We have been working with the Local Authority and Foxwood school to produce a guidance leaflet. This is now ready for publication and will be available very soon.

You told us that the EHCP process was confusing and difficult to navigate so we asked the EHCP team to develop a 'welcome and Introduction" letter to go out to all new EHCP applicants. This was coproduced by WarrPAC on your behalf and after reviewing the final version we all agreed it was a great piece of work.

We are also working on adapting the short breaks tool to try to make it less complicated with more transparency around specific areas of need.

It may not feel like it sometimes when as families you get upset, angry and frustrated about the quality or lack of SEND support in Warrington. As parents and carers ourselves we feel your pain but as the Strategic lead for parents and carers locally and regionally across Cheshire and Merseyside, as well as having my finger on the pulse nationally, I feel I need to at least put some context around the landscape out there. Whatever your experience and I know some of you have been on the receiving end of some difficult decision making, I can assure you that you are in one of the better Authorities for SEND. I don't say that lightly and I am certainly not saying Warrington gets everything right, far from it. As an independent Forum, I can tell you we work with SOME of the most committed professionals, working to improve things in what are very challenging financial circumstances locally but also nationally. To help both parties to work in coproduction the LA have assigned the SEND lead to meet with us every week to discuss what's happening on the ground. We meet with education health and social care leads every month, we are involved and challenge lots of their decisions. I don't pull any punches when they get it wrong, but on the same token we have to give credit when they get it right. As a forum we are privy to what goes on in other areas, how inspections have gone and some of it is horrific. Please know we are all working for the same thing...to improve your experience.

Since the Area SEND Inspection, WarrPAC have been heavily involved in the "Implementation Plan" addressing the areas Ofsted highlighted as needing improvement. I have put a Rep from WarrPAC with relevant experience and knowledge on each sub group, not to do the work for the LA required for a successful outcome, that's not our job but to ensure that we on behalf of our members hold to account Education health and social care to do what they say they are going to do to improve what isn't working well in Warrington highlighted by the recent SEND Inspection.

Regarding forward planning and our future commitments this includes ongoing work with the Autism in schools project, consultation with you around the new facility for post 16/19 at the Peace Centre, Coproducing a "tell it once approach" across area system for parents and carers....and of course always the highlight of our year ... preparing for our next parent/carer/professionals conference in March 24. There are also some plans for coproducing pieces of work that are in their very early stages and I look forward to sharing them with you all as they arise.

Thank You

Jean Fitzpatrick

Chair WarrPAC/Chair/Lead Cheshire & Merseyside Forum Cluster