

## Better Together!

**Family Action's Warwickshire SENDIAS team were delighted to welcome 84 parents, carers and professionals to its Better Together! Conference held on Saturday, 13 May in Rugby.**

The conference was aimed at parents, carers and professionals who wanted to find out more about supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Warwickshire.

The event offered delegates the opportunity to:

- hear from guest speakers
- take part in a range of interactive workshops
- get practical ideas for supporting a child with SEND
- browse an exhibition of resources and support organisations
- network with other parents, carers and professionals.



David Holmes opened the conference by warmly welcoming delegates and urging them to get as much out of the event as possible including visiting the exhibition stands, networking with fellow parents and carers, and taking part in the workshops.

He spoke about the wide variety of programmes and services delivered by Family Action, and praised the highly-valued service offered by the Warwickshire SENDIAS team. He said:

*“This was such a well-organised event and it succeeded in its aim of bringing people together, inspiring them and giving them practical information, advice and resources that they could take away with them. Well done to Sue Robus and the whole team in our Warwickshire SENDIAS service for delivering such a great event.”*



Pat Tate, Service Manager, Vulnerable Learners at Warwickshire County Council highlighted the variety of support available for families across Warwickshire. She also updated delegates on developments in SEND provision in the local authority, such as three new schools for children with SEND.

She was followed by Ross Caws, the authority's SEND Programme Manager, who spoke about the importance of parents/carers and young people being involved in shaping services in Warwickshire, and reminded parents and carers to sign up to their E-bulletin, to visit their website and get involved in focus groups.

Participants took part in a range of interactive workshops during the conference including:

- **Who's Looking After You? Wellbeing and Self Care for Parents and Carers**, *Nicky Probert, Family Action*.
- **Meeting Your Child's Sensory Needs**, *Ann Huc, Links Therapy Company*.
- **ADHD Awareness for Parents**, *Jo Wagstaff, ADHD Solutions*.
- **ASD and Family Relationships**, *Sam Ramsey, Curly Hair Project*
- **Getting Your Voice Heard**, *Aimee Mann, Entrust Care Partnership (pictured)*
- **Mental Health Awareness**, *Kanu Patel, Family Action*



During the morning break and lunchtime, participants were encouraged to browse the many stands in the bustling exhibition area, and learn from local and national organisations where to find resources, information, support and advice to support them and their children. Organisations included Contact a Family, Family Information Service, Curly Hair Project, ASD Solutions and Take a Break.

We were delighted to welcome delegates to our own Family Action and SENDIAS stands, where we were promoting a wide range of our programmes and services, as well as forthcoming training and consultancy workshops and volunteering opportunities within the organisation.



We also encouraged exhibitors and delegates to share their experiences via Family Action’s social media channels – and have been delighted by the positive comments posted.



For most, if not all, participants, one of the day’s highlights was guest speaker Fran Williams, Paralympian Swimmer.



During her inspiring, highly entertaining and often moving speech, Fran spoke openly about the challenges she has faced and how, with the full support of her parents and through her own determination and hard work, she has achieved great success in her life including 13 World Championship and 6 Paralympic medals!

She urged all the parents and carers present to continue to support their children to achieve their own individual goals in life in their own individual way. As Fran said:

*“I would rather have a life full of ‘oh wells’ than a life full of ‘what ifs’.”*

Sue Robus, Service Manager, summed up the conference for many participants:

*“Better Together! Was the title of our event and Better Together! was the theme throughout the day. It was inspiring to see parents, carers and professionals from across the local authority come together to find out how they can work in partnership to improve the life chances of children with SEND. Events such as these clearly demonstrate that we are definitely BETTER TOGETHER!”*

[JANE HERE ARE SOME QUOTES FROM DELEGATES FROM YOU TO USE IF YOU WISH; PLEASE CAN YOU ALSO ENSURE SOME GO ON THE INTRANET]

**What was the most useful thing?**

**Listening to Fran Williamson in the afternoon. I laughed, cried and walked away feeling so positive and uplifted. Simply brilliant!**

**A sense of hopefulness and inspiration as well as brilliant practical advice on dealing with different situations**

**Talking to other parents/carers, getting information from exhibitors; feeling empowered and positive from the workshops; knowing that actually we are doing a great job with our children**

**Good to have time to meet up with people you wouldn't normally meet and be able to speak to people who can actually make changes!**

**Fran's presentation was very inspiring and gave an excellent message about celebrating difference**

**All of it was inspiring to me to develop my role as SENCo at the nursery I work at to support children with SEND and their families**

**Meeting others, listening to their experiences, sharing and talking together**

**Fantastic event. Took the fear from the unknown future ahead. Fran's talk was life-changing**

**Great all round event**

**Finding out about organisations I hadn't heard of before**

**Start to finish Fran was brilliant**

**Very professional workshops and inspiring Fran!!!**

**Really worthwhile day, thank you**

**Event was excellent; workshops informative and relevant**

**All great!! Thank you for this opportunity!! Fran was very inspiring!**

**It was ideal for me as a SEN Teaching Assistant. I wish there were more conferences like this organised. Thank you!**

[JANE – I HAVE PUT A FEW OTHER PHOTOS BELOW IN CASE YOU WISH TO USE THEM]

