

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

“OPENING DOORS” QUALITY STANDARD DEVELOPMENT

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To seek support on the use of the “Opening Doors” quality standard for access to services for disabled children and their families. This is a partnership initiative developed by North Lincolnshire Integrated Service for Disabled Children and Disabled Children and their Parents.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Disabled children and young people and their parents want to be actively involved in planning services for themselves and in the wider development of service provision for other disabled children and young people. They are particularly keen to be involved in removing barriers to accessing services.

2.2 Quality Standard Development.

Professionals from within the Integrated Service for Disabled Children have worked on the “Opening Doors” project in partnership with the Parents’ Involvement & Participation Group (PIP) and representatives from Leisure Services to develop a Quality Standard and Mystery Shopper Framework. This Framework is a tool to assess and audit access to services by disabled children and young people and would become an integral component of our inclusion agenda. This type of audit constructively and positively involves disabled children and young people and their parents in evaluating services and provision. The audit tool is based upon the requirements and principles set out in the Equality Act 2010.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The ‘Opening Doors’ Standard is a pioneering project in the North Lincolnshire area and has already gained the interest and support of the Council for Disabled Children. The standard will recognise and highlight issues that disabled children and young people face in their everyday lives and will help them to make a more informed choice as to which services they use. The standard will highlight access for disabled children and young people in three key areas:

1. Facilities – The provision of facilities such as an accessible toilet and changing facilities, induction loop, hoist, etc.
2. Access – How easily accessible a service is, based on ease of access through the use of electronic/push button doors, access ramps, lifts and signage, etc.
3. Staff awareness – The awareness that staff have of different disabilities, how they support disabled people and the training staff have received.

3.2 It is proposed that the Opening Doors Standard will be awarded as Gold, Silver or Bronze dependent upon set criteria, which will take the form of an evaluation. During the development phase of the project the draft standard has been tested in a small number of settings by disabled young people and amended to take account of their views. The young peoples evaluations were also positively received by the settings and some actions followed up to make improvements. This has been very positive and constructive.

3.3 Criteria

An award is to be given depending upon the outcome of an initial evaluation undertaken by a mystery shopper (disabled child or young person with support) The bronze criteria is set in accordance with guidance from the Equality Act 2010 and will be the benchmark for the standard being awarded. The Silver and Gold Standard will be awarded based on additional criteria to be agreed in consultation with North Lincolnshire Council and external agencies. Criteria will be made publicly available to maintain transparency. Awarding the standard in 3 tiers will give clear steps for improvement if anything other than gold is achieved.

3.4 Mystery Shoppers

The Mystery Shoppers for this project will be disabled young people of transition age (14 to 19). They will be recruited and supported through Voluntary Action North Lincolnshire (VANL). In consultation with North Lincolnshire Council's Integrated Service for Disabled Children, VANL will produce a programme of training and learning opportunities that the mystery shoppers will have access to in order to equip them with an understanding of all aspects of the standard and for the kitemark to run productively and efficiently.

The skills and knowledge gained by each of the mystery shoppers participating in the project will have a positive impact on their future work related experience and employment potential helping close the gap between them and their non-disabled peers. The progression of mystery shoppers in to employment or other learning experiences will be recorded by VANL. Mystery Shoppers will visit unannounced where possible. An evaluation will then take place in consultation with the supporting agency to assess the level of the standard to be awarded. Feedback and guidance on how to progress to a higher level award will be given to any evaluated service which will be given the option to sign up to the standard.

The Mystery Shoppers will also act as the first 'young peoples' panel'. They will be asked their views on issues affecting them in their everyday lives and their opinions and suggestions on services and provisions available to them.

3.5 Reward and Recognition

It is proposed that the project is launched in the public domain to raise awareness and also to celebrate the achievement where services have been awarded the standard. A handbook/web page of services will be developed containing information on all services that have achieved the standard. The standard awarded can be displayed much like the food hygiene star award.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 The development of the standard will support inclusion and enable disabled child and young people to make a real difference to the environment and services they access.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 Sustainability

For the sustainability of the standard it is proposed that the responsibility will be handed to the agency used to recruit and support Mystery Shoppers who will be already involved in providing training and support for the standard project.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

6.1 This project will contribute toward our statutory duties toward disabled children and young people.

6.2 An integrated impact assessment has been undertaken in relation to this report and any issues identified have been addressed.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 Partners from across the Children's Trust and parents / carers / disabled children and young people have been consulted.

7.2 Young People's Views: The disabled children and young people involved in the quality standard development have 'tested' this in some settings with positive / constructive results. They are keen to develop this further.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That Cabinet support the development of the 'Opening Doors' Quality Standard and endorses it for all council buildings.

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None