

## Joint NatSIP/HoSS Event 04/02/21

### Back to the Future – lessons learned

Session 5 Working Groups: Lessons learned from practice during the pandemic – what might we retain.

#### Vision Impairment

There have been a wide range of new approaches which services have used to maintain support to children and young people, their families and their educational settings/schools. In an open discussion the group discussed what had been provided by their services or by the individual that they may want to continue/retain/modify in the future model of delivery.

- **Apprehension/Fears overcome** about using online communications because everyone was using it and there was peer-to-peer support. Although there are always sometimes difficulties with technology there was a great deal more flexibility of thought about how it could be used in the future.
- **Increased technology skills** A number of people referenced the improvement in the technology skills within their teams. It was noted there should be digital champion/training to support peripatetic staff in these new approaches. Some services have access to this, but this is not the case for all. Technology support for staff is important to access for this new way of working.
- **Individual online sessions** with children and young people had been successful and could continue to provide opportunities for a range of work which would be time efficient (the saving on time travelling was noted). Although this would need to be balanced with activities that needed to be delivered face-to-face.
- **Programmes of intervention** provided online for older pupils and college students at home by QTVIs and Habilitation specialists were successful in supporting increased independence. This would be a useful way to support the development of skills in the future.
- **Online group sessions with children** and young people had been very positive. This has included singing sessions, music therapy and sensory stories. This possibility of bringing together children from different locations/schools to meet as a VI group has great future possibilities, as it is often difficult to organise when travel distances are significant. This could have the possibility of groups for approaches such as Think Right Feel Good to take place online.
- **Online group sessions with parents** these included Early Years Groups and Virtual Coffee Mornings for families. A good way forward as more families joined. There was a suggestion that with live meetings in the future these could be blended to include those attending virtually.
- **Virtual sessions with individual parents** had brought closer contact between the QTVI and parents, particularly where children were of school age and primarily services had been delivered in school. It would be beneficial to maintain this contact in this way.

- **Using the evenings** to contact parents online had also been successful and could continue where families are difficult to contact during the daytime.
- **Delivering training online** – live training online has proved to be very effective with good numbers attending. Some schools have preferred this offer. This will be an effective way to meet needs in the future particularly if attendees have to travel to attend. Some training has taken place in the evening as online there is more flexibility. Some had found that recorded online training was less effective although others had followed recorded training with a live Q&A session which was very successful.
- **TA Network Meetings online** – these were very successful online with greater attendance, due to no travel time, and this will be used in the future.
- **Meetings online** had proved very successful and had better attendance. Where a range of professionals were involved, they were easier to organise and attend. The saving on travel time was noted as a positive feature and it was found that difficult to reach professionals were more likely to attend. However, they may need to be balanced with live meetings when required.
- **Annual Reviews online** have generally been successful and time efficient. This would be a good approach to be supported in the future particularly for Annual Reviews for learners at schools which are out of the county.
- **Working from home.** Previously in some services this seen as a privilege which had to be specifically requested, whereas now working from home is seen as a very productive way of working and there would be a different attitude to this approach, although it would need to be balanced with working from their base.
- **Informal staff meetings online** were used to provide support within the team during this time and enable staff to maintain contact with other members of the team. Although it was felt that peripatetic working could be quite isolating and so meeting up with other staff would be essential to support wellbeing.
- **Training within the VI team** has been easier to organise online but it misses the hands-on elements.
- **National events online** – some commented that they were able to attend national events such as NatSIP as they were online whereas normally this would not be possible.
- **Walking Supervision** had been introduced by one service, whilst another had had this in place for some time. This was found to be more supportive for wellbeing than an online meeting and had the advantage of being able to take place socially distanced. This was a development to take forward/continue.

It was generally felt that there were a great number of positives from the new approaches to take forward as they were very supportive of learning. However, it was felt that online support does not always replace benefits of face-to-face teaching. One QTVI explained the challenges of teaching long division in Braille online. This experience was daunting but successful. It would have been easier if both QTVI and learner had been in a classroom together.

Services were asked to consider which aspects of their current approaches were successful and they would continue to provide in the future.