



Message from Wendy Burt, Coordinator at Essex Carers Network:

Hello, following the Direct Payment workshop I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce you to the Essex Carers Network we are a network of families who care for a family member with a learning disability who may have autism too. Having said that if there are families out there whose family member has a different disability and they find what we do and share beneficial they are more than welcome to join us. However, our experience and expertise is with learning disability and autism.

This is what we want people to know and think of about the Essex Carers Network (ECN) and what drives and informs the work we do:

- ECN is a recognised and well-established voice of families in Essex caring for a family member with a learning disability and autism.
- ECN work to ensure the lived experiences and voices of our families informs and influences the future landscape and opportunities for people with a learning disability and autism and their families in Essex.
- ECN work to support families to have the tools they need to feel strong, resilient and empowered in order to advocate for their family.

An area of our work which may be of interest to some of the families who were at the meeting yesterday is our Thinking Ahead family to family program of work.

Thinking Ahead is a guide to support families in talking about, and planning for, the future, we are pleased to say our team of trained family to family facilitators, who are all family carers themselves will soon be running a series of bite sized workshops across Essex for our families. The workshops will cover things like:

- Making plans for the future in a person centred way
- Making a plan for emergencies
- Housing and support
- Building friendships and support networks

- Making decisions
- Talking about difficult subjects
- making financial plans.

If you would like to find out more about the guide have a look at the website www.togetharmatters.org.uk/planning-the-future There is also a companion guide, I'm Thinking Ahead, to help young people and adults be included in the conversations.

If you are interested in attending some of the workshops please get in touch with us info@essexcarersnetwork.co.uk this is fully funded by ECC so there is no cost to families who attend the workshops. As you may expect at the moment these have to be online sessions but we hope in the future to run in person sessions.

Here is a quote from one of our family to family facilitators at the end of the training:

“This whole programme has been a real ‘refresher’ for me with my own family and reminds me that some of the best advice/help throughout our son’s life has been from other families who have trodden the same path. The material in Thinking Ahead is very clear and can be used according to the needs of the family, flexibly and tailored to each individual’s priorities. I think it will enable families to start thinking about the next steps and to have those difficult conversations and begin to make some dreams and aspirations come true before there is a ‘crisis’ and so much else to deal with.”

If you would like to be added to our mailing list please drop me an email, I promise we don't send lots of emails we try to only send through items that will be of interest to our families. We can also share with you dates of our meetings and up and coming webinars.

Warmest regards

Wendy



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