

Recognising parents as partners

Sioned Williams: My name is Sioned Williams, and I decided to be part of the 100 Stories project because I think it is very important, as a parent, that we can share our experiences and our aspirations.

I'm a mother of a young person. I'm a very lucky mother of a 14-year-old who has a learning disability. He is my teacher. He is the one who teaches me in life, and we have a lot of fun. I'm very proud of him and what he has achieved in his life so far.

Interviewer: As part of the story, what is important to you as an individual, and why is this important to you as an individual?

I think what is important to me as an individual is that it is important that the voice is heard as a parent.

I think that very often, as parents, we are seen as people who perhaps are a pain. But what people don't really appreciate, I feel, is that we have so much expertise. I've dealt with health, I've dealt with education, I've dealt with social services. We have so much information, and I don't feel we are always respected for the information we have.

I don't want to be negative. I don't want to be critical. But what I want is recognition. I want to see co-production happen from the very beginning, not down the line. I want it from the beginning. I am very keen to be part of the developments, the development of future services. I have so much information I can offer, and ideas too.

I think we should just be respected for who we are and have our concerns recognised as parents, and not just be seen as the people who are a pain and complain. We are obviously passionate about our children. I am passionate about seeing our services develop into the future for the benefit of young people and adults with learning disabilities in North Wales.

Interviewer: So, if we look ahead two years - this project is finished, the authorities and the people who make decisions have agreed that things need to change - what would you like to see in two years' time that is different to what is there today?

Sioned Williams: That we are included. That our voice is heard. That we are counted as the professionals we should be counted as from the beginning, with the sea of information we have.

That we are passionate, not just to be negative but also to be positive, and to look at how we can improve services for young people, children and adults with learning disabilities in North Wales.

That we are a part of it from the very beginning. There is a lot of talk of co-production happening, but unfortunately for me, as a parent, it is still a 'tick-box exercise' in my

mind. We're still not there. We're still not being recognised as we should be. I think there is a lot more room for improvement in terms of involving parents from the start, with the information they have about their children, young people or adults, and that we are recognised as the professionals we should be, I feel, in terms of the knowledge we have.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the 100 Stories programme has been an effective way of doing this?

Sioned Williams: I think it's important for people to hear stories. It's easy to say things are working when it's clearly still not working. I think it's important that there are people like me who are parents, who want to see improvement and want to see things... You know, I'm not all negative. There are good things happening out there, but there is always room for improvement.

As a parent, I have felt more than once that no one talks to me about my experiences and the knowledge that I have, and what I can offer.

I feel a little bit like, well, we've asked one question or whatever, you know, it's a 'tick box' and that's it, move on. I want to see more working closely with me as a parent. And this is not just for education. It is all across the board. It is for education, health and social services. I think if there is more co-production, we could offer quite creative ideas in terms of ways to develop services that benefit the people we support. I think it would be good if we could be part of it. We have something to say. That's what it is, isn't it?

We have something to say and we have something to offer. I think there needs to be more recognition for parents like me, and not to be seen as someone who is a pain in the side.

I want to be recognised that I have the knowledge and that I have the passion to improve.