

Celebrating Difference: Bridging the Divide

Parent-led training shaped by lived experience



What is the project

Celebrating Difference: Bridging the Divide is a parent-led training project to help professionals better understand and support children with additional learning needs (ALN) and neurodivergence.

The training was developed by **Voices4Bettws** in Newport and puts parents' lived experience at the centre.

With support from **Save the Children Cymru** and **Children in Wales**, and funding from the Welsh Government, the project was expanded to **Bridgend**, **Merthyr Tydfil** and **Rhondda Cynon Taff**.



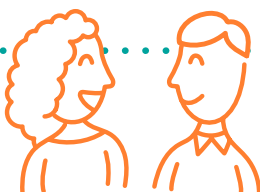
Why it is needed

The training creates a safe, compassionate and stigma-free space for honest conversations communication between parents and professionals.

Families can experience a gap between professionals' understanding and the reality of their child's needs.

Bias and stigma can create barriers to understanding and support.

How does it work?



Parents who are **'experts by experience'** are supported to become lived experience practitioners.

These parents have real experience of raising children with ALN/ND, living in communities affected by poverty and trying to get the right support for their children.

A train-the-trainer model helps the programme grow within local communities.

Since expansion

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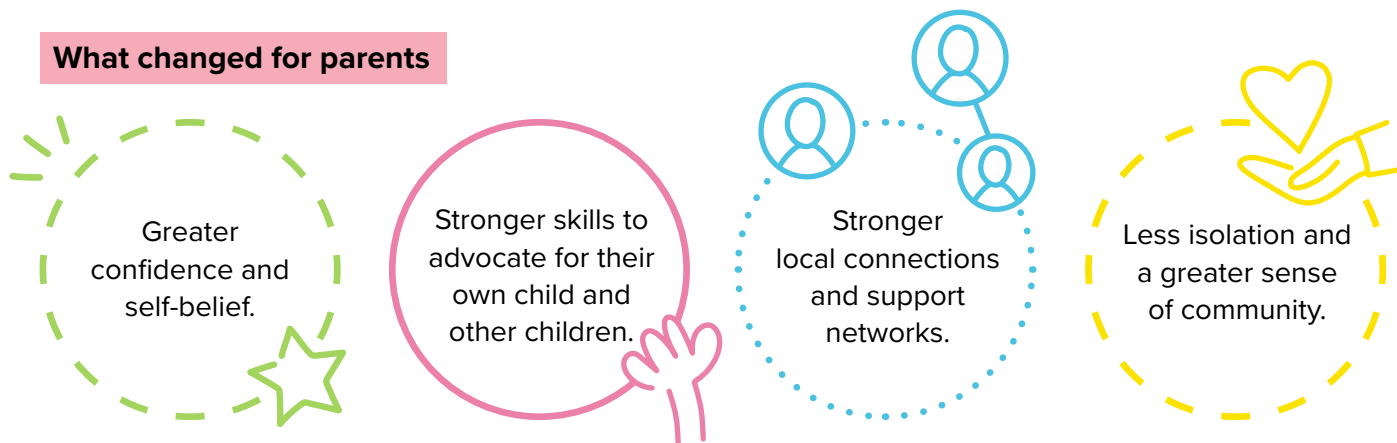
parents were involved in the project



20

parents completed the full training and became certified lived experience practitioners

What changed for parents



Parent voice



"I feel much more confident in speaking up for my child and empowered to deliver training. I've also made some lovely friends."

"A sense of community. Gained confidence to advocate for my child's needs and other children's needs."

"That even if I only manage to touch one person into understanding difference in a positive way. That I will have made a difference."

"People would now appreciate all the difficulties ALN children encounter every day."

Parents are 'experts by experience' in their own lives. By having their experiences at the heart of the programme, professionals can understand what children and families really need.

What changed for professionals

Professionals said the training increased their confidence, empathy and understanding of children with ALN and their families.

Professionals plan to listen more closely to children and parents, improve communication and provide more inclusive, rights-based support.

Supporting wider change

The train-the-trainer model is ready for wider rollout across Local Authorities.

An e-learning module has been co-produced to improve accessibility and extend the reach of the training.

A promotional video, podcast and resource suite have been developed to support future delivery.

Find out more

We would like to thank all of the parents who contributed their time to take part in this project.

To **find out more** about the 'Celebrating Difference' project and to view the full report, visit:- <https://www.childreninwales.org.uk/professionals/our-work/celebrating-difference-project/>