

The AHA Group

The AHA Group was set up during the academic year 2008/9 as a vehicle for consultation with students with disabilities – a requirement for the local Aiming High for Disabled Children project. Students were recruited from 4 local special schools and 1 college. I taught mainly in special schools when I was working in the classroom and had a remit for working with special schools for almost 20 years as an advisory teacher in the PSHE & Healthy Schools team. When that contract was not renewed, I was approached by what is now the Participation Team to devise strategies for consultation with children and young people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance about the services they receive. With support from the Participation Team I set up the AHA Group and organised and facilitated the group until the end of March 2013.

During those years the Group had a fluctuating membership of between 9 and 14 students, met at least 12 times a year, were given opportunities to express their opinions on a wide variety of topics and comment on a number of issues requested by other local agencies. I also worked with the respective School/College Councils to garner opinion from a wider range of students.

On several occasions but particularly during the consultation with the Office of the Children's Commissioner about the Children and Families Bill, they discussed feeling safe, bullying and behaviour in their schools/college and came up with realistic suggestions for improvements that could be made. It is these findings I would like to present to the Scrutiny Panel.

Ruth Hilton

