

# Survey of Parents and Carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Spring Term 2021

How Bristol's SEND Partnership is responding to what parent carers have told us.

## Introduction

The Written Statement of Action (WSOA) reached its final milestone in July 2021 and much has been achieved since the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) local area inspection in 2019. However, there is still a long way to go before Bristol's children and young people with SEND and their families have consistently good experiences of education, health and care. The new SEND Partnership Plan will continue to tackle the areas of weakness identified in the inspection. It also provides the opportunity to include other areas that were not highlighted in the inspection findings, but that parents and carers have told us are important to them.

In spring 2021 Bristol's SEND partnership ran its second annual survey for parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. The findings are detailed in the accompanying SEND Consultation Report [[hyperlink to report when published](#)]. In July, Bristol's Parent Carer Forum asked parent carers to tell them what their top three priorities are for children and young people with SEND and their families in Bristol. Similarly, over the summer, other parent/carer groups have shared with us their feedback about Bristol's SEND services and support. All this information is being used to help shape the new SEND Partnership Plan.

One City partners recognise the need to come together to improve inclusion and reduce inequality for all children in the city. Partners have worked with children and young people in the city to develop the new 'Belonging Strategy 2021-24' which launches autumn 2021. This document sets out the main themes from the recent feedback from parents and carers and outlines the actions that will be included in the SEND Partnership Plan. The Plan ensure SEND is firmly embedded in Bristol and it will sit across the four pillars of the Belonging Strategy:

- Belonging from the Beginning
- Belonging in Families
- Belonging in Education
- Belonging in the Community

## Parent Carer Priorities

### 1. Communication, engagement, and support for parents and carers

The SEND Partnership Plan will continue to focus on improving direct communication with individuals by making sure that it is timely, and that written communications (letters, emails, leaflets etc.) are easy to understand, helpful and accessible.

The Local Offer (LO) website will continue to be improved to make it easier to find information. The Local Offer Development Plan will be shared with parents and carers, young people, and partners during autumn 2021 to agree the priorities and establish how best to co-produce the improvements. These include reorganising the content of the website and creating a glossary of terms that will also be used to improve the search function.

Bristol City Council (BCC) and its partners will improve the ways that we ask families for feedback and to work with us in co-production. The aim is to co-ordinate engagement and co-production across the partnership so that families are not asked to take part in these activities by lots of different services at different times, and the results are used by more than one service. We plan to get better at publicising co-production opportunities using social media, parent/carers networks and by contacting people who have said they would like to be involved.

During the last year, the range of support offered to parents and carers has grown to include things like 'wellbeing webinars' and FLORA (Families, Local Offer Resources and Advice) the new team that parents and carers can phone or email for information or advice about early support for their child's additional needs (phone FLORA on 0117 352 6020, or email [flora@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:flora@bristol.gov.uk)).

Families have told us that they want more direct support like advice clinics, respite services, supportive networks of peer parents and knowing who to phone for help in a crisis, for instance when their child is behaving aggressively.

We are developing new community Family Hubs which will bring together different services (health, education and social care) in one place. The SEND Partnership

Plan will look at ways to make sure it is easier for parents and carers to find out about the support available and to access it locally.

## 2. Education

Parents and carers have told us they want:

- their children's schools to listen to them and be better at communicating
- mainstream schools to have the appropriate training and support to be able to identify and understand all types of SEND and to make support more meaningful and child centred
- more funding and resources for SEN in schools
- schools to be more accountable for making provision that meets their children's needs and helping them to achieve their full potential
- better support for children who attend mainstream schools, so they do not feel left out, and are included in wider school life such as school trips, after school clubs and team sports
- their children not to be bullied in school
- schools to stop excluding children with SEND and not leave children on part-time timetables without good reason and regular reviews
- enough special schools and specialist places to enable every child who needs specialist provision to have a place
- more options and support for alternatives to full time school
- more options and provision for post-16 young people with SEND

During the last year, the training and support offer for school staff has greatly improved and extended. This work is ongoing and will continue into the new Plan.

Mainstream schools have been issued with guidance about what should be 'ordinarily available' to pupils with SEND, and work is planned to co-produce a version of this guidance for parents and carers.

There are large-scale work programmes underway to increase the number and range of specialist provision places and to improve the way we use alternative provision.

The SEND Partnership Plan will be embedded in the 'Belonging in Education' pillar of the Belonging Strategy and will focus on working with schools to improve inclusion for all children and young people and reduce exclusions.

It is recognised nationally that there is not enough funding in the SEND system. BCC has increased funding for SEND and is continually working with its partners to ensure that we are making the best use of limited resources.

### 3. Health

Bristol's health partners are working on a range of ways to improve health services for children and young people. The aim is to improve access and reduce waiting times by simplifying the pathways to different health specialists and services. This includes being able to access support and services without the need for a diagnosis.

Children's mental health will continue to be a major focus in the new SEND Partnership Plan. Actions include training and resources for school staff to identify and support children and young people's wellbeing and mental health needs at the earliest point to help reduce the risk of children reaching crisis point and needing long-term interventions.

### 4. Education Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans)

Since the SEND inspection BCC has increased the size of the statutory SEND team which has also been restructured to improve ways of working and increase capacity. All staff undertake a comprehensive training programme, including legal training. It is encouraging to note that far more parents and carers going through the statutory process in the last year (2021) report a positive experience, including 26 per cent rating their child's education, health and care (EHC) plan as excellent, compared to just 5 per cent in 2020.

Significant improvements have been made in the timeliness of new EHC plans being issued, despite an ongoing increase in requests for Needs Assessments. However, this still falls short of where we want it to be and means too many children and young people are still waiting too long for an EHC plan.

A complex programme of work is underway to completely overhaul statutory systems and processes. A new EHC plan template has been co-produced with parents and carers, and the supporting processes have all been reviewed to ensure the child and family's voice is central to the process, and that provision is needs led. This should lead to consistently good quality plans.

The development of an electronic system for professionals to add their contributions to the Needs Assessment will eventually lead to a new online 'Parent Portal' enabling parents and carers to follow the progress of their child's assessment and view their child's EHC plan, once completed.

### 5. Transition to Adulthood

The parents and carers top three priorities also identified the need for an improved support for the transition to adulthood:

*“There is a lack of information, guidance, and timely support for young people and their families around navigating the move from children's services to adult services - every parent seems to have to research everything from scratch.”*

The SEND Partnership Plan will have a focus area on ‘transition to adulthood’ that will include actions relating to:

- developing independent living skills from the earliest age
- sporting and leisure activities for young adults with SEND
- guidance, policies and protocols for working with the families of young adults (post-18) with SEND
- transition support from children’s services to adult services (health, education, and social care)
- education, employment and training for Post-16 SEND young people
- specific focus on 18-25 young adults with SEND

## 6. Community Inclusion

The council and its partners have inclusion at the heart of our thinking and planning and it is no surprise that parents and carers have told us they want:

*“Inclusion of SEND kids in the community, not segregation”*

This theme will be embedded in the ‘Belonging in the Community’ pillar of the new Belonging Strategy and the SEND Partnership Plan will ensure we focus on the following priorities:

- accessible and inclusive clubs, leisure and play activities
- support during school holidays
- normalising neurodiversity – celebrating and recognising the value and strengths of the different ways our brains work
- creating a disability friendly city