



**NHS**  
Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire  
Clinical Commissioning Groups

# How parents and carers have shaped Bristol Local Area's Written Statement of Action

for children and young people  
with Special Educational Needs  
and Disability, aged 0-25

May 2020

**You Said  
- We Did**

# Bristol's Written Statement of Action

## – You Said We Did

### What is a Written Statement of Action (WSOA)?

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) carry out inspections of Local Areas to check how well health, education and social care identify and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

If the inspection finds 'significant concerns', the Local Area has to produce a 'Written Statement of Action' (WSOA) that explains how the areas of weakness will be tackled.

The Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England then visit the Local Area every 3 months to check on progress and report back to Ofsted and CQC.

The Local Area will have a full re-visit about 18 months after the inspection to see how effectively local leaders have addressed the serious weaknesses set out in the Written Statement of Action.

### Bristol's Written Statement of Action (WSOA)

Bristol's SEND inspection took place between the 30<sup>th</sup> of September and 4<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and the inspection findings were detailed in a letter published by Ofsted in December 2019.

The letter sets out the Local Area's strengths and areas for development, and identifies five areas of significant concern requiring the production of a 'Written Statement of Action' (WSOA) which had to be submitted to Ofsted for approval before the end of March 2020.

We had already started to tackle many of the areas of weakness and the WSOA is the document that helps us to bring all the improvement activity together and make sure health, education and care partners across Bristol are joined up and working really well with each other, and with parents and carers, towards the same goals.

We wanted to make sure that parents' and carers' views and ideas shape our WSOA so, between December 2019 and the end of February 2020, managers from health and the council met with groups of parents and carers to find out what is most important to you. We want to thank you all for taking the time to work with us. Your feedback has been used to make sure the actions set out in the WSOA are focused on the things that will make the most difference to children and young people and their families.

Bristol's WSOA was approved by Ofsted at the end of March and has been published here <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/written-statement-of-action>

This 'You Said, We Did' report brings together the parent and carer feedback in one place and explains how we have responded to that in the WSOA.

## The Areas of Significant Concern in the Inspection Report

This means that inspectors found that the leaders of the council, health and schools were not working together as well as they should be to make sure each organisation is doing their very best for children and young people with SEND.

### a. Inspectors found a lack of accountability of leaders at all levels, including school leaders

#### Parents and Carers agreed with the inspectors. This is what you have told us...

You told us that we need to make sure we have a much better understanding about our SEND population and how well services are meeting the needs of all Bristol's children and young people with SEND because:

- You feel that the council hasn't been honest in the way it has reported data in the past
- You don't feel that the council and its partners really understand the needs of specific community groups, such as the BAME community, and therefore are not good at planning for and responding to your needs
- You don't feel the council and its partners, including schools, understand how to make sure there is the right range of support and provision to meet the needs of children and young people with different conditions

You told us that we need to be really clear and honest about how decisions are made and how SEND funding is spent by the council and by schools because:

- You are not always clear what a school should be providing and whether the school or you should apply for an Education Health Care Plan (EHC Plan)
- Schools sometimes tell you they haven't got enough money to meet your child's needs, even if your child does have an EHC Plan

You told us that you want leaders to be more visible and that we need to make sure you have easy ways to let the leaders of the council, health services and schools know when you are not happy about something because:

- You want council leaders to talk to you directly, for instance by going to your parent carer meetings
- You don't want to have to make a formal complaint just to get something done
- You're not sure who to talk to when you feel a school is not treating your child fairly, or doing what they should be to meet your child's needs

You told us that we need to make sure that your views make a difference. When you tell us about something that is going wrong, or isn't available, leaders must make sure that the people running the services take the right action to make things better because:

- You feel that, all too often we don't take any notice of your feedback and it feels like it has taken an inspection to make us take any action
- When you do make a formal complaint, you want it responded to quickly, your complaint taken seriously and action taken promptly

## What we have said we will do in the Written Statement of Action

We are:

- Ensuring co-production is sustained and front and centre of everything we do
- Reviewing boards and structures to make sure the right people (including parents and carers) are involved at different levels of decision making, and we have simple and clear systems in place to hold leaders to account
- Making sure that we have reliable data and performance information that is shared with partners, as well as parents and carers, and used to jointly develop better services and provision to meet needs
- Providing parents and carers with easy to find, clear and honest information about how well services are doing and what you have said about them

So that:

Where things aren't going well, we work together with parents and carers to find out what needs to change and how we can improve, so children and young people with SEND have the right, good quality services at the right time.

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### **b. Inspectors found inconsistencies in the timeliness and effectiveness of the local area's arrangements for the identification and assessment of children and young people with SEND**

This means that professionals working with children, do not always understand how to recognise early on when a child might have a special educational need or disability and what they should do next where needs are identified.

#### **Parents and Carers agreed with the inspectors. This is what you have told us...**

You told us that professionals need to listen to parents and respond quickly when you tell us that you think your child has a special educational need, because:

- Some of you had to keep on 'shouting' before you got any support for your child
- You are worried about the children of parents and carers who don't have the time or energy to 'shout' and may not get the support their children need
- You feel that too many children struggle for years in school before they get the support they need, and by then it is too late for many to make up the learning time they have lost

You told us that professionals need to work better together and share information, because

- You have to knock on too many doors and explain the same things over and over again to different people
- Some of you have waited a long time to see a professional, such as a community paediatrician, for their assessment of your child, and when you did see them some of you were frustrated that they simply referred your child to another organisation and the waiting began again

You told us that all assessments need to be of high quality so that they lead to a good quality plan, but:

- Some of you feel that your child's assessment was not fit for purpose and did not help others to make sure the right support is put in place to meet your child's needs
- Some of you have felt the need to pay for your own assessments

### What we have said we will do in the Written Statement of Action

We are:

- Providing more guidance and training to all staff in health, schools and the council's education and children's services about the SEND Code of Practice, including how to undertake a child and parent carer centred assessment and who to involve
- Making sure information is shared appropriately with all the right professionals, for instance when Health Visitors identify a very young child has needs that may require an assessment
- Making sure professionals understand each other's roles and know how to get the right help at the right time from other services for the children and young people they are working with
- Doing all we can to reduce the time it takes to see professionals, for instance community paediatricians
- Improving the timeliness of response to requests for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments
- Doing research across the partnership to understand more about black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), SEND population so that we can make sure services and support meet their needs and there is better access and take up of early intervention.
- Working with parent carers and young people to improve the Local Offer and set up ways for all parent carers and young people to have easy access to clear information that helps them understand the Bristol's SEND Local Offer and find the right support

So that:

Children and young people with disabilities and those with special educational needs, are identified as early as possible; their needs swiftly and accurately assessed and they receive the best possible, appropriate and effective support and provision at the right time.

### **c. Inspectors found a dysfunctional EHC plan process, and inadequate quality of EHC plans**

This means that the council has not been processing requests for EHC Plans properly. The EHC Plan process must comply with the legal framework set by government and the guidance in the SEND Code of Practice. The council's approach has not been compliant, particularly in not meeting the 20 week maximum for issuing EHC Plans.

#### **Parents and Carers agreed with the inspectors. This is what you have told us...**

You told us that you just want to receive the EHC Plan on time and be kept informed of progress.

- You expect us to be compliant with the SEND Code of Practice
- You expect to receive a prompt and helpful response when you contact the SEND team
- You want to be able to get through to the team by phone
- You want better support and direct communication from SEND caseworkers
- You want to be able to understand the process and where you are in the process
- You want to be confident that all staff in the SEND team understand the legal framework and know what they are doing

You told us that you want the quality of EHC Needs Assessments and Plans to be much higher, because:

- EHC Plans are not always co-produced with parents, carers or the child or young person from the outset and often do not make their views and aspirations clear, or take these into account
- Too many plans are not clear enough and do not help education settings to put the right provision in place to meet the needs of the child or young person
- Provision in the EHC Plans isn't always specific or quantified
- The way that Bristol's EHC Plans are set out is unhelpful and outcomes are not always specific, making it difficult to know if they are making a difference

You told us that you want Annual Reviews of EHC Plans to be on time and of better quality, because:

- Too many annual reviews are not taking place on time, meaning that the content of some EHC Plans is out of date as the current plan does not take account of children's development and changing needs
- Annual reviews do not always check that the provision in the EHC Plan has helped the child or young person to reach stated goals and outcomes
- Annual reviews do not always check that the goals and outcomes in the EHC Plan are still the right ones
- Where EHC Plans are amended following a review, the new ECH Plan is not always clear about what has changed and why.

## What we have said we will do in the Written Statement of Action

We have:

- Increased the capacity of the SEND team by appointing more than 20 additional staff in January and February and providing legal and professional training for all
- Restructured the SEND team to create up a dedicated assessment team and area casework teams to ensure staff develop expertise and can focus on specific aspects of EHC processes
- Put in place a new telephony system to make sure parents can get through to the team and calls and messages are answered promptly

We are:

- Further increasing capacity by appointing more Educational Psychologists
- Making better use of data to manage workflow and performance
- Reviewing all policies and procedures to ensure all our statutory work is compliant
- Ensuring SEND staff make regular contact with parents and carers throughout the Needs Assessment process to improve co-production and ensure you know who to contact with any questions
- Working with health, care and education colleagues to improve the speed and quality of assessment and plan contributions
- Putting in place quality assurance processes, for instance EHC Plan audits

We are planning a programme of co-production with parents and carers to ensure:

- Our letters are clear and helpful
- Our processes are simple to understand and child and family centred
- Our ECH plans are set out in a more helpful way and easy for all to understand
- Parent carers have good quality, helpful and clear information about the EHC Plan process so they know what to expect

So that:

We have enough staff with the right skills and training to provide a good quality service in partnership with parents and carers

The timeliness for all new needs assessment requests improves rapidly; assessment and plans are of high quality and improvement is sustained.

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#### **d. Inspectors found underachievement and lack of inclusion of children and young people with SEND, including the high rates of persistent absenteeism and fixed-term exclusions**

This means that leaders across the local area have not been working well enough together to make sure that children and young people with SEND are made to feel welcome and are supported to access learning, wherever they are educated, enabling them to achieve their full potential.

#### **Parents and Carers agreed with the inspectors. This is what you have told us...**

You told us that your experience of SENDCos is mixed:

- Some SENDCos are wonderful, but you feel that some do not seem to have enough experience or time to do their job properly
- Some of you feel that the SENDCo in your school does not have enough influence over decision making in the school

You told us that some of your children have experienced poor support in education settings:

- Parents and carers told us that their children were very well supported in their Early Years setting, but all this support ended when they started school and your child had to wait for the school to put support in place
- Some of you have moved your children from school to school until you found a school where they did not feel left out or were made to feel different to the other pupils
- Some of you talked about children being sent home or being excluded from activities as a punishment for 'bad behaviour' but not given the support they need in the classroom to help with their learning
- Some of you do not understand what the Bristol Support Plan is for, or do not think that having a support plan is making any difference to your child
- You are concerned that your child's school no longer has a school nurse as they were really valued in schools and provided advice and support to both parents and pupils
- Some of you want your children to be in school, but have felt the need to take them out of school as you don't believe your child's needs were being met and /or you worry that your child's school is not able to keep them safe

You told us that you have waited too long for funding and specialist provision:

- Some of your children's schools say they don't have enough funding to meet your child's needs and that they can't get additional funding from the council
- Some of you have been told that your child needs specialist provision but there isn't a place, so they have to stay in their mainstream school

## What we have said we will do in the Written Statement of Action

We are:

- Working with our partners in education and health to make sure Bristol's Local Offer has better, joined up services that make a real difference to children and young people with SEND and their families and reduce the risk of them feeling, and being excluded.
- Working more closely with schools and other education settings to provide the right balance of training, support and challenge to make sure they are meeting the needs of all children and young people, including those with SEND, so that children of all ages and abilities can access their right to a good education and together we stop Bristol from being one the highest excluding areas in the country
- Providing the right level of advice and support to help schools and other education settings to make the best use of available resources to put in place the provision set out in an EHCP
- Making sure that Bristol has enough specialist provision for children and young people who need a specialist placement

So that children and young people with SEND:

- are fully included in their education setting and experience high quality teaching and learning that enables them to achieve their full potential
- are not excluded from taking part in activities that are ordinarily available to those who do not have SEND
- Children with SEND experience a continuity of support from Early Years to the end of reception year and all children are well supported to move from one setting to the next

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### **e. Inspectors found fractured relationships with parents and carers, lack of co-production and variable engagement and collaboration**

We know that we have a lot of work to do to gain your trust and confidence. We know that this cannot be achieved until you start to see real improvements in SEND processes and provision in Bristol and then see these improvements continue.

#### **Parents and Carers told us the same things that many of you told the inspectors...**

- You don't trust the council to do what it says because we haven't always followed through on promises made in the past
- You don't feel the council's culture is family friendly or child centred
- You are deeply frustrated by the years of issues with the EHC Plan process and feel the SEND system has let down you and your family
- You want greater clarity and transparency about everything to do with SEND

- You want us to start listening to you and acting on what you tell us
- We need to get much better at reaching out to, and communicating with, families from all backgrounds and communities
- You want to be able to share your views but many of you don't have time to get involved in co-production
- We need to make sure there is a much wider representation of communities from across Bristol when we are co-producing services

### What we have said we will do in the Written Statement of Action

- Professionals across the council and health will be trained to understand what co-production means and we will agree a co-production charter with parents and carers
- We will make sure we have a better understanding Bristol's diverse population and develop a wide range of ways to make sure all parent carers, who want to, can 'have their say' about SEND provision in Bristol as well as enabling those who want to work with us to co-produce Bristol's Local Offer
- We co-designed a survey with Bristol Parent Carers and young people and will publish the results this summer. This will be repeated this every six months to help us to monitor progress on our areas for improvement
- We are co-producing the Local Offer website with children, young people, parents and carers in order to ensure information is clear, comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date

**So that parents and carers have a positive experience of the SEND system in Bristol, can see that the Local Area partnership is committed to working with you, and your confidence in the system improves.**



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