



**Memorandum of Understanding between:**  
**Bristol City Council (BCC),**  
**Bristol Parent Carers (BPC) and the**  
**Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire**  
**Integrated Care Board (ICB)**

**Date of agreement: 21.10.2024**



## 1. Our Partnership

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We want Bristol to be a city where children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND) and their families can thrive, with access to the support they need at the time and in the way they need it. Our three organisations are key strategic partners in achieving this along with others in the voluntary and community sector and none of us can achieve it alone.

As set out in our Co-production Charter which underpins our work, together we will shape and enhance local services, processes and system to ensure better long-term outcomes for children and young people with SEND across Bristol.

We want co-production to be embedded in our culture. The purpose of this MoU is to provide a statement of intent to work collaboratively together, to set out the parties' intentions and expectations for co-production and to detail how we will enact the promise and commitment made in the Charter.

## 2. Shared Principles

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Our collaboration is rooted in legislation and guidance about involving children, young people and families in decision making. We are committed to upholding the principles of the SEND Code of Practice 2014, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We are committed to working in equal partnership to improve local services for children and young people with SEND and their parent carers.

We know that working well with each other across the local area and actively listening to children, young people and families, is the best way to achieve high quality services that deliver better outcomes and create a brighter and more inclusive future.

We recognise that by prioritising communication, collaboration, confidence, and care, we build a culture of mutual empowerment.

## 3. Partners

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Bristol City Council and the Integrated Care Board are responsible for leading SEND services locally working with our partners. We recognise the importance of working together across our city to achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people with SEND and their families. Our children and young people told us that they:

- have the same hopes and aspirations for their future as all children and young people
- experience many of the same challenges and struggles as other children and young people
- want and have the right to the same opportunities in their lives.'

We are committed to delivering their vision, together.

Bristol Parent Carers is a charity based in Bristol, run by parent carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who either live in Bristol or go to a school in Bristol. As a disability charity, we provide information and support to all families, regardless of their child's type of need or diagnosis status. We work with local SEND services across education, health and social care to ensure that the support and services they offer suits the needs of local families.

NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board is responsible for the day-to-day running of the NHS for our local area. We give consideration to our local population's needs and arrange for the provision of services, as well as managing the NHS budget for our area.

## 4. How We Will Work Together

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**Respect** – We are dedicated to forging a strong partnership aimed at achieving positive outcomes for all members of our community. We value honesty and transparency in all our interactions. We will collectively celebrate our successes whilst also tackling our challenges together. When we disagree, we will do so with respect, openness and honesty so that solutions and ways forward can be found, prioritising the needs of families, children and young people.

**Power** – BCC and the ICB commit to fostering an environment where all interactions with BPC are guided by an awareness of potential power imbalances between stakeholders. We understand that as statutory bodies we might unintentionally dominate discussions and decisions. It's important for us to acknowledge and address this to ensure that everyone's voice is respected equally. By being open, respectful, and mindful of these dynamics, we aim to build a collaborative partnership that values the input of all stakeholders.

**Communication** – Good communication is the foundation of a good relationship. We agree to be kind, respectful, clear and honest in our communication, actively sharing timely and relevant information with each other and keeping an open dialogue.

**Doing with, not doing for** – We understand the difference between co-production, co-design, engagement, consultation and information. We commit to upholding the local area commitment to 'doing with' rather than 'doing for,' parent carers, ensuring that families are active participants in decision-making processes from the outset. This approach appreciates and includes the unique perspectives and contributions of parent carers, promoting genuine collaboration and mutual respect.

**Decision making** – Our approach includes reaching agreements that everyone supports, actively listening, compromising, and finding solutions that everyone can accept.

**Accessibility and representation** – We are collectively committed to making all communications and events accessible to ensure that every parent carer can participate. We will actively include parent carers from often overlooked communities in all co-production projects, ensuring barriers are removed to fully include and value their contributions. We respect different ways of communication and understand the diverse needs of individuals. We will share information well in advance of meetings to allow for proper preparation. This approach ensures that all parent carers can participate fully and meaningfully.

**Forward planning and clear expectations** – We will put in place co-production forward plans to manage this and share them well in advance to maximise effectiveness of joint working. We are all committed to identifying common areas of interest and working collaboratively. At the planning stage, BCC and the ICB will identify and include in their plan BPC co-production opportunities and communicate these so that BPC can plan for engagement work with the wider parent carer community.

**Working patterns** – Bristol Parent Carers employees, volunteers and parent carers more broadly, will only be available during school hours (09:30-14:30), during term time. All activities should be planned within these times, and project plans should be adjusted accordingly, to respect their time and their invaluable contributions. Where possible, work will be agreed at least one clear term in advance. The partners will hold a termly planning meeting to agree the forward plan for co-production and to remain proactive. This will be scheduled at the start of the term to discuss the term ahead, i.e. term 1 meeting to discuss term 2.

**External communications** – We agree to give fair warning and sight of any planned external communications about each other. Information intended for external sharing that references the other parties should be shared with the lead contacts at least five working days before publication. This includes information submitted to committee, DfE or other meetings. The use of each other’s logos on publications will always be agreed upon in advance and in line with each organisation’s own brand guidelines and internal processes for sign off, which should be no less than 2 weeks notice (unless urgent and agreed in advance)

**Information sharing** – All parties will share information about commissioning, service changes, policy developments, upcoming events, training sessions and any other matters relevant to SEND as soon as these are known and can be shared, and ideally before they are finalised. BCC and ICB will keep BPC updated about all relevant services, especially any gaps or changes in support, so BPC can advise their families as appropriate. Parties agree to communicate changes in senior staffing where it affects joint working and to share organisation charts and contact information wherever possible (abiding by GDPR and entering into separate data sharing agreements, or equivalent, wherever legally required). Each member of this Memorandum should put in place steps to ensure there is a cascade of key information agreed strategically throughout their organisations.

**Signposting** – All parties commit to signposting each other’s information where relevant and other signposting may also be included. Any existing information that has not been co-produced will be prioritised for development. All newly created information will be developed in alignment with the principles outlined in the Co-production Charter.

## What Should Be Co-Produced

Co-production will apply to any matters directly affecting parent carers. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Large transformation projects (e.g. service redesign, policy changes, or new initiatives impacting families).
- Changes to existing services that affect SEND provisions, support, or communication methods.
- Smaller operational changes, such as revisions to letters, forms, or processes that impact how parent carers interact with services.
- For actions where formal co-production is not necessary (such as information campaigns or direct communication with parent carers which has already been established), the Parent Carer Forum should still be informed in advance. This allows them to:
  - Plan for any potential knock-on effects in the parent carer community.
  - Ensure additional staff and capacity are available to manage any increased demand for support as a result of communications or actions taken by the LA or ICB.

This ensures that the Parent Carer Forum remains informed and prepared, even in instances where their direct input may not be required.

## 5. Confidentiality

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We agree to maintain strict confidentiality regarding any sensitive information shared during meetings, discussions, or through any other communication channels. This includes but is not limited to personal stories, identifiable data, strategic planning details, or any information which any partner confirms to be confidential.

Confidential information shall not be disclosed to external parties without explicit consent unless required by law. It is understood that confidentiality fosters trust and enables open dialogue, ensuring everyone feels safe and respected.

We will abide by our respective organisation's Code of Conduct and recognise and respect the other organisations' ways of working.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

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Our three organisations will hold ourselves to account through existing local area governance arrangements. The primary accountable officers (unless one party notifies the other parties of a change from time to time) are:

- Director of Children and Education, Bristol City Council
- Chair, Bristol Parent Carers
- Chief Nursing Officer and Senior Responsible Officer for SEND, BNSSG Integrated Care Board

We recognise that many of the people who work or volunteer in SEND across Bristol may also support family, friends, or peers through various aspects of their SEND journey. Statements made or actions carried out in an individual's personal capacity do not reflect the views of their organisation or affect their role in this partnership.

## 7. How We Will Know It's Working

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We will monitor this agreement with an annual review including feedback from all parties. This will be linked as much as possible with grant monitoring arrangements to ensure efficient ways of working.

We recognise that true co-production is taking place when all partners are all able to agree with the following statements:

- Concerns raised by parent carers are valued and addressed promptly
- The parent carer forum is funded in a sustainable way with capacity to engage with families and stakeholders consistently
- Regular evaluations and feedback loops assess the effectiveness of our co-production efforts
- I am an equal partner in the local area
- I am able to participate in every stage of the process
- My contributions are recognised and valued
- I receive clear information in a way that works for me
- I am open to new ways of working to achieve the best outcomes
- I am supported to participate meaningfully in co-production.

## 8. Term and Review

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This MoU commences on the date of signature by all three organisations and expires on written agreement. We will review it together at least annually and vary it by written agreement. This MoU is not intended to be legally binding.



### SIGNED BY

*Vik Verma*

**Vik Verma**

Director, Education & Skills,  
Bristol City Council

*Hayley Hemming*

**Hayley Hemming**

Chair, Bristol Parent Carers

*Rosi Shepherd*

**Rosi Shepherd**

Chief Nursing Officer and  
Senior Responsible Officer for SEND, BNSSG  
Integrated Care Board