

PARENT CARERS TOGETHER



Bournemouth Christchurch Poole

the voice of parent carers of young people with
special educational needs and disabilities

Parent Carers Together Representation on BCP (Bournemouth Christchurch Poole) SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Inspection by Ofsted

The SEND Local Area Inspection by Ofsted/CQC in July 2021 identified a broad range of failings that BCP Council needs to improve. Since then, Parent Carers Together representatives have been involved in a great deal of work resulting in the Written Statement of Action that was created by BCP Council in December 2021 in response to the areas of significant weakness that the inspection identified.

The Written Statement of Action identified **70** actions across **8** key areas for improvement, to be implemented over the next three years. Parent Carers Together representatives have been involved in meetings to progress these actions. Parent Carers Together also attends the quarterly meetings with the DFE (Department for Education) who are monitoring BCP Council's progress against this Written Statement of Action.

For information on the Written Statement click [HERE](#).

It is very important to discover whether all the work from the Written Statement of Action will have a positive effect on the lives of children and young people with SEND and their families. This is one of the many reasons why Parent Carers Together encourages all families with an interest in SEND to join us and make sure we hear your views on what is happening locally. If you are interested in this work, or any of the other boards and projects we are involved in, we will be recruiting additional representatives in September, please check our website and Facebook pages for updates.

Parent Carers Together Representation on Boards and Projects

Parent Carers Together supports parent representatives who speak up for the parents' and families' point of view at a wide range of board and project meetings with BCP Council and NHS Dorset. Parent representatives are not there to represent their own personal situations or advocate in the interest of their own children. They are there to work to ensure that the full range of children and young people's needs are being identified, provided for and their outcomes improved in line with national legislation and local plans.

We work to try and influence service developments so that they are of good quality, effective and efficient. Parent Carers Together parent reps do not champion one type of need or disability over another. However, some of the work we do does focus on one particular type of need or diagnosis.

Parent Carers Together sends representatives to the following meetings and working groups. Please do get in touch with us if you have concerns, information, or compliments

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about any of the following subject areas:

Alternative Provision

Autism in Schools Project

Learning Disabilities Partnership Board Asthma Pathway

Carers Action Group

Development & Behaviour Pathway

EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plans) workstreams

Health Action Group

Inclusion Workstreams

Joint Commissioning

Keeping Safe Action Group

Keyworker Project

Learning Disability Health Check Project

Local Offer Improvement – Health Section Local Offer – Children’s Social Care Section

Mental Health Projects

Positive Behaviour Support

Preparing for Adulthood Projects

SEND Health Forum

SEND Improvement Board

SENDiass Steering Group

Short Breaks Review

Speech, Language & Communication Needs

Where I Live Action Group

SEND Intelligence and Data Group

Aspire Adoption Strategic Partnership Board

Written Statement of Action Workstreams (WSoA):

-Culture

-Coproduction

-Identify, Assess and Meet Needs

-Joint Commissioning

We are always looking for volunteers to become parent reps, if you can spare 2-3 hours a month then please complete the application form on our website.

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Communications and Coproduction

This is a key area to successful improvements of SEND services in Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole.

We have highlighted to BCP Council and Dorset Health the importance of good communications and Coproduction. We have identified the following important themes:

1. Communication is a two-way process. It is not something that is done *to* parents but should be something in which they participate. If parent carers have swift and easy access to ask questions and give views, this also creates a useful feedback loop so that confusing communications are rapidly identified and changed. Openness to questioning and even challenge is beneficial in reducing parental suspicion and lack of trust. Listen to us at every stage and everything will become more collaborative, fruitful, and quicker to adapt.
2. Communication internally, within BCP Council and health services is just as important as external communication to parent carers. Time and again parents experience different services giving them different information, sometimes conflicting. Professionals should be more skilled in understanding the bigger picture within which they work, so that they can give accurate information and advice or at least direct to the correct place if they cannot. This is particularly true between different sectors, such as between social services and education, or between children's and adult services. Lack of communication in this way reads to parent carers as lack of caring.
3. It is vital that everyone uses the same language. Terms such as SEN Support should be correctly used so that everyone means the same thing. The parent of a child or young person with a learning disability may never have heard that term used. 'Learning difficulty', 'developmental delay', 'developmental trauma', and any number of other terms may have been used in the expectation that these are easier for parent carers to hear. But we need to be clear in order to access the correct services and support. Agreement about terminology at a basic level throughout BCP Council and health services is vital. Common training for in-house staff in different departments would help to ensure that language is shared. Alongside this, a clearer policy on the use of language would be very helpful. The web team have rules about sentence length, capitalisation, avoiding long paragraphs etc. Everyone should follow simple in-house guidelines when preparing communications. Many professionals are skilled in their field but not skilled communicators. They should have straightforward, rapid access to a team who can simplify what they are saying and give a consistent flavour to all communications. Too often parent carer groups commenting on material end up proofreading rather than being involved in true co-production of content. This should never be necessary.

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4. Communications **always** need to be made with a full and clear understanding of their intended recipients. Too often 'in-house' terminology and acronyms are used, or technical educational terms that are only relevant to professionals. This is not in opposition to point 3., above. It's not always easy for a professional to understand how their words sound to someone outside the profession. BCP Council and Health has access to Parent Carers Together and other parent groups who can say immediately how something will be viewed by some parents. Use them. More careful wording could avoid a great deal of anxiety and distrust.
5. Clear channels of communication need to be identified so that parent carers know where reliable information can be accessed or how they will individually receive it. Parent groups should not be expected to inform parent carers about services. None of them have 100% membership of relevant groups. There needs to be more consistency about what and how educational settings pass on information. The same is true in health services between different services and to parents. Too often, documents with false information about a child or young person (an assumption made by someone who is an expert in a different field) are included in patients' files.

Progress has been made in some of these areas, but more can be done.

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