

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

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## Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities

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#### SUMMARY

- 1 The purpose of the paper is to provide details of how children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families are fully involved in discussions and decision-making about the services and the support they receive through meaningful and ongoing co-production.

#### INTRODUCTION

- 2 The Children and Families Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice 2014 (updated 2015 Appendix 1) pushed forward the Government's commitment to improve services for vulnerable children and young people and support strong families.
- 3 The Children and Families Act transformed the system for disabled children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs, so that services consistently support the best outcomes for them. The reforms created a system from birth to 25 through the development of coordinated assessment and single Education, Health and Care Plans; improving cooperation between all services responsible for providing education, health or social care; and giving parents and young people greater choice and control over their support.
- 4 Within the SEND Code of Practice there is a clear focus on coproduction. Coproduction, when applied effectively to supporting children and young people (CYP) with SEND, enables the CYP, their parents and/or carers and professionals across multiple agencies and sectors working together as equal partners to design, plan, deliver and review support and services in order to achieve shared outcomes.
- 5 Coproduction recognises children and young people, parent carers and professionals as assets that all have important contributions to make due to their differing knowledge, skills and experience.
- 6 The SEND Code of Practice highlights the expectations of core principles that underpin all legislation and guidance related to SEND: It states that local authorities, in carrying out their functions in relation SEND, must have regard to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents
  - the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions
  - the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes and preparing them effectively for adulthood.
- 8 Local authorities must consult children with SEN or disabilities, their parents, and young people with SEN or disabilities in reviewing educational and training provision and social care provision and in preparing and reviewing the Local Offer. It is important that they participate effectively in decisions about support available to them in their local area.
- 9 CCGs and health bodies must co-operate with local authorities in carrying out their functions, including those for providing information and advice. The joint commissioning arrangements that local authorities and CCGs must have for commissioning education, health and care provision for children and young people who have SEN or are disabled must include arrangements for considering and agreeing what information and advice about education, health and care provision is to be provided, by whom and how it is to be provided.
- 10 Partners must engage children and young people with SEN or disabilities and children's parents in commissioning decisions. Local authorities, CCGs and NHS England should develop effective ways of harnessing the views of their local communities so that commissioning decisions on services for those with SEN or disabilities are shaped by users' experiences, ambitions and expectations.
- 11 To support families and the development of services many local areas have a Parent Carer Forum. Parent Carer Forums are representative local groups of parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities who work alongside local authorities, education, health and other service providers to ensure the services they plan, commission, deliver and monitor meet the needs of children and families. Parent Carer Forums have been established in most local areas and local authorities are actively encouraged to work with them.

## **EVIDENCE/DISCUSSION**

- 12 To support the implementation of the SEND reforms, services across education, health and social care worked closely with parents, young people and families to consider how best to implement the reforms across Middlesbrough. Themed working groups were set up to understand each aspect of the reforms and how to develop and implement these across the local area. Themed working groups continue to be in place across the local area and are reviewed based on key areas for development.

- 13 One of the initial focus key areas was the establishment of systems and processes for assessing needs, format of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) template and reviewing of EHCPs. Parents4Change Middlesbrough's local parent's forum were actively involved throughout this process and have been ever since. These processes have been reviewed over time to support on-going improvement and to continue to effectively capture the voice of the child/young person and parents/carers.
- 14 To further embed the Education, Health and Care Plan process a Rapid Improvement Week took place within Health to improve the understanding of Health Colleagues in relation to SEND. Parents4change were very involved in this intensive work and an impact of this work has seen information from Health colleagues which is used to support the EHCP process improve significantly. Health colleagues also reported that they have a better understanding of the process and feel more confident in their role.
- 15 Through the ongoing developments of the EHCP process we can see from our feedback from families that they feel fully involved in the process. We also need to consider that our rate of SEND tribunals in Middlesbrough is one of the lowest in the Country and it is felt that this is down to the robust systems developed in partnership with Parents4change, provides families with the opportunity to work together to share key information and plan for provision to meet needs.
- 16 Our parent's forum have been very involved in the designing and delivery of a range of training. This includes the EHCP process, voice of families and young people, autism awareness etc. Having our parents involved ensures the voice of families is clearly heard.
- 17 The local area SEND Strategy was developed in partnership with our parent's forum. This work included gathering feedback regarding key priorities and the actual designing of the strategy to ensure that it is accessible. The SEND Strategy has been further updated this year again with our parent's forum and is available on the Local Offer.
- 18 During the development of the local area SEND strategy in 2018 we also developed with families a short video. The video captures the voice of families, sharing their feedback regarding support they have received across education, health and care. The video was shared during our revisit in July 2019 and is on our Local Offer. To see the video please click <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrQnZfArnHA> We will be creating a new video with families in 2022 which will be placed on the Local Offer
- 19 We have undertaken a lot of developments within Early Years to increase access and inclusion based on feedback from families. To support these developments we set up working groups which included members from Parents4Change. Feedback from families reported that they wanted their children to be able to attend their local nursery with other children and families from their community. Parents and carers, specialist settings, health and social care colleagues, also highlighted concerns with the number

of transitions from one setting to another, experienced by the youngest children. Some children experienced up to three different educational settings before their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Using our robust data, the Local Authority in partnership with Health and Education settings was able to relocate a number of the assessment nursery places into some of Middlesbrough's specialist settings. This not only spread the specialist assessment nursery places more widely across Middlesbrough but also doubled the number of nursery places in an Autism specific school, as well as creating new nursery places in a special school for children with Severe Learning Disabilities.

- 20 Feedback from our Parents forum indicated that we needed to have in place a Single Point of Contact where families could call and get the right information at the right time. This model was developed with representation from our parent's forum and has been in place since 2019. This model will be further reviewed in 2022.
- 21 Families also requested Drop-in Clinics in the community where families could come and ask questions, seek advice and support. These have been implemented and are facilitated by the Local Authority and Designated Clinical Officer (DCO). These continued virtually through COVID. Parents who have used these Clinics have found them very informative.
- 22 As a result of the Local Area Inspection in March 2017 it was identified that the Local Offer was not accessible and easy to use. To move this forward we implemented a work stream with membership from parents. A Lead Officer was appointed to develop the Local Offer. As a result of this work the Local Offer has been updated and is now more informative, accessible and user friendly. This allows families to have a better understanding of the resources and support that is available in Middlesbrough. We can see from our data that more and more families and stakeholders are using the Local Offer.
- 23 As a request from parents and carers the Local Offer work stream has also developed a Facebook Page which is used to inform families of the support that is available across the local area. This Facebook page is another means of communication for families and currently has 390 members.
- 24 Some families also asked for an email network to be set up where information could be shared. This has been actioned and currently has approximately 100 members.
- 25 To support participation of young people we have facilitated a number of events. These events have included:
  - a. The voice and influence conference where over 150 staff members attended. This conference was held in March 2019 and was hosted by the Children in Care Council.

- b. In 2019 the strategic Preparing for Adulthood task group hosted a young person's conference. The conference was specifically designed for young people with SEND, with interactive workshops to allow young people to share their thoughts in a variety of different ways and about a wide range of topics. The main themes of the feedback from young people were that they wanted greater opportunities for employment and independence, and to be supported to make their own decisions. Following the conference, this feedback was used to help shape services. One example of this is the work to support a greater number of young people into employment. In order to achieve this, we worked with local Post 16 providers to increase the number of supported internships available for young people with SEND. A supported internship is a programme of study where, instead of learning in a classroom environment, a young person learns the skills for employment in a workplace. In Middlesbrough, in 2016, there were 3 supported internships; last academic year there were 34. A further conference will take place in early 2022.
  
- c. At the conference, young people also told us how important it was to them to have their achievements celebrated. Many children and young people with SEND can have poor self-esteem and confidence as a result of their experiences. What young people wanted was an opportunity to be celebrated for their contribution. After hearing this, we organised a celebration event for the young people - an awards ceremony, designed to acknowledge the huge breadth of achievements of all young people. Young people were celebrated for their achievements in everything from employment to volunteering, to staying healthy and developing independence. The celebration event was held at Middlesbrough Town Hall and young people from across the town were invited, with their parents, carers and staff.

26 Within Health, the Children's Strategic Lead (Consultant Paediatrician) has overseen the following engagement projects with young people in South Tees Hospital Foundation Trust (STHFT). These include

- a. Young People have taken part in a transitions learning event, giving an account of their transitions journey and holding a questions and answers session.
  
- b. A DVD was produced in which parents and young people talked about the challenges they had faced during transition and any examples of good practice. This was shared at one of the Transitions Learning Events.

- c. A new menu has been developed for inpatients following tasting sessions and suggestions by young patients on the ward.
- d. Young people are involved in other aspects of service development such as improvements to the hospital website, developing information leaflets and offering peer support.

27 Families have been very involved in the development of the Joint Commissioning Strategy. This work included working closely with families in determining what they would wish to see in a joint commissioning strategy. The strategy focused on laying out the principles of how we would work to jointly commission services in the future including how we could involve children and young people fully in the commissioning process. This strategy will be further reviewed and updated in 2022. Work with families has also included:

- a. Re-shaping of the Speech and Language contract to ensure that it is more person centred and responds to individual needs. This contract is currently being further reviewed and developed.
- b. Development of a new neurodevelopmental pathway which was implemented in September 2021. This pathway will provide greater support for families of children who are on the autistic spectrum without the need for waiting for a diagnosis

28 Parents4change have been involved in the development of a specification for the short breaks provision framework. As part of this work Parents4Change were also involved in tender process the evaluation to ensure appropriate providers were approved and added to the framework.

29 Our Parents Forum have recently been involved in the development of the criteria for the Children with Disabilities Service. Through this process they have provided challenge and support to ensure the criteria is robust, relevant and clear for all.

30 Each Year there is a parent's conference where we work in partnership with our parent's forum to plan and design the conference. There have been many areas discussed and feedback sought at these conferences including SEND Strategy, High Needs Funding, Short Breaks, EHCP process, Health Services, Local Offer and Preparing for Adulthood. We are currently planning a conference to take place in March 2022 with an agreed focus on co production. This session will be facilitated by Participation People First who are currently working with the local authority on the Big Takeover (November 2021).

- 31 To enable Parents4change share key information with families across Middlesbrough the local authority supported the forum with funding for a consultant to help develop a Newsletter for families. This newsletter has information regarding key developments and events across the local area which families might find useful. It has also been developed to try and encourage new members to join the parent's forum.
- 32 Our parent's forum supported in the development of our new Data Outcomes Framework which was developed to collect data on progress for children and young people around softer outcomes identified within the EHCP. This is now embedded within our Annual Review paperwork and is seen as an example of good practice.
- 33 Based on feedback from our families and our parents forum we have developed more local provision for children who are autistic. We have worked with secondary colleagues to develop secondary mainstream Autism provision. A new base has been built on the Acklam Grange School site which now has 7 young people accessing this provision. This will rise to 16 over the next 3 years. We also worked with one of our Special Schools to develop a satellite provision for children and young people on the autistic spectrum with more complex needs. This has increased the number of places locally and will continued to be reviewed.
- 34 Alongside this our parents have been involved in the development of the neurodevelopmental pathway with Health which was launched in September 2021 providing greater support to children and young people and their families at the earliest of stages.
- 35 We continue to work closely with Post-16 providers to develop a range of provision which fully supports our young people as they move into adulthood. By doing so we have increased the range of Post 16 opportunities for young people with special needs. Feedback from young people has identified that they feel listened too and are accessing the provision which they feel meets their needs and prepares them for adulthood.
- 36 We are currently in the process of developing a SEND/Inclusion Hub in partnership with parents which will be based at Hemlington Initiative Centre. The Hub will be used for families to access training and support. There will also be an accessible kitchen for young people who are visually impaired to support with independent skills as they move into adulthood.
- 37 In November 2021 the local authority implemented the Big Takeover across Middlesbrough in partnership with Participation People. This work included young people with SEND. To support this work we had four young people from Priory Woods Special School who worked with the Strategic Lead for Inclusion and other key officers to consider and develop ways to further improve attendance of young

people at their EHCP meetings. The young people are currently seeking feedback from other young people and will provide key solutions which will be actioned across the service and settings.

38 We have recently developed a wider parent's partnership across the local area, inviting parents from key groups across Middlesbrough to join. This partnership will focus on key topics throughout the year where we will collect views from families on these topics and collectively analysis the feedback and agree areas for improvement.

39 Our parent's forum continue to be members of key work streams and task groups to support the development across the local area. These currently include SEND Strategic Leadership, Preparing for Adulthood, Local Offer, Data, Quality and Outcomes, Workforce Development, Early Years, Children with Sensory Loss, Transitions, Neurodevelopmental Pathway and Speech and Language Pathway. Alongside these work stream regular meetings are held with the Strategic Lead of Inclusion, Designated Clinical Officer from Health and the Interim Head of Children with Disabilities Team and our parent's forum to identify any areas of concern and to further strengthen our local partnership.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

40 As a local area we recognise the importance of co-production and the impact of this work. We ensure that our families are fully involved in sharing their views, supporting developments and reshaping services. We continue to strengthen this process through engagement events, the Local Offer, surveys, Facebook Page, email network, newsletter, Drop-in-Clinics, membership of tasks groups, work streams and our SEND Strategic Group.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

41 SEND Code of Practice: Appendix 1

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

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