



SHROPSHIRE  
Parent  
And  
Carer  
Council

Shropshire Parent and Carer Council  
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## **Shropshire SEND Self-Evaluation Workshop – 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

### **PACC Feedback**

Hearing from families is one of the key elements of SEND inspections. As part of the inspection there will be a specific webinar that will enable parent carers to speak to the inspection team and parent carers representatives will be involved in face to face meetings with inspectors. It is also possible for parent carers to provide feedback by email.

In light of the central role that parent carer feedback will play in the inspection process, the PACC Board recently discussed what they feel would be the key feedback from families, were Ofsted and CQC to visit us tomorrow.

The feedback that we are going to share with you is informed by a range of sources; such as our daily interactions with parent carers on our social media platforms, feedback at specific events such as our recent EMHW service workshops, discussions with our Parents Support Parents groups at Bayston Hill and Ryton xl Towns and contact with parent carers on a 1:1 basis about specific issues.

We considered the three key line of enquiry that inform SEND inspections, along with where we think we are in Shropshire in terms of co-production and working in partnership with parent carers.

### **Identification of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities:**

The picture here is very mixed. Those families whose children are diagnosed very early in their lives with complex life-long conditions, that may result in health issues, often speak positively about their experiences of diagnosis. Many families talk positively of the multi-disciplinary assessment approach and of the support they received through the Child Development Centre but that does not mean that this process is without its issues and feedback also highlights that some families do not feel sufficiently involved in the MDA and that they are not well informed about the process.

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The main feedback relating to identification stems from where there are indications that a child or young person may have an Autistic Spectrum Condition or another neurodevelopmental condition such as ADHD. In these circumstances the main message we hear is one of confusion and frustration, parents being given conflicting information and advice, parents not being believed, parents having to constantly repeat the same information and long periods where parents feel they are just fighting the system to be heard and to secure some recognition of the challenges their child is facing.

### **Assessing and Meeting Needs:**

When an assessment is carried out, the message we mainly hear is that the focus is too often solely on diagnosis rather than interventions. While diagnosis is an important process in helping people understand the potential impact of any condition, parents are very clear what they want is support and advice to overcome or minimise the impact of any condition. They want their family to be supported to thrive and their child to be given the opportunity to develop and achieve in a meaningful way. Whether parents are supporting a young person with autism, learning difficulties or a physical disability the overriding message from parent carers is one of a lack of aspiration or proactivity in terms of the support their child receives. The feedback also paints a picture of a system where collaboration and partnership working is not the norm, with services too often working in isolation and in the main not being joined up.

In terms of the EHCP process in Shropshire the picture is more positive. The majority of families who have been through this process recently talk positively about the relationship with the SEN team and we are hearing reports of person centred approaches being implemented in some settings, with some parent carers feeling that they are listened to and involved in planning their child's care. This is not however embedded in all settings and across all services. Parent carer feedback does highlight an ongoing confusion amongst both parent carers and practitioners about the role of social care and health in the EHCP, with the focus remaining on education.

### **Outcomes;**

The key concern should always be what difference are we making to the lives of children and young people with SEND and their families and PACC would have to say that currently, it is difficult to articulate this. Achieving positive outcomes for a young person still feels too dependent on the ability of parent carers to make the system work for them. Following issues around diagnosis of Autism, the main feedback we get is about parent carers feeling let down by the system as their young person moves

into adulthood. Decision not being made in a timely way, a lack of information about what options are available after school, and feeling unsupported and not listened too. There are always some examples where families feel well supported by individuals and where young people have been supported to make significant achievements, securing employment or living independently for example, but these unfortunately are still the minority of cases.

## **Other issues;**

### **Communication**

One of the key themes in the feedback received by PACC is the difficulty families have in finding the information they need. We know that this has been acknowledge by both Shropshire Council and Shropshire CCG and we hope that there will soon be the improvements in terms of the transparency and accessibility of the provision of SEND information across all services. The effort made by the SEN team to improve the communication about their work has been very well received by families.

### **Co-production**

Finally, the PACC Board considered how effective participation is in Shropshire and how embedded co-production is across services. In terms of strategic participation PACC works closely with the SEND Strategic Board, there is an expectation that there will be parent carer representation at this level and a sense that the parent carer voice is seen as a key element of the work done by the Board. This has resulted in PACC chairing the SEND Communication and Participation Workstream that reports to the Strategic Board. This success however is limited to the work overseen by the SEND Board and the same commitment is not seen in other work areas that are not solely focused on SEND, but do impact on the SEND Community. This is starting to change and PACC does have now regular meetings with a number of senior managers across services delivered by Shropshire Council, as well as the Director of Children's Services, but co-production isn't a way of working that is embedded more widely in Council Services. We continue to struggle to get a voice in strategic health decision making and while we are developing relationships with health commissioners, this is still only on a service by service basis and it is not clear how parent carers have a voice in long term strategic SEND health planning in Shropshire.

It is our experience that ensuring all services work in partnership with parent carers at an operational level (when there are specific discussions about how services are actually delivered) is still an area of challenge. We have particularly struggled to develop a working relationship with the provider of the new Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service (BeeU), with repeated requests for engagement not being

responded to. This is in marked contrast to the very positive working relationship between PACC and the Shropshire SEN Team, where there has been a number of examples of partnership working, including; regular 'News from the SEN Team' articles in the PACC newsletter 'Participate', jointly delivering engagement events such as the recent Developing SEND Provision Conference and jointly chairing the EHCP Process Review group with the SEN Manager. The SEN Team has also made a clear commitment to working in a person-centred way, ensuring that the views and wishes of children and young people and their families are seen as key to the work that they do. This has included offering training to all schools to enable them to work in a person-centred way and an offer of similar training to other services, such as social care and health teams.

### **Summary**

There is still much to do in Shropshire in terms of creating a system that clearly makes a difference to SEND families, but PACC recognises that there is also a lot to be positive about. PACC has well established relationships with a number of senior decision makers and this has resulted in a real commitment to working in partnership with families at a strategic level. We need however, to ensure that this commitment makes a difference to the everyday experiences of SEND families, by ensuring that all services understand their duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 and how to deliver these at the front line. Services need to work together to ensure that there is a co-ordinated offer of support and think about how they communicate this offer to the SEND Community. We also need to ensure that there is a clear vision from health services about how they intend to respond to the needs of the SEND Community.

PACC is committed to continue to promote the parent carer voice in SEND strategic and operational decision making and we look forward to continuing to work with all Shropshire services and senior managers to ensure that Shropshire is a place where SEND families thrive.