



Bristol Parent Carer (BPC) Forum is a volunteer-led organisation that works with strategic partners and the wider SEND community groups in Bristol, to amplify and represent the voices of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

In a time of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) crisis across the country, we feel saddened that we are facing further unfounded allegations and feel that our focus should be on working with our partners to address this crisis.

We wish to be clear that we remain committed to supporting the SEND community in Bristol in a bid to repair the fractured relationship between parents and carers as per the Written Statement of Action aims. We will continue working in collaboration with strategic partners in health and schools as well as alongside other DfE-funded Forums.

On the 1st of July, BPC raised concerns with the BCC regarding the surveillance, processing and storing of Forum officers' data without their consent and the possible harm this action has had to officers' professional reputations. BCC informed us that they would investigate our concerns. BCC subsequently produced a fact-finding report released on Friday 2nd September.

In light of this report and to address any concerns of our stakeholders, we would like to offer the following clarification:

- BPC has not been asked for any information to inform the fact-finding report and first viewed it on Friday 2nd September when it was shared publicly.
- BCC raised concerns with previous BPC officers about Forum representatives' conduct in September 2021. Previous BPC officers examined these concerns and sought external advice. On the basis of this advice, it was concluded that there was insufficient evidence to carry out any internal investigation regarding Forum representatives' conduct.
- BPC Forum informed BCC on 19th October 2021, that there was insufficient evidence to support their concerns and that Forum representatives had not broken any Forum policies, BCC or DfE terms based on the evidence BCC had submitted to support their complaint.
- BPC, further added in this letter, that personal social media activities, individual Freedom of Information requests, and personal Judicial Review actions are all individual rights which are out of the remit of BPC to control.
- BPC Forum has not received any evidence from any other organisations, to support the opinion that Forum officers have shared sensitive information, or broken any Forum guidelines or any DfE or BCC funding terms.



- With no discussion or attempt to create achievable goals together, BCC informed BPC that they would not sign a memorandum of understanding to allow BPC to receive DfE funding.

We continue to support parent carers through school-based SEND coffee mornings, and offer webinars for parent carers to access advice and information. We are currently appointing new members to our steering group from our fellow SEND community groups in order to strengthen our reach and engagement so that every voice in every community across Bristol is heard.

Our door continues to be open for working with BCC and we hope that, despite our differences, we can join forces so we can work together to move forward and address the very real SEND crisis in our City. We have previously offered to show BCC officers our draft, "10 quick wins" for the EHCP process in Bristol, but they have not taken us up on our offer. As the EHCP process is an agenda item here today, perhaps councillors could take on board some of the suggestions made by parent carers in Bristol



Bristol Parent
Carer Forum

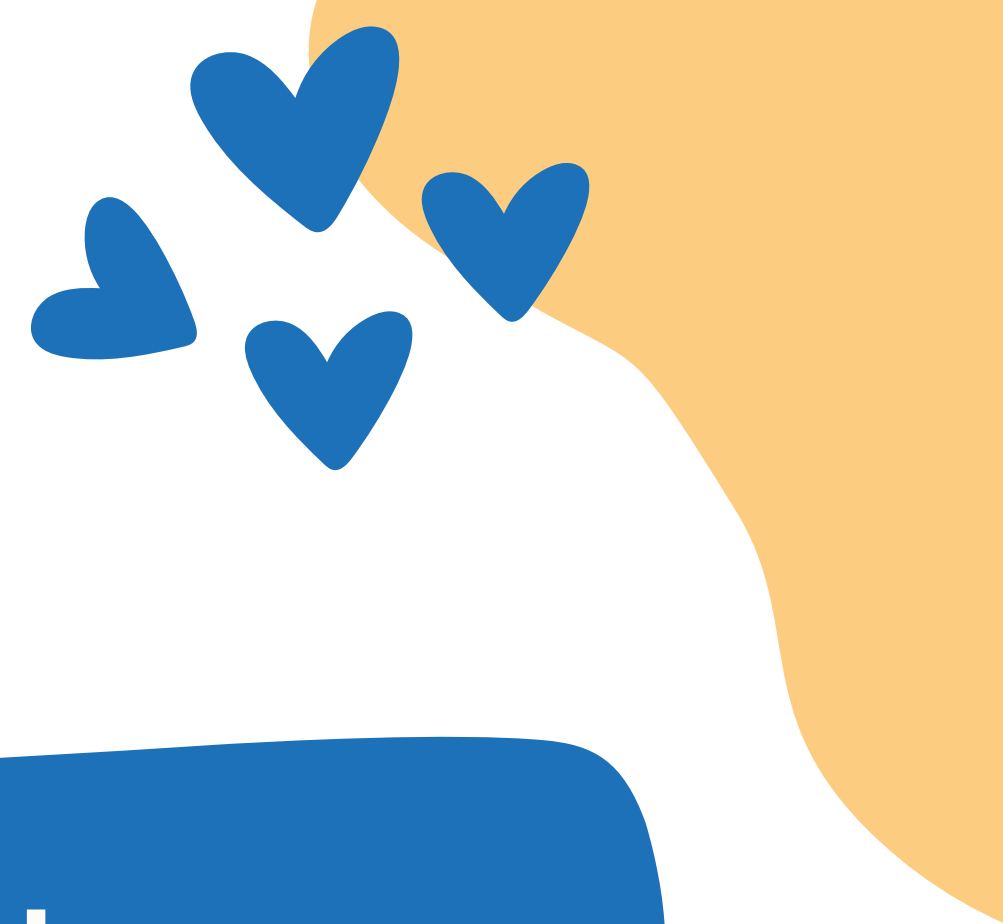
Shaping the Future *Together*

Bristol Parent Carer Forum

➤ WORKING WITH BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
EHCPs: 10 'QUICK WINS'
SEP 2022/23



Bristol Parent Carers



Vision

To work as equal partners with all Bristol SEND services in order to shape the experiences that services provide for all families, children and young people living in Bristol. We strive to ensure co-production is as inclusive as possible, demonstrating equality, diversity, accessibility, and reciprocity to ensure co-production efforts are genuine and authentic.

Mission

We seek to support and empower families to be heard and achieve better outcomes ensuring families' voices are heard by planners and decision-makers. Signposting and communication are key to our roles and we always aim for work to be co-produced with us, so that the voice of families is at the heart of every decision and policy. →



Our Goals

We want families, children and young people to...

Feel included in their education settings

Have access to suitable education settings

Be able to access the community & go to work

Receive health advice & support promptly

Have accurate information on their EHCP journey



We will achieve these by working with families, children & young people, community groups & SEND services...

Create awareness in the community of the resources (OAP etc) & services (FLORA) BCC have created around SEND support via school-based coffee mornings.

Keep families informed on the progress that BCC has made in creating school spaces

Parental support webinars/seminars

Parental support webinars/seminars

Co-produce a visual guide to the EHCP process

Work with the ICS to support ND pupils in schools

Co-produce lists of schools and types, liaise with them to keep spaces up to date on LO & BPC website

Clear co-produced information on the availability of local services and direct payments/personal budgets

Co-produce ND toolkit and family leaflet

Co-produce a city-wide understanding of PDA

Co-Produce documents detailing the EHCP process that reflect current wording around panels

Help families understand graduated response to help BCC place plan SEND school spaces

Stronger links between CYP with EHCPs & Social care team

Co-produce understanding of the use of private reports & obtaining health advice in EHCPS

Co-produce and publish parent-friendly versions of all EHCP SoPs



10 quick EHCP wins for Bristol City Council

1

Problem: Families tell us that there is a long wait to receive a reply to an email or that they are not informed of panel decisions. [Solution](#): Implement a service-level response time so families know you will get back to them to prevent lots of duplicate emails chasing initial queries that staff then need to process on top of the original question

2

BCC has been working with schools to strengthen inclusion but it is families who ultimately have the power to hold schools to account. [Solution](#): Use parent carer feedback to identify schools that need more support with inclusion practices & educate families on what good SEND support looks like and how to engage school leaders.

3

Problem: Each time a family raises a complaint, the complaints team then asks the SEND team to look into the issue, diverting staff away from EHC assessments.

[Solution](#): Co-produce solutions to common complaints to prevent problems from repeating and lessen the need for families to complain

4

Problem: Families tell us that Bristol City Council does not arrange mediation dates within 30 days as they are required to in law. [Solution](#): Co-produce a standard operating procedure with families relating to mediation so that appeals can be avoided meaning more staff available for needs assessments which will increase timeliness

5

Problem: The number of EHC needs assessments BCC refuse to carry out is increasing and families tell us that when they are informed of this, they do not know what to do or where to get support. They also tell us that they do not believe decisions have been made in line with the law and that once they enter an appeal, BCC quickly concedes, causing around a 5-month delay in supporting their child. [Solution](#): i) ensure legal departments are aware of BCC EHCNA request criteria, ii) include advice on the support available from community groups with the decision letter iii) include an example of a support plan with ordinarily available provisions. These actions may reduce appeals and reassessment figures freeing up resources which in turn may increase timeliness.



10 quick EHCP wins for Bristol City Council

6

Problem: The local offer in Bristol is not well understood by families. [Solution](#): Provide BPC Forum with the DfE funding so that they can create a network of volunteer parent carer peer supporters to help other families navigate and understand the services available locally.

7

Problem: The decision on whether to carry out an EHC assessment comes too late in the process due to the panel system BCC use. [Solution](#): Speed up this process by only using panels for difficult cases with unclear evidence. This means fewer school staff have to attend panels so they can get on with delivering the support needed in schools.

8

Problem: Parents tell us that they are confused by the EHCP system. [Solution](#): Coproduce all of the letters sent to families during the process so that families are clear on what's involved especially where English is not the family's first language. This will create and hopefully lead to fewer complaints, ensuring better relationships between families and BCC.

9

Problem: Families and schools tell us that when the process misses a legal deadline they do not have anyone to contact. [Solution](#): provide a dedicated email address for schools/families to use with an agreed service level response time. This will hopefully mean fewer complaints, ensuring resources are not diverted from the SEND team.

10

Problem: Families tell us that they often see an Educational Psychologist (EP) 2 or 3 times in 18-24 months. This creates a huge demand for EP services which contributes to delays in the EHC assessment process. [Solution](#): Coproduce the EP reports that families are provided with before they reach the EHC needs assessment stage with the aim of ensuring that EPs write "EHCP ready" reports. This means that the advice can then be used in the EHCNA process (pending Reg 6.4) meaning that a report would not need to be duplicated which would speed up the process. Alternatively, BCC could consider carrying out an EHC needs assessment for any CYP who needs input from an EP & BCC could provide guidance on the use of independent reports which are frequently ignored.



Glossary

- SEND Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- OAP Ordinarily Available Provisions (support schools should try)
- FLORA Families Local Offer Resources Advice
- ICS Integrated Care Service (health services in the area)
- ND Neurodivergent: A non-medical term that describes people whose brain develops or works differently for some reason
- BCC Bristol City Council
- LO Local Offer: The SEND services & support available locally
- BPC Bristol Parent Carers
- CYP Children and Young People
- EHCP Education Health Care Plan
- EHCNA Education Health Care Needs Assessment
- SoP Standard operating procedure
- CoG Community Groups (SEND-based) in Bristol
- P/C Parent Carer

