

Bedford Borough and BLMK Integrated Care Board Partnership Response to the Parent Carer Forum Outcomes Report

Firstly, we would like to thank everyone who contributed to the Outcomes Report and gave their views, via the PCF, on how young people with SEND are supported in our local community.

The volume of responses was encouraging, particularly as this was slightly up from previous years, which not only reflects the increased membership of the PCF in Bedford Borough, but the strength, passion and dedication each of you has to improve the lived experience for our children and young people with SEND, and our families.

Whilst much of the report highlighted positive responses, we acknowledge through our work with the PCF and as highlighted in this report, that there are still a number of areas we must continue to improve. We recognise there is still work to be done around improving experiences for young people, particularly those in the 16-25 age range; for those with an EHCP and for those whose needs may be better met through alternatives to an EHCP; for those with increasingly complex SEND to feel fully included and part of our community in Bedford Borough. We remain committed to these improvements and the proposed workshops needed to explore these areas further will be a key starting point in outlining the themes and goals we bring forward into our new 2024 SEND Action Plan.

Our commitment is to coproduce a new SEND Improvement Action Plan alongside the Parent Carer Forum, with the feedback and findings of this outcomes report at the heart of our key priorities and actions. We will also use the data from our SEND Joint Strategic Needs Analysis and performance data to ensure that we are developing an action plan that will drive forward the improvements that are needed across our system.

Bedford Borough Council is committed to reviewing and refreshing our SEND Self Evaluation as part of our continuous improvement journey and to ensuring that we continue to coproduce everything with the Parent Carer Forum. We truly value the feedback we receive from parents and carers and commit to continuing to attend PCF focus groups, attend drop-in sessions and ensuring our leaders are visible and accessible to hear the concerns and issues being raised by our parent carer community.

The partnership work between the PCF, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and our Local Authority is something we are very proud of in Bedford Borough, as it pushes us all to continue to strive for a better future together. Outlined below are the responses from our ICB partners in relation to the key points highlighted in the Outcomes Report.

“As chair of the Bedford Borough SEND Improvement Board, I can see firsthand the hard work and commitment that is going on across the partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families in Bedford Borough, but I acknowledge that there is always more that can be done to continue this improvement. I want to thank Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum for their tireless commitment to representing the voice of the Parent Carer Community here in Bedford Borough and I am committed to working with them to deliver the recommendations found in this report”

– Cllr Jane Walker, Cabinet Member, Portfolio holder for Children’s Services

“Thank you to all the parents and carers who took the time to share their views and experiences within this report. This report is so valuable in driving forward our SEND agenda and the recommendations and feedback feed directly into our improvement plans.”

– Harmesh Bhogal, Director of Children’s Services

“I am committed to ensuring that Bedford Borough is the best place for all children to be educated including our amazing children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities. I acknowledge that this report highlights that not all of our children and young people with SEND are feeling this currently and I am committed to working with our schools and settings to address the concerns being raised in this report. I am proud of the achievements we have already made in the SEND system, and this shows me that collectively we can continue to achieve more – our children and young people deserve nothing less”

– Chris Morris, Chief Officer - Education, SEND & Schools Infrastructure (Chief Education Officer) for Bedford Borough

The Integrated Care Board (ICB) are grateful to BBPCF and the parents and carers who completed the survey, for providing this valuable feedback. The ICB remains committed to working in co-production with BBPCF, the Local Authority, and provider health services to address the identified areas of concern and improve outcomes for local children and young people with SEND.

We have reviewed the report and identified the themes and recommendation below in relation to health: *The health needs of children with EHCPs in mainstream schools are not being met as effectively or co-ordinated as effectively as they need to.*

The ICB wants all children and young people with EHCPs to have their health needs met in any setting and this feedback is helpful as the Designated Clinical Officers (DCOs) are already supporting work in this area. We now have both a DCO and Deputy DCO working across the 3 x Bedfordshire Local Authorities. The roles work in partnership with the ICB, provider health services and the Local Authority, in providing specialist input into the strategic and clinical planning, standard setting and assurance processes in service provision for children and young people with EHCPs. The DCO roles also support the EHCP improvement processes within health services; and have oversight of health processes within the Bedford SEND Quality Assurance Framework. The roles support the identification and prioritisation of vulnerable groups across the health system and have a focus on the availability and quality of health provision. The DCOs will continue to work in co-production with BBPCF and local Children/ Young People (CYP) and their families to ensure that their voices are heard, and their experiences of the SEND system continue to inform future multiagency service redesign and SEND system provision.

There is a significant difference in all three be healthy questions between those with an EHCP in mainstream schools than all other respondents. Parent carers do not feel as if services support their CYP to live a healthy life, to access the right health services and get help quickly when they need it.

Survey Recommendation: The ICB and community care providers should review their community and elective paediatric service recovery plans in light of these comments and ensure they are fully integrated into the new SEND strategy being developed.

The new NHS Planning Guidance requires all ICBs to submit a plan for addressing long waits for children's community services by the end of June 2024. This will be the ICB mechanism for looking at health service recovery plans and managing waiting lists across Bedfordshire.

Cambridge Community Services NHS Trust (CCS) are grateful to the 656 parents/carers for providing feedback, of which will support our journey of continuous improvement. We have taken time to review the report and have identified the below themes in relation to community health services which we will continue to work with you on, as per our co-production approach in our regular communications meeting, and via our quarterly SEND operational group.

Accessibility of health services and long waiting lists

We acknowledge that there is increasing demand on community health services, resulting in long waiting times. We do not underestimate the impact this has to the wellbeing of children and their families. Over the last few years we have secured additional funding for the community paediatrics service to increase the offer of support for families and decrease time waiting, and we have invested in growth of our teams to include further skill mix of trained support practitioners.

We are not alone in that nationally, the demand for assessments of Autism and ADHD continues to increase. Therefore, there is a need for us to think differently about how this can be managed, and how we can ensure children and young people are supported. We have been working closely with improvement and transformation specialists, stakeholders, parent carer forums and commissioners to review how we can support the growing needs of children and young people. We will continue to work on this as a matter of priority.

Lack of Support Pre + Post Diagnosis, including being told no support from school until a diagnosis is received.

We recognise that children and young people who access our services will need strategies and interventions to support their daily lived experience before, after, and with or without a diagnosis, on a

needs-led basis. We have been working with partners in education to develop a needs-led approach, including co-producing an 'Early Concerns Model' Pilot and building professional knowledge across the system.

Additionally, we will continue to co-produce information and resources to support children and young people pre and post diagnosis. We have previously co-produced the Neurodiversity Support Pack and will enhance the promotion and circulation of this resource.

We will also increase the visibility of the Early Support Workshop (with face to face, online and translated options), a host of recorded online workshops on targeted areas such as sleep, challenging behaviour, sensory processing, 'What is Occupational Therapy?', and 'Child's posture in standard seating', as well as Speech and Language Therapy early support advice sessions, the SEND Health Focus Week events and a developmental concerns padlet.

Lack of sensory support for managing in school

We understand that many children and young people who access our services will have sensory preferences that may impact their daily lived experience, including the ability to successfully engage with school.

The 'Early Concerns Model' that is currently in development as a pilot with partners and parent carer forums, includes sensory as a key element of the pathway. Once launched, the model will support education staff to identify and implement interventions to better facilitate sensory preferences.

We have previously co-produced sensory awareness resources, including the planning wheels package, and sensory awareness training (available to watch online). We will increase the promotion of these resources for parents, carers and professionals across the local area.

Thank you again for providing this comprehensive report. Bedfordshire Community Health Services greatly values the collaborative approach and commitment of Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum in working together to co-produce better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) would like to thank the forum for this excellent piece of work; it is very valuable for the SEND system in Bedford Borough to have the annual reports which provide the direct voice of parent carers locally and track outcomes on those key indicators over time. It is evident from the report that there is still much more to be done to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

We have discussed the feedback in relation to CAMHS with the North Bedfordshire CAMHS Senior Leadership team and acknowledge the views expressed in the narrative and note the overall score in relation to the 'Be Healthy' outcome and the decline in the score compared to previous years. I hope the following comments are helpful and provide some reassurance to the ongoing work and investment within our CAMHS annual plan and clinical strategy. I know Rosie is in the process of providing an updated 'You Said/We Did' to provide further detail.

We would like to suggest that we meet with the 3 PCFs in Beds and Luton to discuss feedback from parent carers in a dedicated space, rather than the CAMHS Quality meeting – of course we welcome your attendance, questions, and feedback there as well.

As a service and part of a broader system, we continue to work hard to ensure we can deliver a high quality and safe service to the patients and families that present to us with this level of risk and need, due to the vast array of self-harming behaviours not all presentations will require specialist service support. We continue to work collaboratively with our voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) to ensure clinically appropriate signposting within our wider system to ensure cases are offered the right support at the right time – this will include making direct referrals on behalf of clients to other local and national services as identified.

The limited NHS resource for highly specialist services means that inevitably a relatively small proportion of the population will access these services, although the number of children receiving a service from our specialist CAMHS provision each year is by no means small. The challenge of meeting needs with this

limited resource is one of the reasons we continue our thinking and investment in relation to building and supporting provision across the system.

Bedford CAMHS access pathway has never been more accessible than it is today not only through the single point of entry route but also within our community access pathway; GP Liaison, MHST / Schools, hospitals, Crisis, Home Treatment Team, Intensive Support Care – supporting the client group under transforming care cohort whom have a diagnoses of Autism/ Learning Difficulties. Our triage team triage all referrals for risk on the same day and will aim to provide an outcome based on that within 5 working days.

Even though our waiting times are considerably less than in many other parts of the UK, we recognise that waits for specialist services can be very difficult for families and are constantly working hard to reduce these and promoting self-help and waiting well advice for families during this time. Where cases escalate to crisis point, we established clear crisis pathways across the system for safety planning.

We recognise there are gaps in the system locally and nationally and we are trying to mitigate this in areas where we can such as we have increased the support going into our schools to look as well as looking at our broader systems and what they do. We have rolled out our National Autism Trainer Programme (NAPT) within our own services as well as delivering this in our schools, to parent / carers and our colleagues in Cambridgeshire Community Services.

In relation to transgender support, we are in conversations around service provision following the closure of the Gender Identity Service at the Tavistock. CAMHS also has seen an increase in young people experiencing bullying either face to face or cyber bullying and this is a broader culture problem. Nationally the derestriction about children's social media remains a significant challenge and a safeguarding concern.

We continue to want children and young people, and their families, to receive the right support at the right time and in the right place.

We hope the response we have provided from our Partnerships helps to illustrate our commitment as a Borough to improving the lived experience for those with SEND, and their families, and a better future for all. We look forward to working with each of you to achieve this.

Thank you.