

# In 2022 - 2023

## You said...we did



We reported regularly at the Local Authority and Health's strategic meetings to ensure that senior officers were aware of your concerns and able to consider opportunities to address them.

### **You said...the process of getting your children's needs assessed and met remains difficult / very difficult. We...**

- reported the issues you raised with the Statutory Assessment Team, as well as a meeting with the Director of Children's Services for parent carers who are experiencing issues with admissions and attendance for their children.
- enabled co-production of what we should expect to be 'ordinarily available' in school, including access to assessments without the need for formal requests. We have also challenged emerging issues raised by parent carers to ensure these are understood and addressed where possible.
- assisted in redrafting the new Local Authority (LA) parent carer leaflets for Education Health Care Assessments – the role of the Educational Psychologists.
- asked the LA and Health to address appointment waiting lists and provide interim help for those in crisis. There is work now taking place to reduce waiting times for those seeking assessments. We reviewed and commented on the letter about how to find mental health support whilst on waiting lists for mental health services to produce more parent carer-friendly wording. We also supported health to write a parent carer-friendly document about their position on sensory processing.
- worked with health to provide support to parent carers whose children self-harm. The new "NESSie" offer is now available and we are hosting sessions.
- offered regular network participation sessions with a range of education, health, and social care staff, as well as third-sector organisations, to ensure that your voices are heard. We have tailored some of these to match the issues parent carers have raised. You can find reports from the sessions on our website under Network Meetings.
- asked that training be provided to all schools to extend the early identification of autism in primary-age girls pilot work taking place in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland . This will now roll out wider in time.
- told health you feel the identification for neurodevelopmental differences takes too long, and once you have a diagnosis there is no follow-up. There is work ongoing behind the scenes to recommission services and to develop a pathway for Cambridgeshire.

- encouraged health and the LA to address the issue that children who may have Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder are not readily offered a diagnosis at present in Cambridgeshire.
- supported the LA with its SEND Transformation conference which updated parents on the LA's progress and sought feedback to enable future co-production of services and the SEND offer in Cambridgeshire.
- supported the LA in holding its first Preparing for Adulthood event where parent carers could readily access professionals from a wide range of services and providers who can support children as they move into adulthood. There were also opportunities to participate.

**You said... you felt the only way to get help and support for your child was to take legal action. We...**

- asked the Local Authority to review all the disputes it deals with to identify issues about which it might be able to act, where processes have not worked as they should. They have done this and are using this to drive improvements.
- expressed parent carer concerns about the limiting of resources for their children and the perceived threat of removing resources from their children. We have been explicit about concerns regarding Ordinarily Available Provision, the SEND Transformation project and the Safety Valve funding in Cambridgeshire. We provided FAQs for the LA to answer and then asked the LA to publish these for parent carers to see. We have raised this with the Director of Schools. He has been listening to parent carer concerns and has committed to improved communication, participation, co-production, and consultation.
- enabled families to meet with senior LA staff to personally voice their concerns through the Meet the AD sessions.

**You said...the legal requirements are either poorly understood or not routinely applied in terms of SEND legislation. We...**

- ensured that the Local Authority understands the importance of ensuring the system does what it is supposed to do (compliance). The Local Authority is investing in making SEN Support more effective, providing more support for schools so that they are better able to meet children's needs early and effectively.
- have raised these issues again and asked the LA to look at whether there is more training and support it can offer schools. The LA have restated that they will challenge schools where they are aware there may be issues.

**You said...**

**some services (education, health, and social care) work well together but that often they don't work as well together as they could. We...**

- continued to work on cross-sector (health, education, social care) raising parent carer voices and encouraging the system to be as joined up as possible from a user perspective.

**You said...**

**that the process of getting Education Health and Care Plans updated and back in good time was a problem. We...**

- have asked for updates from the LA as they address the backlog and new surge in demand. Figures are showing an improvement and the LA appear to be doing all they can to address the issues.

**You said...you were not happy about how your children's needs are being identified, monitored, and supported. We...**

- continued to work with Local Authority health, social care, and education colleagues to improve pathways for children with ADHD, and or Autism. We are pleased there is progress behind the scenes to develop new neuro-developmental pathways in Cambridgeshire.
- have worked with health colleagues to ensure services are understood and that there is early access, including occupational health, speech and language therapy. We have provided links to these on our website.
- continue to urge the LA to make a wider behaviour support offer to families, as we know families struggle to support children with behaviour needs.
- asked that professionals take heed when parents report concerns about behaviour that schools do not see and accept parent reporting as evidence of need when being asked to make referrals or requests for help. We have a commitment from the Director of Schools to take this message back to schools again.
- raised your concerns, together with SENDIASS, directly to the Statutory Assessment Team, and senior LA managers, so that they can consider service improvements and system improvements. The LA are purchasing a new records management system that will enable parent carers to track progress – they have been listening and this new facility will be most welcome.

**You said...that the Local Offer was not widely known and that you did not have the information you needed. We...**

- continue to offer ongoing parent carer input in co-producing the new Local Offer website (which will be known as the SEND Hub).
- regularly add content to Pinpoint's website in response to questions from parent carers

**You said... the wait to access ASD/ADHD assessments and mental health support for your child was taking too long. We...**

- asked the LA to ensure SENCos understand they can ask for dual ASD/ADHD assessments or single assessments – each has different NICE guidelines (ADHD requires an evidence based approach and a parenting course whilst ASD single assessments do not). We asked that they help parent carers understand this distinction when asking for assessments.
- commissioned our own sessions (from other funding sources) for parent carers covering topics such as anxiety, OCD, behaviour and eating issues and provided the opportunity for peer support through our Tii Hubs. We have offered more sessions to support families whilst they wait.
- asked the LA to look for a crisis support offer for families waiting for services. We have met with paediatricians and senior leaders from the LA and Health to raise this issue and encourage them to identify possible solutions.
- are pleased to see new offers for mental health (quicker YoUnited appointments, what to do whilst you are waiting support, a new Self-Harm support service for parent carers and new alternative ASD diagnosis options being piloted).
- are looking to bring a new guide for parent carers to families, based on a successful booklet co-produced by another Forum.

**You said... being a parent carer felt lonely and you wanted support. We...**

- continued to offer virtual sessions for information, signposting and support and have continued to see an increase in the numbers of parent carers able to join in. We are finding our sessions are being rated highly against the question of whether parent carers feel supported.
- promoted our Tii Hubs more regularly to help you find a safe space to share and find the help you need and increased the number of new parent carers attending
- trained yet more new Champions
- worked with Caring Together and the LA Commissioning teams to bring forward carers' assessments.

