

# “Inclusion in Shropshire”

## Executive Summary

As always, we are impressed by the honesty of our community and your generosity to share your experiences to help improve local systems. With 44 Parent Carers in attendance, there were plenty of discussions to be had.

Our keynote speakers Karen Levell (Service Manager for SEND and Inclusion at Shropshire Council) and Jen Griffin (Designated Clinical Officer for SEND at NHS Shropshire Telford and Wrekin) delivered some key updates on who is who across the system and key LA SEND services. They also updated Parent Carers on the SEND improvement plans and changes that are being made to respond to the Local Areas SEND Accelerated Progress Plan that is now in place and being monitored by DfE and NHSE Midlands. This feedback provided some useful stimulation in discussions to understand how these changes have impacted parent carers experiences, or if they have not what changes need to be seen.

Keynote speaker Amy Chevin-Dooley (Director of Inclusions at Marches Academy Trust) presented The Marches Academy Trust Inclusion Plan. This detailed the journey of the Trust to explore how they can lay the correct foundations, behaviours, and expectations across their schools to ensure all children are included in education to meet their individual needs. Again, this information provided some extremely interesting discussions about how this approach could be replicated in other Trusts and across Shropshire more widely. Most importantly the presentation detailed how a top-down approach is essential and how getting the fundamentals in place across a Trust is much more valuable in the long term to developing better practice in schools for individual children.

After a much-needed lunch break, we reconvened the afternoon session exploring our tabletop discussions. Overall, the consensus among Parent Carers is that enough change has not happened, and their families are not feeling the benefits yet. Experiences with SEN Team remain challenging, with families reporting poor communication, poor etiquette from staff they engage with, and poor-quality plans. Parent Carers also spoke about their frustrations at the fundamentals of SEND not being embedded in schools and services with basic awareness of the law and rights of families being ignored or dismissed, with awareness of SEND in school communities being a barrier, and aspirations for our children being limited and managed by those providing care and support. Parent Carers also shared concerns around the Quality Assurance processes and how the system can ensure a child's needs are being met well.

## Feedback Summary

We have broken down the summary feedback into the workshop categories below.

### **EHCPs:**

Parent Carers made it clear that EHCPs are not being used on a day-to-day basis in classrooms to support a child to engage well with education and thrive in the classroom and wider school environment. It would be used best if all staff engaging with a child has read and understood their role in delivery of an EHCP.

EHCPs are not constructed well, with suggestions of an executive summary, actions list, and allocated tasks list to be included to make it clear who is to do what and when. It was also suggested to break the document down into easier to digest elements with categories of Education, Health, and Social Care rather than Section A etc as this is confusing.

Aspirational outcomes are limited, with references throughout the event to the need for starting Preparation for Adulthood much earlier. Building in actions and outcomes from a younger age and earlier stage will develop the skills required and ensure PFA outcomes are achievable in later life.

Provision needs to be more clearly described, responding to the child's need rather than using what is available in hope it fits the bill, and implemented well so schools understand how to support the child well.

EHCPs and provision need to be quality assured properly. EHCPs should be monitored for delivery, with spot checks and family conversations to understand if provision is being delivered in schools and if its meeting needs or not. Parent Carers explained how provision is often 'tweaked' to fit what a school can offer or what they can access rather than what has been described or indicated within the EHCP.

More health and social care provision, with greater focus on social skills and maintaining good health and wellbeing to be included in plans and support to be delivered to ensure key skills are grown and maintained.

Annual Review updates need to happen – families voices need to be heard and reflected within these changes.

Parent Carers want to feel more involved in the plan development, i.e., supporting what goes where and what provision may be suitable. Supporting a holistic coproduced document to be developed.

Training and awareness of all staff and people in schools around disability, SEN, and reasonable adjustments need to be standardised and rolled out to ensure that excellent quality foundation knowledge is available across all schools.

Plans to include information about managing challenging situations for a child, such as potential risks for behaviours to escalate or risky situations to arise following failures to mitigate and meet needs at a reasonable adjustment level.

### **Schools Ordinarily Available Offer:**

Inclusive focused people would deliver well trained staff and communities that understand the needs of the people they include. Supporting every child to feel they belong, and they are valued and welcomed. Modelling behaviours expected across environments to develop more inclusive practice and support. Developing supportive teams where people with key roles in SEND are valued and given the appropriate time and resources to do their jobs well. Also supporting families in a more holistic way, looking at the impact on family life because of the needs of the child with SEND.

Embedded reasonable adjustments would look very much like what Amy described in the Marches Academy Trust approach where children are dealt with as children, understanding that all children will have vulnerabilities and needs at various points of their educational journey. Ensuring that we focus on creating space for all children to be supported proactively so that when a child with SEND presents, they already have some support wrapped around them which can simply evolve and grow alongside the child's needs. Reasonable adjustments should not need to be fought for and should have a standardised approach to remove the postcode lottery of school placements. Also considering why there is such a difference between primary and secondary school approaches to care and support at this level and how we can change this, as families feel their children are failed more at secondary level at this earlier intervention level. Ensuring that curriculums are adjusted to meet the needs of the child, as reasonable adjustment, and part of the EHCP. Access to provision when it is needed, not a term later, as this can add to the pressure cooker effect and create risks for crisis for the individual children – this also fits into Shropshire's expectations of the 'Waiting Well' process.

Parent Carer Needs are quite simply not addressed well in Shropshire. They are not considered in the process of SEND with regards to support Parent Carers own needs based off their caring roles and responsibility. Parent Carers described improved communications, better consideration of Parent Carers needs, and the challenges faced at home, and regular feedback from staff about a child's daily experience, would all go a long way to support Parent carers Needs to be met better. Also, better communication around the escalations towards exclusion would be hugely beneficial.

Environment and Resources need to be improved. Consistency of resources, especially those described as required in health, care, and EHC plans needs to improve. Parent Carers describe how different schools have different resources which creates a postcode lottery, and sometimes results in schools not using the resources identified if they have similar or cannot afford to buy them in (even though the EHCP should cover the cost). Schools are not protecting EHCP monies and tell families they cannot afford provision / resources / support / interventions even though a child's needs should be covered through SEN support or EHCP funding. Sensory safe spaces and sensory considered communal spaces are essential to creating an environment that works for all children. Visual timetables and alternative communication methods should be standardised in all schools. Preparation for Adulthood opportunities within schools should be universally available (allowing for specialist support when needed) – such as work experience opportunities, development of skills that will be required to perform tasks identified in their PFA plans. Parent Carers also discussed how schools should have or become wellbeing hubs.

Systems to support inclusion would include standardised training offers across all settings, standardised intervention offers and access to these, as well as standardised communications about services so we can avoid schools creating confusion by amended information being shared (would this be the appropriate use of the local offer?). School staff should be provided protected time to fulfil their duties and support children effectively. Governors and Senior Managers in schools need greater awareness of roles and responsibilities within SEND and must support these to be delivered appropriately by all relevant staff. Policies and practice guidelines need to reflect inclusive values and expect inclusive practice. Quality assurance and monitoring needs to be in place to ensure.

effective implementation and practice are consistently delivered across all schools. This includes looking at how the LA as the accountable body can spot check and quality assure that provision as described in plans is being delivered as agreed and funded.

### **SEND and Inclusion Strategy:**

Feedback from Parent Carers was clear that the vision needs to be implemented as it stands and quality assurance and measuring of impact needs to be established. Parent carers discussed the role of data and insights to support measuring success and planning for future services based on what we already know about children and young people across Shropshire. Most importantly it was clear that quality assurance processes, which are transparent to families, are an essential tool to demonstrate the system has a grip on what it is accountable for and is aware of where improvements need to be made. Parent Carers also highlighted the need for the SEND and Inclusion Strategy to inform and influence other strategies across the system and decisions that are made in areas not managed by those in charge of SEND specific services, for example ensuring that adequate and appropriate housing is planned and developed throughout the year. Training, workforce development, community awareness, and building skills were also highlighted as key areas to commit to in the strategy, for both delivery and expectations. Communication has consistently been key area families wish to see improved, so the strategy needs to recognise and address this with the appropriate commitments made. Early Intervention, provision that meets need and is monitored for impact, quality of experiences when engaging with services, and feeling heard were also identified as key areas Parent carers would like to see committed to within an amended strategy.

### **Recommendations**

It is clear from discussions throughout the day that families feel the impact of change is limited, with references to those new to the system benefiting but those in the thick of it still struggling. The pace of change and impact needs to improve. A clear and holistic SEND Improvement plan should be devised with key actions and timeframes identified. This should be communicated to the community through the local offer with regular updates shared.

EHCPs are seen as a crucial vehicle that is underutilised and poorly constructed. EHCPs should be designed as a daily tool that provides the essential guide on how to support a child to thrive within school, at home, and in their community. The development of EHCPs and their structure should be reviewed with consideration to how we can achieve this.

Quality assurance of provision delivery and impact needs to improve. A robust quality assurance framework that checks the quality of contributions to plans, the delivery of provision as is described, and the impact this is having on the child and their family must be developed in coproduction.

Schools Ordinarily Available Offers are a postcode lottery. The system needs to create equity across the area, provide clear and concise information about what is accessible and how, and must provide training and support to settings and practitioners to understand how to communicate this and support families to access it. The 'Waiting Well' agenda needs to be applied, with consideration given to the holistic needs of a family whilst awaiting assessments or access to interventions and support.



The descriptions of universal, targeted, and specialist offers needs to be explored and better described. Families often describe their child as too disabled for mainstream or not disabled enough for specialist support. Thresholds can be a real barrier. For an Ordinarily Available Offer to genuinely work, we need to ensure that a child can access specialist support to enable them to participate in universal or targeted provisions. This may mean the use of a PA, or specialist equipment or training to be made available. There needs to be a simpler process to access this support if needed at less frequent intervals or in specific circumstances only.

Schools need to be held to account more robustly on the use of SEND funding, especially when the LA are accountable for the delivery of the support to meet needs. The system needs to develop a more clear and transparent way to manage schools that do not use the funding appropriately or are having to redirect the funding to prop up other financial gaps.

A refreshed SEND and Inclusion Strategy needs to retain the voice of families that has been captured already and enhanced with the latest feedback provided from the SEND community. It must have greater impact and influence across the 'non-SEND' sectors to improve experiences holistically. It is essential that the values are demonstrated from the top to support those within the system to understand the expectations and values within the Strategy.

All actions, decisions, and planning must be coproduced with Parent Carers voices heard and valued.

## Appendix A

### Workshop Feedback

#### EHCPs

#### **Aspirations**

- Important to put in place early
- Child's Voice, aspirations to be included
- Link to future employment goals
- Always lead back to the child
- SENCos need to understand the statistics on employment and SEN pupils
- Looking ahead, beyond the present

#### **Provision**

- What the child needs
- Provision has been in place for many – where is the accountability and who checks the provision
- Needs to be managed at the beginning
- Geographical lottery – who is checking all children get equitable opportunities – differences in schools
- Needs implementation – not just a phone call
- Social Care elements need to include social activities, lifelong skills development in social situations, experiences that nondisabled peers would usually experience too (such as holidays)
- Must include transport to school and activities (all ages)
- Targets for provision
- Clearly identified to the child's need (need – provision – outcome – aspiration)
- Aspirations of all clearly identified and linked
- What helps the child to be included (reasonable adjustments etc)
- Families input needs to be clear and given the same weighting
- Health to be more included in targets

#### **Plan Details**

- Must be followed
- More succinct and clear
- Long term objectives – 2 years, not filtering them or diluting them
- Taken years to understand what the plans should include
- Would benefit from covering explanation – a summary page at the beginning of the plan to support better understanding delivery and implementation
- IPSEA training for parent carers and other key organisations offers where appropriate (Cerebra etc)
- Parent Carer involvement in the development of the plan structure needs improvement and to genuinely inclusive

- Takes too long for changes to be added – meaning that requirements or availability of provision may have changed
- Section B & F to be side by side – sections that synchronise or link to be clear
- National framework Vs Localised approach needs to be clear and transparent (on Local Offer?)
- Someone to take responsibility for the bits that do not fit into boxes
- Action plan at the end so everyone knows who is to do what (xxx delivered by TA, xxx delivered by external party)
- Need to end up with a skills profile / likes / dislikes / activities, work etc
- Planning ahead to include supported living or alternative
- Documents are too long. Lots of overlap, repetition – can it not be more focused or targeted
- Length and background not always helpful – history is important but does not need to be so lengthy
- Smaller profile sections
- Length of EHCP limits engagement
- Split sections based on who it is relevant for
- Terminology guide
- Sections clear and identifiable
- Make sections by E H C
- Person centred approach
- Social care bit must be filled in
- Intervention fund whilst awaiting decision (graduated process)
- Timescales and communication to be used and communicated well
- Parent Carers to be kept up to date
- Attach an activity plan
- Signposting and info to be provided as soon as LA are engaged
- Areas of Strengths need to be included
- Use of language needs to be clearer
- Language – the use of ‘Mom say’s’ undermines the contributions made and shows a difference in power and respect for the information provided. Just use my name
- application
- Clearer information on the Local Offer to support families
- Guidance on who can request an EHCP
- EHCPs to be used in AP, Independent, Private settings
- Annual Review Backlog needs to be dealt with in the system
- People are having reviews before the previous one has been completed on paperwork
- Current plans need to reflect the child and their needs now!
- Unfair to prioritise new cases
- Lack of cohesive communication
- Overly Education focused (where is the H and C)
- Jargon and unclear language
- Plans do not reflect the person that we see in our children, what they like and do not like
- Social care needs not clear in the plans
- PFA sections need to be better highlighted and clear
- Applications need to have information transferred over – application information should be included in plans



- Needs to include information about child's behaviour such as if they abscond etc
- Plans need to include levels and phases of independence development (such as at stage one we learn basic awareness of road safety, phase two we explore planning a short journey, phase three travel that route with support often, etc)
- Needs to include skills that support them to survive in life
- Need to include triggers for the child
- Activity plans need to be included
- Crib sheet – needs, support, risks
- Clear outcomes
- Next steps and planning included
- Mental Health Needs and Risk Assessments need to be included
- Outcomes that explore life outside school
- Needs to be used as a vehicle to deliver support and meet need
- Reviews by staff need to be delivered by those who know the children
- Need to include adaptive teaching and learning style
- Include skills to support social development and life
- Factors impacting sensory needs

### Quality Assurance & Process

- LA need to go in and check provision and delivery of required elements in EHCP
- Annual Reviews need more LA input
- Plans need to be followed in school – must be meaningful
- Changed appropriately
- Who makes sure EHCP is being delivered and is appropriate across all schools
- Communication between families' schools and LA needs to improve
- Families should know who the case officer is, and key worker identified to support through the process
- SENCos need to signpost towards non educational provisions and activities
- Training for parents on the process (videos?)
- Make sure the right people are invited to meetings with follow up
- More advance warning of meetings (who is organising them and who is responsible for communications to parent carers) and improved comms through the year
- Could be standardised – explaining delays
- Capturing CYP perspective – videos, digital records, documents
- Exits and cessation – need more than just a letter to the CYP – graduated, planned, and communicated exit arrangements to include where and how we manage the health and care bits that remain requirements – transitions etc
- Feels like a tick box exercise – process designed for the LA not families or schools
- Ensure SMART / meaningful for child and family
- Centralised record – virtual EHCP or online records for easy and regular updates and access
- Keep reports and information used for reference
- Executive Summary
- Identify and manage schools that are challenging or not supportive of EHCP
- Schools do not listen to families - Parent Carers feel unheard



- Families feel that schools do not understand how families can help and how they can support children too
- Clear description of what is available and what could happen next
- Systems need to be in place to make sure we do not hit crisis before EHCP becomes an option
- Need to adhere to timelines
- Listen to parent carers
- Explain the process – support, signposting, where to go for help
- Use EHCP proactively not reactively
- Not just a tick box

### **Implementation**

- Staff training to deliver support as described
- Staff need to understand the EHCP
- Staff need to follow the care plan
- Consistency of training, e-learning is not effective. need evidence to change and monitor the impact of training
- Time built in for 1:1 handover discussion
- Colour coded sections to help find things easily
- Ensure the professionals have the time to input into the process
- Outcomes need to be clear
- Communication pathways and expectations need to be well established between parent carers and staff
- Policies need to be flexible
- Signposting within services needs to be more effective

### **Schools Ordinarily Available Offer**

#### **Inclusive focused people**

- Values – everyone's welcome and equally important
- Nurture focused throughout education journey
- Curiosity of teachers
- Celebrate diversity
- Child led learning
- Training understanding of why things need to be different for some children
- Bespoke specialist, targeted, universal
- If everyone did the job properly
- Treat people as you want to be treated
- Not statistics
- Access to right package of care
- 'ordinary' one size does not fit all
- What meets need got to be tailored
- Accountability – who makes sure every child gets what they need

- People cannot provide the provision (respite)
- Cannot find PAs
- How do we meet the need of the child (i.e., not exclude) and support the family
- If exclude but what other help can we offer wider family
- Modelling
- Label focus – the narrative needs to change
- Awareness
- Listen to parent carers
- All staff must be aware of additional needs
- Inclusion
- Teachers to get on pupils' level
- Encourage individualism
- Ask and listen to cyp

### **Embedded reasonable adjustments**

- Differences between primary and secondary – easier to dip in and out at primary
- Secondary focuses more on attainment – needs to shift
- Uniform policy allows flex
- Use of other sanctions – how to focus on positives, not negatives, so the negatives do not become acceptable – having reward plans that work for SEND pupils
- Absence – have educational day pack to do at home which supports current curriculum to support the child when they are struggling to cope in school
- Use of other sanctions – how to focus on positives not negatives so the negatives do not become acceptable – having reward plans that work for SEND pupils
- Safe spaces in school and acceptable chill out zone – wellbeing hub
- Rules – why do they need to wear uniform?
- Reasonable adjustments
  - Uniform in the workplace?
  - Consistency – consider needs, behaviour policy
  - Sensory needs – uniform
  - Exclusions – coat, kicking / ehcp not followed – need flow to get this right
- Movement breaks, sensory breaks – do not need to be at set times
- Access to sensory spaces
- Teams on site such as SALT
- Readily adaptable plans / lessons (able to build in flexibility)
- Sensory items in classrooms
- Access to OT and support needed
- Comms and buddy system
- School is school, no homework (creates issues for the child with rigid thinking)
- Tailor their day, term, year, and experience to their needs
- Changeable classroom environment
- Make it accessible to everyone – if the resources work more positively for all pupils, reduces negative experiences
- Flexibility on uniform

### **Parent Carer Needs**

- Key person and same day communication
- More regular and transparent communication (not just positive gloss)
- Accessible opportunities for parental connection or to meet with key staff
- How do we meet the need of the child (i.e., not exclude) and support the family
- If exclude but what other help can we offer wider family
- Keeping open communication with school for parents (good links to TA)
- Signposting to other support
- Families should be told about early help
- Better parental support
- Better support for parents, forums, signposting

### **Environment and resources**

- Uniform flexibility
- Teacher time for communications / intervention with parent carers
- Out of hours support so parent carers can attend meetings
- More flexible rules to allow for differences
- Environment – sensory, cyp friendships / issues
- Outdoor learning
- Adaptive teaching styles
- Using resources sensibly
- Resources
- Home school link books
- Makaton in primary schools – pupils and teachers
- Pre-school SALT assessment
- Visual timetable for every child
- Sensory room – neutral room and sensory equipment
- PFA opportunities – different pathways through this
- Visual timetables
- Individual timetable / adapted curriculum
- Transition planning and graduated transitions
- Wellbeing centres
- Education of children to include autism (Neurodiversity) – teach children that people can have differences and still be ok and are a person
- After school clubs for all – parents should not have to support extra curricular activities and trips
- On site school nurse – a contact for parent carers
- One-page profiles for all young people

### **Systems to support inclusion**

- Cross fertilisation of ideas between primary and secondary (to improve secondary experience)

- Change in the way secondary schools are measured (not just attainments)
- Putting resources in right place
- Ensuring staff have time to respond to communications
- Role of teacher – protected time
- Person Centred Practice / Coproduction
- Quality assurance
- Assessments / intervention
- Transition KS and Schools
- Reasonable adjustments / waiting on diagnosis
- More flexible provision – learning outside classroom – other spaces – moving around – exercise
- Curriculum – Risk Assessments, relevant subjects OUTCOMES, Life Skills
- Policies adapting with the times
- Looking at models of teaching curriculum and education in alternative settings and environments
- Transitions – longer, visual aids
- Transparent training / checks that is regular
- Risk Assessments
- Staff / CYP awareness
- Authority policies – adaptive
- Compulsory SEND training / awareness /experience: governors
- Two-way comms – school and parent carers
- Looking at changes
- How will SOAP be equitable and monitored across all schools?
- Visibility of kind of interventions available
- Children to be able to feel comfortable
- Alleviate pressures on children
- Differences – common knowledge
- Educating all children
- Communication for parent access to teachers – unable to speak to teachers (expected to know their email addresses or what subject they cover)
- Daily communications
- Better communication routes
- School should have useful contacts
- Communications – staff awareness

### SEND & Inclusion Strategy

- Better information held on each child
- Do parents notice the change
- Are plans coming through on time
- Does learning and behaviour express this
- Is the provision being made and accessible
- Put the vision into practice

- What does this mean?
- Establish the vision first
- Does it need to change and adapt
- Get on with it
- Needs to demonstrate and add value
- Re evaluate it
  - Remove what is not working
  - Revisit keep what is working or try again
- Achievement targets – inclusive
- Right tools behind strategy to be able to deliver
- Be honest – own mistakes
- Change and move forward
- Consider school transitions but put strategy around this into practice
- Learning from strategy
- Robust monitoring of how implemented and regular review
- Strategy should challenge the system to make progress
- What does that mean to CYP with SEND
- Early intervention
- PFA starts at early years not fourteen
  - Think what its like for the child
  - Life skills
  - Independence skills
  - Cultural change
- Ability to make choices to diversify from mainstream curriculum supporting change and transition
- Guidelines for looked after children should reach same level of attainment
- Funding attached – primary – spend allocated to the child and shown! – secondary – it is not specified deems to go into a generic pot and not accountable (should be mandatory)
- If know housing needs, why not commission purpose-built homes for multiple occupants / developers required to deliver x amount SEND specific – 4 ensuite, equal provision for all occupants
- Respite respite respite – lack of creative opportunities, and ladders of opportunity (layers of building skills and progression)
- Looking at more opportunities for volunteering, pt work, employment
- Different approach to work and life / community opportunities
- YP having a voice but a voice about opportunities and opportunities that are available
- Ensure that monitoring and data is reflective of the diversity of the SEND community – to ensure diverse needs are being met
- Parent Carers and young people feel supported at all stages of the journey
- When things are going well and not just within crisis
- Parent carers know where to go and can communicate their CYP needs
- Assessment = diagnosis pathway – timescales and positive experience reported as improved
- Positive experience of post diagnostic support reported
- Measures of parent carer health and wellbeing (and other support availability) – showing positive improvements
- Shared and aligned outcomes across the system – impact measures



- Positive outcomes for CYP
- Open feedback – not closed questions
- Transport provision
  - Schools knowing about transport
  - Supported living
- Service practitioners / managers
  - Experience and training of SEND (before and after)
- Coproduction
  - Invited and welcomed to participate in decisions and choices
- Knowing who is available to contact if have concerns – that concerns have been escalated correctly – kept up to date
- Implement what is being committed to in the first instance and then check this has been carried out and delivered
- Voice across the system – comms between services
- Housing
  - Adaptive
  - Community focus
- Use the EHCP data to track and identify outcomes
- Involve families in ALL parts of the system
- Information sharing agreements
- Access to psychs
- Requirements for support need reviewing, i.e., EHCPs