

# Local Area - SEND newsletter for parents & carers



Dear Parent or Carer

Welcome to the first joint newsletter from all of us working together to deliver SEND services. We hope that a joined up newsletter will make it easier for parents and carers to find out what they need to know about SEND in Birmingham.

## Birmingham City Council welcomes Sue Harrison new Executive Director for Education and Skills

Sue says, 'I am delighted to be joining Birmingham City council at such an exciting time. I look forward to working in partnership with Birmingham's children, their parents and carers, along with school leaders and all our key partners who work hard to support our children and their families. Working together delivers the best outcomes for children, which is what our job is all about. Together, we will make a tangible difference.

'This is a great opportunity to improve our services for children with additional needs and disabilities. We will only achieve the culture change we need across our system in Birmingham if we hear what our parents and children are telling us about their experiences and commit to delivering real improvements on the ground. Our comprehensive improvement plan will result in better services and I look forwards to co-producing a better future for our children. I hope that parents will join us in our improvement journey, by reading our newsletters which are produced every half term, joining one of our upcoming engagement events, and finding out about our vibrant Parent Carer Forum if they are not already members.'

## Newsletter Highlights

**1st Local Area  
newsletter**

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**DfE Commissioner  
appointed**

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**New Executive Director  
for Education and Skills**

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**Together We CAN**

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**Children First**

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**Improvement for SEND  
in the NHS**

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**Co-production in action**



**Sue Harrison - new Executive  
Director for Education and Skills**

NOVEMBER 2021

## How we are going to improve the SEND service in Birmingham?

The Department for Education and NHS England, have requested that the Local Area, working with parents and carers, prepare a plan, called the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP), which will have to show how it will improve the 12 areas of significant weakness identified in the original inspection in 2018.

The SEND Improvement Board (which will be made up from a range of people across the city) will approve the plan and then keep it on track to ensure that it is improving the experience of children, young people and their families.

Some issues which require more urgent attention are already being worked on. In particular the restructure of the Special Educational Needs Assessments and Review Service (SENAR) operations team where we are appointing more case workers currently. This will enable parents to contact a named person who will know and understand their situation and the service be in better communication with schools.

### DfE Commissioner John Coughlan appointed

Birmingham education, health and care services have been told by the Department of Education (DfE) that they must quickly show all the ways that they are going to improve services for the children and families living within this City.

The (DfE) has appointed a Commissioner, to make sure that the Local Area can deliver the required improvements. The commissioner's first task is to write a report for the Education Minister which will decide if the Council is able to ensure that SEND services will improve – this has to be completed by 31st December. We will keep you update with news on that as we get it.

Sue Harrison, new Executive Director for Education and Skills said, 'It is a great privilege to have John as our Commissioner. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experiences and I look forwards to working with him to improve our services for Birmingham's children with additional needs and disabilities, and their families,'

### New Head of Service for Disabled Children



Claire Owen has been recruited as the new Head of Service for Disabled Children.

Claire comes with considerable experience as she led the Disabled Children's Service at Staffordshire for over 5 years.



# Together We Can - new programme title

Following feedback from the SEND Youth forum/RISE Youth Forum - who do not feel the term SEND represents them, they have asked that we join their campaign to replace it with Children with Additional Needs (CAN).

The partnership has agreed to this and we will begin to use CAN in all appropriate situations. We will continue to use SEND where it is currently required under the Code of Practice.

We have heard the strong message from parents and carers 'Nothing About Us Without Us' and will commit to ensuring parent and child voice is heard, valued and informs our work. It is a priority that we work together to deliver our commitment to co-production and to ensure that the voices of children and young people and their families is at the heart of all we do – Together We CAN.

## Children First Changes in Disabled Children's Social Care

We want disabled children to be empowered to live an independent life, now and in the future. So the Children First project was set up to review the current Disabled Children's and Social Care Service (DCSC) provision and improve outcomes for disabled children and young people in Birmingham.

The project team includes Birmingham Children's Trust, Parent Carers Forum, SEND, Health, Residential Services, and Early Help.

The DCSC service has been restructured and will now consist of the following teams:

- East, South and North, West & Central Safeguarding teams will deal with safeguarding concerns and Children in Care.
- The Early Help Support and Guidance team will monitor short breaks and direct payments to ensure the right package is in place and families have the support they are entitled to.
- The Complex & Enduring team will provide support for children and young people with complex and enduring mental health issues.

Other young people will be considered where there is a complex and enduring mental health issue that requires support within the home.

We will be sending out regular updates on the restructure, its benefits, and what it means to families. If you are currently being supported by the Disabled Children's Service and would like more information, please contact your allocated social worker or family support worker.



**Coming soon.....**

**Further opportunities for you to have your say and make a difference to all the changes that are taking place in the near future. Details to follow.**



Over the coming months, many activities will be taking place to start looking at how SEND support can be improved in the city. We will look at ways that include and involve the experience and views of more parents carers and young people with SEND.

In early November the co-production officer Maria McCaffrey, Communications Officer, Rachel Edwards and our Parent Carer Forum Chair Sabiha Aziz will be reaching out to projects and people within our communities in order to do two things:

- Find out more about SEND projects that are working well and involving families and what can be learnt from this?
- Listen to the experience and views of families with SEND and what matters most to them so that the changes ahead in the city are shaped by them.

**CO-PRODUCTION –  
LET'S GET  
TALKING.....**

## Improvements

The Birmingham PCF (BPCF) is working with partners in Health on a range of projects in the city and meet monthly directly with Health leads to discuss key health issues that parent-carers have raised. This parent carer feedback has led to workstreams on **selective mutism**, improving understanding of access to **Crisis support** and the **Key Worker** pilot as well as finding ways to promote **Annual Health Checks at the GP** for those over 14yrs.

The BPCF is bringing parent carer voice to work in the Autism in Schools project, as well as redesign of the Pre-Post Autism diagnosis work and the and improving the Health input on the Local Offer.

The NHS is also working at pace on:

- Working out how to keep the best of face-to-face and virtual appointments and what gives the best outcomes
- Linking GPs into the systems that schools use to support children attending school
- Strengthening support to young people as they prepare to move from children's to adult health services at age 18 years
- Strengthening systems which help health services to contribute to SEN planning and EHCPs
- Working with colleagues from early years and above to make providing speech, language and communication support 'everyone's business'
- Implementing improvements in the experience of children and young people with Learning Disability when they go to hospital
- Improving the children's access to health services for families who have their GP in one area and attend school in another related to the Birmingham – Solihull border




## **BUILDING A BRIDGE**

### **BETWEEN PARENT CARERS & THEIR SERVICE PROVIDERS**

We are a voluntary group of Birmingham Parent Carers whose purpose is to be the bridge between services and families and a collective voice representing all members and all disabilities.

We aim to build strong and sustainable links between our Local authority, Joint Clinical Commissioning Group and The Children's Trust.

[birminghampcf.org](https://www.birminghampcf.org) [info@birminghampcf.org](mailto:info@birminghampcf.org) [@birminghampcf](https://www.facebook.com/birminghampcf) [@birminghampcf](https://www.instagram.com/birminghampcf)

Click the image above to find out more about the BPCF

## Good News for Children Waiting for Therapies

The length of time children and young people are waiting for Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language has reduced over the last few months, as we recover from the effects of COVID-19.

Waiting times to **assessment** are down to an average of **7 weeks**, with 96% of children waiting less than 15 weeks at the start of October. Occupational Therapy have been targeting longest waiters who now have to wait a maximum of 30 weeks.

The Physiotherapy Service has also experienced an increase in waiting times during the pandemic and is focussed on bringing longest waits down, whilst prioritising children in most need.

We will continue to work to bring waits down further and are closely monitoring all waiting lists.

If your child is on a waiting list please see below for support that can be accessed during this time:-

- Advice lines: OT – 0121 683 2325, SLT – 0121 466 6231, PT – 0121 466 5193
- Website information - <https://www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/childrens-healthcare/services/>

SEND Local offer website [www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk](http://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk).



Are you concerned that your child has Special Educational Needs or a Disability?

The Birmingham Local Offer website provides help and support for your family  
[www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk](http://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk)

### Other Newsletters for Interest:

[The Council for Disabled Children's - Ebulletin](#)

[Preparation For Adulthood newsletter](#)

[Birmingham Parent Carer Forum Newsletter](#)



## Birmingham's Young People are on the RISE

The RISE Youth Forum formally known as the SEND Youth Forum, launched in February 2020, where by a platform was provided for 12 young people aged between 12 – 18 years from mainstream secondary schools in Birmingham.

Underpinning the framework of the forum, is promoting pupil voice and ensuring a platform is provided for the young people to voice their views, participate in discussions and decisions about policies and practices, which are affecting their life through delivery, locally and nationally at a strategic and operational level.

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