

## **Notes from parents' meeting with Ofsted/CQC inspectors**

**13 November 2018, at The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane**

The meeting was attended by all three inspectors and around 50 parent carers. These notes have been written by SPCF. They are NOT the official notes. Bullet points reflect comments made by parents.

### **Inspectors: Have you noticed a change in perspective since the reforms were implemented in 2014?**

- Services still don't talk to each other.
- It's impossible to speak to my case worker in the SEN Team.

### **Inspectors: Has there been a change in the past 12 months?**

- The local authority (LA) is not amending my child's EHCP, despite more current medical evidence. However, the school is brilliant and is making reasonable adjustments.
- Whose job is it to update the EHCP? Inspectors: It's the LA's duty.
- Parents have to project manage everything themselves. Several parents said they had to re-write the whole plan to ensure it was of a reasonable quality.
- There has been a high level of staff turnover in the SEN Team, and there is no continuity of care.
- EHCPs are a hotchpotch of information that has been copied and pasted from assessment reports. Often this information is transferred in a way that doesn't make sense, and important information is left off. Information is often in the wrong sections, e.g. provision in section A.
- Parents' feedback about the EHCP is ignored.

### **Inspectors: Has the annual review process changed in the past 6 months?**

- Professionals still don't attend annual reviews and they don't send reports.
- There was no input from a careers advisor and nobody from Health, Social Care or the SEN Team attended the Y9 review.
- Several parents raised concerns about processes in the SEN Team, for example: The SEN Team recorded dates for the receipt of documents that were different from the dates when the documents were delivered by special delivery. Paperwork was lost/mislaid. Letters were addressed to the wrong people. Parents were sent another child's report.
- Case workers don't have enough time or training to sympathise with parents. Some were excellent and worked in a child-centred way, but these have now left.
- There is no "tell it once" approach.
- Mediation resulted in a promise to review the EHCP, and changes were discussed during a home visit. The plan was then finalised without making any of the amendments to section F that had been agreed.
- It took over three years to finalise the statement-to-EHCP conversion. The parent suspects that this may have been because the child's needs were too complex. The parent has

submitted a proposal for a complex case team to the LA. This has been read, but no response has been made.

- Statement-to-EHCP conversions were finalised just before the end of March deadline despite not being ready.
- A statement was converted without any involvement by the parent or the school.
- A parent was given one week to comment on her two children's EHC plans.
- The LA does not know where to commission services like specialist speech and language therapy, or speech and language therapy for young people in further education.
- No annual review done for three years.
- A parent spent over £20,000 on specialist provision, reports and advocacy. Feels she had to do this and go into debt because she has been lied to and ignored by the LA.
- No specialist speech and language therapy provided despite this being written into the EHCP.
- The LA commissions "lesser" reports from Educational Psychology and the Speech and Language Therapy Service. Speech and Language Therapists are not allowed to recommend class sizes in their reports.
- It took years to get any input from a Speech and Language Therapist, but then it made a crucial difference for the transition to secondary school.
- The specialist Speech and Language Therapist for complex needs is hard to get hold of.

#### **Inspectors: Do you only have to "tell it once"?**

- Parents generally said that there was no "tell it once" approach, but there were exceptions; some parents had experienced some well-managed transitions, e.g. from primary to secondary school, from secondary school to college, or from mainstream to an Integrated Resource (IR). There was a consensus that this was because of individual people working well together "despite the system".
- Head teacher did not accept the child's needs. This caused the parent to request an EHC needs assessment, which resulted in a poor plan. The school then refused to make any provision that was not described in the plan.
- Parents are frequently told that the school does not have the funding to provide what is in the plan. Parents have been told by the LA that it is up to them to enforce the plan.
- Parents feel that their child needs a diagnosis to get help in school.
- There are training issues in schools, e.g. staff not understanding that some children, particularly girls, with autism mask their difficulties, which comes at the expense of their mental health and wellbeing – but that may only be apparent at home, where they feel safe.
- There is a lack of consistency. Parents feel distraught at not being able to afford to move house in order to get their child into a school that meets their needs.

#### **Inspectors: Are the professionals focused on your child and do they listen to your and your child's views?**

- No. Sheffield Children's Hospital and Ryegate are very flexible and responsive though. Integration between Ryegate and education is poor. There is no input from social care.
- The experience in primary school was awful. Parent had to pay for a private dyslexia assessment because the school refused to fund this. The child is now under CAMHS, who say

he suffers from school-induced anxiety. The school has done an intervention with the child but not evaluated it.

- All of the secondary schools in Sheffield are huge. There is no provision for children who are too able for special schools but need a smaller, more nurturing environment.

**Inspectors: How easy is it to get the resources your child needs?**

- Occupational Therapist recommended specific equipment, but the school refused to provide it. The parent is now paying privately for this.
- Nobody had a Personal Budget or Personal Health Budget.

**Inspectors: What do you think about the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum?**

- They gather our views and represent us.
- Wouldn't know half of the things I know if it wasn't for them.
- They provide easily digestible information.
- They make you feel like you're not on your own, especially those parents who are more isolated and not part of other groups.

**Inspectors: What is your experience of short breaks?**

- The grant has been positive, but due to recent cuts we don't qualify any more.
- The requirement to get evidence from a professional will put more strain on health professionals and families.
- The experience of Gibson House has been positive.
- There was no forward planning for the transition to adult social care, and a young person with very complex needs was left without any respite when they turned 18. There is a reliance on private providers which the LA cannot control.
- Families have to reach crisis point before they can get help.

**Inspectors: Are you aware of, and have you used, the local offer?**

- Approximately a quarter of parents were not aware of it.
- It's just a list of stuff.

**Inspectors: What do you think about the Sheffield Support Grid?**

- Around half of parents had not heard of the grid.
- It's difficult when a child's condition doesn't fit the grid - children are "squashed" into it.
- It's just a paper exercise.
- There is no training for parents about the grid.