

You said, we did

April 2018 - September 2018

Topic	Key issues reported by Sheffield Parent Carer Forum	Responses from Sheffield City Council and Sheffield CCG
Admissions	Several parents have reported issues with the process of agreeing a specialist placement. Examples: took four panel meetings to decide on placement; special school named on EHCP which had not been considered or visited by parents; no suitable placements for some pupils, e.g. academically able pupils with complex mental health needs.	<p>When considering placement the Local Authority must have robust, accurate and up to date information as to why a child's needs have changed and whether it is appropriate. There are occasions when information is not clear in order to make a decision. In addition there are times when a parents' preference is not available and so further information needs to be sought to consider alternatives for the child. This understandably takes time.</p> <p>We are arranging further training about assessment and review for schools. Training sessions are planned for all SENCO's to take place before Christmas on 'The graduated approach' and how assessment and review should be conducted.</p> <p>There are some issues around timing and when schools are and aren't looking at changes to placement. There are particular issues around changes for the next academic year. The LA has shared a briefing note to schools already about when they should be preparing for a change of placement.</p> <p>Phase transfer information has gone out earlier this year to ensure that there is better planning for transfer between schools.</p> <p>The admissions policy has been updated with information re SEND and school responsibilities and distributed to schools.</p>

Admissions cont		<p>SEND Assessment & Review Service will check the letter for phased transfer that it details that if a school cannot accommodate needs then an alternative may well be allocated.</p> <p>The local offer worker will work with schools, particularly special schools to ensure that information clearly details the cohort that they meet needs of.</p> <p>Locality SENCO's are visiting specialist provisions to ensure that they can provide more understanding of what they are delivering to best advise parents.</p> <p>Local Offer worker will ensure that they include Alternative provision within the AP framework on the website.</p>
Education	<p>General concerns about the inclusiveness of mainstream schools, particularly secondary schools. Examples: lack of vocational and nurturing provision, lack of staff expertise, insufficient transition support in Y7, exclusions.</p>	<p>It is concerning that parents are reporting that schools are not inclusive. There is continued work happening with the Inclusion Taskforce and Learn Sheffield who are utilising the school audit to ensure that we can review schools support further.</p> <p>Sheffield is developing the use of the London Leadership Strategy to be able to review individual schools as part of broader school improvement work through Learn Sheffield.</p> <p>The Local Authority is developing a programme of extra support for schools in addressing key areas such as transition points and support delivered within schools, particularly at SEN Support level.</p>
	<p>Concerns that alternative provision is not always properly monitored by schools.</p>	<p>Sheffield City Council quality assures a network of AP providers through a commissioning framework. Clear guidance exists between schools, the LA and providers in these circumstances to ensure robust monitoring. For a copy of</p>

Education cont		<p>roles and responsibilities document please contact huda.ahmed@sheffield.gov.uk</p> <p>Where schools chose to directly commission AP it is up to the school to ensure these roles and responsibilities are covered.</p> <p>Additionally an Alternative Provision safeguarding factsheet is available to all schools:</p> <p>https://www.safeguardingsheffieldchildren.org/sscb/education/policies-procedures</p>
	Very positive feedback about outreach from special school to mainstream	<p>It's good to hear that outreach services are working well. We want them to support mainstream schools in developing their broader skills as well as meeting the needs of individual learners and are looking at how we utilise further support into mainstream.</p>
	<p>Lots of feedback about the impact of school funding cuts, particularly on TA support. Out of 42 parents who responded to our Facebook poll, 76% said that support in school for their child with SEN had been reduced recently.</p>	<p>It's important to note that notional SEN funding has not been reduced for individual schools, however, there is a significant shortfall on the schools block funding for Sheffield based on the governments new funding formula and what they believe we need both within schools and support services to meet the cities needs.</p> <p>Councillors are continuing to push the Department for Education for appropriate funding for schools and SEN Services (funded through what is known as the high needs block). NNPCF is also pushing at a national level about limitations of funding.</p> <p>Schools budgets are incredibly tight and so they are looking at the best ways to support individual learners and needs. This may not always be through a</p>

		Teaching Assistant intervention, but we know that parents are concerned that schools are removing TA support.
EHCP	Non-implementation of provision set out in EHCPs is an ongoing issue. Parents report that schools and the LA argue about whose responsibility it is to fund provision. Some pupils are on part-time timetables due to provision not being made.	<p>Whilst the Local Authority have a duty to ensure that provision within an EHC plan is delivered this is not easy to track or always easy to enforce. When a parent raises concerns about provision not being implemented the Local Authority would always advise that they start with a discussion with the SENCO about the reason why it's not being delivered and how support is in place.</p> <p>Information has been added to the Annual Review training and template guidance about how provision is being delivered.</p> <p>Information will be on the local offer about new templates for the My Plan and EHC Annual Review plus guidance for schools. In addition information will be written by the Local Offer worker about parent participation at the review and what to do if they've got concerns about provision not being put in place. This will be in place by Christmas 2018.</p> <p>New guidance around reduced timetables is being formalised and a briefing note has been circulated to services such as EPS. Once it is signed off it will be added to the local offer. This should be before Christmas 2018.</p> <p>Mainstream schools are all aware that additional funding to meet needs should be accessed through their locality panels. Further guidance on this is being developed to ensure consistency of approach.</p>

EHCP cont	There is no process for establishing and recording if a young person aged 16+ lacks capacity to make decisions about their EHCP.	<p>The mental capacity act is clear that capacity should be assumed for all in the first instance. Capacity is related to the individual decision and time and so it's not possible to record that a child does not have capacity to make any decision. This is part of the complexity of that legislation.</p> <p>The focus must be about the best interests of the young person and supporting them to articulate their voice. Social workers are skilled and experienced about making these assessments.</p> <p>We know that parents are often anxious about decisions for their young person as they move to adult life but we have to act within the legislation that exists.</p> <p>The Local Authority has recently appointed a 'Preparation for Adulthood Programme Manager' who has the job of drawing all the pathways and processes to support a young person towards adult life. She will be working over the coming academic year to develop this, including ensuring that processes to establish when and how a young person can input as to their education and adult life is central to all decision making.</p>
	There is no process for establishing and recording parents' communication needs.	<p>This can be included within a My Plan and Section A of the EHC plan. The new paperwork will enable this much more.</p> <p>Unfortunately current Local Authority and Health IT systems do not easily enable this and so we know we have to regularly ask.</p>
	Annual reviews: The LA is taking too long to issue decision letters and implement amendments.	We know this is the case and are working hard to get up to speed with this. As we train staff in the Local Authority and across schools to be clearer as to the outcomes of an Annual Review we hope to improve this substantially.
	Some parents report improved communication with the SEN Team, but relationships are affected by high levels of staff turnover.	It's good that communications are improving. We know it's not always the case.

EHCP cont		<p>There have been a number of changes to the team recently. We are currently recruiting to vacancies within the service following a restructure. This structure gives a much better starting point to do the job well, however, it will take time for new staff to start and be trained. Currently there are a number of agency staff within the service.</p> <p>We know that we have a high turn over of staff. This is for a range of reasons (including a recent baby!) but we are working on a staff recruitment and retention plan.</p>
	Parents have expressed doubts about LA figures showing that only 3 EHCP conversions were still outstanding at end of conversion period.	<p>There were only 3 conversions to complete as of the end of March. We know a number of parents have said that their plan wasn't converted. This is not the case as all those parents had been sent a final EHC Plan. Whilst they may not have agreed with content or information within it, the Local Authority had issued a final plan.</p> <p>One of the points that parents have raised as part of this is that they hadn't 'signed off the plan'. We need to be better at communicating the process for assessment but this is not part of the legislation. The process is that parents are asked for input and comments on the draft plan. It is then for the local authority to decide what amendments it intends to make in line with their requests. The final plan should then be issued. We have worked to make further amendments through further draft plans for many families which has often delayed the issue of a final plan, however, this is actually over and above the expectation of the SEND Code of Practice. The Local Authority does not have to agree to all the proposed changes a parent requests, but we would always want to work with parents on this.</p>
Finance/benefits	Several enquiries from parents looking for help with benefits applications and appeals (DLA, PIP, Carers Allowance).	Parents should contact benefit services for advice and guidance on their own individual needs and specific benefits available to them. Support in completing

		<p>applications would be accessed through their services. We will seek to establish further advice and guidance on this.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits</p>
Health	<p>Many parents and some GPs are not clear about pathways for accessing health assessments and support (e.g. for dyspraxia, sensory issues, mental health issues, behavioural issues).</p>	<p>CCG working to unpick pathways both as part of community services review and transforming care reviews to clearly specify pathways to access provision Once completed these will be advertised widely via links from the Local offer websites.</p> <p>Significant work ongoing about changes in practice and availability of services</p>
	<p>Mixed feedback about SLT, specific to individual therapists</p>	<p>Specific concerns should be raised with the service or via Sheffield Children's Hospital complaints team and CCG</p>
	<p>Waiting time for SAANS is over 39 weeks. Parents report that the service is only dealing with those who are in crisis and cannot offer any ongoing support or signposting.</p>	<p>SAANS has a limited resource and in order to provide equitable access to those referred, the service provides assessment and time limited follow up.</p> <p>Whilst not specifically commissioned to be a crisis service, it does offer assessment appointments for urgent referrals in circumstances where if assessment is not facilitated, there will be an imminent serious detrimental effect on the referred person.</p> <p>At assessment the majority of people are offered some advice and signposting.</p> <p>The service does offer some time limited support for people with identified needs that can be addressed by staff within the team which include Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Psychology</p>

MyPlan	Parents report that some schools agree to draw up a MyPlan, but are then extremely slow to action this	<p>Parents should always start by discussing with the school SENCO.</p> <p>We will ensure that as part of upcoming training we advice schools of the need to communicate well with parents as to what they're doing and how.</p>
	Several parents have reported that provision set out in their child's MyPlan is not being made.	Parents again should start by discussing this with the School SENCO. Schools should put in place information and advice provided by services. The My Plan draws all this advice together into a clear plan.
Transport	<p>The consultation about changes to SEN transport policy was too short and done during the school holidays. Some parents felt the wording of the letter announcing the changes was misleading. They expressed concerns that the changes could mean that young people are forced into independent travel training before they are ready. Parents feel they are best placed to decide when their child is ready, not a travel panel.</p>	<p>The consultation was planned for June 2018, however was delayed by circumstances beyond our control. Consultation starting shortly before the summer holidays was not ideal, but in order to have a refreshed policy in place for Sept 2018 this proved to be unavoidable. The consultation period was extended as much as possible in light of this.</p> <p>Young people will not be forced into travel training before they are ready. Individual assessments are carried out in person to check suitability, and we always engage with parents/carers.</p>
	<p>Parents have reported a range of communication issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Messages not passed on to taxi driver by transport office and/or taxi company - Poor communication between SEN transport and Staniforth Road, e.g. both sending out copies of TIF - The offer of independent travel training is not communicated well to parents, e.g. just told that their child will have an assessment for ITT - Letters with photos of driver, escort and vehicle are appreciated by families, but in some cases these contained incorrect information 	<p>I understand that messages not being passed on to the right person can be very frustrating. Transport Services work closely with our own drivers as well as private taxi operators, however we are always looking to improve wherever possible. Any communication issues need to be reported directly to Transport Services at the time.</p> <p>Both Transport Services and the Training and Assessment team did send out TIFs – this was a miscommunication on our part, which we will ensure is not repeated.</p>

Transport cont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confusion about eligibility for post-19 SEN transport and how to apply, information not included in Post-16 Transport Policy - Parents confused by question about claiming parental reimbursement on travel support request form 	<p>Independent travel training – we are currently reviewing the service, and awareness raising and communication with parents and other stakeholders in central to this.</p> <p>Post 19 – we were not fully prepared at the post of application, for which I apologise. This has now been remedied.</p> <p>Parental reimbursement – the question is intended to check whether parents would be interested in receiving a mileage based payment for getting their own child to school. We will review the wording and make sure this is clear.</p>
	Concerns raised about length of time primary school children are travelling on minibuses	We actively look for opportunities to reduce travel time, particularly for primary aged children. This however is in part dependent on home/school locations, as well as balancing this with the responsibility of managing the cost of the service
	<p>Feedback on post-16 travel charge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reminders sent that termly payment is due - Payments demanded before bursary applications processed - Vulnerable student bursary far higher than requested - Fairness: not fair to charge when education now up to 18, not fair that charges are not pro rata (e.g. for those attending 3 days/week, school leavers) - Parents told by some providers that the discretionary bursary will only cover the price of a 16-18-year-old's weekly pass for term time, which is less than £540 	<p>No reminders – this is something we can look at.</p> <p>Payments demanded before bursary applications were processed – payments were initially requested in September 2017, however unpaid invoices were not followed up until January 2018. Aside from that specific point, this was the first year of charging a contribution towards the costs, and I acknowledge that the process was 'bumpy' in places. We have learned a great deal for the experience and it will run much more smoothly as we go forward.</p> <p>Vulnerable bursary more than requested – the number of applications for the vulnerable bursary are relatively small, and this is paid by central Government. If, on application, a parent/carer feels that the full amount of £1200 is not necessary – for example if it is only needed to cover the cost of the transport contribution, please state this on the application form.</p> <p>Fairness – many students full-time courses are set over a 4 day week, and it was decided that the £540, as a contribution towards a much higher total cost</p>

		<p>(estimated as between £2,000 and £12,000 per student), would still apply. Where parent/carers contacted us in relation to a 3 day week, the decision was made to reduce the contribution to £400.</p> <p>Parents told by some providers that the discretionary bursary will only cover the price of a 16-18-year-old's weekly pass for term time, which is less than £540 – I am not entirely clear what this means, please can you ask the parent/s to contact the Training & Assessment team directly re this 0114 2053542</p>
	Issues with sickness cover: different drivers turning up at different times, often arriving late	Again, we would always look to improve any issues around sickness, arrival times etc. Please ask parents to contact Transport Services directly if issues such as this arise.
	One-off incident where new driver turned up far too early and would not wait, young people had to be taken in by their parents or were left in college waiting area for an hour	The situation described is simply unacceptable, and I would expect that this will not happen again.
	Several enquiries from parents whose application for SEN Transport had been refused	Difficult to comment in general terms. Each year there are some applications which are turned down, and the two stage appeal process is made clear in each case. Please encourage parent/carers to follow this process .
Social Care	<p>Comments about the short breaks consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not clear that Direct Payments were included in this - The consultation document did not make it clear that the LA was planning to implement ALL of the changes. Some parents felt the wording was deliberately misleading. - Parents felt that their responses had not been 	<p>These points were raised and discussed at the September Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny Committee – draft minutes are published on the council website at:</p> <p>http://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=122&MId=7068&Ver=4</p>

Social Care cont	<p>considered when making the decision – they felt it was a done deal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Several parents said they would no longer be able to have a holiday. - Families earning just over £21k said they would struggle to pay the contribution to short breaks clubs. 	
	<p>Comments about the letter announcing the changes: Many parents found the letter confusing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Several parents asked if families who have an income above £21k but get child tax credits would be exempt. - Several parents asked if they would have to pay the full cost of 1:1 tuition (e.g. climbing lessons) if their child cannot access group activities due to their disability 	
	<p>Some parents mentioned that they had missed out on the short breaks grant due to not knowing about it or being given incorrect information about eligibility criteria</p>	
	<p>Ongoing issues with treating families with disabled children as if there were safeguarding concerns. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent contacted SCC asking for help with behaviour management, safe restraint training. Was distressed when called back by someone from the Safeguarding Children Team. - Child in Need visits: not clear why these are done 	

	more frequently now, or indeed what the frequency should be	
Transition	<p>We have received numerous comments highlighting issues with provision at the Sheffield College. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents are not happy with the change from four to three days per week for students on Personal Progress courses. Not clear who is responsible for funding provision on the 4th and 5th day and how to apply for this - Provision that was promised is not being made for students on PP courses (drama and dance) - Concerns about lack of ambition, e.g. students working below the level they had attained when leaving school - Staff refusing to use Makaton - Poor communication with parents, e.g. refusal to write in home/school book, parents not informed about days when college closed to students, college slow to inform parents about timetable for next academic year, which means parents can't plan package of care <p>Students who are supposed to be learning until 4pm are put on busses at 3pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peaks campus is more suitable for students with SEND, but all the Personal Progress courses are at Hillsborough campus 	<p>The Local Authority are working with Sheffield College as we develop provision across the city. The new Assistant Principal for Maths, English and Inclusion started 4 weeks ago and has already met with the Parent Carer Forum and individual parents about concerns.</p> <p>We know that there is a lack of understanding as to how study programmes operate and how provision can be accessed across a full week where it is needed. We will look at how this is communicated as part of the work of the new Preparation for Adulthood Programme Manager (who started a couple of weeks ago!).</p>

	- No TA support for students on Maths and English GCSE courses-	
	Parents are concerned that adult social care assessments are not completed on time before young people turn 18, leading to gaps in services	<p>The Children with Disabilities Social Care Team is looking at how transition planning for social care for those who meet their thresholds are developed but also needs to adapt the service structure in order to do this.</p> <p>We anticipate having a clearer plan and information to share with parents by Christmas 2018.</p>