

Dear Parent/Carer

Thank you for your letter and the points you raise. While I can confirm that we are firmly on a journey of improvement, I will readily concede that we still have major challenges ahead of us.

Although we are successfully establishing many of the building blocks that will drive sustained improvements to our SEND service in the years to come, there is still a long way to go. However, making a sustained, lasting difference means getting the fundamentals right and as Director of Children's Services this is my top priority.

There are some clear examples of increased listening and engagement with young people and parent-carers that I think are worth mentioning, including:

- A survey we conducted in May successfully engaged 788 parent-carers for their views, from which we can measure progress over time.
- In addition, we held eight 'Have Your Say' events in early 2022 which engaged another 93 parent-carers.
- Since May 2022, we have begun to increase youth participation activities and involvement, (largely via RISE and YES groups), with a view to expanding further. We know we have a long way to go but have made a positive start and I would like to thank all the young people who have shared their experiences and ideas for improvement with us.
- We have involved parent-carers and young people in multiple service improvements, including the design of EHCP forms and processes, improvements to the Local Offer website, survey and performance reporting design. I would like to thank all who have given their time to co-producing these key improvements, and for contributing to initial discussions to develop our SEND and Inclusion Strategy.
- There have been regular team members attending Parent Carer Forum meetings and events.
- We have co-designed and agreed a Co-Production Framework and Charter (which the PCF was invited to sign in July).
- We are also developing our communications channels and building a 'you said, we did' section on the SEND Local Offer website.

The Parent Carer Survey will help us to objectively understand where we are now with parent-carer views – offering a 'baseline' from which to measure progress over time. (We will also re-evaluate the Charter's impact by November 2022 with a repeated parent-carer survey). At all stages, children, young people, parents and carers are at the heart of everything we do. Furthermore, I am clear that they must feel they can hold us to account, and your involvement and support in this regard will continue to be highly welcomed and invaluable.

Some detailed findings from the survey include:

Indicator	Survey Response
No of parent-carers engaged with	788 survey respondents and 93 event participants (May 2022). The number in 2021/22 was unknown but significantly lower. Survey responses were over double the highest number previously in 2019.
% of parent-carers surveyed who were satisfied with SEND services % of parent-carers surveyed who think SEND services have improved	In May 2022, 32% said “Good” or “Very Good” and 27% said services has “Improved” or “Improved Significantly” in the last year (n=788).
% parent-carers who feel updated and informed about SEND services in Birmingham	42% (May 2022)
% parent-carers who feel they have had an opportunity to give feedback about SEND services in Birmingham	26% (May 2022)
% parent-carers who feel they have had an opportunity to influence changes in the SEND services available in the city	16% (May 2022)

It is important to acknowledge that much of the above activity is ‘strategic’ and will not yet have filtered down to evidence a change in the experiences of individual families accessing services today. However, if we do not put these strategic building blocks of improvement in place, we will not be able to deliver a consistently good service to our children and families. To measure the difference we are making on the ground going forward, an Improvement Programme Team has now been established and will progress practical changes such as improving relations and processes with schools and SENAR, alongside quality assurance, ICT and workforce development reforms. Admittedly, there is a long way to go, but data suggests some modest improvements are beginning to be made:

Indicator	Improvement Made
Statutory Deadlines to issue school phase transfers for EHCPs met	91% of Reception placements were confirmed (121 out of 132), 97% of Year 2 placements were confirmed (29 out of 30) and 99% of Secondary placements were confirmed (677 out of 685). The figure was 0% in 2020/21.
Improved on the 20-week statutory compliance with Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments	65% of assessments were completed within 20 weeks in May 2022 (813 out of 1245 new plans) compared to 53% in May 2021 (524 out of 989 new plans) and 65% national average.
Progress made on addressing the Annual Review backlog	The % Annual Reviews actioned for May 2022 was 25% (158 out of 632). This was at 0.4% in September 2021 (1 out of 239).
No and % NEETs with EHCPs from 9% in May 2021 (945 young people) to 4% in May 2022 (425 young people)	With more appropriate casework now in place, there are now 4% (425 young people) NEET with EHCPs, a reduction from 9% (945 young people) in May 2021.

The pace of change can be frustrating, and I personally share that frustration, but I must stress that we are not only committed to improving services, but to transforming them. And this must involve delivering excellence for all, right across our city. This can only be achieved through delivering a culture change across our system. I am pleased that supporting children and young people with SEND is a key priority in the Birmingham Children's Partnership developing a Children and Young People's Plan, demonstrating how seriously the council and all partners in the city are taking our SEND improvement journey.

Our partnership with parents and carers is something that we value, and your insight will help us to drive change as well as redesign and improve frontline services. Input from the Parent Carer Forum, at all stages, is essential in this regard.

I am grateful for your recognition that we are on a two to three-year improvement journey and I promise you that we will listen, respond, and look to strengthen our communications with you and the whole SEND community as a means of apprising you of the improvements we are making as they happen.

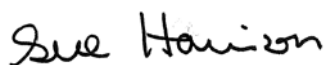
Our Accelerated Progress Plan has now been published, and contains progress milestones for which we will, quite rightly, be held accountable.

As you mention in your letter, you have heard talk of pressing the reset button before. On behalf of the entire team in Children's Services I want to reassure you that we hear you and that our priority is to continue to listen, to co-produce solutions and address your suggestions to make improvements a reality for children, young people and their families with additional needs in Birmingham.

This response has been focussed on the services I'm directly responsible for as director. Please be assured that I am continuing to work hard with senior leaders in health and social care to address the concerns you have in those areas.

We appreciate that we have no time to waste, and we are committed to getting on with the job.

My very best wishes



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