



**Response to Cheshire East  
Parent Carer Forum  
Members' questions  
AGM (12 Nov 2020)**



## Response to CEPCF Members' questions @ AGM (12 Nov 2020)

### 1. My child's school is refusing to create, update or show me a SEN Support Plan.

**The SENCO at my child's school is reluctant to do a needs assessment saying it's better if parents request it – does it make a difference who asks for an assessment?**

**What are the next steps for parent carers when the setting is not following the graduated response set out in the SEND toolkit?**

## Response

Schools should use the Cheshire East SEND Toolkit and if the child/young person's needs are identified at SEND support level they should have a SEND support plan which identifies how their needs will be responded to and met. If further advice and guidance is needed, then parents/carers can seek support from Cheshire East Advice and Information Service (CEIAS) 0300 123 5166; CEIAS have a website with lots of useful information do take a look : [Cheshire East Information, Advice and Support](#). CEIAS can liaise with a SENCO from the Inclusion and Quality Team (IQT) who is employed by the Local Authority if further advice is needed about what the school should be offering as part of the graduated approach.

If parents/carers are still unhappy with the response from the school, they can follow the school's complaints procedure which should be available on each school's website.

Needs assessment requests can be made by either the school or the parent/carer. A decision on whether to assess can sometimes be made more quickly when submitted by schools/settings as there is often more evidence submitted with the original request. We have suggested to the PCF that we work together to provide to further guidance for parents/carers to support them on what type of supporting information would improve the process.

**2. When are the assess plan do review meetings each term going to start, as school only reluctantly doing just the annual review?**

## **Response**

Termly review meetings are good practise as outlined in the Code of Practise and we do encourage this by using our school implementation plans.

If these are not happening routinely it would be good to let us know where this is the case. The IQT are planning some training and advice for settings on the Toolkit and the expectations of the Local Authority.

**3. Complaints about SEND provision in settings**

**a) What action does CE LA take in response to upheld SEND complaints in its schools?**

**b) How is the success and impact on pupils of these actions, shared and measured post SEND complaints?**

## **Response**

The IQT has recently started to collate all information about settings against key SEND Indicators (such as the proportion of pupils with SEND, number of Needs Assessments requests, number of children on part-time timetables etc) as well as other useful data and intelligence we have collated from various sources. The aim of this is to look at all the data and information we have from across multiple services and use this to make decisions on the best and most effective ways to support schools. IQT has started to work with the School Improvement team on this so that all our information is in one place.

Individual complaints are dealt with under the school's own complaints procedure and schools are not required to submit these to the Local Authority.

In the case of maintained schools, the Local Authority would only be made aware of these if the complaint is escalated to us by the parents.

In terms of academies, they will have their own complaints procedures and, if a parent/carer is unhappy with this, their complaint would be escalated to the ESFA, and not the local authority.

Where we have been made aware of concerns and we have asked that steps are taken to address those concerns, we are under a duty to ask the school to confirm that they have taken those steps. We are including key themes around concerns in the data we are collating through the IQT team and this will be used to feed into the identifying the key focus areas for support for schools.

#### **4. Communication and coproduction**

- c) What is the expected timeframe for CE responses to emails?**
- d) What should a parent carer do if they are consistently having to chase?**
- e) I've emailed the generic send team email but keep getting no response, and I know others have said the same. How do we communicate with our key worker or report writer?**
- f) How are plans able to be written with no contact from keyworkers at all?**
- g) How are you going to improve communication between the SEND Team and parents, especially in the first 14 weeks of the EHCP process?**
- h) Is there any way that notes about a parent's needs and preferences are recorded on your system?**
- i) I really struggle to have conversations on the phone, and I really want everything in writing so I can get my head round it. I keep telling team members this but they keep calling. I also can't use egress. I tell one person and they agree but then someone else picks up the case and I have to start again each time.**

### **Response**

a) Staff aim to respond to email queries within 3-5 days, in some instances such as illness or leave staff may not respond to emails within these timeframes; in these cases parents/carers are able to contact the locality managers where needed for support (below is the link directly to staff contact details)

c) Link to staff page <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/local-offer-for-children-with-sen-and-disabilities/send-developments/sending-you-the-news/send-team-roles-and-responsibilities.aspx>

c/d/e) Our aim is to embed a culture of working TOGETHER across all teams to support improved communication with parents/carers and Children and Young People. We have invested in more capacity into the locality teams to support with workloads in particularly with regards to new Needs Assessments, our aim is to ensure that moving forwards we are working TOGETHER throughout the process. However, we understand that further work is needed to get to where we want to be.

We have held one session facilitated by the CDC (Council for Disabled Children) to help improve our understanding of Coproduction, the different levels of coproduction and how these should be implemented. We agreed an action plan with the CDC which will be included as part of our new quality plan. This will be agreed and overseen at Workstream A (which has representatives from the PCF in attendance).

f/g) Plans should not be agreed without communication/contact with parent/carers. This is not in line with the Code of Practice. We have worked with PCF representatives and practise champions across all services to review the full process and will be publishing a guide to the 20-week process.

We have developed a new SEND Training Programme for staff to improve practice and consistency. The programme has delivered 3 sessions to date of 25 sessions in total for the Spring Term. This has been shared with the PCF. We would welcome parent/carer reps on all the sessions. We have the following sessions which will specifically help to improve communication (these are just a selection from the whole programme):

• Parental Perspectives in SEND – Ruby’s Fund and CEPCF
• Master Class’ - EHCPs and the SEND Code of Practice – Gill Tyler, DCO
• The Cheshire East SEND Toolkit – Andrea Phelps-Brown, Dawn Cranshaw and Kay Clarke (SENCOs)
• Understanding and Preventing Complaints and Tribunals – Charlotte Greenbank and Matt Prenton (Complaints and Tribunal Managers)
• Young People’s Voice – Carrie-Anne Charlesworth and a young person representative
• The Statutory 20-week Process – Locality Managers

## 5. Keyworkers

- a) We would like to change our case worker how do we do this?
- b) I am confused – I have been asking my child’s keyworker to help with transport, and with issues about provision not happening, but they have told me that it’s not their role – whose is it? Please can we have a job description for clarity?
- c) What is the role of the LA send keyworker?

## Response

If there is any concern in relation to a keyworker in the first instance you should try to resolve these direct with your keyworker. If required you can seek further support from the Locality Manager. We must manage the wellbeing and workloads of keyworkers therefore cannot always accommodate changes except in exceptional circumstances. Staff are supported with professional development with a structured training and development programme.

Locality managers shared a document during virtual coffee sessions on the roles of staff within teams, this will be placed on our sending you the news webpages to view.

We are in the process of producing FAQ and updated information regarding transport and we will ensure this is shared with PCF as soon as this is available.

## 6. Annual reviews

- a) **Should the Annual review be about just going over the paperwork, or should we be looking at whether the support is actually helping our child reach their goals? Time is so limited that the paperwork takes the whole time**
- b) **What paperwork should parents be getting from their school/college before an annual review? This year I have been told that due to COVID this may be difficult, but it is the same every year. I have to ask for paperwork but am told 'we don't have to do any pre-review paperwork anymore. How does the LA follow up on settings not providing this?**
- c) **What happens when EHCP was returned for update and has never been returned. Annual review, not had one for 2 years, why? No Social worker no idea who to contact regarding problems.**
- d) **What use is the new annual review process if schools aren't doing it?**

## Response

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/local-offer-for-children-with-sen-and-disabilities/send-developments/sending-you-the-news/ehcp-annual-reviews-process-update.aspx>

and

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/local-offer-for-children-with-sen-and-disabilities/education/supporting-send-in-education/ehc-assessments-plans/annual-reviews-of-ehc-plans.aspx>

Annual Review Process and guidance is available on our website and SENDCO training has taken place.

The review should focus on the child or young person's progress towards achieving the outcomes specified in the EHC plan. The review must also consider whether these outcomes and supporting targets remain appropriate.

- review the special educational provision made for the child or young person to ensure it is being effective in ensuring access to teaching and learning and good progress

- review the health and social care provision made for the child or young person and its effectiveness in ensuring good progress towards outcomes
- consider the continuing appropriateness of the EHC plan in the light of the child or young person's progress during the previous year or changed circumstances and whether changes are required including any changes to outcomes, enhanced provision, change of educational establishment or whether the EHC plan should be discontinued
- set new interim targets for the coming year and where appropriate, agree new outcomes
- review any interim targets set by the early years provider, school or college or other education provider"

We have issued new guidance including a standard agenda (links above), to support settings in covering all topics required at the review meeting. The new review paperwork can be used to guide the meeting, but this does also include questions regarding if the provision remains appropriate.

There is no longer specific pre review paperwork for settings to complete. However, we have made our expectation clear that in line with legal requirements, we expect every setting to submit all updated reports and information to the LA and send to attendees 2 weeks before the meeting. The child/young person and parent/carers should be asked to complete updated views and advice templates prior to the meeting. These are also available online.

We now have a more effective and robust monitoring system in place and are working to reduce the number of overdue review meetings. We apologise where reviews have been late or updated EHCP plans have not been actioned timely. This is one of our main focus areas over the next 12 months and have plans to see much improved performance in this area.

We have not changed the review process. The requirement to complete Annual Reviews is set out by law in the SEND Code of Practice. We have greatly improved our guidance available for families, settings and professionals and have given clear expectations to settings that reviews are held on time.

We will continue to work with PCF through Workstream groups to allow us to monitor the impact of the changes and ensure this does make a difference to children, young people and families, ensuring that we have a clear feedback loop.

**7. How will preparation for adulthood have a main focus in EHCP reviews with lots of information for young people and parents?**

## Response

We have recently finalised and signed off a coproduced Preparing for Adulthood Strategy. This contains 6 key priorities. We are currently working to turn this into an Implementation Plan, and we need your help with this, we will be working with PCF over the next few months. As part of improving Preparing for Adulthood we have developed e-learning and we are asking that all staff complete this as part of their continued professional development and training programme. This is a continued area of focus for us over the next 12 months.

It is a requirement from year 9 to ensure preparation for adulthood (PFA) is included as a focus in annual reviews, there are resources and information on our Cheshire East website to support with guidance and advice. Schools have access to Youth Support Service and Keyworkers to offer further advice and support as needed.

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/services-from-childrens-social-care/youth-offending-and-preventative-services/youth-support.aspx>

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/local-offer-for-children-with-sen-and-disabilities/preparing-for-adulthood/preparing-for-adulthood.aspx>

**8. How will my young person's aspirations for the future be realised if a secondary school doesn't offer the KS4 options for them?**

## Response

All schools look to offer a broad and balanced curriculum, but specific subjects cannot be guaranteed (except core curriculum) Children with an EHCP should have the same options and choices as all children, with the addition of any specific provision to meet identified needs in the plan.

Within the plan consideration will be given to how a child's aspirations can be reflected in provision. More work is being done as part of the PfA strategy implementation to ensure a child/young person's aspirations are discussed, planned as early as possible and realised.

Many schools are currently waiting for national decisions regarding assessment arrangements as this will determine how curriculum content and coverage will be shaped going forward. All schools try to operate within the principles of the English Baccalaureate which requires a diverse range of curriculum opportunities to allow young people to have the flexibility of learning to progress in future career opportunities.

**9. What is being put in place for transport for next September, to address the problems that keep happening year after year? Don't tell me it's COVID! It's the same every year**

## **Response**

Locality teams have all received transport training over the past few months and this will be incorporated into the SEND annual training plan. A transport meeting has taken place with PCF involved, we have identified this as a service priority area of focus during the next 12 months and will be working alongside PCF on actions/developments as needed. The Local Authority has now recruited a SEND transport lead within the transport team. The local authority is in the process of publishing FAQ and updated information on transport and we will share this as soon as it is available.

**10. Improvements being felt on the ground.**

- a) There are lots of communications about improvements, but I have not seen it! In this year's annual EHCP review or in the actual paperwork which took over 6 months to be sent from Cheshire East, when will the quality and timeliness improve?**
- b) I recently got a response to a complaint I made to CE Council. The response included a lot of detail about changes that have been made by Cheshire East to improve the services following the Inspection, but I am not seeing much evidence of that yet.**
- c) Please could it be explained what was meant, in more detail in the statement 'We have strengthened our learning following complaints'? Is it possible to include anonymised measured examples?**
- d) What checks are happening to make sure that the changes are making a difference**
- e) How will the success or otherwise of the outcomes for CYP be measured, how will you know Cheshire East have achieved them and when will they be reviewed?**

## Response

We have strengthened are learning from complaints and receive regular reports at our SEND Management Group on themes which we build into our development plans. The Locality Managers also consider the themes and will raise in a 1:1 meeting with the Keyworker or at team meetings as appropriate. We are using this information to inform the SEND annual training plan for all staff as part of continued professional development.

We also consider compliments and look at how we can learn from these and share/build on the good practice.

Annual review timeliness and quality remains a priority area for the partnership. This is now being given increased priority as a focus area over the next 12 months.

PCF will deliver a training session across all SEND staff as part of the annual training programme on parental perspectives.

Monitoring of progress continues at a number of levels. The Partnership Board monitors progress at a local level. In addition, we have regular monitoring meeting with the Department of Education SEND adviser and National Health Service England Adviser. They have commented at meetings on clear improvement and recognise the strength of local leadership in understanding local challenges and plans/ determination to continue to improve.

### **11. ASC pathway and support in schools**

- a) In regard to health and ASC pathway... still the issue with the improvements that they are making that is doesn't necessarily factor in for children that mask (questionnaire from school heavily relied upon for decision making)?**
- b) My child is masking her undiagnosed ASC, school not interested in her mental health, low self-esteem, her being victim to bullying or her lack of eating at school, because she doesn't have any educational SEN needs. No one at school knew her or wanted to fill in the CAMHS forms, how can my child get help if school not support?**
- c) My son's school says they can't do anything extra to support without a diagnosis first, and I've just been told that the wait is ages. Is this right?**

## Response

It is challenging to diagnose a need that a child is masking. This is an area the partners work together on as it is appreciated that this can eventually lead to significant escalation. Support/training is provided to schools on identifying mental health and other needs. If you have concerns you should first raise with your school, (Senco, Form teacher, Pastoral Lead. The arrangements may be different for different schools.) Referral for assessment can also be made by a GP. ASC diagnostic services are aware that Children and Young People may present differently in different settings/situations, this is taken into account during assessments and a school observation by professional ASC diagnostic team may take place where concerns are raised.

We continue to support schools in using the toolkit. This is well embedded in most schools who find it invaluable. Schools will identify and adapt support at the appropriate level of support. Diagnosis may trigger/lead to a specific response based on the identified need, but settings will be providing support on a need's basis for individual children and young people. There are commissioned services who can provide support and input whilst a child or young person is on the ASC pathway before any diagnosis is given.

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/local-offer-for-children-with-sen-and-disabilities/send-developments/sending-you-the-news/improving-autism-assessment-and-integrated-support-for-children-and-young-people.aspx>

<https://livewellservices.cheshireeast.gov.uk/Search?keywords=autism%20services&location=&distance=>

**1. If the remote learning technology is there currently set up for cases of self isolation , could it be made available to families where the children are too anxious or don't have a placement to be in school?**

## Response

Where schools have pupils isolating then this currently leads to an allocation of technology support. This is targeted at disadvantaged families. School is recognised as the best place to meet a child's needs and we would encourage children to attend their school.

Due to the pandemic access to technology has become a greater priority and something that is given great consideration

Schools across Cheshire East have been supported in widening their use of IT to support learning and this includes linking into families using Microsoft or Google IT platforms. Parents should be encouraged to be actively involved in remote learning and schools will communicate to parents' methodologies and strategies where they can actively engage with IT to help with online learning. If parents are unsure as to how they can support their child, we would encourage them to contact their school in order to find out more about the increasing technologies available.

**12. How are young people in colleges who have SEND being supported with online learning?**

## Response

We have issued a joint letter detailing support from colleges following issues raised by PCF. Representatives from the steering group are attending future meetings between the colleges and the local authority and will be able to feedback on queries.

**13. When are the inspectors coming back, and how will parents and carers be able to get involved?**

## Response

Ofsted visits were on hold during the first lockdown, as guidance is changed and updated, we will ensure that PCF have all information. There will be a revisit to specifically review progress on the written statement of action which covers timeliness, process and quality of needs assessments and autism pathways and timeliness. Ofsted will seek parent and young people views. PCF are present at all monitoring meetings with the Local Authority.

**14. What can parents do if schools and colleges say they can't provide evidence of progress made towards EHCP outcomes as children have been out of school due to COVID?**

## Response

Covid has brought about challenges for all children in terms on progress. The most recent Ofsted research report outlines the impact Covid has had on all pupils. Schools are assessing where all children currently are and looking at catch up support. As an area that was high alert area before lockdown this remains a challenge with many pupils regularly having to isolate due to close contact with a positive case. Many schools are struggling with staffing levels but working hard to remain open and keep safe. During this time the Local Authority produced a temporary change to provision plan for schools to co-produce with parents and carers to ensure there was a clear record of where changes to provision occurred and outline what provision was in place during this period. Although the government legislation for SEND changes has ended, we have requested that schools continue to use these documents to record any changes during the recent lockdown.

**15. What is the role of the Youth Support Service and how should they contribute to the annual review process?**

## Response

The Youth Support Service (YSS) is focused on transition planning and participation, supporting young people to prepare for adulthood. YSS staff will attend reviews in Cheshire East and support the completion of preparing for adulthood transition plan. They will offer advice on option choices and support with practical transition into further education or training.

The Young People's Participation Worker is based in the YSS and is working with SEND to improve young people's engagement in the planning and delivery of SEND services.

**16. The recent plan that was out for consultation acknowledged that reduced funding from central government and increased demand is having an impact on CEC's capacity to meet need in SEND services. Can you give us any reassurance about this?**

Many local authorities face challenging financial position. In relation to SEND the increase in the number of children with EHCPs and level of complexity of need is increasing far in excess of the budget provided. In addition, many independent providers increase costs above the rate of increase in funding the LA receives.

The local authority is required to submit a plan on how it will balance the budget despite the above challenges. Many LAs including Cheshire East continue to lobby for a settlement that reflects demands and need. This does not impact on the provision we agree in and EHCP and neither is it a factor in deciding to assess or issue a plan. We do however ensure efficient use of resources and have various strategic approaches to addressing pressures. A major factor in this is creating additional local provision and supporting early intervention and support.

**17. Impact of lockdown**

- a) **We all understand that 2020 has been challenging for everyone. Has the SEND team learned any lessons about working differently that you think you'll carry on?**
- b) **My daughter had an EP assessment over the phone. I was really pleased with the discussion, but both me & the EP felt that there's only so much that can be done over the phone. Will she get a proper assessment now that she's back in school? I'd like to know that her EHC plan has the right info in it.**

## Response

There has been a lot of learning throughout COVID19 and this will impact future practice where it has brought about benefits. Where EP or Health assessments have been undertaken remotely this does not mean that these assessments are of a lesser quality. We will not automatically undertake a reassessment. However, where a plan is not meeting needs then this may trigger a new assessment or further advice to the school through a consultation. Any health assessments started over the phone/video have been categorised and children and Young People will be seen face to face in order of categorisation of needs.

**18. When a YP goes into college and then onto an apprenticeship there is very little support in place- what offer is there in the way of support for YP in this position**

## Response

The Youth Support Service (YSS) will work with children and young people with the study-based element of the apprenticeship. There are financial allowances for young people accessing apprenticeships and more information can be gained from the YSS if required. <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/services-from-childrens-social-care/youth-offending-and-preventative-services/youth-support.aspx>

**We would like to thank you for your continued support**