

SEND UPDATE WEBINAR JANUARY 2023 QUESTIONS

SUFFICIENCY

- 1. How are OCC forward planning for more spaces in special schools and/or better support for those in mainstream?** *Our children / schools need help now.*
- 2. Is there more primary resource bases in planning?** *(Even if they can't publicly name the schools yet, can they tell us the areas eg Oxford, Banbury, Didcot or wherever)"*
- 3. What is being done to ensure adequate specialist provision for post 18 to avoid having to go out of county?**
- 4. Is there data on how many young people with SEN are in the county?**
- 5. Is there a strategy in place to respond to the local demand?**
- 6. What is the plan to increase specialist school placements in the area?** *My son is in year six and finding a suitable placement for him that can meet need is difficult.*

COMMUNICATION

- 1. When will communication with schools improve?**
- 2. Following the SEND Parent Carer Feedback Session in September 2021, you stated "Communication with parents from the SEN teams is key to feeling listened to, working together and getting to know our children as individuals, this currently doesn't happen and we are also working on the responsiveness of communication by the SEN Teams. What have you done since then to improve communication and how will you ensure your staff begin to follow your own communication policy?"**
- 3. Why when I submitted a formal complaint about the SEN team on 8th November have I not had a response, despite numerous emails and a phone call on Friday 6th Jan?**
- 4. Will the SEN team please provide at least one phone number that is manned and answered by a member of the team?** *We just want to be heard. I have a child with an EHCP which hasn't been updated following the last AR and despite dozens of emails and phone calls I can not get anyone to respond to me. This issue has been going on for years and seems to be getting worse. Please work with parents*

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and carers to get the system back on track. We would prefer to work in cooperation with you, but as we are systematically ignored over years we have no choice but to take combative routes which is not only wasting years of our children's education but cannot be cost efficient for you.

TRIBUNAL and FIGHT

- 1. Why do you continue to force parents to go to court of appeal for an EHC needs assessment?** *This is based on our experience of 4 of our family members all winning appeals. 2 of the children are now on specialist provision. This seems to be general practice and we assume it's a cost saving exercise.*
- 2. Why do parents have to fight so hard for what their children deserve to be treated so poorly?**
- 3. Why do county not apply the CAF and force parents to go to tribunal and judicial review?**
- 4. Why is the LA forcing parents to attend a tribunal hearing in order to get a space at a specialist school for their child?** *The LA reached out to three of these schools for our son, all of which have said they are full and have now stopped searching and completely stopped communicating with us.*
- 5. What is the plan to reduce the amount of time and money spent on Tribunal cases? Is the money not better spent and would provide better outcomes for the children if their needs were identified/addressed by the OCC team initially?** *This is specifically relating to EHCNA and failure to issue EHCPs.*
- 6. Why is it acceptable to force a parent down the path of appeal and tribunal and leave the child without any form of provision or education, even when they are of compulsory school age?** *It is only a matter of time before this approach pushes either a parent or a child to the brink of despair and you find yourselves with a serious case review following a suicide. As a family we were already living in a state of crisis and the weight of work and further trauma involved in managing the tribunal case cannot even be described.*

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MAINSTREAM

- 1. When will you stop saying SEN children can have their needs met in a mainstream setting when it's apparent from their EHCP that's they cannot.... causing child/family detrimental health issues sometimes leading to self harm of worse? *It's being used as a delay tactic and it's not appropriate***
- 2. Why do County name mainstream schools stating they can meet need when the school have said they cannot meet provision and the child is unable to attend due to EBSA?**
- 3. If a child has been unable to attend their mainstream school for a significant period of time, if they do manage to get an EHCP, why does the EHCP nearly always name the school they haven't been able to attend and only offer support once they are in school and no support outside of school to understand why they can't get in and what needs to change?**
- 4. I have a child with ASD/ADHD in Year 5. He has an EHC plan. We do not think that mainstream school is the right route for him. The specialist schools we have spoken to have advised that they need a referral from the local authority. **How do we begin those discussions in good time?** We will be doing his EHCP annual review in the summer term as advised - but that feels too late to be logging our wishes and concerns because we will need to apply for a mainstream place in September (if a specialist place is unrealistic).**

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MISSING EDUCATION

- 1. What are the SEN team within OCC doing to ensure children who are unable to attend an educational setting due to anxiety are provided with suitable, alternative full time education?**
- 2. Can the team provide an update on the EOTAS policy and plans for access to alternative provision for children who cannot attend school please?**
- 3. What is the plan for children with ECHP but no school place? *This has been the case for my son for over a year now. Where do we go for help? - we have no SENCO to turn to for support. We feel utterly lost in and forgotten by the system.***
- 4. Do you have a policy for schools and parents on EBSA and where is this publicly available?**

WAITING TIMES

- 1. What are OCC doing to reduce the waiting times at CAMHS? 3-4 years is unacceptable.**
- 2. What are OCC doing to reduce wait times and improve service for EHCP applications?**
- 3. What is being done about the CAMHS waiting list times for assessment and mental health support?**

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GENERAL CONCERNS

- 1. Why do OCC continue to fail SEN children within County?**
- 2. Why do County not provide schools with correct funding to provide ALL the provision in section F of a EHC Plan?**
- 3. How do you plan to address the significant failures and delays in the SEND department including adhering to court orders, communicating and acknowledging families and following lawful practise?**
- 4. Have you read the backpack letters submitted to you from dozens of families ? What do you have to say to those families?**

SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

- 1. When does transition into adulthood start and what happens?**
- 2. A lot of charities now have waiting lists for referrals, eg. Keen, AFSO, BFYC. Is there any support that can be offered to them to reduce waiting lists?**
- 3. Not a question but interested to hear more about what support and funding is available during early years and beyond?**
- 4. Could we have more information on the implementation of the send strategy please?** In particular more detail on what is actually going to change - number of resource base places, specialist schools, etc
- 5. What is the process for looking at appropriate secondary schools for children with EHCP's? When should you start, what do you do, what is the timeline etc. If you want specialist rather than mainstream, is this different?**

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6. I am not a single parent. I have a high level of education. I have a child with a relatively common disability and am part of my local appropriate support groups. English is my first language. All these things lead me to believe that I should be able to successfully navigate the systems and procedures needed to ensure that my child is at an educational establishment that is right for him, with the correct level of support. Despite all these things in my favour, I still find the procedures immensely difficult. There is no one place to get clear guidance on what I should be doing and when. I can ask my school SENCO, or my complex needs coordinator, or the SEN officer.... but the advice is not consistent, and it always takes a long time to hear back from the SEN South team, who are the people who I think should really know and understand the system. When I try to find the answer on the OCC SEN Local Offer web page I am totally overwhelmed. The site might make sense to people who understand the system well, but for someone who doesn't understand the system it's a labyrinth. Say for example you want to find out how you go about getting your child into a SEN secondary school. Should I look in "Support for children 5-16", "Introduction to SEN needs and disability", "Guidance and policies", or "Information and Advice". Or should I be going to SENDIASS for advice? Am I missing something? It feels like I have to fight for everything, even if that is just a fight to find out what I am supposed to be doing.... So given that I am having these problems, and that I am not necessarily doing the right thing for my child, how on earth do you expect the system to work for children who have parents who don't have as many privileges as me? Where is the simple "step by step guide? **Can you imagine what it is like to have to try and navigate this kind of system?**

I totally get that there is no magic money tree, and that we aren't all going to get exactly what we want for our children.... but it would be so much more user friendly if one could go through the system feeling that you were being supported, and that if you didn't get exactly what you thought your child needed then that was because the correct decisions had been made..... rather than worrying that you hadn't done things correctly, or that you hadn't fought hard enough. Surely resources should be allocated based on the child's needs, not the parents' abilities and tenacity.