

16th July 2019

Dear Mr Hinds and Mr Hancock

We feel compelled to write this letter to express our earnest concerns of the impact that the austerity measures are having on children and young people (CYP) with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) within our city of Peterborough. Children and young people with SEND are the most vulnerable of our citizens; they face considerable challenges and are in the greatest need for support to access and take advantage of the full facilities of the community that are more easily accessible to those who are not born with or acquire these challenges. Peterborough has received a year by year decrease in the revenue support funding that it receives from central government, despite the fact that we have an ever increasing population with complex and multifarious needs. We have therefore been hit particularly hard by the austerity measures and are experiencing considerable budget constraints when it comes to being able to deliver the support and services that are required by children and young people with SEND and their families.

Peterborough is a relatively economically deprived area with many of our Wards having high levels of children living in poverty. Our health, education and social care services are significantly underfunded and this means compared to other cities our children and families get less support and access to the services they need to achieve their full potential. These decreases in funding have come at a time when there is increasing pressure on health, education and social care to deliver on the SEND reforms by placing the children, young people and their families at the heart of the process. This is an ethos that we wholeheartedly embrace; however, this cannot be realistically delivered to every child and family that needs it because it is unaffordable within the current budget.

Within Peterborough we are witnessing some serious concerns over the effects that budget constraints are having on children, young people and their families. There are greater tensions and divisions arising, as the system is coming across as more adversarial and more and more families fight for a piece of what is perceived as an ever shrinking pot. This is leading to the breakdown of relations and trust between parents, carers and professionals. This is borne out by the unprecedented rise in the number of inappropriate requests for an EHCP needs assessment by parents because they feel that their children's needs are not being met. We have collated evidence of what we are presenting here in our annual report 2019, which we have shared with our local authority and have included with this letter.

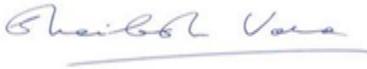
We would respectfully implore you to raise our concerns at the highest level before our situation worsens and relationships breakdown to such an extent we are unable to rebuild them; and more importantly before more children, young people and their families suffer poorer outcomes and reduced life chances than their peers elsewhere. If all services are funded more equitably and holistically from the outset, then all our children and young people can be enabled to achieve better outcomes at less cost in the future and their parent carers and families can receive the right support at the right time.

Yours Sincerely



Mr John Ravenscroft (Family Voice Peterborough Chair Person)

This Letter is being endorsed by the following Persons and/ or Organisations:



Shailesh Vara MP
Member of Parliament for North West Cambridgeshire

'The Association of Directors of Children's services have identified the increased funding needs of Local Authorities to ensure all children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities have access to the support and services they need'

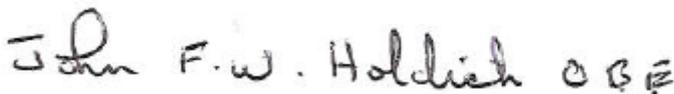


- Wendi Ogle-Welbourn
Executive Director: People & Communities
Cambridgeshire County Council & Peterborough City Council

'We fully support the letter and hope that real outcomes and significant positive changes are put in place to address the funding shortage. We would also like to add that how the funding is used in terms of identifying needs via the Education, Health Care plan is reviewed and revised'



Nazreen Bibi
Peterborough Branch Officer for National Autistic Society



Councillor John Holdich O.B.E
Leader of Peterborough City Council and Deputy Mayor of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

A Parent has the following to say:

'My daughter was diagnosed as having sudden moderate hearing loss in her left ear in June 2017 when she was at the end of reception, she then got a hearing aid in July 2017. She also had an MRI scan in July 2017 and we found out she had enlarged vestibular aqueducts in her right ear in October 2017.

By Christmas 2017 we still had no contact from Sensory Support, I met with Family Voice and within a day I had contact from a teacher of the deaf and they came to see my daughter in January and assessed her. A sound field in the classroom was fitted shortly after.

At this time my daughter was not where she should have been in all of her lessons, the teacher of the deaf said that due to her balance issues and the EVA then she would visit her each term. We had deaf awareness training for all teaching staff September 2018 and also received a letter that TOD support was being withdrawn as my daughter had unilateral hearing loss. At Christmas our class teacher left and we got 2 class teachers, the SENCO has had to work with them about deaf awareness.

Earlier this year my daughter was diagnosed as having much worse hearing in her right ear and ENT asked for 2 hearing aids, however, audiology found the second hearing aid took out her mid range good hearing so has left for now to be reviewed. However, we are not aware of whether we will get TOD support with the right ear being much worse.'



Amy Casselden
Chair Person – Peterborough and District Deaf Childrens Society



Melanie Gray
Deputy CEO, Caring Together



Tracy Dowling
Chief Executive, Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT)