

31<sup>st</sup> January 2015

# SEN Issues

## Qualitative Evidence of SEN Issues



## **Introduction**

As the new system for those with SEND starts to be put in to practice Family Voice Peterborough (FVP) are being made aware of issues around the use of co-ordinated plans, EHC processes, Educational Psychology assessments and transfer arrangements. FVP have asked parent carers asking questions and raising concerns if these can be captured and added to a report to evidence the need to explore further the impact the new system is having on families.

The report will contain quotes from parents captured in discussions via Facebook and case study data. There will also be a set of questions raised by parent carers at a parents meeting hosted by Face2Face and attended by FVP. The details of this meeting will also be included.

The evidence will be presented first followed by a brief thematic analysis although no coding will be used at this time. The thematic analysis will simply be used to gain an idea of where issues may be occurring and provide a breakdown of these issues to enable future work.

## Evidence

The following are a snapshot of the data captured that demonstrates the views of parent carers and can be used to demonstrate emergent themes/ topics relating to various elements of the SEND reforms since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014.

### Case Study A – CS

Parent of daughter in Hampton College who has SEN and was previously on School Action + and a diagnosis of Aspergers

A question was posted on FB by a parent carer and the conversation that took place is as follows

**Parent:** *“Can anyone give me a rough idea of how long it normally takes to hear the outcome once an EHC request goes to panel. Thanks”*

**FVP:** *“Is it your request for an EHC needs assessment that has gone to panel? also have you had any letters from PCC on the process yet?”*

**Parent:** *“No letters I think it's a needs assessment. SENCO has basically told me not to hold my breath, even though they can't really cope”*

**FVP:** *“You should have had a letter from PCC saying a needs assessment request has been made on your behalf, have you had the opportunity to express your views?”*

**Parent:** *“We expressed our views in the coordinated plan and had to put costings together and this was then submitted to panel”*

**FVP:** *“What school?”*

**Parent:** *“Hampton College was told it was going to panel last week or this week however they said not to get hopes up”*

The following took place via private message

**FVP:** *“can you answer any of the following questions? Who made request? What School? How the co-ordinated plan was used? What costings? When it went to panel? How have you been included?”*

**Parent:** *“Not sure on costs it was school resources ta, paper etc and costs that LM have incurred over the last year in 1:1 support and resources etc. My daughter has not been full time schooled in over a year*

Due to the issues being raised it was decided to ask the parent if a meeting could be arranged to explore this further and to provide FVP the opportunity to sign post the parent to the appropriate support. A report of this meeting is in the appendix.

## Case Study B – KC

A boy at Ken Stimpson with a diagnosis of ADHD who has been previously on School Action +

A parent was signed posted to FVP by her son's school and discussed over the phone her concerns and gave verbal permission to raise on her behalf. She was also signposted to other organisations who could give one to one support. She was also provided information on the Local Offer and process for requesting and EHC needs assessment.

The following information was captured:

*“Child has a diagnosis of ADHD and parent has taken part in parenting course through the child development centre and is happy with managing at home. School is problematic due her son continuously being in seclusion and are talking of exclusion due to being unable to manage his needs. There has been mention of moving to PRU and parent has been asked to attend meeting but has not support and is concerned about what to do.*

*Parent has had son assessed by Educational Psychologist and was subsequently informed by the psychologist that an EHC needs assessment was not required. A report was shared with the school. Parent is feeling confused as her son's needs are such that he cannot be supported by the school and they have said he needs help yet the psychologist has told her otherwise.”*

### Parents Meeting

After questions were raised on Facebook in the Face2Face (F2F) chat room one of which is as follows:

*“I found out today from the person supporting me that whilst my child's full statement has to be transferred to an EHCp, my child can actually lose, a statement does not guarantee an EHCp. Why did the SENCo not tell me that?” (AR)*

It was thought it would be good to hold coffee meeting with parents and invite to ask questions to pass on to Peterborough City Council as part of an FAQ which is being formulated on the Local Offer.

There were seven parents at the meeting and two FVP parent reps and two Independent support/ F2F professionals who are also parent carers. The parents were all women and the main disability/ additional need of their child/ young person was ASD. Their CYP ages ranged from pre-school to 16 and all parents have CYP at different places in the system from home schooled and part-time schooled through to being statemented or going through the EHC needs assessment process.

The questions asked on the day were:

1. Can an EHC plan be taken with you if you move to another county or will it need to be re-done?
2. What can I do if the school refuses to apply for an EHC plan when I have asked them?
3. What happens when a parent has higher/ lower aspirations than the CYP?
4. Who will be replacing Clare Major?

5. If a child's needs have changed significantly and statement needs to reflect this will they be transferred to an EHC plan?
6. If a child is transferring from mainstream to special school will they have their statement transferred from a statement to EHC plan at the same time?
7. Why does a child have to be seen as struggling at a mainstream setting before agreeing a special school placement, often impacting negatively on their mental health and behaviour in their home life?
8. Why is the focus on the emotional state of the parent rather than the needs/ support of the CYP when it is the unmet needs of the CYP that lead to the emotional state of the parent?
9. If a child is home schooled on a statement and wants to go to college will they be transferred to an EHC plan?
10. If a personal budget is requested and the YP is 16+ and home schooled will this pay for the education tuition?
11. If a personal budget is used for education tuition will be through contract of tuition or paid to YP?

FVP have kept a record of who asked which questions so individual answers can be fed back to the parents. The questions have also been passed on the SEND project manager for following up.

#### Facebook Discussions

Eight parent carers took part in discussions via Facebook; their CYP have the following disabilities/ additional needs ASD, ADHD, SpLD and GDD. Their ages range from pre – school through to 15.

The following are examples of comments taken from two discussions via Facebook. A fuller dialogue is in the appendix.

*“Couldn't fault my son's first EP assessment. Lovely lady. Shame the previous school never implemented any of her recommendations. So I moved my children out of that school. 3 school years later and that first report is finally in place. I can't thank that lady enough as she listened to me and agreed with what I'm saying. So looking forward to the next appointment. But like I said it's such a wait and now I'm confused as doctor at CDU said he needs one and the school said it's down to the CDU to arrange and now I'm seeing (information on) the Thursday afternoon thing so I'm not sure if I've done right or not. It's all very confusing” (Parent A)*

*“I was told by a teacher at the kids new school that they can only refer 6 kids a school year to ed psych, Not sure if it's true“ (Parent A)*

*“ Look I heard this conversation many years ago , that services were restricting access because of the numbers , there were no resources for so many children in need .....I was horrified , but I have seen glimpses of that here and there ....” (CT)*

*“I was told by paed at CDU girls need one and that it is pre-school who refers and that is exactly what happened. (...referring to comment about a referral to see an ed psych) (DS)*

*“I have received one letter regarding the EHC plans from the local authority in July 2014. This is not acceptable and is leading to parents speculating on what is happening surrounding there child's EHC, some of this information is incorrect. I can not grasp, why Peterborough Local Authority would want parents of children with disabilities to worry and fret. When this can be avoided by keeping parents better informed on there plans for OUR children, and I believe other local authorities have done. After all, the SEN reforms are to encourage better and positive relationships between professionals and parents, so why are us parents still in the dark?” (RP)*

*“After being told that my daughter WASN'T ACTUALLY first on the list to see the ED PSYC at her school (so annoyed) I made an appointment just now over the phone to see one myself 15 WEEKS WAIT!!! She'll have left school before this is sorted .....” (VP)*

*“I think there is different groups within the ed psych group as we saw an early years one this week. We got referred end november and saw her this week. Well ours saw the girls on a particular good day, of course has not got a lot off worries and even asked if we wanted to continue with the ehc plan. Well yes we do and at least pre-school is fully supporting us and sending it off next week. There is 2 months worth off evidence off the issues the girls have next to her 1 hour off them being good (they love new adults who come and play with them!!!. Next day of course one off the girls kicked off big time, but she never got to see that I hope yours has less rose tinted glasses” (DS)*

*“ If they operated on a daily basis rather than just Thursdays, it would be in 2wks .....if she had been referred ..... was then it would be week into process by now or even a decision made..” (VP)*

## Thematic Analysis

### Co-ordinated plan use

Case study A in particular shows there may be some work around required understanding the use of “co-ordinated plans”. The parent has taken part in meetings and been given the impression this will lead to funding and had support added in to the resources section

*“Not sure on costs it was school resources ta, paper etc and costs that LM have incurred over the last year in 1:1 support and resources etc. My daughter has not been full time schooled in over a year”.*

The parent also thought this would be presented to panel for support for her daughter and that this meant she would get an EHC plan. This points to another area for further investigation; the belief that the co-ordinated plan will be sent to panel. FVP have further anecdotal from other schools that the co-ordinated plan is meant to go to panel to secure resources, this is detailed in parent rep reports that have been included in a report look at school engagement.

### EHC process

Some of the questions asked by parents in the F2F meeting show there may be a lack of understanding of some aspects of the EHC process

1. *Can an EHC plan be taken with you if you move to another county or will it need to be re-done?*
2. *What can I do if the school refuses to apply for an EHC plan when I have asked them?*

This can be further supported by some of the comments from parents during the Facebook discussions:

*“.....A friend off mine has a child scoring 2b in year 6 so very far behind. He has no diagnosis off any medical issues and she is in the waiting game off seeing the correct people and get him assessed. This could take quite some time still. Her senco is adamant they can not apply without a medical diagnosis and she knows she can apply herself, but rather does it with school together. No psych ed has been called by school either”*

*“..... had a very good day, even key workers said so, but after md assessment .....strongly advised us to apply for the ehc and now we were told that she does not think they need it and if we still want to apply? As you can understand this is very mixed feedback and pre-school is handing in the ehc next week but we are pretty concerned now that based on one good morning in pre-school and a possible 'too' positive report of one person (who says she has no say in the decision but I reckon her report weights quite heavy) our chances have drastically been reduced” ( DS)*

The first quote appears to show that there is a belief a diagnosis is required before the EHC needs assessment can take place. The second quote may demonstrate a perception that without a supporting EP report there is no chance of a needs assessment request going through. The two quotes together could point to an issue around the EHC needs assessment part of the process.

## EHC decisions

More than one parent has made comments that appear to show confusion around how decisions are made regards the EHC needs assessment.

From case study B:

*Parent has had son assessed by Educational Psychologist and was subsequently informed by the psychologist that an EHC needs assessment was not required*

There are also comments on Facebook that can show confusion around decisions regards EHC plans such as the following which shows that people think the criteria has changed:

*“She said he would have needed a statement if it had been the year before, but now, children like him can be supported without requiring the new version of a statement (an EHC) and to get an EHC now, the child's needs have to be more so, than it was to get a statement. Because kids only need an EHC now if they require more than the 16-18 hours of 1:1 per week.” (TW)*

## EP capacity

An issue that parent carers are reporting would back up a view professionals have expressed in meetings and that is the capacity of EP's.

*“After being told that my daughter WASN'T ACTUALLY first on the list to see the ED PSYC at her school (so annoyed) I made an appointment just now over the phone to see one myself 15 WEEKS WAIT!!! .....” (VP)*

*We're waiting to see an ed psych too. My son's teacher said the waiting list is absolutely ridiculous and unrealistic right now, because they're trying to get all primary school leavers who need an EHC plan for their next school sorted. (TW)*

Some comments were made regarding this and funding at LA level appear to imply there is a view that EP's are required as they are the professionals that conduct the EHC needs assessment and make decisions regarding who will or will not get and EHC plan.

*“We've been waiting to see ..... for a few months now. No time scale has been given, teacher has nudged her several times. Head teacher and class teacher said the ed psychs are just far too busy right now with getting leavers changed over to EHCs as quick as they can”*

## Transfer arrangements and timescales

There were also comments made that relate to the transfer process, time scales and information regarding this . One parent had the following to say on this topic:

*“I have received one letter regarding the EHC plans from the local authority in July 2014. This is not acceptable and is leading to parents speculating on what is happening surrounding there child's EHC, some of this information is incorrect. I can not grasp, why Peterborough Local Authority would want parents of children with*

*disabilities to worry and fret. When this can be avoided by keeping parents better informed on their plans for OUR children, and I believe other local authorities have done. After all, the SEN reforms are to encourage better and positive relationships between professionals and parents, so why are us parents still in the dark?” (RP)*

Another parent shared the following information:

*“My Yr 9 child's Statement was going to be transferred to EHCP on Tuesday, but now the SENCo tells me at the LA has said Yr 9 transfers are on hold (due to illness at LA). I understand Yr 11 being given priority if they can't do both year groups atm. However, if they don't get around to doing Yr 9 this academic year, I imagine that next year they will again give priority to the (new) Yr 11 and Yr 9 students, so my then Yr 10 child will be missed off, and won't get done till the following year when they are in Yr 11 (2 yrs from now). This is a long time to wait for someone the LA or government had identified as needing to be done as a priority this year (current Yr 9). What exactly IS the plan for current Yr 9 students? How can a LA not be able to deal with a workload they knew was coming. Transferring statemented Yr 9 and Yr 11 students was not an unknown, they LA should have had a pretty good idea of how many students this would apply to, give or take a few who might move away or move into the area. This should be entirely separate from new EHCP requests, which I do understand would be hard to predict. How can official bodies tell families that they have no choice, the transfer must happen, at a time chosen by the authorities, and then when families are all geared up for it, families suddenly have to accept that the meeting will 'just be an annual review'. It doesn't make the LA look good and does not inspire me with confidence in this new EHCP project. “ (JR)*

## **Analysis (Discussion)**

Overall 15 different parent carers views have contributed to this report; their CYP have disabilities/ additional needs of ASD, ADHD, GDD, SpLD or Complex Health and are aged from 3 years through to 15 years. The schools they are known to attend include Eyrescroft, Southfields, Helwate, Jackhunt, Ken Stimpson, Hampton College; a couple of CYP are either home schooled or on a part-time timetable and two are in early years settings.

Although coding has not been conducted of the qualitative data gathered it is still possible to establish some themes based on the information provided. These themes are as described above. Overarching all of this is an encompassing theme of communication; from mixed messages through to misinformation.

In terms of communication and the information being shared it is possible to see that there is a lack of knowledge regarding the referral process for services like the EP, a lack of knowledge regarding the timescales for transfers to EHC plans, confusion over the criteria for needs assessments for EHC plans and confusion over who makes decisions regarding EHC needs assessments.

It appears if looking at the evidence included that there may be issues around the sources of this information. When asked where parent carers have heard what they are reporting or even when they are simply discussing their beliefs about the new system the most common sources

of information are the SENCo or the EP. The parent carers are reporting these sources independently of one another and as mentioned above have CYP who access different educational settings.

From all of this it is apparent more needs to be done to ensure parent carers and professionals jointly are correctly informed of the processes around EHC needs assessments, transfers to EHC plans from statements, the fact the co-ordinated plans are not statutory and have no funding attached and how to engage with the EP service. This really needs to be LA led information.

## **Recommendations**

1. More consistent and timely information regarding SEND processes
2. The parents who have input in to this report have their views taken on board
3. There is a clear “You Said – We Did” approach to this report on the side of the LA