

Dear Chairs of Parent Carers Together and Parent Carers Foundation,

We are writing to let you know that the inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission of local SEND services is being published on Tuesday 31st August. We attach an embargoed copy of the report. It highlights some strengths in the service and also makes some strong criticisms. Strengths include Early Help, the work of SENcos, the Portage Service, special schools and specialist provision. The main criticisms are that we have been slow in implementing the reforms set out in the SEND Code of Practice and that we need to improve our co-production practice by working with families in a more engaged way. The report highlights how hard it is to achieve stability in services with high staff turnover and with recruitment being difficult.

On behalf of the Council and the CCG, we would like to apologise to those children, young people and families who have not received the level of service they have a right to expect. We offer no excuses, just a determination to transform SEND services, especially to work together with families in a way which makes them feel we are on their side and working for them and with them.”

As you know from our discussions, these are issues facing many local systems in England. We have to build high-performing and stable teams so that all of our SEND services level up to the standards shown every day by those excellent services we have already. We will now produce a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) for the Government by 30th November. This must set out how we can address the weaknesses identified in the inspection and the strategic and operational improvements needed.

Ofsted and the CQC found that ‘deep cultural issues’ explain the lack of high-quality partnership working locally. Obviously, LGR has taken time to implement, and many aspects of our service are yet to be harmonised in BCP. However, the NHS is restructuring into Integrated Care System (ICS) from next April, so change is constant. We think the central issue is service leadership – which sets the tone and culture for SEND – and how we can build and maintain the capacity to make simultaneous improvements across social care, SEND and education. The recent Appreciative Inquiry into inclusion practices in BCP schools found many of the same problems inspectors found in the SEND inspection. The Appreciative Inquiry made 44 recommendations and suggested the transformation programme needed would take 3-5 years. Whilst acknowledging transformation takes time, we intend to make definable progress every week, reporting to the SEND Leadership Board. The Board will remain in place for the foreseeable future to oversee improvements.

Many changes we need to make have started already, such as improving the quality and consistency of Education, Health and Care plans. For these to be of the required standard, each of the three agencies involved needs to put time and effort into each plan – into each child. Each Plan needs to be co-produced with the child and family. Getting this right is probably the single most important improvement we will be making in the first year of our Action Plan because it directly affects the service people receive.

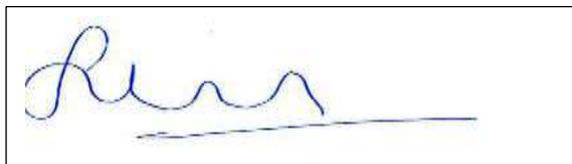
Health through the CCG and ourselves have both committed to improving our commissioning arrangements, starting with a new joint-funded post to oversee developments. Very few SEND services can be provided by one agency in isolation so joint commissioning at the population level will

be vital over the next few years to ensure that commissioned services produce real benefits for children and families and that they are value for money so that the limited funding available goes as far as it can.

Our response to the justifiable criticism in the Ofsted/CQC letter is to get on with the improvements we need to make. That is the best guarantee we can give you to meet your clear expectations that as a local Send System, we have to do better.

We hope you will stick with us and help us make these improvements. We want to increase the strength of our partnership with you because of your vital representative role. We know we need to make a culture change in how we operate, and I hope you can help us to get this right as soon as possible.

Best wishes,



Elaine Redding
Interim Corporate Director – Children's Services
BCP Council



Sally Sandcraft
Director of Primary and Community Care
NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group