

Notes from Meeting 1 of Workstream 1

4th October 2021

Present:

Anthony Douglas (Indep. Chair), Geoff Cherrill (Schools Forum), Sally Sandcraft (CCG), Elaine Redding (BCP), Cllr Mike White (BCP), Cllr Nicola Greene (BCP), Sarah Rempel (BCP), Karen Taylor (Linwood School), Gemma Talbot (Linwood), Louise Taylor (PCF), Nick Wills (St Michael's), Katherine Harvey (NHS), Clare Hurley (CAMHS), Sarah Ward (PCF), Sarah Murray (PCT), Claire Webb (BCP)

Anthony	There is clearly a flawed culture but isn't about coming up with a rapid action plan because culture is an overall change. This change is important not just because of the Ofsted report, but for the overall lived experience of CYP.
Louise	Parent carers have experienced a lack of partnership working with barriers to funding, a lack of knowledge of SEND in the schools and BCP. Has experienced a sense of blame which has sometimes been raised under safeguarding as the needs are not understood.
Sarah W	Has had the same unpleasant experiences. 'Elephant in the room' – austerity has had a negative impact. Has had to chase to receive help or diagnoses. There was pressure from the school on attendance and then judged as school refusal as you, 'can't be off school without a medical note or information. As a single mother she was badly affected by the safeguarding link to school absence and the thresholds for diagnosis. There is the fundamental cultural issue of adult conversations. Honesty would have helped. Long Covid will affect CYP and this may have the same problems re recognition, diagnosis and attendance as conditions like M.E.
Geoff	As well as a headteacher he also has a child at home because of the catastrophic response so agrees with the above. Everything seems to fall on education. People have not taken responsibility for the issue. Direct quote: "Catastrophic failure of many agencies towards his daughter"
Anthony	Raised the issue of ethnographic analysis.
Geoff	It's not really about the agencies, it is about the individuals. Eg. The use of the graduated response is not consistent. Within health the hospital hadn't updated a protocol so there was a lack of consistency with some not taking responsibility. People who are not interested in talking to you. It is a matter of luck who you encounter.
Sarah W	There needs to be trust in the parent and child but there is a flawed belief that it is the parenting to blame. There is no transparency and no empathy with the parents. Staff may just be exhausted but there is a fundamental issue around trust and empathy. There also needs to be honesty.
Geoff	It is to the point where you meet people who think they know better than the parents. There is also a different approach whether it is the mother or the father. Comes down to trust. He thinks there is systemic gender discrimination. There needs to be a recognition of parents as experts on their CYP.
Kate H	These are powerful experiences. Culture is more than between agencies. The focus should be on the child and family.
Sarah R	When as a school leader she saw the first hoop for parents being to attend a parenting course which appears to suggest blame. We need to change this with urgency. Almost forgotten that we are there because of the children.

	There is a lack of understanding from the school so it comes down to the parent. Now she is seeing the system from the perspective of a parent of an SEND child, and it looks very different. One of the issues is that things need to progress quickly in line with difficulties the child is facing, and this doesn't happen in the LA!
Elaine	We lose culture to the process so lose the focus on the child. How do we empower staff to see the child at the centre? This is often ruled by budget,
Nick W	His school has a high proportion of EAL so need clear pathways of communication. There are often difficulties between parents, agencies and schools so the school can't support immediately. The schools often don't have sufficient resources.
Sarah M	Raised question about pre and post Covid
Nick W	It has made communication more difficult.
Nicola	This is chastening feedback. We have to recognise the need for commitment.. Culture covers the the whole system. There are clearly weaknesses that need to be addressed. We are only as good as the weakest part of the system. We can't lose sight of the child at the centre, or the parent. We sometime treat the presentation of the need as day 1 whereas we lose sight of all that went before. Anger should not be seen as part of the system. Half a year is too long to move through the system. We seem to be better talking about mental health than SEND. We need to be honest and not blame. This attests to the positive power when support is provided. These are life changing people. Mental health issues are not respected (this differs from note takers comments for some reason!!). "We would be deluding ourselves if we thought Covid was the reason for our failures". Has a SEND child going through tier 3 cancer throughout secondary school – has had an excellent experience, but thinks this is down to luck!!
Sally	Picking up on the parents' comments. We are looking at inherent cultural experiences. Some is to do with how professionals are educated to 'know best'. There is an inherent culture that you have to know the answer. We need to hold the mirror up to the stories. We need to know how to implement and engage the teams. Happy staff are more likely to provide a good service. We need to know how to make happy staff.
Sarah W	Cllr Greene's comment about knowing what to ask for can sometimes be seen as a 'threat' by the agency.
Anthony	Working together is sometimes better achieved with those more recently trained. Health and police are often a top down system. In LAs the control of resources is often to down. Being honest to why it can't be down can often lead to an increase in trust. There is a "command and control" culture.
Gemma	'Happy chickens lay good eggs!' People who have day to day contact provide the best support. How do we value front line staff? Some have personal experience. Gave the example of doing this with her child but having to shy away from using her knowledge and experience. There are poor links with other services. Parents' difficulties on the journey leads to defensiveness in order to prove their worth. There are inconsistent response from all of those who are working with the child. It is a case of knowing what the responsibilities are and who to go to. Something that helped was just an agreement by the SENCO that something was going on. What didn't help was the medical response that, 'She can't be autistic because she can make eye contact.' Importance of Teaching Assistants and how we help and retain them. Each agency needs to understand who to refer to – what the different agencies do,
Geoff	Used to get anxious about where the professional knowledge he has could be used against him. The EHCP means it all falls on the school. Because they see them every day they have to deal with all the areas. Staff are on their

	knees. We have created a world where they are expected to do more and more. The very wording of 'EHCP' - because it's education first makes more pressure for schools. Staff absolutely exhausted! There's an environment where people constantly have to fight fires, which means they may make mistakes, or not give their best.
Sarah W	There is a wider national culture going on than anytime before. This WSoA can't change that. However, we can change the culture in BCP. Honest, empathetic trusted conversations.
Louise W	There is a large focus on education when health and social care are also vital and the health of young people in schools eg. Affected by behaviour modification processes.
Sarah M	There isn't a holistic approach – seen as 'them and us'. Other parents are already feeling levels of defensiveness. Gender responses are often evident. Her daughter can't attend school because of the way education treats her. Two children have different disabilities – one physical, the other mental. The response to the physical need is ok but not that for the mental needs. The child with physical needs obtained an EHCP easily. Disabled parents treated differently too. The child with mental health needs and a 'physical disability' did not!
Mike	Very touched by the comments and experienced the professional 'pointing the finger'. Inconsistent practice makes for a problem and this is a role for management. Son has M.E. so he has personal experience of the condition not being recognised.
Karen	Worked in a Pupil Referral Unit and listening to the young people showed the failures they had experienced. You have to be alert to 'masking'. We need to look at these innovatively and need to be more aspirational. Son with SEN – there was a real problem with how he ended up feeling about himself, and this came down to a lack of trust in the child.
Kate H	The value base and the experience are opposite. Sometimes comes down to the chance of who you work with
Sally	A different nuance around experience and knowledge. There will be a generalist knowledge but there comes the point when you need more specialism.
Sarah W	Things that get in the way – inbuilt prejudice – regardless of training. This can include gender bias also racial bias – this was a very white meeting

[Clare H. Works for CAMHS, Very stressed workforce, there's not a huge level of trust and communication across agencies.](#)