



PCT Development Plan

2023 – 2028

Introduction

Parent Carers Together is an independent not for profit Community Interest Company, formed by parents and carers for parents and carers. We are the official parent carer forum for Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole (BCP), recognised by the Department of Education as the strategic partner for parent carers voice in BCP. We have a strong and committed steering group and parent carer representatives who strive to enable our SEND community to have a strong voice by sharing concerns and issues with key policy makers at a local, regional and national level.

The SEND Code of Practice (para. 1.13) explains the purpose of parent carer forums:

“Parent Carer Forums are representative local groups of parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities who work alongside local authorities, education, health and other services providers to ensure that the services they plan, commission, deliver and monitor meet the needs of children and families”

Parent Carers Together (PCT) has come a long way since we were established in April 2019 to represent the voice of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP). We are well respected for being able to make a real difference to services and outcomes by providing strong parent and carer voices.

The 2014 SEND Reforms provided a real opportunity for radical change and improvements. At the heart of the reforms is the imperative that services work together and work with parents as equal partners to achieve the best possible outcomes for children; as the Parent Carer Forum for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole this is the core of what we do. We use every opportunity to embed a culture of ‘coproduction’ – working together, so that BCP Council, health services, schools and others work together with parents, facilitated by Parent Carers Together, to commission and provide the best possible services for all children and young people with SEND.

The 2014 SEND Reforms are now embedded and while the EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) process can work very well for some, for others the picture is very variable. As it is, the number of EHCPs issued in BCP continue to grow and the system can’t cope with the numbers; the emphasis has been on the EHCP process rather than early identification and intervention (SEN Support) within schools. Times are tough; council and schools funding, and benefits for families, have been slashed while the Covid pandemic, the war in Ukraine and inflation has resulted in prices for food and energy rising to unprecedented levels; the pandemic has led to long delays in the SEND system for assessment, diagnosis and for appropriate interventions coupled with increasing needs from its effects with greater levels of mental health issues particularly and the lack of early intervention. Schools are under huge pressure not only with funding but also with teacher and staff recruitment and retention.

Everyone is faced with hard choices but by working together we can make the best use of scarce resources. Everyone desperately wants to move away from parents feeling they have to fight for their child’s rights to services and support, but this requires a massive culture change: parents need information, support and



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often training but so too do the staff who are working with them. PCT's key role is to engage and empower parents to work effectively with services to achieve the best possible outcomes for their family and by sharing their experiences and ideas to influence the services and support for other families and the wider community. The 2022 SEND Green Paper (now an Improvement Plan) will bring further changes.

At PCT, we focus on engaging and empowering parents, embedding coproduction, and ensuring strong parent voices can influence the shape of services so all children have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. We have looked at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for PCT's work and reviewed our Vision, Mission and Values. We have set out in this Plan the ambitious developmental goals for the next 5 years in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for all children and young people with additional needs in BCP.

Board of Directors for Parent Carers Together

1. What Parent Carers Together Stands For: Our Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

Our vision is for Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole to be a place where every SEND child & young person is heard and valued, where services are timely and accessible and where parents and carers work with professionals to improve opportunities for all.

Mission

To be the collective voice of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Values

- **Respect:** all people involved with Parent Carers Together, we respect everyone's views
- **Empathy:** to accept and work alongside all those we come into contact with, without prejudice or judgement
- **Integrity:** to be honest and objective in everything we do and communicate openly and honestly
- **Accountability:** accept accountability for our decisions and actions to PCT members and providers of public funds
- **Quality:** to constantly improve the quality of the services we provide, through seeking and responding to the views of those we work with
- **Leadership:** we promote and support the above values with effective leadership and personal example

2. Achievements 2019 – 2023

Since 2019 PCT has grown into a stronger, more stable and more effective organisation. We focus on engaging and empowering parents, embedding co-production, and ensuring parents can participate in influencing service improvements so all children can achieve their full potential.

PCT has continued to provide high-quality services to fulfil its contracts and grants. Much of what we do enables parents and carers to increase their knowledge and understanding of their child's needs and the services and support available in the local area; we build their confidence and resilience through information, signposting, involvement and training for parents and carers. We also work with parent groups, service providers and commissioners, providing strong parent carer voices and further embedding the coproduction process across services and support.

Our work with parents and carers enables PCT to identify the challenges, the barriers, the issues and ideas that we share with BCP Council, NHS Dorset and other partners. We promote coproduction and support positive relationships with schools, settings, SENCO Networks, health services and other professionals and partners.

The Parent Champion Project is a joint collaboration between SENDiass4BCP and Parent Carers Together. This project helps raise awareness of Parent Carers Together through a cohort of trained and supported Parent Champion volunteers.

With a small, dedicated and hard-working team of six and our parent carers volunteers we facilitate strong parent carer voices. The funding we receive from the Department of Education, BCP Council and other funders strengthens and expands our parent carer engagement and empowerment enabling parents to be equal partners in services and support for their own families and the wider community.

3. Challenges

We have identified the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, and the challenges facing Parent Carers Together to produce our strategic plan for the next five years. This is a challenging time for everyone with the cost-of-living crisis, but it is particularly challenging for families with children with additional needs.

The Local Authority has experienced massive funding cuts over the last 10 years and has a large deficit in its High Needs funding. Many teachers still only have half a day of training on SEN in their initial teacher training, yet are expected to be able to meet the varied needs of the 10% or more of the children in their class with SEN. The level of in-service training that teachers get varies from setting to setting and depends on the priorities and options available.

There is particular concern about the whole EHCP process from needs assessment, production of the plan, financing, delivery and annual reviews and the tribunal process. There is also concern about poor SEN support or inclusivity in some schools and the lack of accountability of these schools. (Most schools in BCP are Academies with no accountability to the Local Authority for their SEN provision and inclusion policies.)

Parent Carers Together is not responsible for some of these challenges but does try to influence those who are. The main issues identified by our steering group and volunteers in 2022 were:



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1. Problems within the wider SEND system, EHCPs and lack of early intervention and support for children and young people with additional needs.
2. Limited awareness within schools and educational settings, of Parent Carers Together amongst parent carers and staff.
3. Providing equitable reach to all families that need Parent Carers Together, including those in digital poverty and those who are seldom heard (such as Travellers, migrant families, refugees and those without good English).
4. Providing sustainable growth for Parent Carers Together, ensuring capacity and resources to match demands and meet needs.
5. Importance of upskilling volunteers, especially with digital skills
6. Concerns that Parent Carers Together is perceived to lack independence from the council.
7. The need to improve internal monitoring and evaluation (of needs, emerging issues, impact).
8. Pervasive distrust of the LA among SEND families
9. Consistently poor communication from the LA and NHS, both at individual level and corporate level (which compounds the problem of sub-standard SEND services)
10. Perception within the LA that PCT is just one of several parent groups (lack of partnership)

Building on our successes and the challenges we face, we have developed ambitious developmental goals requiring innovative solutions from the board, staff and volunteers, while maintaining the ability to respond to new issues and challenges as they arise.

4. Development Goal over the next 5 years

Goal 1 Extending our reach, engagement and participation and empowering parents

Data from the DfE Local Authority caseload shows 3491 children and young people with an EHC Plan, 7118 children and young people on SEN Support. Based on this data there are a large cohort of families in our target audience.

These numbers rely on schools and settings identifying and recording those with Special Educational Needs, and we know this is an underestimate as we know there are long waiting lists for full assessments and diagnoses and when a school identifies needs, they have a responsibility to meet those needs, so there may be a disincentive to identify SEN and register students on SEN Support. Parents may recognise their child is struggling but not yet recognise that their child has Special Educational Needs.

Parent Carers Together wants to reach all communities, including those who may be heard less often and parent carers at the start of their journeys. Schools and other education settings are an essential link in raising awareness of Parent Carers Together, and we will review ways to reach parents through schools.



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We need to ensure that parents can access the information they need but also feel able and confident to work together with teachers, health workers and other professionals to have their children's needs met. Parent Carers Together will continue to offer opportunities to parents and carers through workshops and training to build parents' confidence and resilience, empowering them to work with all those involved with their child.

Goal 1 Aims

- Continue to strengthen our social media presence, provide access to workshops and signpost to services and support.
- Develop partnerships with other organisations working with families with additional needs in different sectors of the community.
- Ensure we focus on extending our participation to all communities, including those we hear from less often, to ensure we can represent their voices and they can access the SEN services and support they need.
- Facilitate effective training to enable more parent carers to feel equipped and empowered to speak up for better outcomes for children and young people.
- Work with schools and services to provide better and more timely SEN assessments, services and support as soon as a child or young person starts to struggle.

Goal 1 Outcomes

Parent Carers Together continues to develop and improve relationships across our networks in order to provide feedback about the impact and value of the work undertaken by Parent Carers Together. We will share the impact of our work with our membership and with our wider networks. Parent Carers Together continues to support the Parent Champions programme.

Goal 2 Continue to Promote a Culture of Coproduction

Parent Carers Together will continue to facilitate and promote meetings, events and forums where parents and carers work in equal partnership with service providers to assess, design/redesign, deliver, monitor and evaluate the services their children, and others like them, receive. While there are some good working relationships and a commitment to coproduction, it is not yet embedded throughout the system and parents can be disadvantaged if they are not given equal access to the information and support required to be able to make informed decisions.

Goal 2 Aims

- Enable parent carers to be equal partners with service providers by equipping all involved to fully understand and use co-production principles.
- Extend our engagement to BCP schools to enable them to better co-produce with their parent carers as equal partners through training.
- Promote training for parents, professionals and organisations to promote involvement of parents as equal partners in discussions with service providers at all levels.



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- Promote coproduction opportunities for parent carers in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole through partner organisations including the Local Authority and the Integrated Care System and health partners.
- Continue to make parents aware of the council's SEND Information Local Offer, 'Graduated Response' for SEN support in schools and their SEND Transformation work and promote opportunities for co-production.
- Continue to coproduce with LA, ICS and other partners through attending strategic meetings and forums to ensure parent voices are heard and influence policy and practice.

Goal 2 Outcomes

Parent Carers Together will continue to work with parents and BCP Council, the ICS, health services and schools that provide services for children with additional needs. The outcomes we are seeking to achieve is that improved co-production leads to:

- all EHC Plans being truly co-produced, and their delivery and outcomes are jointly monitored by parents and staff.
- schools and parents being aware of the 'Graduated Response' that should be available in every school so that every child can have their needs fully assessed and get the EHC Plan or SEN support to meet their needs; and
- BCP having one of the lowest percentages of tribunals in England, where disputes could reasonably have been avoided.

Goal 3 Influencing policy and practice within BCP and beyond

Parent Carers Together influences policy and practice for better outcomes by building and maintaining stakeholder relationships and presence at policy-making forums in BCP. Parent Carers Together coproduces the BCP SEND strategy with the Local Authority and other partners.

As an active member of the South West Region Parent Carer Forum (SWPCF) and National Network of PCFs (NNPCF), Parent Carers Together and other PCFs share experiences and work together to influence local, regional and national policy to improve outcomes for all children and young people with additional needs and their families.

Parent Carers Together will continue to demonstrate impact through seeking formal feedback after contacts and events and through surveys, but will additionally seek to demonstrate impact locally, regionally and nationally through soliciting formal and informal feedback on Parent Carers Together's contribution at local and regional levels.

The SEND Green Paper and potentially LA funding may result in major changes impacting SEND in BCP; Parent Carers Together will attempt to promote positive changes and to mitigate the impact of negative changes for parents –as far as we are able within the constraints of our funding; we will continue to feedback on the issues and challenges for parents.



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Goal 3 Aims

- Take every opportunity to influence policy and practice for better outcomes by building and maintaining stakeholder relationships and presence at policy-making forums.
- Articulate the impact we make in our communications to parent carers and stakeholders to demonstrate that coproduction - working together with Parent Carers Together and other partners - improves outcomes.
- Seek out opportunities to engage in regional and national work for the benefit of BCP families, representing their voices to decision-makers and bringing back learning from effective practice from elsewhere.

Goal 3 Outcomes

Parent Carers Together can demonstrate how parents' feedback and ideas have influenced policy and practice in BCP through a variety of mechanisms including surveys, case studies and other quantitative and qualitative data.

To do this, Parent Carers Together will have developed robust monitoring and evaluation systems, with the impact shared regularly with parents.

Goal 4 Partnership Working

Parent Carers Together has a key role as the strategic partner working in partnership with BCP Council and NHS Dorset to enable these organisations to meet their statutory duties to co-produce with children & young people and parents and carers.

Parent Carers Together has a service level agreement with BCP Council to work on a variety of workstreams to improve services through feedback from local families regarding their experiences which we have collected via social media, surveys, coffee mornings and other events. The service level agreement recognises the independent status of the forum enabling us to feedback parent views accurately.

The forum also has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SENDiass4BCP. This is called the "Together is Better" agreement. The MOU sets out the remit and responsibilities of each service respectively and outlines a code of conduct for how they will work together and support each other's service delivery. We work with this service to ensure that the collective views of families are shared to those that commission and provide services.

PCT is one of 151 forums that form the National Network of Parent Carer Forums. This enables us to feed local experiences and challenges into national work.

The forum has developed working relationships with a number of parent support groups across Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole.



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We will continue to support the parent voice by further developing and strengthening these relationships with local parent support groups to provide an opportunity for these groups to provide feedback to the forum which will then be shared anonymously with BCP Council, Dorset NHS, the Department of Education, Contact and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums. This information not only helps to shape local services but also contribute to national policies and decision making. Feedback will also be shared anonymously with providers when appropriate.

PCT also work with strategic partners to develop accessible routes for children and young people to ensure their views and lived experiences are heard and included in developing services and policies relating to education, health, and social care. The aim is to improve services for children and young people by ensuring that their voices are heard by planners and decision makers. We will do this by developing relationships with the Youth Champions and other youth groups to collect and share experiences and promote co-production opportunities.

Goal 4 Aims

- Identify opportunities for effective two-way communication between parents and professionals
- To forge links with local parent carer networks across Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole and neighbouring parent carer forums for mutual support and sharing good practice
- To link with parent carer forums regionally and nationally to influence, through partnership working and co-production, services and government bodies at regional and national level.
- To forge links with local youth groups, youth champions etc to further enhance co-production opportunities

Goal 4 Outcomes

Parent Carers Together will continue to work with parents and BCP Council, Dorset NHS, health services and schools and other organisations that provide services for children with additional needs. The outcomes we are seeking to achieve is that partnership working leads to:

- Better outcomes for children and young people
- Improved decision-making
- More creative solutions that allow funding to be spent more efficiently, which leads to more appropriate service provision



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Community Interest Company (CIC) Registration Details:

CIC Name: Parent Carers Together (BCP) CIC

Company Number: 14691196

Address: Suite 3 Equity Chambers, 249 High Street North, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1DX

Telephone 07852 422089

Website www.parentcarerstogether.org.uk

Legal status: Community Interest Company, incorporated on 27th February 2023

HMRC Ref:

Parent Carers Together is a Community Interest Company (CIC) registered with Companies House on 27th February 2023. We are a not-for-profit company governed by Articles of Association. We have been in operation since 2019 as the Parent Carer Forum, we have been supported from the outset by BCP Council, and Dorset NHS.

Charitable Objects

Our objectives, changes to which must be agreed by a majority of members and reported to Companies House, are:

The objects of the Company are to carry on activities which benefit the community and in particular (without limitation) to parents, carers and families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) aged 0-25 years in Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole. This will include supporting existing provision and obtaining external funding to create additional projects and activities to support parents, carers and families of children and young people with SEND.

We receive a grant from the Department of Education (DfE). In England, to receive the DfE grant, parent carer forums must be open to all parents or carers with a disabled child (0-25 years) living in the local authority area. They also must be pan-disability, meaning all parent or carers with a disabled child or young person can become a member, regardless of the nature of their child's disability or medical condition and whether diagnosed or undiagnosed.

Parent Carers Together works with parents and carers of young people up to the age of 25, in line with the Children and Families Act 2014.