

# PARENT CARERS TOGETHER



**Bournemouth Christchurch Poole**

the voice of parent carers of young people with  
special educational needs and disabilities

# ANNUAL REPORT



**April 2024 - March 2025**



Empowering Families, Shaping Local Services

## Directors Welcome

Welcome to the Parent Carers Together Annual Report for 2024-2025. This past year has been one of significant activity, growth, resilience and continued dedication to our mission: ensuring that the voices of parent carers in Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) are heard, valued, and instrumental in shaping the services that support our children and families.

We know the journey of parent caring can be both incredibly rewarding and uniquely challenging. As Directors, we are proud to lead a forum that continues to represent the lived experiences of families navigating the challenges of caring for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). At Parent Carers Together, we strive to be a beacon of unwavering support, empowering guidance, influence, and a nurturing community. Through our collective influence, we aim to shape a brighter future for all, ensuring that every voice is heard and every need is met. Together, we can create a world where possibilities are limitless and dreams are realized.

This report highlights our collective achievements, the impact of our work, and the unwavering commitment of our volunteers, partners, and the parent carers themselves who engage with us. It also acknowledges the ongoing challenges and the work still to be done. We extend our heartfelt thanks to every parent carer who has shared their story and every professional who has listened.

Over the past year, we have:

- Strengthened our partnerships with local services and decision-makers, ensuring that parent carers are heard and involved at every level of planning and delivery.
- Grown our membership and volunteer base, building a vibrant and supportive community.
- Delivered events that not only inform but empower parent carers.
- Worked closely with BCP Council and NHS Dorset to influence improvements in SEND Services, from education and health to social care and early support.

This year has reaffirmed our belief in the power of co-production, community voice, and inclusive engagement. We've seen parent carers influence decision-making across local services, and we're proud of the safe, empowering space Parent Carers Together continues to provide.

Together, we continue to push for a more inclusive and compassionate system – one that recognises and supports the unique strengths of every child and every family.

Thank you for being part of our community and for your continued support. Together, we are making a tangible difference for families across BCP.

*Directors of Parent Carers Together*



## About Parent Carers Together

Parent Carers Together (BCP) CIC is an independent not for profit Community Interest Company, led by parent carers for parent carers. We are the Department for Education recognised strategic partner for parent carer voice in Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole.

The forum steering group consists of parents who have children with special educational needs and disabilities, who attend mainstream school, special school, independent provision or are home educated. Parent Carers Together’s activities are carried out for the benefit of parent carers and families who have children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole.

Our core purpose is to represent the collective views of families living with children and young people (0-25) who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

We work in co-production with BCP Council, Dorset Integrated Care Board (ICB), and other service providers to influence, develop, and improve local services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

**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.

**Our Mission** is to be the collective voice of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

### The Team – Directors, Steering Group and Reps



#### Directors

The forum directors oversee the day-to-day running of the forum. They are all parent carers with lived experience of services in BCP. The directors form part of the steering group that sets the direction of travel for the forum work.



#### Steering Group

All of the steering group at PCT are parent carers of children or young people who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. They bring their lived experience and a range of skills and knowledge to support the work of the forum.

The steering group meets monthly to identify key themes emerging from various workstreams and decide whether focus groups need to be established.

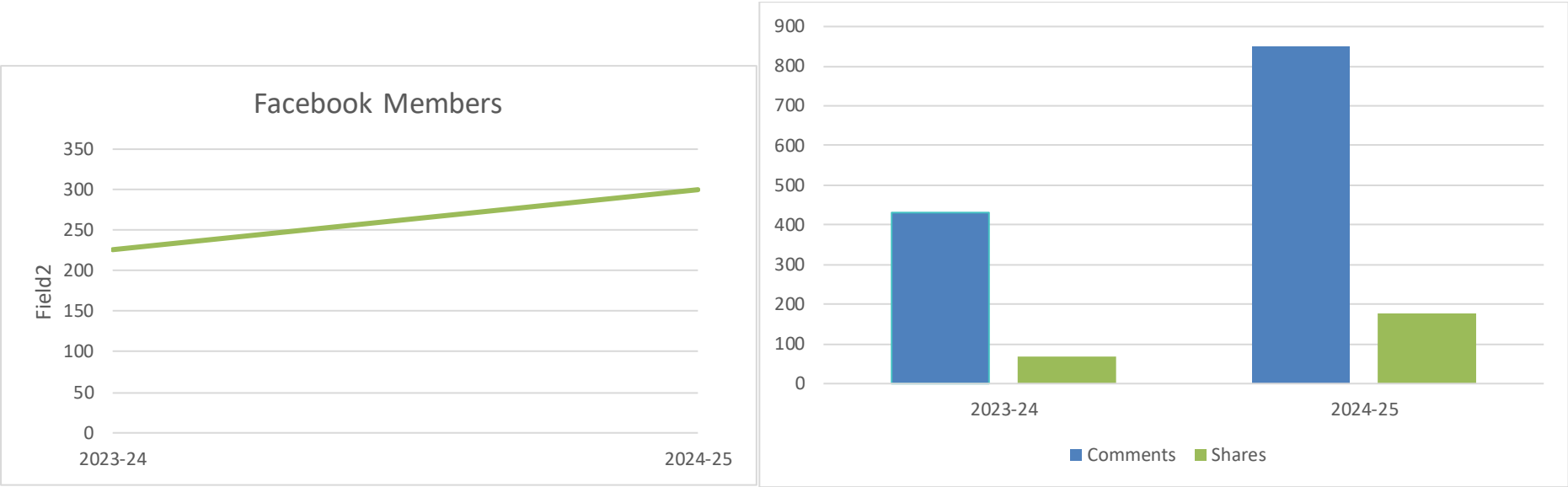


#### Parent Carer Reps

Representatives participate in external meetings with BCP Council and NHS Dorset to inform decision-makers of the experiences of SEND families and ensure that parent views are fed into decisions about services. Some parent reps have a specific skill set or a specific interest and attend meetings to represent parents’ views on these specific topics. This is encouraged as we recognise the significant commitment it takes to be a parent carer rep.

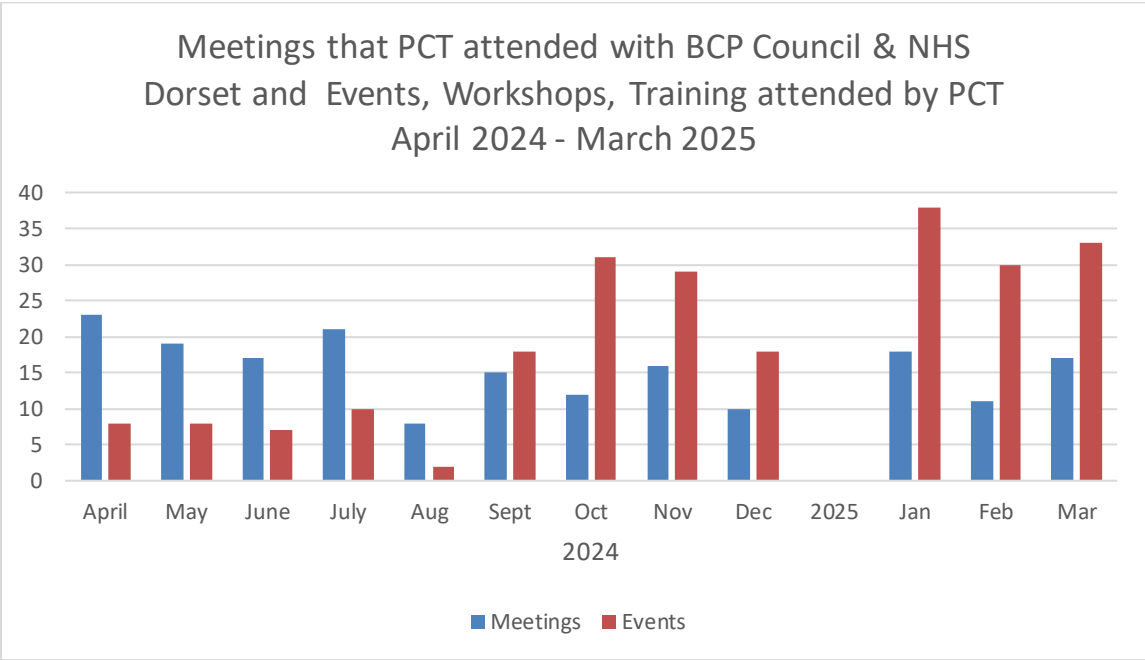
## Highlights

**Social Media following** – we have seen a steady increase in membership of our closed Members Facebook Group, approx.30% increase on last year. We have also seen a huge increase in engagement over the past year.



### Representing Parent Carer Voice

Over the past year we have attended a total of 419 meetings, events or workshops to share the views of the SEND community. This is a 29% increase on last year’s figures. Using the experiences collected through a variety of methods, our representatives raised concerns with services providers and commissioners. All representatives provide feedback to the steering group, including the level of involvement at each meeting, this ensures that our time is being used in the most effective way.



### Listening to the views of our community

Parent Carers Together CIC collects the experiences and views of local families through a variety of ways including surveys, consultations, emails, social media along with discussions at groups and events. Some areas we have collected views on this year include:

- BCP Information leaflets
- Bookable Time Slots with Case Officers
- The Neurodevelopment Profiling Tool
- Parliamentary Inquiry into ‘Solving the SEND Crisis’



All the feedback we collect is used to understand the themes which are coming through as messages, from our community. The feedback we provide is done in a way which protects the identity of our families, unless we have specific permission.

**Over the past year we have heard from approximately 1800 parents either through Padlets, Facebook or at face-to-face events.**

## **Our Achievements & Key Activities (2024-2025)**

This year, Parent Carers Together has been actively involved in numerous initiatives to influence change and empower our community.

- **Representation and Strategic Influence:**
  - Maintained consistent attendance and active participation in key strategic meetings with BCP Council and Dorset ICB, including the SEND Partnership Board, Co-production Steering Group, and specific working groups on areas like EHCP processes and local offer development.
- **Engagement and Outreach:**
  - Held Engagement events including topic specific focus groups on:
    - Improvements to diagnostic pathways for Autism and ADHD.
    - Support in Schools
    - Parental confidence in supporting their child when Preparing for Adulthood.
    - Increased our membership by 30% and our Social Media presence by 33%
  - Launched several Padlets, engaging over 170 parent carers to gather their lived experiences and perspectives
- **Information Sharing & Empowerment:**
  - **Parent Carer Voice Events:** Organised an online workshop on Wills and Trusts to support families of young people in the age range 14-25 years.
  - **Newsletter & Social Media:** Continued to disseminate vital information through our e-newsletter (reaching over 600 subscribers) and active social media channels, keeping parent carers informed about local developments, national policies, and support resources.
  - **Website Resources:** Enhanced our website with updated resources, FAQs, and clear guidance on local SEND services, ensuring accessible information for all.
- **Community Building & Peer Support:**
  - **Coffee Mornings & Drop-ins:** Hosted 6 informal coffee mornings and drop-in sessions, providing a safe space for parent carers to connect, share experiences, and offer peer support.
- **Partnerships:**
  - Collaborated closely with local charities and organisations to ensure a cohesive and comprehensive support network for families.
  - Responded to national consultations, ensuring the BCP parent carer perspective was represented at a wider level.

## **PINS (Partnerships in Inclusions in Schools)**

We are really excited to be part of this project that will bring health and education specialists and expert parent carers into mainstream primary settings to:

- Help shape whole school SEND provision.
- Provide early interventions at a whole school level.
- Upskill school staff.
- Support strengthening partnerships between schools and parent carers.

In BCP the local PINS project team includes members of:

- Dorset ICB
- BCP Local Authority
- Parent Carers Together

The project will focus on strengthening knowledge, skills and improving environments in schools. This will better meet the needs of neurodiverse children and provide a supportive learning environment.

This is a great opportunity for mainstream schools to improve the outcomes for this group of children and provide better information and communication between school and parent carers. The offer to participating schools includes five days' worth of flexibly delivered specialist support.



## Boards & Projects we currently participate in

Alternative Provision

Autism in Schools Project

Learning Disabilities Partnership Board

Carers Action Group

Development & Behaviour Pathway

EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plans) workstreams

Health Action Group

Inclusion Workstreams

Joint Commissioning

Keeping Safe Action Group

Learning Disability Health Check Project

Local Offer Improvement

Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) Project

Positive Behaviour Support

Preparing for Adulthood Projects

SEND Health Forum

SEND Improvement Board

SENDiass Steering Group

Short Breaks Review

Where I Live Action Group

Aspire Adoption Strategic Partnership Board

## Impact & Outcomes

Our work throughout 2024-2025 has yielded significant positive impacts for parent carers and their families in BCP:

- **Improved Service Design:** Parent carer feedback directly influenced changes in BCP Council's proposed short breaks policy, we continue to work with BCP Council on a more flexible and need-led approach. Our input has shaped the user experience and content of the local offer website; we continue to work with others to keep the local offer up to date. We helped to improve the EHCP Annual Review process to make it more streamlined and to make it easier for parent carers to participate
- **Enhanced Communication:** We have seen an increase in proactive communication from service providers, demonstrating a greater understanding of the importance of parent carer engagement.
- **Increased Parent Carer Confidence:** Through our events and information sharing, parent carers reported feeling more informed, confident in advocating for their children, and less isolated.
- **Stronger Relationships:** We have built stronger, more trusting relationships with key decision-makers, fostering a genuine spirit of co-production and partnership.
- **Growth in Engagement:** Our membership and engagement figures have steadily increased, indicating a growing recognition of the forum's value and reach within the BCP parent carer community.

## Social Activities

In November 2024 and March 2025, Parent Carers Together hosted two exclusive painting events at [All Fired Up](#) in Bournemouth, offering parent carers and their children a welcoming space for creativity and connection. Families enjoyed pottery sessions in an uplifting environment where every brushstroke became a moment of joy and calm. The events received glowing feedback, with parents sharing how much they appreciated the opportunity to unwind and bond:

What an absolute treat!

We had a great time last night! Thanks for organising



We loved the pottery painting!

It was such a lovely atmosphere and everyone was really engaged

We all had a lot of fun, thank you.

Thank you so much for hosting. We loved it!



These activities not only provided a sensory-rich experience but also strengthened the sense of community among families navigating SEND journeys across BCP.



## Just Act Natural Project

We are in Year 2 of a partnership with Magdalen Farm and Carymoor Environmental Trust for the Just Act Natural partnership project. This is a 5-year project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund to provide family activity days specifically designed for families who have a child or young person (under 25) with physical or learning difficulties.

[Carymoor Environmental Trust](#) is a 100-acre nature reserve located just outside Castle Cary in Somerset. They have created a home for a diverse range of wildlife; birds, mammals, insects and plants. Their Tree Trail is home to over 100 species of trees and shrubs, from the English Oak to the much rarer Plymouth Pear. They also have over 200 different kinds of Willow and 30 varieties of Somerset apple trees.



[Magdalen Farm](#) is a 132-acre working organic farm on the banks of the River Axe, where Somerset, Devon and Dorset meet. The farm includes meadows, orchards and fruit and vegetable gardens. They also have pigs, chickens and goats, a mile of riverbank, ponds, streams and a play area with zip wire and climbing frame.

In August we arranged a day trip to Magdalen Farm, which was a joyful blend of nature, creativity and play. The day was filled with exploration and learning, from meeting goats to gathering around Hensington Palace to feed the chickens. Children (and some adults) got creative with arts and crafts and woodworking activities inside the barn, using natural materials to create colourful keepsakes that captured the spirit of the day.

After lunch, we practiced lighting fires and laughter filled the air during outdoor play with plenty of space to run, climb and connect with the land.

The atmosphere buzzed with curiosity and collaboration, leaving everyone with muddy boots, happy hearts, and memories stitched with sunshine.



## Wellbeing - Healthy Parent Carer Programme

For those of you that remember the 1970s – you may remember these guys...

The Healthy Parent Carer Programme is a different type of CLANGERS!  
The original list of 5 key actions- CLANG- was derived from 400 studies on wellness and was designed to help people improve their wellbeing.  
In 2018, Dr Phil Hammond added to this, neatly extending the acronym to CLANGERS.



### Connect:

With friends and family, community, nature and yourself

### Learn:

Keeps our brain healthy, it doesn't have to be a textbook

### Be **Active**:

Think of small wins to make throughout the day

### Take **Notice**:

Of what and who is around you, try being present in the moment

### Give:

A smile or out time.

### Eat:

Easier said than done. But small changes add up to big wins.

### Relax:

Something a lot of us are not very good at, there's always something that need to be done.

### Sleep:

A lack of sleep affects both our physical and mental wellbeing, but we don't prioritise it.

## What is the Healthy Parent Carer Programme?

The aim of this programme is not to preach, these eight core principles are explored in a friendly, group setting where parent carers are encouraged to share experiences, learn together, and develop practical strategies for improving their own health and wellbeing.

### Delivery by Parent Carers Together

During the 2024/25 period, Parent Carers Together ran three full rounds of the programme, each spanning several weeks. The sessions were co-facilitated by trained parent carers who understood first-hand the unique challenges faced by participants. This peer-to-peer delivery model created a safe, empathetic environment that fostered trust, connection, and openness.

Each cohort brought together a diverse group of parent carers who were able to:

- Build supportive networks with others in similar situations
- Reflect on their own health and wellbeing
- Gain tools to manage stress and improve emotional balance
- Reconnect with their own needs, often neglected in the demands of caring roles

## Looking Ahead

If you are interested in helping us deliver this programme, we would love to hear from you! <https://forms.office.com/e/SGaNcdg7TZ>



**Financial Summary (Year Ending 31st March 2025)**

**Funding**

The Department for Education (DfE) currently gives grants of £17500 each year to all qualifying parent forums nationally. The funds are administered and managed by Contact and released in two equal instalments of £8750 with the second tranche only being released after we have accounted for the first.  
The forum receives grant funding from the Department of Education and from BCP Council.

***PCT remains a wholly independent organisation managed and led by parents and carers and never directed by others.***

This funding enables the forum to support the SEND community to have their voices heard, running workshops and other events. We are grateful for all the support we receive to continue our work representing the SEND community across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.  
Parent Carers Together CIC is regulated under the rules for Community Interest Companies. As a not-for-profit organisation is for the benefit of the SEND community across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

We remain committed to spending wisely and transparently, focusing resources where they are most needed.

**Looking Forward: Our Priorities for 2025-2026**

Building on the successes of the past year, Parent Carers Together has identified key priorities for the upcoming year:

- 1. **Deepen Co-production:** Continue to embed co-production as standard practice across all SEND services, moving beyond consultation to genuine partnership in design and delivery.
- 2. **Focus on Early Intervention:** Advocate for and co-design improved early identification and intervention services to support children and families at the earliest possible stage.
- 3. **Strengthen Post-16 Pathways:** Work with education and health providers to ensure clear, comprehensive, and person-centered pathways for young people with SEND transitioning into adulthood.
- 4. **Expand Reach & Inclusivity:** Proactively engage with a wider, more diverse range of parent carers, ensuring that the voices of all communities within BCP are heard and represented.
- 5. **Build Capacity:** Seek further funding opportunities and volunteer engagement to sustain and expand our activities, ensuring long-term impact.
- 6. **Increase membership:** To ensure that parent carers across BCP have a stronger collective voice and access to the support, representation and community they deserve.



Our priorities for the year focus on strengthening impact and ensuring meaningful change for children and young people with SEND, as well as their families. We are committed to deepening co-production by embedding genuine partnership working into the design and delivery of all services, while also championing early intervention to identify and address needs at the earliest stage. Strengthening post-16 pathways remains a key focus, ensuring that young people are supported with clear, person-centred routes into adulthood. We will expand our reach and inclusivity by engaging with a broader and more diverse range of parent carers across BCP, ensuring that all voices are represented. To sustain and grow our work, we aim to build capacity through increased volunteer involvement, while also growing our membership so that parent carers have a stronger collective voice and greater access to support, representation, and community.

Thank You & Acknowledgements

The achievements of Parent Carers Together would not be possible without the dedication and support of many individuals and organisations.

A heartfelt thank you to:

- **All Parent Carers:** Your courage, resilience, and willingness to share your experiences are the driving force behind our work.
- **Our Volunteer Committee & Team:** Your passion, time, and commitment are invaluable.
- **BCP Council & Dorset Integrated Care Board (ICB):** For their ongoing commitment to co-production and willingness to listen and act upon parent carer feedback.
- **Our Partner Organisations:** The numerous local charities, schools, and community groups who collaborate with us to support families.
- **Our Funders:** For providing the essential financial resources that enable us to operate.
- **NNPCF & Contact:** for national support and guidance

We look forward to another productive year of working together to make BCP a better place for children and young people with SEND and their families.



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- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/parentcarerstogether3>