

People Scrutiny Commission

14th December 2020

Public Forum



Statements (continued)

Statement 8: Kay Galpin

When considering the recommendations and next steps outlined in the People Scrutiny Commission's document regarding the SEND evidence day, I would like the Commission to consider the following statement which briefly outlines the challenges I have experienced with accessing SEND services in Bristol.

1. Waiting for almost one year for an EHCP plan to be finalised from **March 2019** until the **end of January 2020**.
2. Receiving a poor and unspecified EHCP with outstanding educational psychology reports and advice on sensory strategies still outstanding as of **December 2020**.
3. Waiting from **March 2020** until the end of **October 2020** for alternative provision to be provided, despite a complaint being upheld regarding non-provision of EHCP.
4. Specialist schools being unable to offer a placement, even in September 2021!
5. Waiting for **6 weeks** for a response to a simple query to the SEND team about progress on the process this October.

In respect of the actions outlined in the SEND report for consideration I make the following comments:

- "a clear communication and engagement plan to address culture and trust" is superficial, I constantly hear of parents driven to desperation by lack of timely responses to phone calls and e-mails. Waiting for **6 weeks** for a response to a simple query is totally unacceptable. A more comprehensive review of the department *at all levels* might more fully address what is clearly a serious cultural problem.

- EHCPs are still coming through that are not compliant with the basics or with best practice and parents are still struggling to access basic assessments for their children such as sensory integration and speech and language assessments that contribute to a full needs assessment – this is unacceptable. Much more joined up working is required between departments involved in the EHCP process; training is only a first step. There needs to be leadership commitments and accountability for partnership working at a senior level.



- In order for parents, carers and families to feel confident that needs are being met, much more than reports of progress such as “green shoots of recovery” and “dramatic turnarounds” describing small % progress towards legal compliance are required. As your report states yes, the voices of SEND families are important, but they should also be demonstrably listened to. What should be constantly considered are the lived experiences of the children that Bristol City Council is failing on a daily basis. Parents should not be forced to undertake expensive litigation to get an education that their child is entitled to. They only have one childhood and as time passes, plans and reports are no substitute for action. Senior leadership needs to take these issues much more seriously – you are failing our families. This report contains many useful recommendations, but without senior accountability for the changes this endemic problem will not be changed.