

STATEMENT – JEN SMITH

Following the result of the Bristol Joint Ofsted and CQC Inspection at the end of last year, families were highly concerned and extremely upset about a phrase Ofsted used regarding the fractured relationship with parent carers.

In fact, that phrase appears in agenda papers today: 'the majority of parents and carers accessing services and support more recently, are positive about their experience'.

Due to the level of upset this caused within the Send community following publication of the report, I submitted an FOI to Ofsted to get further clarity around this.

I wanted to know:

1. How many responses were there to the survey and by email or other means in total?
2. How were these graded to create a clear and objective data set?
3. Exactly what categories did positive, negative or responses such as neutral fall into?
4. Please can you provide the data charts of how this data was measured and categorised.
5. How do you class what is 'more recently' in parent carer feedback and how do you measure the timescale of what is 'recent' compared to what you perceive as not more recent.
6. And release the guidance you have to ensure that survey and email responses are from genuine parent carers in Bristol.

Ofsted received 616 responses to the online survey, 76 emails from parents, an online meeting with a group of parents and carers, representatives of groups that support children and families – including the parent carer forum and spoke to one parent who was unable to complete the survey.

The Parent Carer Forum was not operating as a Parent Carer Forum at the time of the inspection due to Bristol City Council blocking coproduction and spying on forum members.

I was personally in attendance at a meeting with Ofsted alongside other parent carers and there was not one single positive comment. There was a slew of personal accounts of current issues that were utterly horrific.

Ofsted also said answers were 'not formally graded as positive, negative or neutral' and neither do they have a specific definition of the term 'more recently'. Therefore, the Ofsted report cannot confidently claim that the majority of parent carer feedback was 'more positive' simply because they do not analyse this data. This is one place where the Ofsted result is open to legal challenge.

I would say the number of unhappy parent carers in Bristol runs into the hundreds.

The local authority will also be unable to formalise the Community of Groups into a coproduction arrangement, because it simply does not fit the format of coproduction as understood in the CoP.

Bristol City Council has also made it abundantly clear throughout 2022, that it does not wish to engage in coproduction, just tokenistic box ticking. Otherwise the former parent carer forum would not have been blocked from DfE funding.

That was a political choice by an education lead who admitted taking that decision without even speaking to the forum. Instead, she laughed about Send families in People Scrutiny Commission who are waiting a year for EHCPs and as well as denying Bristol City Council systematically spies on families in real-time.

It might be wise to amend the submitted report from 'difficult parents' to fractured relationship. Parent carers are not difficult, we spend our daily lives having to deal with daily council incompetence and spend years navigating legal action we don't want to take part in simply because the council will not and still does not follow the law. It doesn't even matter what gets put in an EHCP by SENDIST Judges because the council decides whether or not they will implement it anyway. Reminder that this is not lawful.

The agenda papers confidently report 'A new SEND Partnership Plan will also continue to tackle the areas of weakness identified in the inspection.'

Is that like the last SEND Partnership Plan? So many plans and nothing changes for families.

The relationship with parent carers is fractured due to the way the council continues to behave and the way it behaves is a political choice.

Jen Smith