



SENDiass4BCP (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole)

Partnership working with our local Parent Carer Forums

The context

Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole became one unitary local authority in April 2019. This meant that the two separate IASS for Bournemouth and Poole came together to form one IASS to serve across the conurbation of BCP. Similarly, there had previously been two parent carer forums (one for Bournemouth Borough Council, and one for the Borough of Poole). From April 2019, Parent Carers Together (PCT) were formed and have since been the functioning Parent Carer Forum for the BCP area.

SENDiass4BCP and PCT have a working memorandum of understanding which has been in place since 2020 and was recently reviewed in 2021 (Appendix 1). 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.

The process of co-producing the MOU, signing it, and then reviewing it has had a positive impact as it provided both parties with the opportunity to open a dialogue about their own perspectives and expectations. Reviewing the document and agreeing it for a further year confirms the continuity of having a strong working relationship.

How we work together

In 2020, SENDiass4BCP began working even more closely with PCT, as it was agreed to work in partnership on a project to develop a network of parent carer volunteers. The role of the volunteers will be to provide initial support to other parent carers, and to provide feedback to both services to help gain a greater understanding of the experiences and views of parent/carers of CYP with SEND in BCP. They will also empower parent/carers with awareness and understanding of the role and remits of SENDiass4BCP and PCT, thus widening the reach of both services to families across the local area. The network of volunteers will be known as Parent Carer Champions.

SENDiass4BCP and PCT have jointly developed and successfully appointed a Parent Carer Champion Coordinator. They have been in post since July 2021, and are responsible for recruiting, inducting, and supervising the network of volunteers, as well as communicating with schools and community groups to secure suitable spaces for the parent champions to deliver their role within. There is also a working MOU in place for the coordinator role (Appendix 2); providing guidelines of how both services will work together to promote, sustain, and, ultimately, ensure the success of the project.

The Parent Carer Champion Coordinator is in the process of identifying local schools and community groups who may be willing to offer a space for the parent carer volunteers to meet with parent/carers and provide them with initial information, advice and support (for example, signposting to universal services, signposting to SENDiass4BCP and to PCT, providing a listening ear). It is too early to fully assess the impact the parent carer champion project will have on the reach and capacity of SENDiass4BCP but it is anticipated that this joint project will empower a large number of parent/carers with the information and advice they need to access any further support they may require. This support could be delivered in a more direct and intensive way (i.e. through the IASS) or on a wider scale, such as parents using their lived experiences to influence change and to seek peer support from other parent/carers (i.e. through PCT).

The impact so far

As described above, although the extent of the impact of this joint project is currently unknown, there are already other positive impacts that have been experienced. These are:

- An open and honest dialogue between SENDiass4BCP and PCT
- A consistent memorandum of understanding in place which is adhered to and reviewed on a yearly basis
- A separate memorandum of understanding for the joint working on the parent carer champion project
- SENDiass4BCP and PCT sit on many of the same strategic LA and CCG groups and work jointly to achieve desired outcomes (e.g. partnership working to improve the LA's local offer page about EHCPs).
- SENDiass4BCP and PCT regularly signpost parent/carers to each other's services and are well informed about what the remits are of the respective services
- SENDiass4BCP and PCT promote one another's services and any upcoming projects or opportunities e.g. through social media
- It is made clear to parent/carers, volunteers, schools, community groups, the LA and CCG that the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator role has been jointly developed by SENDiass4BCP and PCT (for example, by the coordinator's email signature including both service logos, and the volunteer induction including information and input from both the SENDiass4BCP manager and the co-chairs of PCT)

It is easy to recognise the clear value for SENDiass4BCP to continue working with PCT as strategic partners and do not anticipate any reason why this shouldn't continue. There plenty of optimism that the parent champion project will only strengthen this relationship and moreover, improve the experiences of families living in BCP who have CYP with SEND.

Contact details

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Memorandum of Understanding – Together is Better Agreement

Appendix 2: Memorandum of Understanding – Parent Carer Champion Coordinator Role

Appendix 1

Together is better

The agreement for working together between

The SEND information, advice, and support service for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (SENDiass4BCP) and

The Parent Carer Forum for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (Parent Carers Together – PCT)

This is an agreement setting out how we can work together as individuals and organisations. The purpose of our joint agreement is so that families of children and young people with additional needs benefit from the best support, advice and meaningful participation opportunities possible, enabling them to achieve the best outcomes.

The core principles in this agreement are:

- ❖ Shared belief in raising the quality of life, improving outcomes and opportunities for all disabled children and those with SEN and their families
- ❖ Clarity over each other's respective roles and responsibilities
- ❖ Commitment to working together to support, train and empower parents to be their own voice
- ❖ Acknowledge the development of each other's practice
- ❖ Communication is open, honest, and solution focussed
- ❖ Publicly promoting, supporting, and championing each other

PART ONE

Our common goals and values are:

- ❖ We agree to work together to identify shared concerns and improved outcomes.
- ❖ We agree that events and co-production activities planned together are timely and positive for parent carers.
- ❖ We agree to plan our shared activities so that all parent carers feel involved appropriately, respectfully and meaningfully.

Our common code of conduct

Individuals and our organisations agree to:

- ❖ Behave with respect and professionalism towards each other
- ❖ Communicate in an open, constructive, and honest way that is diplomatic and not personalised
- ❖ Agree to be honest when there are challenges or differences to enable us to find a useful way forward that best enables parent carer voices to be heard.

Building positive working relationships

We acknowledge that we are all human, and all make mistakes. We agree to try and mitigate any tensions and disagreements as soon as they arise.

What we agree to do:

- ❖ We will meet 3 times per calendar year (at least), so that we can best understand each other's work, priorities and plans – we will make one another aware of any arising capacity issues, so that we can coordinate our efforts, plan ahead and work jointly when needed. This can be through virtual or face to face meetings.
- ❖ We acknowledge that this is a complex arena and there are a range of views, passions and capacities.
- ❖ We agree to talk and find a solution at the earliest opportunity and put any learning into place, so that when if issues arise again, we know how to avoid problems escalating.
- ❖ Do our best to share information (especially on events) as soon as possible to prevent duplication and reduce workloads.
- ❖ We will work together to provide a combined programme of events focussing on each of our areas of expertise.
- ❖ Be respectful of volunteer time. To this end, SENDiass4BCP agree to act as Secretariat for the thrice-annual "Together is better" meetings in as much as they will arrange and host the meetings and take minutes.
- ❖ We will only use each other's branded logos if we are holding a joint event, unless we request a prior agreement for an individual event. We agree to signpost to each other's services via the use of logos and links on each other's website.
- ❖ We agree to all register if we intend to attend each other's events, even if we are exhibiting. We agree not to charge each other attendance at events but in order to meet liability insurance requirements, we must register attendance. Where possible we will have no more than 2 reps from either service at each event.

PART TWO

Our organisation specific goals and values and responsibilities

Organisation 'A' – Parent Carers Together (PCT)

Parent Carers Together (PCT) is an independent group of parents and carers of children and young people with a disability or special educational need, fulfilling the requirement for a Parent Carer Forum to be active locally.

They aim to support parent/carers across the BCP Council area in a number of ways. These include:

- ❖ Hosting free information events, coffee mornings and social groups where parents can meet and talk in relaxed surroundings.
- ❖ Listening to parents and gather their opinions.
- ❖ Share these views and opinions with decision makers in the local and health authority.
- ❖ Make those views count when decisions on services and provisions are made.

- ❖ Provide an informative website and social media presence where parent/carers can receive information and chat with one another.
- ❖ Publish news and information in all media so parents stay informed.
- ❖ Keep parents connected with each other and to groups that can help them.

PCT will be responsible for the following:

- ❖ Representing the collective voice of Parents and Carers within the BCP Council area
- ❖ Recruiting and training Parent Reps to ensure our Reps are representing the wider community and needs of families
- ❖ Reaching out to as many parents as possible by linking with other parent groups, organisations and settings to encourage families to join our database
- ❖ Listening, Collecting and Collating the views and experiences of Parents and Carers, so that Parent Reps can better represent families at strategic meetings
- ❖ Co-producing at a strategic level across Education, Health and Social care informing and influencing local and national policy
- ❖ Running networking, Information and Participation events to help inform our families and members
- ❖ Signpost families requiring support for SEND related questions and processes
- ❖ We will actively signpost and advertise to families requiring this support to the local SEND IAS service (SENDiass4BCP)
- ❖ We will maintain open and honest communication with all parties

Organisation 'B' - SENDiass4BCP

SENDiass4BCP, provides statutory arm's length, free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support (IAS) to children, young people and their parents with any type of special educational need and/or disability (SEND) across the BCP Council area.

SENDiass4BCP covers all aspects of SEND from the earliest stages of concern, through SEN Support in schools to support during the statutory assessment, which may lead to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and beyond. SENDiass4BCP can offer Independent Support, providing trained staff to help children, young people and their parents, during the EHC needs assessment process and through Annual Review process for an EHCP.

SENDiass4BCP will be responsible for:

- ❖ Providing trained staff to deliver free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support (IAS) to children, young people and their parents with any type of special educational need and/or disabilities (SEND) aged 0-25 years, in line with the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014
- ❖ SENDiass4BCP covers all aspects of SEND from the earliest stages of concern, through SEN Support in all educational settings to support during the statutory assessment, which may lead to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and beyond
- ❖ Supporting a young person to access the service when they request a separate service to their parent/carer
- ❖ Feeding back to PCT on key issues and themes arising from service users and providing further information and data, if relevant to the work of PCT.
- ❖ Publicising the work of PCT including key projects and events via our social media platforms/website, in line with our existing policies and practice.
- ❖ Maintaining open and honest communication with all parties
- ❖ Sharing knowledge of local and National SEND developments and the work of the service.
- ❖ Help represent the legal backdrop behind health and social issues and support PCT in raising concerns with the LA and offering challenge where this is appropriate.

Agreed by:

Signatures: *Kirsty Fisher* On Behalf of: SENDiass4BCP

Signatures: *Louise Middleton* On Behalf of: Parent Carers Together

To be reviewed: September 2022

Appendix 2

Memorandum of Understanding In relation to the role of the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator Developed by SENDiass4BCP and PCT

This memorandum of understanding has been developed in light of the SEND Information Advice and Support Service for BCP (SENDiass4BCP) and BCP's parent carer forum, Parent Carers Together (PCT) working in partnership to plan and recruit to the role of a Parent Carer Champion Coordinator.

The parent carer champion coordinator will design, develop, co-ordinate and lead a Parent Champion Volunteer Network project facilitating volunteer recruitment, training, supervision and management while building effective relationships with volunteers and families of children and young people with SEND, to upskill and empower them to work alongside local services, Local Authority and partner agencies.

The parent carer champion coordinator will support the statutory requirements of the Local Authority, detailed in the SEND Code of Practice, by facilitating the participation of families of children and young people with SEND, connecting them with the Parent Carer Forum (Parent Carers Together) and support services locally. They will provide feedback mechanisms so parent carers can have information on and a say about the services they receive at local and strategic level and in the development of SEND policy, procedure and practice.

The parent carer champion coordinator and the projects volunteers will widen the reach, awareness of and access to the SEND Information Advice and Support Information and Advice Service, which is a front-line statutory service and support improved communication, information sharing and understanding of SEND legislation and the Local Authority SEND Local Offer by families of children and young people with SEND.

The parent carer champion coordinator and the projects volunteers will widen the reach, awareness of and access to Parent Carers Together (PCT) the parent carer forum for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. PCT works with BCP Council, Dorset CCG, SENDiass, social care providers and education settings to make sure that the planning and provision of services for children and young people with SEND are effective and the best use of resources.

SENDiass4BCP and PCT already have a 'Together is Better' agreement which sets out how we work as respective organisations and how we will work together.

There are 6 core principles to this agreement. These are:

- Shared belief in raising the quality of life, improving outcomes and opportunities for all disabled children and those with SEN and their families
- Clarity over each other's respective roles and responsibilities
- Commitment to working together to support, train and empower parents to be their own voice
- Acknowledge the development of each other's practice
- Communication is open, honest, and solution focussed
- Publicly promoting, supporting, and championing each other

Our six key principles are embedded within this MOU and the points below set out how SENDiass4BCP and PCT will work together, in relation to the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator role and project.

1. The development, recruitment and planning the induction of the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator role was carried out in equal partnership between SENDiass4BCP and PCT.
2. The Parent Champion Coordinator post sits within the SENDiass4BCP structure and as such, maintains the duty to be arm's length from the LA and CCG, and to be confidential and impartial.
3. The salary and remuneration costs for the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator are provided through ring-fenced grant funding, which is secured through the Information Advice and Support Programme (IASP).
4. The SENDiass4BCP manager has responsibility for managing both the grant funding budget and the core SENDiass budget.
5. PCT will provide funding for social activities, such as coffee mornings and resources that promote PCT events and information on SEND issues. Funding for this can be provided from grant funding.
6. As with all SENDiass4BCP employees, the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator is an employee of BCP Council, and facilities such as emails, Microsoft Teams, and IT hardware and support, will be provided by BCP Council.
7. The service manager for SENDiass4BCP will oversee that the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator completes their induction in line with the Information, Advice and Support Service Network (IASSN) requirements, which includes completing legal training by IPSEA levels 1-3. The Parent Carer Champion Coordinator will also complete the BCP Council induction.
8. When inducting the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator into the role, SENDiass4BCP and PCT will work closely to ensure that the coordinator gains a sound understanding of both organisations.
9. The service manager for SENDiass4BCP is the line manager for the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator post and as such, will:
 - Oversee the Coordinator's probationary period
 - Provide monthly 1:1's
 - Hold a yearly review as part of the appraisal process (End of Year Review)
 - Provide line management support to the coordinator
10. Every other month, the co-chairs of PCT will be invited to join at the beginning of the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator's 1:1 for around thirty minutes, to be briefed on progress within the project. The rest

of the 1:1 will be carried out solely by the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator's line manager, as per SENDiass policy around supervision.

11. As per the current collaboration and partnership working between PCT and SENDiass4BCP, should PCT wish to invite the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator to an event or a meeting, they will discuss this with the manager of SENDiass4BCP and the Coordinator, in the first instance; preferably, with at least two weeks' notice.
12. Should PCT have any comments regarding the development or progress of the Parent Carer Champion Coordinator role and/or the project, they shall discuss these with the SENDiass4BCP manager, in the first instance.

Agreed by:

Signatures: *Kirsty Fisher* On Behalf of: SENDiass4BCP

Signatures: **Louise Middleton** On Behalf of: Parent Carers Together