



# **ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN FEEDBACK FROM PARENT CARERS ON REPAIRING THE FRACTURED RELATIONSHIP WITH BRISTOL SEND SERVICES**

Prepared For:  
Parent carers living in Bristol  
cc. Department for Education  
& Bristol City Council  
**January 2023**



# WHAT IS AN ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN?

In 2019, an inspection of Bristol's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services by Ofsted and the CQC identified five areas of weakness.

A written statement of action (WSOA) was subsequently implemented in order to address these weaknesses. In November 2022, Ofsted and the CQC conducted a follow-up inspection to assess the progress made against the WSOA.

The inspection found that considerable efforts had been made to address four of the five concerns raised during the 2019 inspection, including the publication of an Ordinarily Available Provision document and a reduction in the permanent exclusion of pupils from education.

However, the inspection also revealed that the relationship between parent carers and SEND services, which was described as "fractured" in 2019, had not made sufficient improvements.

As a result, Bristol SEND services have been instructed by the Department for Education (DfE) to implement an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) to address this remaining weakness.

## THE APP FOCUS GROUP

On December 16th, 2022, the Community of Groups (CoG, a group established by Bristol City Council containing various SEND organisations, some of them parent-carer-led) received a request for meeting attendance to discuss the APP.

Four parent carer organisations expressed interest in attending. Availability was mutually determined on 5th January 2023 and meetings were held on 9th, 16th and 17th January.

At the 9th January meeting there was no attendance from ethnic minority parent carers; after seeking permission from Bristol City Council, Bristol Parent Carers contacted their parent carer members asking if they would be able to attend subsequent meetings. Unfortunately, we were only able to give families 1 week's notice. We were very grateful to the four families that took the time to be involved in this work and share their thoughts on how the fractured parent-carer relationship could be repaired from an ethnic minority perspective.

# FOCUS GROUP CONTINUED...

The meetings took place on 9th January 1-3pm, 16th January 1-3pm and 17th January 10-12pm. The Bristol Parent Carer Forum chair, a Bristol parent carer, was present at each meeting, along with the following attendees, the figures are combined across all meetings:

- Bristol Parent Carer Forum - 5 Bristol parent carer volunteers and 6 Bristol Parent Carer members\*
- Bristol-based autism group - 2 parent carers, 1 based in Bristol
- Bristol-based autism group with a focus on migrant communities - 1 Bristol-based parent carer
- Bristol City Council: 4 staff
- Health Care Staff: 2 staff
- Social Care Staff: 0 (potentially due to a local inspection taking place)

The purpose of this report is to document the wider voice of parents and carers (beyond those at the meetings) to compile a report that reflects the views of the SEND community.

Upon completion, the report will be sent to the Department for Education and shared with our members, the community of groups and those that gave feedback during the three meetings.

## What's next?

Bristol City Council is required to create a written plan of action to repair the fractured parent-carer relationship. The Department for Education (DfE) will have the final say in whether the plan is sufficient.

We hope that the DfE will consider the views of the parent carers within this report when determining the effectiveness of the APP. We firmly believe no plan in this area will be successful unless the views of parents and carers are carefully considered.

Once the plan has been agreed upon by the DfE, we will ensure parents and carers across Bristol are aware of the plan and what it means for their families

\*40% of Bristol Parent Carer Forum participants were from ethnic minority groups & Bristol Parent Carer Forum was the only organisation that represented parent carer views across a range of disabilities



## HOW WAS FEEDBACK GATHERED?

Social media was used to gather the necessary feedback for this project as it was felt it would give families fast and easy access, which was important due to time constraints. The same question was posted across 10 different Facebook groups each with its own distinct communities and in some cases specific disability needs.

A survey was considered but there are currently 3 different SEND surveys in Bristol each asking for parent carer feedback and we felt another survey would be overwhelming to the families we represent. We also emailed our members to ask for their feedback. The questions we asked were:

“ We are hoping that some families will be able to help us by sharing their thoughts.

Bristol City Council failed one area of their SEND re-inspection, namely, failure to repair the fractured relationship between SEND services and parents and carers.

They are looking to put together a plan of action for steps they can take to repair this relationship.



Do any parents from Bristol have any thoughts they'd like to share, we will pop it into a snazzy report and share it with you and BCC.



&



“ Is there anything people have found BCC have done really well that you'd like to see more of? ”







# WHAT IS GOING WELL & WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE MORE OF?



 The transport department has been consistently absolutely fantastic. Empathetic, speedy in their replies and helpful 



 We had one particular inclusion officer (we've had 3 now), and she was brilliant, replied in a few days, and explained clearly - so much better! 

 The blue badge team is efficient and helpful 

 The caseworker I had to take us from draft to final plan with our second EHCP did actually respond to emails and was pleasant and helpful 


 We had a great family support worker from disabled children's services for a spell last year, sadly they left 

 I would say on a good note each EP we have had has been really good. Our second EP went and spoke to the first EP about what they found and I really did rate that attention to detail 


 The people who called me for assessments- the health practitioner and EP - were absolutely brilliant; they really listened and understood, and were very much on our side 




## WHAT WOULD HELP REPAIR THE FRACTURED RELATIONSHIP?

 Be honest, both in terms of service limitations but also in terms of your statutory duties. It took me over a year to get an assessment my child was entitled to




 There seems to be disdain by some professionals of parent carers - they think we are 'grabby', maybe if they knew the law they would know this isn't true and we only want our children to not be disadvantaged by their disability



 Implementing the provision in an EHCP, or if you can't, explain why and tell me when it will be sorted out by and then stick to that




 Following the lawful criteria for EHCP, we had 3 appeals and won every one, at what cost? 2 years of missed schooling and an expensive indy school




 Following the SEND Code of Practice instead of causing Appeals & Judicial Review situations



 It really made me furious when my EHCP was late by 20 weeks and no one would reply to me and when I made a formal complaint I was told it would take 20 days. That's unacceptable when you're breaking the law




 It would be really helpful if they would reply to emails and pick up the phone. And yes, follow the law. Apologies when they mess up rather than act as though nothing has happened or claim ignorance







# WHAT WOULD HELP REPAIR THE FRACTURED RELATIONSHIP CONTINUED...

 If parents have obtained independent assessments these should not be argued if there is no other advice, attending mediation would stop them from wasting time with unnecessary tribunals


“

 Parents shouldn't need to chase annual reviews and remind the LA of the statutory procedures - why does this happen? Why can't people do their jobs?


“

 Stop fobbing kids off with the bare on-paper minimum. It's such a waste of time and resources to have an EP come out and say "use this OAP" and you then get an independent report with proper assessments showing so much more is needed


“

 I wish they would realise the gravity of their jobs - it's like some people don't understand my child is out of school, this will affect him for life


“

 Behave as though you were a functioning business. Answer emails, and the phone, have a functioning holiday rota, handle data better, stop using that stupid secure email thing, publish processes transparently and keep minutes of meetings and panels


“

 Start believing parents, educate yourselves about what autism looks like, including PDA, and understand sensory processing issues

“

 It's rubbish, getting towards 2 years now and still no finalised EHCP, zero communication and can't get hold of anyone. There should be a person assigned from the start!

“

 Health services are ping pong machines - 6 sessions of therapy isn't right for everyone, speech and OT are horrendous for this

“

# HOW DO YOU THINK CO-PRODUCTION SHOULD WORK?

Please note none of these comments are from representatives of Bristol Parent Carer Forum



We've seen no evidence that Bristol Parent Carers did anything wrong, you can't cherry pick who you work with



Reinstate the parent carer forum, if you value parent carers then that should be your first step



Don't use community of groups to push out parent carers, recognise that engagement with parent carers is a statutory duty



We feel held hostage, if we don't come to these meetings, the parent carer voice will not be recognised, you have to work with the parent carer forum



There needs to be a recognition that we all work, we all have jobs, we can not drop those commitments and we did not agree to co-production, the forum must be restored



There either needs to be a very clear reason why you will not work with the forum, which currently there is not, or you need to simply work with the forum and get on with it



It's been a year now, it's frankly ridiculous this conversation is ongoing. You already have an excellent partner, stop refusing to work with them



A forum is independent, the council can't set up its own forum, you need to value parents and partners and stop ignoring us and reinstate the forum



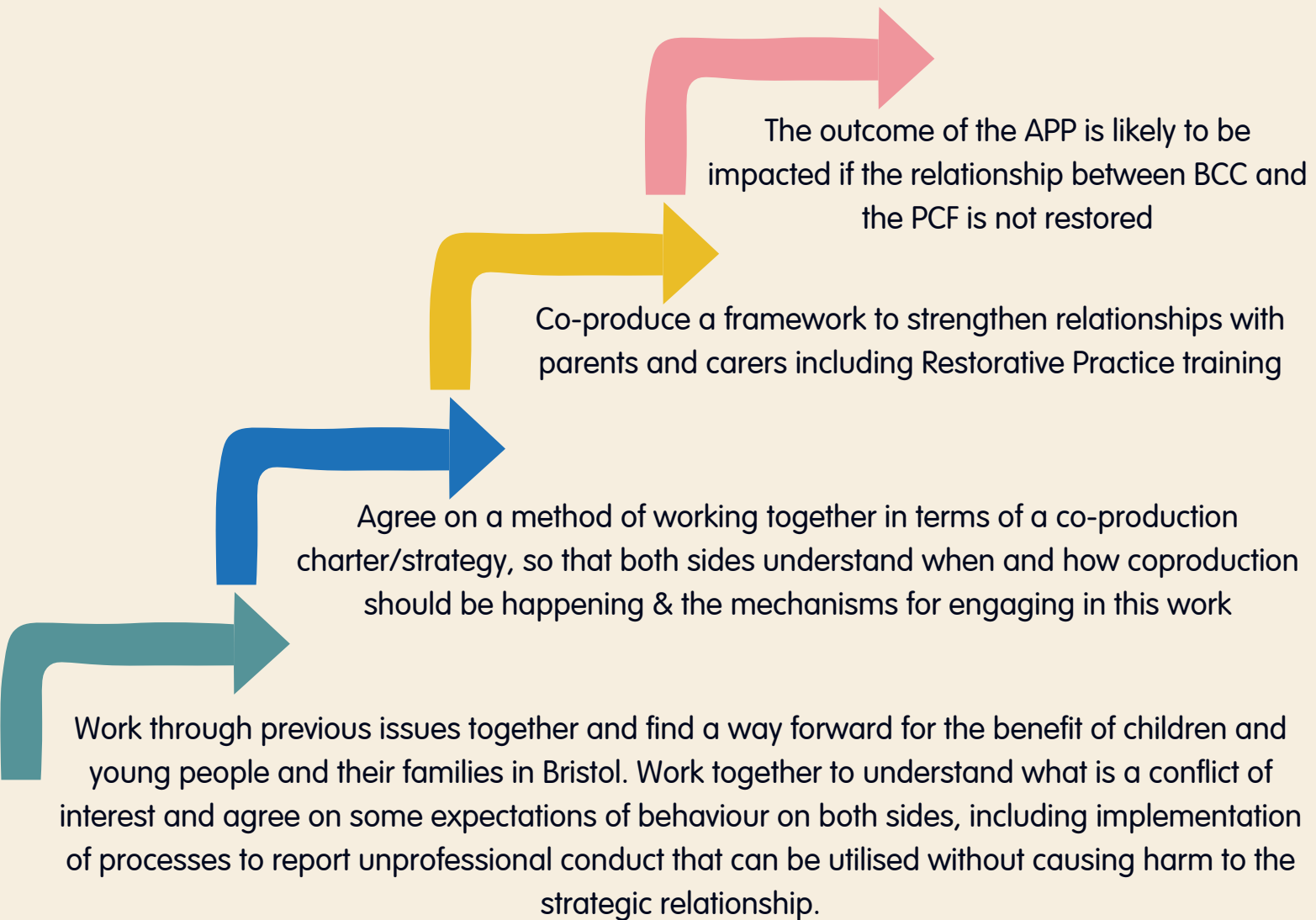


# FROM THE FEEDBACK WE HAVE RECEIVED, WE BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING STEPS WILL HELP REPAIR THE FRACTURED RELATIONSHIP



# Action #1

## Listen to parent carers concerns on co-production



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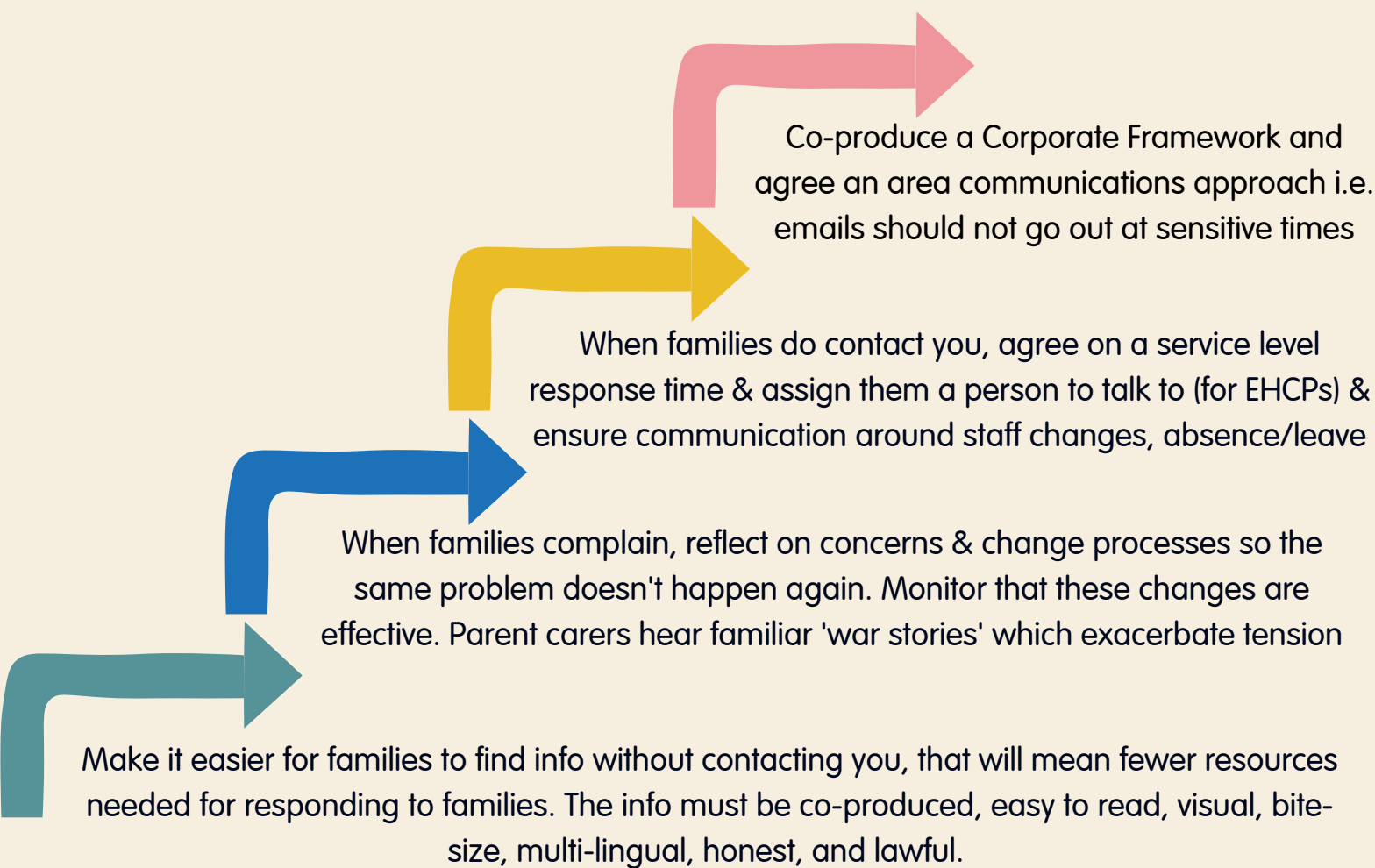
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# Action #2

## Improve how you communicate with families



There should be a contact list of whom to contact, when & why you'd contact them and a 'what to do when things go wrong' page. The local offer must be easier to navigate and user-friendly, and the social care offer needs to be clearer along with letters sent to families.

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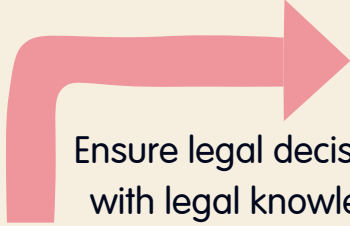
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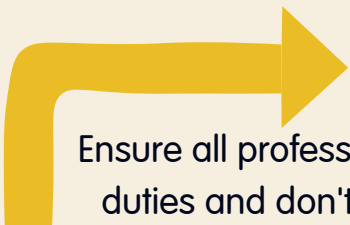
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# Action #3

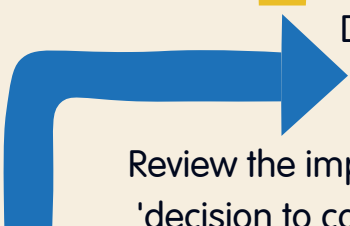
## Ensure processes are lawful & decision makers know the law



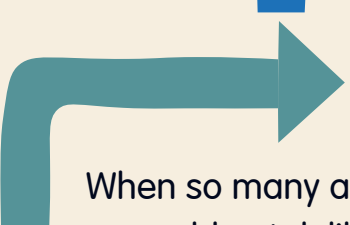
Ensure legal decisions are overseen by people with legal knowledge, i.e. ensure panels are not applying unlawful blanket policies



Ensure all professionals across all areas are aware of the legal duties and don't shut down parents that help other parents. Don't pressure parents to accept the status quo give them the facts



Review the implementation of the current Education, Health and Care Plan 'decision to carry out an assessment' policy. Too many families are being refused assessments and then needing to appeal. The criteria should not be used as a blanket policy



When so many appeals are lost, there must be an underlying reason for this, we know services would not deliberately delay giving families the support they need. What is driving this and does the delay in delivery support cost more when looked at longer term? Local Authorities win 3.7% of appeals: is this good value for money?



BE PROMPT



BE HONEST



BE CLEAR



BE OPEN

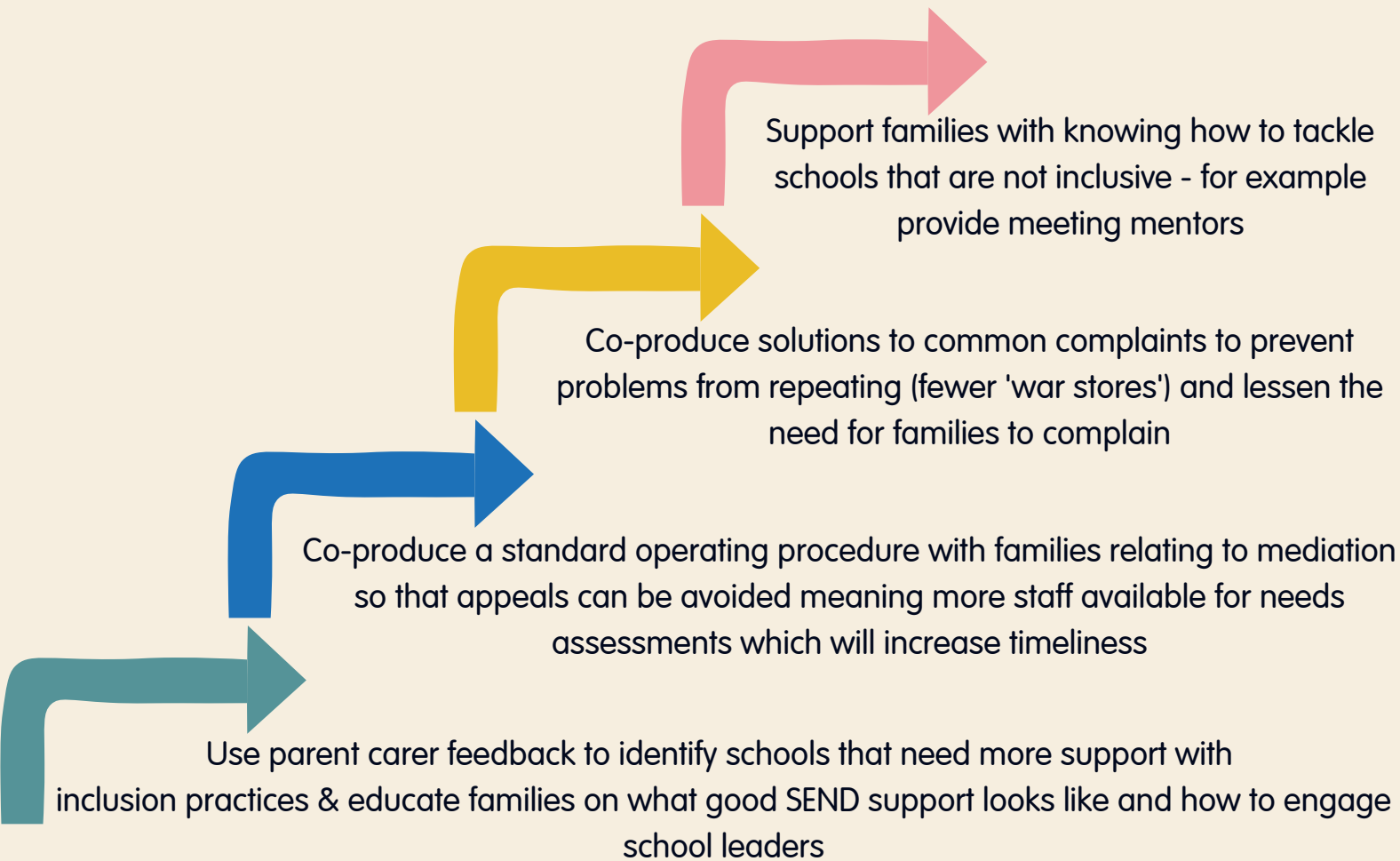


BELIEVE FAMILIES



# Action #4

## Empower parents & take complaints seriously



Complaints about Plans that have breached statutory timescales should not sit inside the 20-day complaints process but should have their own separate procedure; keeping them within the 20-day process drives the need for families to issue Pre Action letters.



# Action #5

## Create a trustworthy system by being transparent

Parents live the reality so spin doesn't work (i.e. EHCP on time calculation & green RAG ratings for incomplete work)

Panel minutes should be recorded so families know who made decisions and why; there is an LGO decision on this. Governance minutes (SIB & SPG) should be publicly available.

Ensure every report written by any professional should be 'EHCP' ready with all needs of the child or young person and provisions identified. This means reports for EHC assessment can be used without accessing a service again

Provide clear guidance on private reports and when they can & can't be used.

If a service can't provide support, be clear about this and let the family know who to contact to raise the issue to find a resolution. Stop services hiding behind each other as families spend hours working out who is accountable for which particular failure.

Ensure there are commissioning agreements between Education, Health & Care colleagues, and stop saying children "are not known to service".

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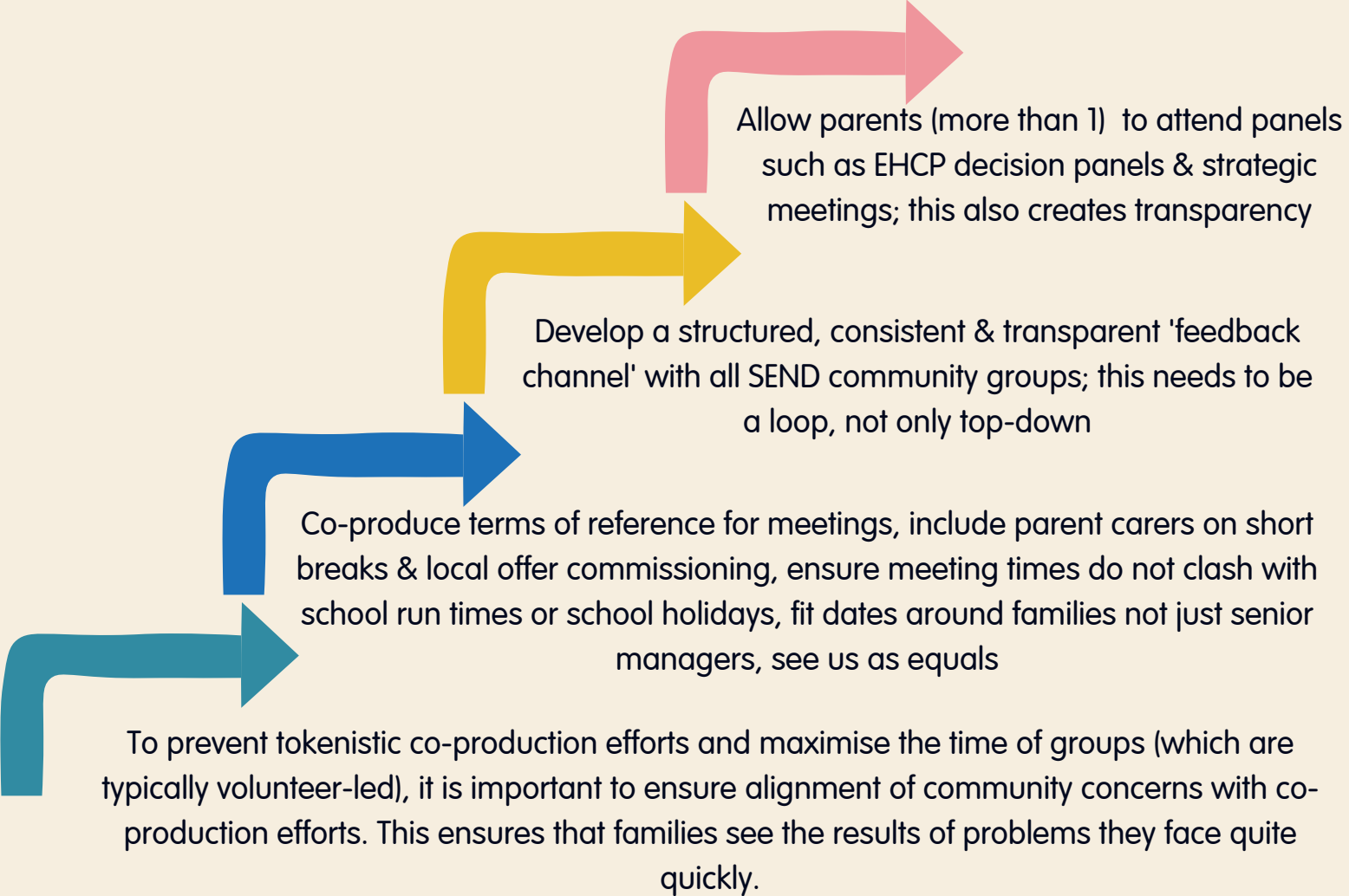
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# Action #6

## Recognise parents as professional partners & allies



Allow parents (more than 1) to attend panels such as EHCP decision panels & strategic meetings; this also creates transparency

Develop a structured, consistent & transparent 'feedback channel' with all SEND community groups; this needs to be a loop, not only top-down

Co-produce terms of reference for meetings, include parent carers on short breaks & local offer commissioning, ensure meeting times do not clash with school run times or school holidays, fit dates around families not just senior managers, see us as equals

To prevent tokenistic co-production efforts and maximise the time of groups (which are typically volunteer-led), it is important to ensure alignment of community concerns with co-production efforts. This ensures that families see the results of problems they face quite quickly.

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# APPENDIX

87 Bristol parent carers provided feedback online for this piece of work and some of the comments were recorded from the APP meetings themselves.

Not all of the feedback has been submitted as there was a lot of repetition but every distinct issue has been documented within this report. The EHCP Facebook page, Incredible Kids, Extraordinary Links, Ups and Downs, Nothing Special, Bristol Autism Support and Bristol Parent Carer forum facebook pages were used to ask for feedback.

## COG FEEDBACK AND BRISTOL PARENT CARER THEMES OF WORK

In January 2022 several SEND organisations were invited by Bristol City Council (BCC) to talk about the difficulties faced by their memberships or by the organisation itself. Some of these organisations were parent-carer-led groups whilst others are SEND organisations. They were later termed, by BCC, as a Community of Groups (CoG); the engagement model is that of informing with some consultation.

During the first meeting, several issues were raised by parent carers in attendance, and Bristol Parent Carers used this feedback in addition to our own parent carer WSoA survey to create themes of improvement.

Bristol Parent Carer Forum believes addressing these issues is essential to making rapid progress in this area of ongoing weakness.



### **Bristol Parent Carers Theme #1: Feeling included in Education**

#### COG feedback that fits within this theme

- Parent carers don't know what effective provision looks like or how they can get their schools to deliver provision/support for their child.
- Part-time timetables, suspensions, and off-rolling, forced EHE are all concerns and for many parent carers there is no simple info for them to access and no one to help them put things right; this is even worse for families that do not speak English.
- SENDCos and LSAs need to have the right knowledge inc masking and Anxiety based school attendance issues, to make Bristol an Autism friendly city - something needs to be done to tackle schools that will not 'do better'.



# COG FEEDBACK AND BRISTOL PARENT CARER THEMES OF WORK CONTINUED....



## **Bristol Parent Carers Theme #2&3: Suitable education and social care support**

### COG feedback that fits within this theme

- Knowing where to go for help and advice/getting at the right advice is difficult as it getting a response in a reasonable time frame.
- More respite is needed for families and greater activities in the community.



## **Bristol Parent Carers Theme #4: Receive health advice & support promptly**

### COG feedback that fits within this theme

- Parents need more information: what to do, what's normal, what to expect.
- There should be better access to diagnosis/services and ongoing support alongside understanding the impact & need for diagnosis.
- There should be better support from Dentists and info on availability.



## **Bristol Parent Carers Theme #5: Parents should have accurate, clear and easy-to-understand information available on all aspects of the SEND journey in all languages, online and offline.**

### COG feedback that fits within this theme

- Parents need more information: what to do, what is normal, what to expect, what support is enough, how to be sure you know everything you need to know to be confident in your parenting abilities.
- There should be better access to diagnosis/services and ongoing support alongside understanding the impact & need for diagnosis.
- There should be various short help guides co-produced with parent carers on a variety of issues such as Dyslexia, EBSA, suspensions, EOTAS, PDA and many more.
- The local offer is not functional for parent carers and needs to be co-produced with parent carers.

# ABOUT US

Bristol Parent Carers is an independent charity based in Bristol that is run by parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

We work in partnership with the local SEND organisations, the Department for Education, Bristol City Council and Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board to shape local SEND services. Our partnership work involves listening to parent carers' feedback on local services and using this to help create services that deliver the right support for local families.

We also offer families information, support and signposting so they know where to turn to find the answers to their problems and to ensure they know whom to ask for advice and information at any stage of their SEND journey. As parent carers ourselves we have often shared similar journeys to the families we support.

# BRISTOL PARENT CARERS: VISION

Our vision is to ensure that parent carers get the right support, at the right time and in the right way that best suits their families.

We aim to deliver this by using the parent carer feedback we receive and sharing it with all Bristol SEND services so that we can work as equal partners to shape the offer that services provide for all families, children and young people living in Bristol.

We strive to ensure that co-production is at the heart of this equal partnership and that we are as inclusive as possible, demonstrating equality, diversity, accessibility, and reciprocity to ensure co-production efforts are genuine and authentic.

# BRISTOL PARENT CARERS: MISSION

We seek to support and empower families to be heard and achieve better outcomes by ensuring families' voices are heard by planners and decision-makers.

Signposting and communication are key to our roles and we always aim for work to be co-produced with us, so that the voice of families is at the heart of every decision and policy. We want every child, young person and family in Bristol to:



Be included in education in a way that meets their individual needs, whatever they may be



Have a school space suited to their needs available when they need it  
Have knowledge and information about services that provide breaks and care



Receive help & advice as soon as possible from all services especially health & mental health services



Have support and accurate information on their Education, Health Care plan journey with an increase in timeliness



Have a positive experience whilst navigating SEND services and feel like a valued partner in achieving good outcomes for their children.



**Bristol Parent  
Carer Forum**

Shaping the Future *Together*

## **Contact Us**

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