

Co-Production with BCC



A Case Study by:



Bristol Parent Carers played a central role in rebuilding trust between families and services by championing co-production. This case study explores how collaborative working with Bristol City Council has improved relationships with Parent Carers and influenced lasting change across Bristol's SEND system.

Turning Talk into Action

Co-Production at the Heart of Change

Building trust through partnership
Listening, learning, leading change

Overview

In 2020, a joint Ofsted and CQC inspection found several local area SEND issues with particular focus on the fractured relationships with families and a lack of meaningful co-production.

In response, Bristol Parent Carers (BPC) began working closely with Bristol City Council (BCC) and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to rebuild trust and embed the parent carer voice in shaping SEND services. This case study outlines our collaborative journey working to restore the fractured parent-carer relationship.

The challenges

The 2022 re-inspection confirmed what many families had been experiencing for years. Parents Carers felt excluded from decisions directly affecting their childrens lives, with communication from services often perceived as top-down, inconsistent, or unclear. There was a widespread sense the system was not listening, and families' knowledge and lived experience were being overlooked. Services operated in silos, leading to disjointed support and a lack of coordinated responses to complex needs.

Engagement efforts, where they existed, were often tokenistic or short-term, undermining trust and creating further frustration. For BPC, a largely volunteer-led organisation at the time, limited capacity and resources made it difficult to respond at scale, contribute strategically, or challenge systemic issues effectively. These factors created a climate of mistrust and disengagement that required both cultural and structural change within all local area parties.

TOGETHER WE CAN

Bristol's Co-production Charter

How we worked together

Following the re-inspection, BPC and BCC committed to a more collaborative and transparent way of working. Regular senior-level meetings, shared agendas, and joint communications helped rebuild relationships. Parent Carers were embedded in strategic forums and co-chaired working groups, contributing directly to service redesign. Time-limited BCC funding enabled BPC to expand its capacity, recruit parent representatives, and improve engagement across communities. We developed a co-production charter and Memorandum of Understanding to embed co-production, supported by a shared commitment to cultural change. Public events such as Together for SEND helped to showcase progress and strengthen shared ownership of the systems improvement.

The impact this had

The partnership between BPC, BCC, and the ICB is strengthening trust, transparency, and Parent Carer influence across the SEND system.

Co-produced changes, including the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, clearer EHCP and Home to School Transport communications, and greater Parent Carer representation on strategic boards are helping to rebuild wider parent carer confidence and shape more inclusive local services for local families.

We recognise change takes time. As a relatively new Parent Carer Forum, and with co-production still embedding across the local area, we are confident this collaborative approach is laying strong foundations for lasting improvements that families will increasingly see and feel.

 In the last three years, we have made real progress in co-production. Parent carers are helping shape decisions, not just being informed of them. Together, we are building better support across our local area. 
- Hayley Hemming, CEO, Bristol Parent Carers