

## CHAMPIONING THE VOICE OF SEND FAMILIES



My name is Simon and the new chair of the forum. I lead on Transitions to Adulthood, Access to Social Care, Support, Services and other provisions and support for single parents, especially for single fathers, male carers and older siblings fulfilling a parental role. I am the legal guardian and carer to my younger 16-year-old brother Matthew who is at the beginning the transition to adulthood process. He has always been a happy child and enjoys many of the same things I do, but is someone I never envisaged that I would be taking responsibility for when he came into my family through a court order in 2007.



**Simon Wilson**  
**Chair**

The thing that brought me to the forum was having had and continuing to have a negative experience with trying to access any form of help and support and knowing that things can and should be better. If the system as it is now, is failing to support someone like me who doesn't have additional needs, how much worse is it for my brother who does have additional needs and is in a special educational needs school? I would like to end all the mixed messages given by social workers, the failure to communicate important information about services, support groups and services and places of financial support for low income families and those forced to give up paid employment and shine a light on the LA's wastage of taxpayers money, which should be spent more wisely on services and support that our children and families actually need, not what they decide they want to provide for us. I would also like to challenge the lack of understanding the LA has particularly in relation to single parent families, low income families and those on benefits and help them understand that not everyone has the privilege of a full time paid job, and not everyone has family, or friends that are in a position to provide any meaningful help and support outside the areas traditionally covered by the local authority.

## Housing Forum SEND



On the 9th November we held our first meeting with key officers from council. The terms of reference were agreed. The functions of the strategic SEND group are to work strategically via Strategy team and Community Participation team to improve services and service delivery. Discussions from this strategic group meetings will be fed back to the SEND parent, carer participation forum and out wider membership.

Meetings will be topic-based, with the aim of raising awareness and development an understanding of the various processes involved in obtaining housing and of specific services and policies.

Issues raised:

- **SEND parents want to get a response / update in relation to their housing situation in a timely and transparent way**
- **Improving customer service communication in general**
- **Helping families to understand the housing journey. Need diagram/flowchart of the housing journey.**
- Information needed on housing adaptations and where to go for assistance with this.
- Hate crime, nuisance & ASB: For instance, SEND families often feel isolated, not heard and not respected.
- Allocations
- Repairs and maintenance
- Customer care / local estate teams
- Aids and adaptations
- Communal and outside spaces
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The first three issues in bold are the most pressing and will be addressed first.

Future planned action:

- RBG will provide support to help SEND families to look for Private Rented Sector housing, including assessing the possibility of the RBG Housing Inclusion and Support Service (who deal with housing allocations and advice) search for properties suitable for SEND families.
- Train repair staff to note the difficulties of being a SEND household and to flag their repair as a priority or be aware of the implications of disrepair for this family.
- Check website for clarity also to make the information available in several places on website.
- Check with RBG Comms section if they can devise a communication strategy to help SEND parents navigate and understand the housing system and where to get the appropriate help.
- SEND group can run workshops in conjunction with RBG. Working in partnership.
- RBG and SEND will use the 'Housing Champions' initiative to promote the needs of SEND families in their local areas.

The next meeting is in January – if any parents are interested in becoming part of this SEND housing forum, email us at [admin@greenwichpcpf.org](mailto:admin@greenwichpcpf.org) or call Carol on 07852101492.

## Next steps:

### SEND:

- Conduct lived-in experience mapping with members
- Create focus group sounding board facility
- Undertake client opinion surveys of service areas



RBG: will research and gather what information we have to address the issues raised above and also research the following:

- Tony will discuss with RBG's Priscilla John, Head of Customer Experience, in the housing repairs division, problems encountered by RBG residents in reporting repairs, including delays in call answering by the RBG contact centre.
- Understand the Allocations policy
- Review and improve usability of the RBG information-i.e. content and accessibility, such as the website and to consider an easy read format for the Tenants' handbook.
- Create a document or webpage and other material that explains the housing process, to be called the 'housing journey' (a document can be given to applicants for housing, before during and after the allocations of a tenancy).
- Create signposting information for strategic SEND group, so they can advise and direct parents to the right operational teams where to get information /help, and the reporting of hate crime targeted anti-social behaviour.
- Explore the housing experience of adults with learning disabilities who live independently and with support. This will include involvement with the RBG's Adult Services colleagues.

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### Parent champion SEND

We are looking for SEND Parent Champions! Be our voice in your local community. We're looking for Parents of children or young people with SEND to share information on SEND services and to support other parents. We will give you training and in turn you will volunteer 2-5 hours a week to use your experience as a SEND parent to benefit others.

We have been blown away by the response in Greenwich. We now have 13 volunteers, but more are always welcome. We're especially interested in hearing from parent carers with children in secondary school or college.

If you would like us to meet with you or your group/ organisation to know more about this scheme do call and we will arrange a time to speak with you. Please call Carol Foyle (Parent Participation Worker) 07852 101492 or email Rachael Withers at [rachael.withers@greenwichpcpf.org](mailto:rachael.withers@greenwichpcpf.org).

Closing date - Friday 24th December 2021

Training days Thursday 27th and Friday 28th January 10.30-12:30pm



## **GPCPF working with SENCOS**

We have made contact with all SENCOS within early years settings and in all schools . We attended a senco forum and a training session for new senco to promote the role of GPCPF and the importance of working in partnership with parents. We are pleased to feedback that 9 SENCO's have made direct contact, inviting us to attend a coffee morning , help set one up and discuss ways we can work together to ensure parents are better informed and supported .

## **Integrated Therapy Services in Schools**

The current contract and service level agreement for the delivery of Integrated therapy services in schools is currently undergoing a refresh . Key to this is hearing from parents and young people about their experinces have been like to see where improvement can be made.

We are interested in hearing about your experinces of;

- Pre access to services – what support was you given and in what format – if you didn't receive good support , what would have been useful and by who
- Access - was accessing the service easy? Are the locations of the services good?
- Experience in service delivery - how were the interventions for the child? How did the service interact with parents and carers?
- Post-discharge - what happens after the interventions, was there a discharge from the service, were you given advice, were your needs fully met, what else would you like to see?

We would also like to consider how the journey might be different for Speech and Language therapy, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy. Do you have any ideas and what training would have helped you?

Integrated Therapies Journey Mapping: click [here](#) to complete this survey which will be open until 17th January 2022.

If you are interested in joining a focus group please email us so we can send you further details.



## **Childrens Home Care community based support tender**

RBG are in the process of tendering out for home care providers to form part of a frame to drive forward improvements in quality of service provisions with the ability to have a more robust and personalised service.

As with the short break services tender process we had a parents panel that were part of the assessment and decision making . we are looking for interested parents who would like to form part of the parent interview panel which will take place early to mid February 2022. All meetings will take place between the hours of 10-2. We are particularly looking for parents who perhaps already access home care services – if you are interested email [admin@greenwichpcpf.org](mailto:admin@greenwichpcpf.org) or call Carol on 07852101492.

## **IND and waiting times**

Three additional staff members have been hired for one year through an external agency to increase capacity for Autism Assessment and diagnosis. This has enabled assessments to take place at a rate of about 24 a month, and has reduced the waiting list from 850 to below 700 so far.

As the number of monthly assessments and consequent diagnoses has almost trebled there has been a knock-on effect on ASD outreach which doesn't have the capacity to provide support for such a sudden increase in numbers. Parenting courses have had to be conducted online recently. This should improve with time, and hopefully there will be a move back to face to face support.

Four independent prescribers for ADHD medication are being put in post. This will reduce wait times for initial ADHD medication prescription.

### **Parents workshops daytime and evenings**

We are keen to put in a number of workshops in different topics relating to SEND

We are keen to hear from you what areas / topics would be useful, they could be health, social care or education related. Please email us and let know.

### **Local offer work update**

We have been working with the Local Authority to bring the Local Offer in-house so that they have more autonomy over how it is displayed and how things like filters can be used effectively to make the Local Offer easier to navigate. The Council's Digital team is really excited about this opportunity to design a Local Offer that everyone can use easily. We have also been working on the latest edition of the Local Offer Newsletter.

Find out more about our upcoming parents daytime and evening workshops in January [here](#).

**From all of us at GPCPF, we would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New year!**

