



## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2022 AT 10.10AM IN MISSENDEN ABBEY, LONDON ROAD, GREAT MISSENDEN**

#### **PRESENT:**

<b>Andrew Howard</b>	<b>FACT Bucks Steering Group</b>
<b>Phil Ogley</b>	<b>FACT Bucks Steering Group</b>
<b>Penni Thorne</b>	<b>Trustee &amp; FACT Bucks Steering Group</b>
<b>Ena Smale</b>	<b>FACT Bucks Steering Group</b>
<b>Ruth Goodman</b>	<b>Trustee &amp; FACT Bucks Steering Group</b>
<b>Beth Knighton</b>	<b>FACT Bucks Steering Group</b>

**Margaret Nyambayo** Trustee

**Kelli McBride**  
**Kelly Allaway**  
**Farhana Rahman**  
**Heather Knowles**  
**Claire Vincent**  
**Bronwen Worrell**  
**Nigel Meek**  
**Leonie Cowlard**  
**Kathryn Watts**  
**Emma Hopkins**

#### **APOLOGIES:-**

**Emma Taylor**

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

<b>Simon James</b>	<b>Buckinghamshire Council</b>
<b>Hayley Nowley</b>	<b>Buckinghamshire Council</b>
<b>Lucy Pike</b>	<b>Buckinghamshire Council</b>
<b>Sarah Smith</b>	<b>Bucks SENDias</b>
<b>Jen Ogley</b>	<b>Bucks SENDias</b>

#### **WELCOME**

The Chair of the Steering Group, Andrew Howard, welcomed members to the meeting and introduced the Director of Education, Simon James; the Head of Improvement & Transformation! Lucy Pike; and the Interim Head of Integrated SEND, Hayley Nowley.

## **REPORT OF ACTIVITY UNDERTAKEN IN THE YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2022**

The Chair gave a report on the work of FACT Bucks in this period. A copy of the report slides is attached to the record.

The highlights included: -

We funded and coproduced a series of 4 webinars - EHCPs; SEN Support; Engaging Confidently; and Health - with Bucks SENDIAS which were attended by an average of 25 parents, but which have been made available through websites to increase views.

We coproduced an annual survey on SEND with Bucks SENDIAS attracting nearly 400 responses (although we had to close the survey early as we had an imminent OFSTED inspection for which the data was invaluable.

We hosted Parent Dialogue Group meetings for CAMHS; Therapies; Short Breaks; Transport and Neurodiversity - which each involve around 10 parents.

We attended strategic governance meetings including the Children's Partnership Board; SEND Board; SEND Improvement Group and the SENDIAS Steering Group. We had parent representatives engaged in all 8 task groups under the SEND Improvement Plan - Statutory Performance; Commissioning; Local Offer; SEN Support; ASD/SEMH; Quality; PfA; Voluntary Sector) as well as numerous project groups and those for the recommissioning of CAMHS and Therapies.

Despite the continued restrictions on face-to-face meetings (in particular the reluctance of parents to assemble) we continued to feed into and receive feedback from numerous condition specific parent groups.

We coproduced a strategy on Sufficiency of School Places for SEND and were fully involved in a consultation on the future of the Specialist Teachers resource.

We maintained the charity; championed an increase in funding for the SENDIAS service and for the forum; engaged in the region; and were fully involved in the preparation for and during the OFSTED inspection of the Local Area in March 2022.

Looking into 2022-23, the Forum continues to engage strategically and operationally whenever it is given the opportunity and especially through the development of the Written Statement of Action and the revamp of the SEND Improvement Plan as well as the implementation of both of them.

## **ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2021-22**

These had been approved by the Trustees and circulated prior to the meeting to all members. Phil Ogley proposed, and Ruth Goodman seconded that the Annual Report and Financial Statements should be adopted and this was agreed new con.

## **ELECTION OF TRUSTEES**

Two Trustees retire by rotation. Neither has indicated a willingness to stand again as a Trustee. There being no other nominations, no additional trustees were elected.

**There being no further business the meeting ended at 10.30am**

## **PRESENTATION AND Q&A**

The meeting was followed by a presentation by the Director of Education for Buckinghamshire Council and his colleagues, a copy of which is attached to the record.

This was followed by questions, a summary of which follows. The questions are in italics.

***Social care engagement still poor and too often simply referring to other services some of which are wholly inappropriate for the situation?***

There is a revised and refreshed approach to Early Help being developed in partnership with the voluntary sector that aims to establish family hubs of professionals and organisations that can meet the varied needs which we know families have and for which they deserve support to boost their resilience and keep families together.

***Post 16/18 learning opportunities are too few and too restrictive – apprenticeships and work-related learning opportunities are options only for the more able SEND YP?***

We are working with business partners through Bucks Skills and our Special Schools to enhance the Post 16 workplace options for a broader contingent of YP. The current economic climate is creating its own challenges, but the numbers are growing every year.

***Why is provision concentrated in the north of the county?***

The map of specialist provision in education and the health service facilities do not reflect that but it does not mean that it does not feel that way for families if they are seeking a particular type of school place or intervention. We have a strategy to grow our specialist school place provision, and this includes a new free school bid along with additional places at current schools and additionally resources places in mainstream schools. Unfortunately, much of this relies on either capacity of existing sites or the willingness of mainstream schools to partner with us. We will keep watching the geographical spread of need and provision.

***What is the SEND toolkit and who are the SEND Inclusion Advisers?***

The toolkit is a resource to assist with the delivery of the Ordinarily Available Provision – the support schools are expected to deliver for CYP with SEND from within their own resources. FACT reps were involved with its development but it is currently subject to further work and volunteers always welcome to assist. The SEND Inclusion Advisers are recent developments, and they are specifically targeted at developing an inclusive response in schools.

***Schools need to address their high arousal atmospheres and practices if they are to be inclusive?***

We accept this and this is a key element in the work being developed in the autism strategy and through the autism friendly school's project. The Council's role in this is to encourage best practice as we do not have any statutory powers which enable us to impose any practices on schools and settings.

***Some SEND staff are very unkind to parents, many of whom are struggling with very demanding children.***

We are always sad to hear that staff have not behaved as we would all expect. The workload demands on the EHCCOs is significant and this can impact on performance.

***Why can we not have the same EHCCo from one year to the next and why are schools always telling us that they have no one to contact when you say that every school has a link?***

We have experienced turnover of staff which is a national issue partly due to the demand for experienced staff in locum roles and locally by the quantum of work being asked of each officer. We are working hard to address these issues and we are investing time into initial training and support through an additional leadership role in each area team. Schools do have a named link but again there are gaps on occasions due to staff movement.

***Delays in assessments for EHCPs are leading to school places being lost?***

We are experiencing a reduction in performance against target in assessments which is contrary to the trend in the preceding year. Work is being focussed on the operation of the panels and a triage system introduced alongside health colleagues to ensure that assessments are only being sought when needed (rather than previous blanket requests which just fuelled the backlog).

***Why can my child not get the therapy support they are due under their plan?***

There is a under provision of therapist support in the area and this has been recognised through the Inspection process and additional resources have been offered by the Council and we anticipate from the NHS to address this. However, there is also a national shortage of therapists and as a result we will shortly consult on a revised strategy that will seek to widen the offer using other trained individuals and organisations. Please do take the opportunity to engage with the consultation.

***Do you really think all schools can deliver this OAP or more therapy support? If they do not, what can we do but seek an EHCP?***

We know that many schools can and do deliver excellent support to children and young people with additional needs without an education, health, and care plan. We are working to grow school knowledge by peer-to-peer support and there are extensive training opportunities. At the same time, school leaders have made it clear that they are also faced with staffing challenges, and we are working at a local area level to see how we can address this.

EHCPs are awarded when the provision required to meet need exceeds that which a setting or school can reasonably be expected to deliver from within their own resources and always will be.

***What are you doing about the waiting lists for ASD/ADHD assessment?***

Again, the Inspection rightly showed that we are not delivering in this area (as FACT had warned us) and work is underway as mentioned to address this by the NHS in partnership with local area colleagues. It is important to note that the waiting lists are for assessments (a shared offer by Bucks Healthcare and Oxford Health) and not for therapeutic support for mental health conditions through CAMHS. A specific Parent Dialogue Group on Neurodevelopment Pathway issues is now working on this with key professionals.

***You spoke of an Annual Review Plan. My child has not had an updated plan for 2 years, when will we see a change?***

We accept that the annual review process is not delivering which leaves situations where children and young people do not have updated plans. However, the annual reviews are taking place and in most situations adjustments in provision identified by the process are being implemented. Our strategy aims to work through the backlog in a sequence that recognises both the child/young person's situation and their current education year – i.e., the most vulnerable children and those in transition moments are being prioritised.

***Many of the plans that are the result of conversion from statements remain inadequate. What is being done to quality assure them as has happened for new plans with the results you have outlined?***

We are looking to extend the QA process to Annual Reviews to pick up these issues but again it is a lengthy process.

***What work is being done to support and develop Education Other Than in School (EOTAS); assist those who have opted for Education at Home because their school place is not meeting need; and for those who are unable to attend school because of anxiety?***

We recognise that these are growing areas nationally (although the number of EHE students has remained consistent over the last few years) and that Emotionally Based School Avoidance is an area where more work is required. The latter is subject to pilot work led by the Education Psychology Service.

***Transport to Special Schools and ARPs is not run with SEND CYP in mind – there seems to be very little understanding of the impact of inconsistency of people and timing changes can have on our kids?***

We are aware of these ongoing challenges, and we know that FACT are working with our Transport colleagues to increase parent and user input into their operational developments.