



## NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2023

### **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE PARENT CARER SEND SURVEY 2023 MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN**

The third annual FACT Bucks/ Bucks SENDIAS SEND Survey for parents and carers runs from 7<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023. This survey is a vital element in gauging the impact of the SEND Improvement journey in the local area. The more responses, the more impact it will have. It is not only Buckinghamshire Council and the local Health Service who are seeking the views from this survey as a measure of their effectiveness, the Department for Education are keen also to see how lived experience is being changed in Bucks.

Last year, the results were fed directly to the OFSETD/CQC Inspectors highlighting the system inadequacies in Therapies, Neuro Development and Community Paediatrics. All of the data and comments are shared with the relevant local area bodies and the themes included in the revisions of the SEND Improvement Plan. For example, we pushed hard for the renewed work on Annual Reviews given the stark feedback from parents.

Whatever your experience – good, mixed or poor – your views need to be heard. Please complete the survey by following this link. <https://survey.zohopublic.eu/zs/iRDHb6> There's even a QR code:



We listened to feedback and invested in better software to allow you to pause and return to the survey if needed. To achieve this, it is issued by FACT Bucks only but we continue to work closely with Bucks SENDIAS to drive forward improvements for SEND children, young people and their families.

#### **COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR**

January was our busiest ever month as the local area wrestles with the twin action plans emerging from the SEND Strategy and the Written Statement of Action. Our priority remains ensuring that a parent rep is in every meeting to which we are invited. This ensures that the needs and concerns of parents and their young people are always being heard and that we can work to improve the offer being made in ways that meet those concerns.

Looking beyond Bucks, there are very significant changes occurring within the health service as the commissioning and oversight of services and strategies moves regionally through the Integrated Care System. In addition, there is a new OFSTED SEND Inspection framework which places the emphasis on the lived experience of children and young people with the parent carer forum being a key partner in deciding where the Inspectors should fix their focus. As we were only inspected in 2022, we will not have a revisit till at least 2025 but it is already changing mindsets as seen above in relation to our survey.



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We have been challenged recently to increase the visibility of our work. With limited volunteers to be reps and with our priority being on attending meetings, the time to make ourselves visible was limited. However, Claire Vincent, a parent carer, has agreed to lead on this for us and I hope you will all follow the new Facebook Page and our Twitter account (see info at the end). We will continue to post all information to our website and mail half termly to those on the membership list. We are also happy to share our information through the Parent Support Groups in Bucks. If you would like more info please email [claire@factbucks.org.uk](mailto:claire@factbucks.org.uk)

### WHAT FACT REPS HAVE BEEN DOING

#### BRIEFLY

In the last 3 months we have been involved across the range of SEND issues including:-

- 4 Workshops run by the Council for Disabled Children focussed on the improvement of pathways for access to services
- The initiation of a new Parent Support Groups Forum with the Director of Children's Services
- The launch of a new Facebook Page and Twitter account to increase our visibility
- Interviews for a new lead for Preparing for Adulthood
- Induction of the new Head of Service for iSEND
- A regional workshop on the issues faced by SEND families led by the Integrated Care Board for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Berkshire West
- Ineffective user engagement of the service provider for community equipment (ie wheelchairs, nappies etc)
- Drafting a revised SEND chapter for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Focussed conversations on those CYP with SEND who are also subject to social care oversight; young offenders or looked after.
- Advocating for a focus on quality of existing plans especially those which were the product of the unsatisfactory conversion from statements process
- Continued conversations aimed at ensuring the relevance of the Local Offer

#### IN DEPTH

##### **Autism Strategy (Lead: Ruth Goodman)**

The All-Age Autism Strategy is now in draft and has recently been presented to professionals and partners before it is completed and ready for public consultation. The consultation should take place later this Spring. The emphasis on the experiences and comments of autistic people is underlined by the recent additional all-inclusive consultation which has just finished aimed at seeking the views of autistic young people. Following the consultation, the strategy implementation will be via a Delivery Plan overseen by a specific Autism Partnership Board.

##### **Housing (Lead: Ruth Goodman)**

There is a new Housing Strategy currently being developed and there has been input from FACT Bucks representatives to put SEND on the agenda ensuring that Buckinghamshire Council consider and work towards suitable accommodation for young people as they move towards living away from their family.



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### **Adult Social Care (ASC) (Lead: Ruth Goodman)**

There continues to be representation on the Adult Social Care forums to highlight challenges and issues for young people as they approach, enter and exist in adult services. Currently there are sessions being held working on Co-Production and how Adult Social Care can be improved.

### **Short Breaks (Lead: Phil Ogley)**

Action for Children provide two largely separate short break services in one contract.

**Bucks Activity Project** provides daytime (typically 3 hour) activities for all children with SEN or disabilities **without** needing a professional referral.

At the recent contract monitoring meeting the service reported having no waiting lists, so we recommended a refreshed publicity campaign as recent conversations have shown a limited knowledge of the service among families. Action for Children also run three **overnight respite** facilities at The Grove, Merryfields and The Vines. Access to those services requires referral from Bucks Social Services. Those services are full and have waiting lists. FACT Bucks is stressing the need for more overnight capacity and in particular for cohorts other than those with Severe Learning Disability.

### **Co-Production (Lead: Chair)**

The Charter, Pledge and related toolkit will be launched to Council and Health staff on 7th March. As previously reported, the Charter is a commitment by the local area to advocate for and deliver co-production at every level of activity - strategic, operational and individual. It will be accompanied by an ongoing commitment to training for staff, as well as acceptance by senior leaders that additional time and effort are a consequence of working creatively with families and young people. It is a significant underlining of a key aspect of the SEND reforms

### **Written Statement Of Action (Lead: Chair)**

The monthly oversight group for the Statement (that arose from the deficiencies highlighted by the OFSTED/CQC inspection last March) is an opportunity to measure both activity and impact in the drive to make improvements in the key areas of Therapies, Neurodevelopment assessment and Community Paediatrics. Whilst there is significant commitment and a wide range of granular actions underway the impact experienced by families is very limited (which is not surprising at this point, especially whilst funding conversations remain ongoing), we are watching to ensure that actions begin to impact lived experience.

## **SEND IMPROVEMENT**

### **School Sufficiency Strategy (Lead: Phil Ogley)**

FACT Bucks joined the Special School Property Board for the first time this month. This group is responsible for turning the SEN Sufficiency Strategy into reality. Progress is being made on increasing the number of ARPS (Additionally Resourced Provisions) and Inclusion Units within mainstream schools, and a bid has been submitted to the Department for Education to construct a new special school near Aylesbury. Unfortunately progress towards an ARP in a Grammar school, and towards more overnight provision in special schools, is stalled. We will continue to push to ensure that the sufficiency strategy is delivered in full and is updated regularly in light of changing pupil numbers. FACT Bucks also submitted a supportive response to the consultation on a new ARP at Bearbrook Combined School.



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### **Preparing For Adulthood (Pfa) (Lead: Ruth Goodman)**

PfA continues to be a priority with partners and commissioners working together to keep on track with Action Plans for this area, covering areas such as housing, further education and health. There is also work being done to look at the wider gaps analysis. The PfA group recognises the importance of communication to young people, parents / carers and professionals and this will be considered with all aspects of the plan. A new PfA Lead has been recruited and will start in post late February and this will help to keep on track some of the challenges that are faced around this area. The Transition Guide has been updated and will be fully accessible. It is currently with the IT team as it is prepared for the website and release.

### **Early Identification & Intervention (Lead: Andrew Howard)**

Across all services, there is a need for an enhanced approach to the earlier identification and intervention on matters relating to SEND. It is often reported that delays in identify SEND create greater challenges for the child/young person and also dramatically impact on the resilience of families. This Impact Group is focussing on pathways, communications and coproduction as common themes identified as being blocks to effective early identification. Whilst early identification is not the same as early years, the initial focus is to be on Under 5s.

### **COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES**

Monthly conversation with the Head of All Age Commissioning focussed on the contract renewals pending for Therapies and Mental Health.

### **Therapies (Lead: Phil Ogley)**

There is lots of activity here as the Local Authority commissioners and the NHS Bucks Healthcare Trust (BHT) therapists respond to a backlog inherited from the COVID pandemic, recruitment challenges which have eased but not gone away, the criticisms in last year's Ofsted/CQC inspection and the need to "re-tender" the service this year. A draft "Therapies Strategy" was published at the end of last year on which FACT commented. Thanks to all the parents and carers who also did so. We anticipate a final (little changed) strategy will published in the next month.

At the quarterly contract meeting the NHS team reported that backlogs and staffing were steady. Improvements will only happen quickly if the budget is increased. The process has started to agree a new budget and multi-year contract for therapy provision jointly funded by the local authority and the regional NHS. Once this is agreed BHT and other possible NHS and private sector providers will be invited to bid to provide the service. The local authority and the therapies team also continue to digest the recent Local Government Ombudsman decision which was very critical of delays to Therapies advice in Wolverhampton.

### **PARENT DIALOGUE GROUPS (Lead: Chair)**

These groups relating to the key service support areas of CAMHS; Therapies; Short Breaks and Neurological Pathway are now written into service contracts. If you want to know more, please email [chair@factbucks.org.uk](mailto:chair@factbucks.org.uk). All meet again this term.



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Meetings during November focussed on:

- **Neuro** – current delays in assessments dominated conversations alongside update on the ways that the issue is being tackled including pre assessment support offer. There was also discussion of Emotionally Based School Avoidance; Autism Friendly Standards in Schools Project; and the Autism Strategy
- **Therapies** – updates on the service, its staffing and future service shape as well as discussions on the use of remote therapy, its effectiveness and applicability, as well as the best way to communicate with families.
- **CAMHS** – service updates and contract renewal information were shared alongside communication; service specification statements; the use of the term 'crisis'; and paper-based prescriptions

We are looking to establish a PDG for Short Breaks – please let us know if you are interested.

### TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES (Lead: Admin)

Another selection of webinars developed alongside Bucks SENDIAS to help parents are underway for the Spring Term 2023 as follows:-

- Parents/carers new to SEND - held Friday 27 January 2023 – view now on [Buckinghamshire SENDIAS webinar co-produced with FACT Bucks - Parents & Carers New To SEND - YouTube](#)
- Emotionally based school avoidance - 10am - 11.30am Friday 10 February 2023 – book via Eventbrite [Emotionally-based school avoidance FACT Bucks/Bucks SENDIAS Service webinar Tickets, Fri 10 Feb 2023 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)
- Mental capacity - 10am - 11.30am Friday 24 February 2023 – booking via Eventbrite link to follow
- Preparing for adulthood - 10am - 11.30am Friday 10 March 2023 - booking via Eventbrite link to follow

Meet the SEN team will return in 2023. Based in areas, these will be opportunities for parents and carers to meet directly with the iSEND teams based in Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chiltern & South Bucks.

We are planning a conference in May and a family focussed event in the autumn at Thomley – details will follow

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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