



# Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum Update January 2020

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The Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum has now been in place for a year, and we last submitted a report to Oxfordshire SEND Board in April 2019.

The forum continues to be run by a group of parents with children who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and we have recently taken on three new members to our steering group.

Our membership and reach has increased since April 2019 as follows:

- 24 registered parent/carers to 239 members at the end of November 2019
- Facebook 243 followers to 448 followers
- Twitter 52 followers to 90 followers
- Instagram 104 followers to 112

This section highlights some of the areas where the forum has actively impacted on policy or service provision in Oxfordshire, following feedback that we have heard from parent/carers in Oxfordshire.

## **October 2019: Ofsted/CQC Inspection Re-visit**

The most significant activity for the forum, since April 2019, has been the Ofsted/CQC Inspection re-visit which took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019. The forum was actively involved in all planning meetings in preparation for the inspection and was directly involved in designing the parent/carers feedback session. The forum members met with the inspectors as part of the re-visit, where our views of progress against the written statement of action were shared.

## **Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) Process**

Parent/carers told us and the local authority that the EHCNA process is confusing and not clear. The forum has been working with the local authority to review the EHCNA timeline and we have fed back the importance of identifying outcomes for children at the earliest point. The new timeline is now being reviewed by the Local Authority.

## Exclusions

Our first report, focused heavily on parent/carers feedback related to exclusions, and specifically the particular behaviour management practice at one South Oxfordshire school. The forum is pleased to note that following our feedback, the local authority has met with this school, and their practice of 'Late Room' has now been abolished. They have revised their behaviour policy and published the new version on their website. We feel that this is a positive step towards inclusion and valuing the role of the forum in sharing parent/carers feedback and experiences.

In addition to this the forum now has 2 representatives on the Learner Engagement and Early Help Strategic Partnership Board, which is a multi-agency group drawing membership from schools, Thames Valley Police, District Councils, Health, Voluntary and Community sector to name a few. The first meeting took place in October, and the intention is that it will meet termly. The next meeting will be in February 2020.

## Exclusions Guidance for Schools

Forum members have also met with officers to support the development of guidance for schools around exclusions. We have also highlighted the importance of schools involving and working with parent/carers as early as possible when a child is at risk of exclusion. Further work is required to develop this guidance but we feel our involvement, at this early stage, is important to ensure that schools take an inclusive approach when managing behaviour and that they fully address all options before excluding a child.

## Moving into Adulthood

The forum has been encouraged by the recent developments in post-16 provision in SEND, an area of considerable concern to parents of young people in transition to adulthood. These developments result in part from the co-produced 'Moving into Adulthood' report with which two of our members were involved. A new post-16 lead for SEND has been appointed to head up a separate post -16 team and in social care there are now 8 transition social workers in the county. Assessments are now taking place from age 16. It is understood that the EHCP template is to be amended from year 9 to include a new 'Preparing for Adulthood' section

# What Parent/Carers Have Told Us

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The feedback that the forum has received to date is varied in its nature due to the activities that the forum has undertaken.

Through working in partnership with the local authority the forum have helped to influence and provide opportunities for parents to give direct feedback of their experiences of special educational needs provision in Oxfordshire. These, including parent feedback, are highlighted below:

### November 2019: Oxfordshire County Council Coffee Morning – Meet the Leaders

Following the Ofsted/CQC Inspections, leaders at Oxfordshire County Council met with the forum chairs and asked their views on holding coffee mornings for parent/carers. It was agreed that this would be a useful exercise and the local authority held their first SEN Coffee morning on the 15th November 2019. Around 30 parent/carers attended and it has been agreed, with the forum, that these meetings will be held termly going forward. The forum recognises that this is big step for Oxfordshire County Council and welcomes this new approach to engaging with parent/carers.

## October 2019: SEND Strategy Workshop

A multi-agency workshop to develop the first draft of a strategy for SEND in Oxfordshire.

## October 2019: Ofsted/CQC Inspection Re-visit

The most significant activity for the forum since our last report has been the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection re-visit which took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019. The forum was actively involved in all planning meetings in preparation for the inspection and was directly involved in designing the parent feedback session that took place on Monday the 14<sup>th</sup> October. Over 100 parent/carers registered to attend this event with approximately 45 parents braving the weather and attending on the night. The feedback at the event specifically focused on the areas highlighted within the Oxfordshire Written Statement of Action

(<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/local-area-inspection#writtenstatementofaction>) some of the post-it note feedback from parent/carers is shown below, we also had 26 feedback forms completed on the night which were anonymised and shared with the inspectors directly:

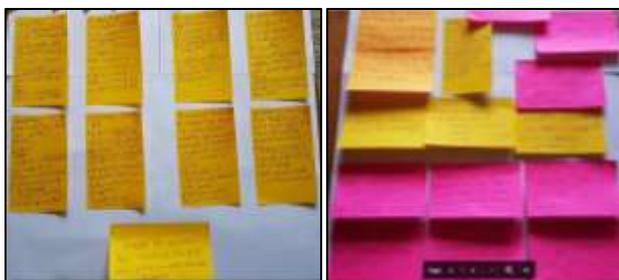
- EHCP's (Timeliness and Quality)



- Exclusions (Mainstream Secondary and those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health issues)



- Access to Health services (i.e CAMHS)



## September 2019: Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum Open Evening

The forum hosted a public open evening in September 2019. We invited senior members of the SEN Leadership Team from Oxfordshire County Council to come and meet with our families. We had approximately 12 families attend, who all had the opportunity to discuss their personal experiences with the professionals face to face.

## September 2019: IMpower Focus Groups

Working in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, the forum have been reviewing the SEN Guidance for schools and working with a consultancy called IMPOWER to look at developing a way that supports staff in schools to identify children and young people's needs better, as well as to identify the support that might be available. Two focus groups were held with parents, one in Oxford and one in Banbury. Around 14 parent/carers attended and gave feedback on what it is like to be at the early stages of the SEN journey.

## July 2019: Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum Open Morning

The forum hosted a public open morning in July 2019, this was a chance for parent/carers to meet with the forum and to find out more about what we do. Some parent/carers spoke in detail with forum members about their experiences. Some of this feedback was captured...but the main purpose of the event was to introduce parent/carers to the work of the forum.

# Forum Activities

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## Networking:

Since our last report the forum's steering group has been heavily focused on creating our own events and opportunities around the county to engage with parent/carers.

Whilst we have held or supported a number of events to encourage parent/carers so have their say, we have also participated in three events to raise the profile of forum:

- Better Together – November 2019
- Youth In Mind Conference – Oxford March 2019
- Shift Meetings



# Looking Ahead

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The forum is keen to continue developing and this involves working with Oxfordshire County Council and Health to feedback parent/carers experiences to improve services. Initially for 2020 the forum will be:

1. Holding their own away day in January 2020, to identify key priorities for the forthcoming months.
2. Distributing their own “Accessing CAMHS in Oxfordshire” survey to gather feedback of parent/carers’ and young people’s experiences. This will run for six weeks until 10 February 2020.
3. Supporting the Integrated Therapies Consultation.
4. Planning to create and distribute an annual parent/carers survey to gather a greater picture of SEND experiences across the county.

In April 2019 the forum identified a number of activities to deliver between April and December 2019. Some of these have been addressed in the activity listed above, ongoing areas of activity are:

The forum is considering the idea of having “Forum Hubs” around the county that can meet with parents on a small scale, coffee and chat type set up, or via social media and school events.	<b>Update: This is an ongoing ambition of the forum, and we are currently developing networks with local support groups to start this process.</b>
It is our plan, that as the forum grows, we will be able to offer a “Meet the SEND Team Face2Face.”	<b>Update: The County Council are now holding termly public coffee mornings for parents to meet senior leaders and staff working within the SEND Team. These will be supported by the forum.</b>