



Delivering the
Bromley
LOCAL
OFFER.



Guidelines for engaging

with children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities and their families

Summer 2019

Introduction

We want to put the voice of our children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families at the heart of what we do. Ensuring that they are engaged actively in planning and evaluating the services they need is everyone's business.

Bromley Council, NHS Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Bromley Parent Voice are strongly committed to improving the education, health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people who have SEND.

Our commitment is encapsulated in the Bromley SEND Strategic Vision and Priorities.

Engagement was one of our priorities for 2018 to 2019 and remains a priority in the extended strategy for 2019 to 2022.

These guidelines aim to:

1. Enable professionals across the Local Area to enhance their work with children and young people who have SEND and their families
2. Provide strategies to further involve children, young people, parent and carers in the planning and evaluation of services
3. Overcome barriers to engagement
4. Share the benefits of engaging

This toolkit provides guidance on the issues to consider when planning and developing engagement.

Thinking through the following questions and issues will help in the planning and development of engagement:



Engagement works best where it is an ongoing cumulative process enabling relationships and trust to build and strengthen over time.

Context

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced new statutory duties with regards to the involvement of children, young people, parents and carers both at an individual level in decisions relating to support and at a strategic level through development of the Local Offer.

Section 19 states that local authorities must pay particular attention to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of children and their parents, and young people;
- the importance of them participating as fully as possible in decision-making and providing the information and support to enable them to do so; and
- supporting children and young people's development and helping them to achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.

The effective involvement of children and young people who have a disability or special educational needs and their parent and carers is central to the new Ofsted Local Area Inspection Framework.

Co-production is defined as

a way of working where children and young people, families and those that provide the services work together to create a decision or a service which works for them all

Who can use these guidelines?

These guidelines should be used by all of the education settings, organisations and agencies that form the Local Area.

Professionals work with a diverse community with a wide range of different needs, so it is important that we listen to as many service users as possible so that we build services that deliver and meet those needs.

These guidelines can also be used by a child or a young people who have SEND and their families.

The child or young person may attend a mainstream school, setting or college or attend specialist provision.

How to use these guidelines

The stages of involving children, young people, parents and carers

This guide is designed so that teams/organisations can start from a point that is realistic for them and then develop engagement as their collective confidence, trust and skills increase.

What is important is that managers and practitioners understand the differences in these stages and are person centred in their approach. This provides an empowering environment in which children, young people and their families can actively participate in discussions and decisions about their outcomes and support.

What is service user engagement and why is it important?

The concept of children, young people, parent and carer engagement means different things to different people.

The purpose of engagement is to enable children, young people and families to get involved in decision making and service planning so that:

1. services meet the needs of families with children and young people who have SEND
2. resources are not wasted on services which parents and families do not take up or which do not support children and young people to achieve better education and other outcomes

There are different levels of engagement. Our engagement framework is based on informing and involving children and young people who have SEND and their families to influence services.



Stage 1: Inform

We will ensure that children and young people who have SEND and their parents are fully informed. This helps them provide information and allows them to make informed decisions.



Stage 2: Ask

We will create opportunities for children and young people who have SEND and their families to give their views. This might mean being proactive in asking and being creative in helping them respond.



Stage 6: Respond

We will feedback to the children, young people and parents who gave their views. This will demonstrate impact and will encourage service users to share their views again in the future.



Stage 3: Listen

When we ask for feedback, we will listen actively. This means listening to what is working well and where things could be improved too.



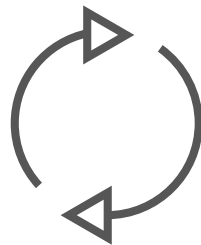
Stage 5: Improve

Once we embrace what we have heard and learn from the feedback, we will focus on finding solutions and improving what we do together.



Stage 4: Learn

When we listen actively to feedback, we will use this to share what is working well and learn from each other.



Effective engagement is a **partnership process** where parent carers are **valued members of a team shaping and delivering services** for families of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Effective engaging happens when parents have **conversations** with and **work alongside** professionals in order to design, develop and improve services.

Benefits of engagement – why it works

There is strong evidence that when parents and carers have a good relationship with their child's school or setting and are involved in their child's learning and development, life chances and outcomes for children and young people are improved.

There is also mounting evidence to support parent participation as a successful way of providing better services. Evidence also shows that parents who are involved in planning and developing services are more contented, resilient and empowered parents.

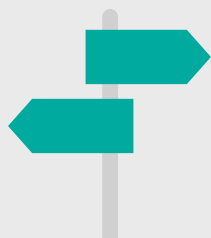
Other benefits include:



Supporting local authorities
& CCGs legal duties



Improved decision making
and creative solutions



Leading to more appropriate
service provision



Gives better
value for money



Better informed, supported
and resilient parent carers

Getting involved as an individual

As individuals, families can get involved in a number of ways:



Observing and talking to their child to capture their views



Writing a personal profile (Section A)



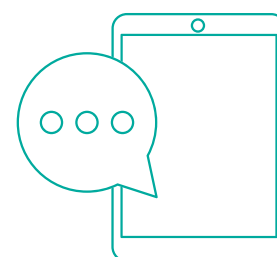
Thinking about Outcomes and Aspirations



Attending meetings
such as EHC Needs assessment meeting
or annual reviews



SEN Information reports
and the Local Offer



Service evaluations
and surveys

Families may also support their child or young people to get involved by:



Thinking of things from the child or young person's point of view



Listening to what the child or young person wants, helping plan with them – not for them



Enabling children and young people to think about what they want, now and in the future

Children and young people in Bromley are included in meetings at school, such as: the EHC needs assessment, annual review process or SEN Support meetings to share their views. Children and young people with SEND are given advice and information relating to their additional needs and the support available.

Participating in working and strategic groups

For engagement to be meaningful and effective it needs senior managers and strategic leads to understand how participation and partnership working works, and be committed to it.

Working together helps parent carers to better understand the constraints placed on service providers, including budgetary and legislative requirements. It also enabled professionals to find realistic and workable solutions that meet the needs of the children, young people and their families better.



The role of the Parent Carer Forum



Bromley Parent Voice (BPV) is the parent carer forum in Bromley for parent carers of children and young people (birth-25) who have special educational needs and disabilities.

BPV provides a platform where parent carers can discuss and contribute to the decision making process and collectively help to shape services that are available to families in the borough.

A short film highlighting the ways that parent forums make a real difference to their children's lives can be seen at

www.bromleyparentvoice.org.uk



Inclusiveness: overcoming barriers to engagement

When planning an engagement process you need to recognise diversity, identify any potential barriers and design the process to minimise barriers where possible.

Potential barriers to consider

- ✓ The capacity and ability of different stakeholders to participate
- ✓ 'Seldom-heard groups' such as young people, minority groups or socially excluded groups
- ✓ Locations
- ✓ Gaps in information

Young people in Bromley have told us:

People might think that because you have special needs you can't speak your voice or say what you want to say

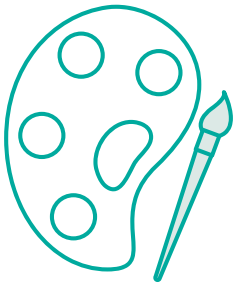
People not listening/ ignoring my views

I want to talk to other people but I feel that I can't because I don't believe that I will fit in and I feel unwanted and as if I am wasting space

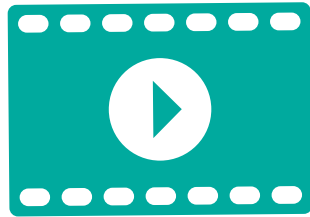
Methods and techniques

The following outlines a broad range of methods and techniques which are appropriate for a range of engagement activities and events.

Each method will have its own strengths and weaknesses.



Art and
creativity



Vlogs and
films



Workshops and
focus groups



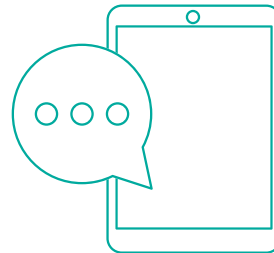
Forums



Web based
engagement



Social
media



Surveys



Evaluation
forms



School
councils

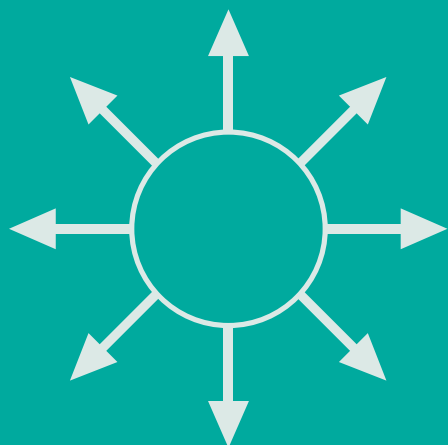


Public
meetings

Things to consider

1. Successful models of engagement have seen parent carers and young people participate in a variety of circumstances.

Thinking about the decision making processes and the existing opportunities for parents and carers and young people to be involved or to influence decisions is important in terms of deciding what a realistic aim for your service is. Parent, carers and young people can be involved in many different ways.



2. Different groups of parents, carers and young people and different issues will need different approaches.

It is not always going to be an easy or a quick task. It can take time and effort to ensure that individuals are fully able to participate.

3. Children, young people and their families must feel valued in their involvement.

If parents and carers are encouraged to generate ideas themselves and feel properly involved in the creation of solutions, they are more likely to invest time and effort to ensure their successful implementation.

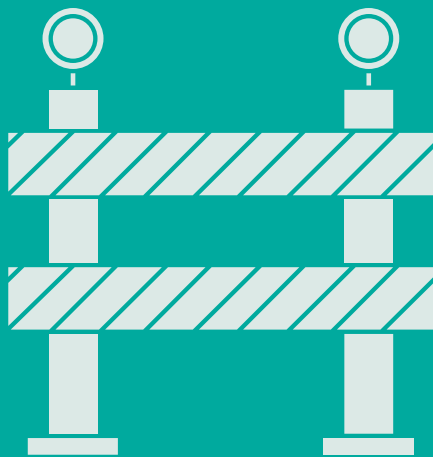




4. Services need to provide a wide variety of opportunities for engagement, across the range of disability and additional needs.

Not all parents and carers will want to be involved at the highest level, but it is important that those who want to do so can get involved in ways that match their current skills, interests and time commitments.

5. Being honest about how much influence they might have and how much you are able to take notice of what they say, is essential.

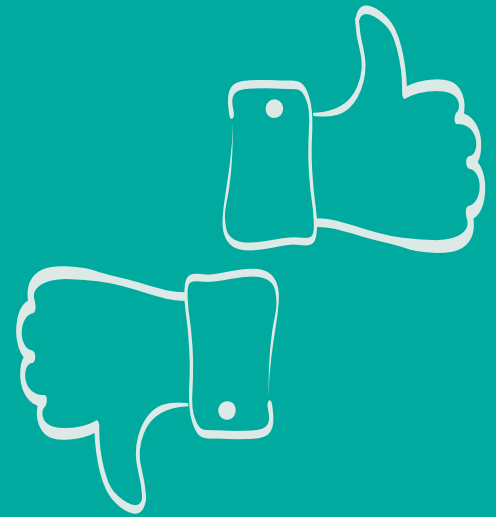


6. Departments and organisations must take a proactive approach in targeting those facing greatest barriers to getting involved.

This can include: parents and carers from minority ethnic backgrounds, those living in rural areas or disadvantaged neighbourhoods, refugees, the traveller community, disabled and other young people with special needs or special personal or family circumstances. This proactive approach will ensure that they are aware and take up appropriate opportunities to have their say. Working through established local community groups may be helpful in reaching 'seldom-heard groups'.

7. Children, young people and parent carers also have the right not to get involved.

Insisting on everybody's engagement goes against an ethos in which individuals are encouraged and given responsibility to make their own decisions; however, this must be through informed choice rather than a lack of creative engaging opportunities for involvement.



8. Engagement can feel unsettling at first, as families are given increased levels of power and responsibility.

However, most practitioners welcome participation once it has been established and will champion its development once they see the benefits. Taking small steps to build confidence and embed among practitioners as well as providing effective training and support if helpful.



9. Engagement should not be seen as an add-on to the business of providing services.

It should be built in to the department or organisations values and be reflected in strategic planning, delivery, resourcing, communication and business improvement activities across agencies.



Practical considerations

1 – Families

Wherever possible two or more parent representatives should be invited onto any planning or decision-making group. This provides parents with support and is more likely to ensure consistent parent representation.

Out of pocket travel and childcare expenses or crèche facilities should be offered and/or reimbursed. The Parent Carer Forum has a formal mechanism for dealing with expenses.

Parent representatives are volunteers and have many family and or other commitments. It is important for meetings involving parents to start after 10am and finish by 2.15pm to fit in with school journeys and transport, wherever possible.

Parent representatives are generally unable to attend meetings taking place during school holidays.

2 – Young people

Wherever possible go to where the young people meet, such as school or college, youth clubs and short break activities

Make sure that the young people feel listened to.

Make it appropriate, accessible and fun.

Make sure that the young people can share their ideas and opinions.

What parent representatives can expect from a Chair of a meeting

An induction

An induction which would include:

- A written description of others on the group and their roles and responsibilities.
- A chance to meet with any out-going parent representative.
- A meeting with the Chair of the group beforehand where parent representatives' responsibilities are outlined and information is given about the current issues being raised at the group.
- Copies of previous minutes.

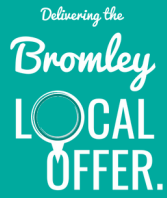
For meetings

For meetings:

- Being given the same courtesy as professionals on the group.
- Being given the same information as professional on the group.
- An explanation of any jargon or terminology.
- Being given the opportunity to raise any concerns about the role or place of the parent representatives on the group.
- Appreciation that parent representatives have other commitments and timetables.

What the Chair can expect from parent representatives

- An awareness of other parents views.
- An ability to represent the views of other parents when they might not be their own.
- A willingness to contribute to discussions.
- Regular attendance at meetings and sending apologies if unable to attend.
- An understanding of meeting etiquette/ protocols.
- Coming prepared e.g. having read minutes and documents.



Produced by:

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