



Special Education Needs and /or Disability (SEND)

COMMUNICATION CHARTER

We are committed to ensuring every child is at the centre of what we do. By working with service users and their families and our partners we can improve outcomes for our children and young people. The SEND Partnership recognises that in order to achieve this, we must communicate effectively with each other.

The purpose of the charter is to ensure that Bromley Council has consistent standards and processes in our approach to communication with our families.

This charter will be implemented within the statutory assessment team initially. Together we will work to involve other SEND teams and wider partners.

We have created this charter and standards to help clarify what we expect of each other.

The SEND Team's approach to communication is based upon what families and young people have told us are important to them.

Channels of communication include:

- Email
- Microsoft Teams
- Telephone
- Social media connections
- Local offer/online
- Surveys
- Newsletters
- Face to face: meetings, events, conferences/training, working groups or when representing the local authority in any capacity
- Printed communication

In all communication we will:

- Be open and honest
- Listen actively and respond
- Be respectful
- Value contributions as equal partners
- Value lived experiences
- Be focussed on outcomes
- Work together to find solutions

Our standards

- We will be courteous and professional, using clear, easy to understand plain language. We will take care to avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Listen and value the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person and the child's parents and carers with empathy.
- When using video conferencing programmes such as Microsoft Teams, wherever possible, we will keep our cameras on. We will use the standard corporate privacy background.
- We will ensure an environment that supports collaboration. We will be open to appropriate constructive challenge from peers and questions from managers, contributing to knowledge and development.
- We will use appropriate language, tone of voice, and welcome constructive discussion.
- We will be transparent and open in our communications.
- We will ensure our communications are relevant, i.e., copying in to email only appropriate and involved stakeholders. Similarly, in Teams the group chat will be used only for whole team messages, and individual queries messaged directly.
- We will show respect and our principle of inclusion by asking people's chosen/preferred names, listening to pronunciation and being conscientious in spelling. Similarly, we will respect preferred pronouns when shared.

Our expectations

- All team members will check core communication channels of email and phone/voicemail at least once a day. In rare circumstances when this not possible (such as conference/day meetings), we will apply an 'out of office'.
- These will be acknowledged within three working days and a response provided within ten working days.
- Where a response or resolution cannot be achieved within that time frame, we will communicate that to the recipient within the ten working days and advise who is working on the matter. We will be transparent and honest in sharing the challenges we face and avoid making promises which are not deliverable.
- Complaints /Member of Parliament / Councillor enquiries / Freedom of Information /Subject Access Requests are not bound by the above and are subject to their relevant terms.

- Emails must include a signature in the agreed SEND format or style, giving contact details.
- An 'Out of Office' automatic reply will be applied during annual leave and absence. This will give a date of return and details of an alternative point of contact.
- We recognise our families are understandably and reasonably worried about their children or young person. We understand that at times this may lead to frustration or upset, however, there is no acceptable circumstance for our staff to face shouting, swearing or feeling threatened within their place of work. Our staff work hard, often in challenging circumstances to maintain the running of our services.
- All our staff care deeply about providing each and every parent, carer of young person that they come into contact with a high level of care and a positive outcome to whatever their enquiry may be. Should staff experience unacceptable behaviour they will be supported by their manager. Bromley Council has a [Habitual Contact Policy](#) which covers unacceptable behaviour.

Working in partnership with the Council, parents and carers are asked to:

- Be polite and respectful when communicating with Council staff members
- Avoid copying in 'all staff' into emails whenever possible
- Before a complaint is made, please consider contacting the relevant team directly so that a way forward can be agreed
- Remember staff are not expected to respond to email outside of working hours or when on annual leave
- Complete parent carer surveys and SEND Local Offer feedback in an open and constructive manner

Measuring Impact

- We will use the charter as a framework to monitor the improvement in communication with our children and young people and their families in partnership with our Parent Engagement partners.

November 2024