

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) News

June 2019

Issue 1

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) monthly newsletter. Working together we are committed to ensuring that our children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities have access to appropriate education, health and care services so they can flourish.

This newsletter will aim to keep you informed about the work taking place across our multi-agency partnership to make the very necessary and important improvements in the current service offer to our children and young people; as well as addressing the findings from the Ofsted and CQC inspection in June 2018.

Rachel O'Connor

Lead Officer – SEND / Assistant Chief Executive for Birmingham and Solihull Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP)



What we are doing and why

The purpose of the Ofsted and CQC inspection in June 2018 was to review the implementation of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reforms set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

Following this inspection, Birmingham City Council and NHS Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were required to submit a [Written Statement of Action \(WSOA\)](#) to address significant area of weakness in the local area's practice. This resulted in the partner organisations working together to deliver a new and improved SEND service over the next 18 months.

Work has already started on the key priorities and includes:

- How we are working together as agencies and professionals to make sure children and young people get 'joined up support'.
- Making sure that when a child or young person needs an Education Health and Care Plan – that parents and carers are fully involved, and that all the relevant services contribute to the plan.
Developing better support and understanding of the ambitions and interests of children and young people particularly as they approach school year 9 and prepare for transitions to adult support and further education, training or employment.
- Making sure that there is sufficient investment and that services can meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Talking about the findings, Rachel O'Connor, lead officer for the SEND improvement plan says: "We know that there is a significant amount of work to do over the next 18 months. It is important to acknowledge the good work that the staff from all partner organisations are

doing but we can do more together to make improvements to ensure our children, their families and carers are getting the care and support they need at the right time. We are listening to what children, their parents and carers are saying about their current experiences of accessing support and care. Those views are so important to us to co-design the changes we will make happen. We want to be in a place where consistently the support and care provided has the child's voice at the heart, is responsive and joined-up around their needs."

What are special educational needs (SEN)

The term 'special educational needs' (SEN) has a legal definition. Children with special educational needs have learning difficulties or disabilities, that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age. Find out more [here](#).

SEND parent and carer survey

As a result of the inspection, the first [parent and carer survey](#) took place in November 2018, which saw a number of improvements put in place including:

- Improvements to customer service and responding to email and phone calls,
 - How all services are contributing to Education Health and Care Plans,
 - The way the 'voice' of young people is heard in understanding their ambitions,
 - The way staff are trained,
 - How young people aged 14 and above are supported to become young adults,
 - The launch of a new Parent and Carer Forum,
 - How we are working with parents and carers, and listening to the feedback that they give us,
- Investment in NHS therapy services to reduce waiting times, and improved support whilst children are waiting.



Vickey Weaver, Birmingham Parent Carer Forum Chair says: "Working with the council, the NHS and the Birmingham Children's Trust we want to make sure that we have strong and sustainable links providing a two-way feedback between parents, carers and services. Our representatives sit on the SEND Improvement Board to represent parent carers' views and help in the development of education, social care and health services."

A [second survey](#) is now available to help us understand what difference these changes have made to children and families in Birmingham, allowing us to identify examples of good practice, where improvements have been made and where we need to do better. The [survey](#) closes 14 June 2019.

Working together - Rix Wiki project

The Ofsted and CQC Inspection in 2018 identified that parents were dissatisfied and engagement between parents and professionals was poor. Parents consistently reported

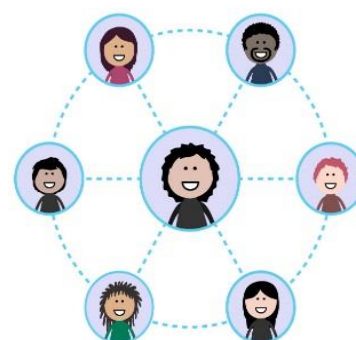
that the 'tell it once' approach was not established and they had to repeat their stories over and over again. The Rix Wiki project is an 18-month pilot, with its key aim - to enable children, young people and families (who hold the wiki licence and control content) to tell their story once and then give them a choice of who can access different parts of their story. The benefits include:

- A stronger voice for children, young people and their families,
- Improved communications between professionals and the children, young people and their families,
- Saving valuable time, with a system that puts the individual at the centre, allowing a better exchange of information and reducing any misunderstandings and misinformation,
- Celebrating success by capturing and keeping important achievements as well as increasing self-esteem and confidence.

Families will be invited to take part in the pilot scheme which will run until January 2021. Training and support will be offered to a number of 'wiki champions' who will be identified from the education, health and social care teams, children and young people parent/carers and key workers. These champions will then be able to offer training, advice and support as other families and professionals join the pilot. We aim to offer the wiki to up to 1,000 children, young people and/or their families/carers over the next six months.

What is a Rix Wiki?

A [Rix Wiki](#) is a private, easy to use website which will allow those involved to upload photos, videos, documents and more to a Wiki to tell their story. Once created, other people who the children and families know and trust can be invited to view their Wiki. It can be securely accessed on any device, anywhere.



Rix Wikis offer a way to help ensure the needs, wants and aspirations of individuals are centre-stage and avoids the frustration of having to repeat their story to different health, education and care professionals. More information about Rix Wikis can be found [here](#).

News in Brief

Birmingham Parent Carer Forum



The [Birmingham Parent Carer Forum](#) is a voluntary group of Birmingham parent carers, whose purpose is to become the bridge between services and families and a collective voice representing all members and all disabilities. The Forum is working closely with the Birmingham Children's Partnership (BCP) with a particular focus on SEND. The Forum will hold the SEND Board to account for the work it is undertaking in relation to the SEND priority.

[SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)

The SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) was agreed at Birmingham City Council's Health and Well Being Board and was published in March 2019. This outlines how many children in Birmingham have SEND, and key data to help plan the improvements we need to make in the city.

SEND strategy

A draft strategy has been developed and shared with the Parent Carer Forum and Schools Forum. It is currently out with all partners for comment with timelines for publication to be agreed.

SEND training material

All SEND training materials are being collated and reviewed. Once completed materials will be disseminated to relevant partners. We are currently looking into the potential for free training and support which would be offered to staff across the partnership. Look out for more information in the next newsletter.

In the next issue

- SEND training
- Comment on the SEND strategy

If you have any queries or would like to be kept up to date on the work of the BCP please email: rob.willoughby@nhs.net

Partner organisations:

