



The Bromley Pathfinder Journey

Kay Moore: Parent Participation Officer

&

Bromley Parent Voice



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What is Bromley Parent Voice?

Bromley Parent Voice is a forum that aims to be a voice to inform service providers of the needs of children and young people with a disability or additional need and their families in the London Borough of Bromley.

The Forum believes that by working co-operatively with local service providers parents can contribute to improvements in the services delivered for children and young people with a disability or additional need.

Parent and carers can get involved at different levels.

The work of the Forum is supported by Kay Moore, Parent Participation Officer, London Borough of Bromley, Contact a Family (National Delivery Partner for parent participation) and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums.



What is Bromley Parent Voice?

- For the past five years, the Department for Education has supported the development of Parent Carer Forums through a Participation Grant, and a support offer that they have contracted Contact a Family to deliver. The grant has enabled Bromley Parent Voice (BPV) to strengthen the participation of parent carers in local strategic decision making and service improvement. BPV is eligible to apply for a Participation grant of £10,000 per year. Under the Aiming High for Disabled Children Programme the focus of the grants was information sharing and involvement in decision making about the local delivery new Short Breaks services, but has now developed to developing the participation of parent carers in strategic planning across health, education and social care.
- During the past two years the focus has been building participation based on good practice, promoting parent lead approaches, establishing sound forum governance, and growing the membership of Bromley Parent Voice.
- Over the last five years, there has been significant development, growth, and committed funding from the Department for Education for Parent Carer Participation, and Parent Carer Forums.

What is Co-production?

Co-production is one approach within Participation.

“Coproduction happens when all team members together co-produce decisions, plans, actions and materials as a collective with shared responsibility. This process develops over time, blends a range of expertise and perspectives, is driven by a solution focussed approach from all participants and requires strong leadership. Communication that is transparent and open, relationships that are equitable and respectful help the team overcome complex challenges and continue the process of learning together. (Findings from Parent carer Forums in pathfinder areas; a report commissioned by The National Network of Parent Carer Forums and Contact a Family)

Parent carers are not there just to illustrate the experiences of services users but rather to take responsibility to help shape future experiences.

See the glossary for definition of consultation, participation and range of different tools that could be used.

Co-production means doing things differently. It shifts perspectives, and meaningfully puts the child and family central to collective effort.

Co-production is a learning process which:

- Develops over time and is a complex option;
- Blends a range of expertise and perspectives and involves difference;
- Is driven by a solution-focused approach from all participants.

And requires:

- Strong leadership, patience and joint commitment;
- Communication that is transparent and open;
- Relationships that are equitable and respectful to help the team overcome

What we did in Bromley

Reach consensus agreement about practicalities

Personal willingness to work in partnership is a starting point, and where commitment of leaders is essential.

In Bromley we developed an agreement from the start.

We established a consistent set of mutual commitments and expectations. The framework outlined a two way set of responsibilities between LBB and BPV. For example, LBB made a commitment to operate in the following way:

- Meetings will be held at convenient times to allow parent carers to participate.
- Meetings will have clear terms of reference and agendas
- Abbreviations and jargon will be avoided or, if necessarily included, they will be explained.
- Notes of meetings will be clear with action points and agreements identified. They will be distributed as soon as possible after the meeting.
- Parent carers will abide by confidentiality agreements in the same way as staff members are required to do.

As part of this agreement, and recognising the input from parent carer representatives from the forum, Bromley Parent Voice established a Reward and Remuneration policy that paid travel and child care costs incurred by parent carers and paid a set amount for their time and contribution to pathfinder work. (Appendix 1)

‘Markers for Good Practice in Participation’ - This document formed part of the initial briefing for pathfinder leads at the Department of Education in September 2011 by the National Network for Parent t Carer Forums. This document formed the basis for the agreement in Bromley. (Appendix 2)

Resource parent carer participation

In order to deliver the co-production model it was necessary to resource co-production from the Pathfinder budget. This meant resourcing the payment policy for parent carer engagement and extending the role of our parent participation officer.

In addition, LBB resourced training for forum members on parent participation.

BPV access delivery partner support from Contact a Family (CAF) through the 'Strengthening Parent Carer Participation' programme and NNPCF.

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Bromley Pathfinder Governance structure

Reporting through SEN (Mary Cava) to Assistant Directors and Education & Care
Service Management

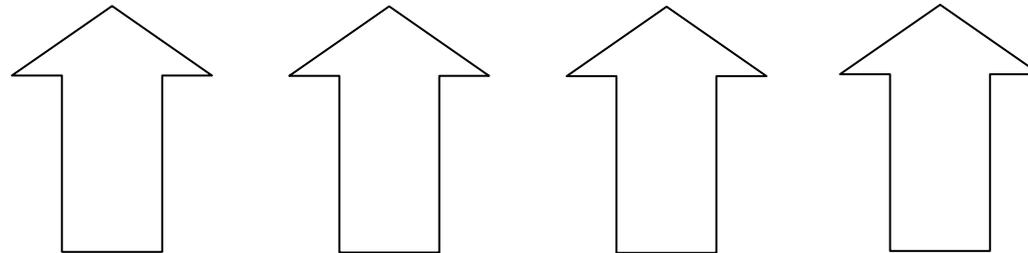
Lead

Helen Norris - Local Authority

Representation from:

Local Authority, health (commissioners & providers), parent carers forum/council, VCS,
schools, colleges, parent partnership services, children and young people groups/forums

**Strategic
decision
making & co-
production**



8 Work streams

**Parent Representatives involved in each
workstream**

Inform, Involve, Influence

There are three essential ingredients for successful parent participation:

Good Information

All parents need timely and relevant information to help them access the services and support they need to care for the disabled children. Yet parent carers often struggle to get this information and to make sense of what is available. The more informed that parents are, the more they will feel confident and able to make appropriate choices for their children and families.

Honest Consultation (Involve)

Consultation is a step up from simply giving information as it requires a two-way communication. Bromley Parent Voice host regular open meetings and focus groups to seek parents' views on how services can be improved. Formal consultations are held when changes to services are planned. As many parents as possible should be informed about proposed changes to a service and invited to give their ideas and raise concerns about the proposals before final decisions are made.

Parents' views can change process and decision making.

Effective Participation (Influence)

Parent Representatives inform decision makers about the experiences of parents and to ensure that parents' views are fed into decisions about services at a strategic level. Through this process parents and professionals reach a common understanding about effective services for disabled children, young people and their families. Parent Representatives represent all parents.

What we have achieved so far

Good Information

Parents Guide (Appendix 3)

Website

Pathfinder awareness raising events

Consultation (Involve)

The best way to engage parents in consultation is to give them choices of how to respond.

It is vital to involve parents in the planning from the outset and to use a variety of approaches:

Questionnaires – Personal Budgets & Local Offer

Focus Groups

EHC Plans, Personal Budgets, Local Offer, Preparing for Adulthood, Early Support & key working

Public meetings and events

As a result of this engagement Bromley Parent Voice have produced the following reports:

- Local Offer (Appendix 4)
- Personal Budget (Appendix 5)

Effective Participation (Influence)

Parent Representatives across all work streams and core steering group.

In addition, we have modelled co-production at regional and national events.

Evaluation of outcomes from Phase 1

Bromley Parent Voice have conducted a short survey with the parent representatives involved in the Pathfinder project. A further evaluation was carried out with parents involved in the testing of the EHC Plan and those parents involved in focus groups and parent journey work.

This is what parents have told us:

Building trust and constructive relationships

- 'A mutual learning process – helped with mutual understanding so that we learnt to do things differently

Improvement in processes, documents, information or services which become more family, child and young person focussed

- 'Led to the development of a more family centred approach'
- 'Parent carers have been instrumental in shaping the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) thus far... Pathfinder parents have given positive feedback to us about their involvement in developing an EHCP for their child and the quality of the plan'

Personal development:

Parent representatives have benefitted in a number of ways personally from taking part. Parents have felt empowered, confident and informed. Parents recognise and understand the financial constraints in which the Local Authority operate. Parents expectations are realistic.

Wider outcomes

Pathfinder has strengthen links with Voluntary and Community organisation and given them the opportunity to form better links with their members.

Highlighted the importance of having a Parent Participation Officer to co-ordinate parental involvement.

Raised the profile of Bromley Parent Voice.

Evaluation of outcomes from Phase 1

Challenges

The biggest challenges have been:

- 1) Capacity and managing additional workload
- 2) Cultural change in practice
- 3) Getting the right parents involved whilst representing the views of all parents
- 4) Sustainability and cost

Other comments:

- How involved parent representatives have felt in their work stream is varied suggesting that parent involvement is not yet fully embedded in some areas
- Practicalities. Wherever possible meetings have been held within the school day to enable parents to attend, however, there have been occasions when meetings have overrun or been cancelled at short notice and parents have not been informed.
- At the start it took some time to get going.
- Misunderstandings or occasional breakdown in communication due to workloads.
- Getting information to parents through schools

The Pathfinder project has and will continue to present challenges, but it is only through a strong partnership with parents, children and young people that these challenges can be overcome.

We need to revisit the markers of Good Practice agreed at the start of Phase 1 to ensure that all involved in the Pathfinder project value and respect the time commitment and input that parent carers, children and young people are giving to this process and are continued into Phase 2.

Proposed outcomes for Phase 2

Meaningful shared ownership of outcomes

Achieving meaningful shared ownership of the outcomes will depend upon the commitment at **all levels** of those engaged. Parents to be valued as equal partners.

‘Everybody who participates in something does not take something away, so that others cannot have it. The opposite is true: by sharing, by our participating in things, we enrich them: they do not become smaller, but larger.’

At a time of austerity, cuts and radical reform it is more important than ever to change our culture and working practice to promote more meaningful participation.

This leads to:

Better family experience and confidence in service delivery

Better value for money

Better outcomes for children and young people

More ‘Choice and Control’

The next 18 months

The main concerns for Phase 2 are:

- Keeping parents motivated
- Will feedback from the Pathfinder be used?
- Involving new parents
- Roll out of the programme

What BPV and the Local Authority need to consider as they begin work on implementing the proposed changes:

- Working together. Listen to each other, consider other views and respect them.
- Embed co=production and joint working between BPV and education, health and social care.
- Keep the child, young person and family at the centre
- Clear and timely communication
- Accurate information
- Accountability

Key Learning Points

Co-production involves parent carer forum from the start, and at every stage.

1. Agreement about underpinning framework and delivery tools at outset is important
2. Commitment of leadership needed throughout process is essential
3. Training to provide practical examples, good practice guidelines, safe rehearsal for dealing with difference and to underpin cultural shift
4. Regular meetings between LA leads and parent carer forum to gain wider perspective, share learning and information
5. Resources, support and training for parent carer forum to widen representation skills and active membership
6. Regular, honest and open communication supports the development of the trust which is so vital
7. Regular and consistent meetings using consistent co-production approach and valuing all contributions
8. Recognition of the realities of life for parent carers of disabled children including setting meetings at convenient times, regular communication and swift turnaround of expenses and recognition payments
9. Using plain language as far as possible – cut out the jargon and the bureaucratic language
10. Involving parent carers results in better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Glossary of Terms

During the Aiming High programme working in partnership with parent carers, children and young people with additional needs proved an effective methodology to improve outcomes: both for the family members and service providers. Families reported better outcomes and experiences for the disabled child or young person, siblings and other family members when these groups were involved in shaping those services or reforms. There was evidence that effective Parent Participation resulted in a better fit between families' needs and service provision, higher satisfaction with service delivery, reduced service costs as long term benefits emerge, better value for money decisions and less conflict between providers and those dependent upon services. *

Consultation is: asking parent carers about their response to pre-set questions, strategies or services. The respondents themselves are not involved with any further stage of the process. A range of approaches might be involved including surveys and public meetings.

Participation is: when parent carers are involved in meetings to express their views and experiences and take part in the debate. A range of approaches could be used (citizens juries, deliberative mapping, attending decision making meetings). It is a partnership process where parent carers are valued members of a team shaping and delivering services for families of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Effective parent participation happens when parents have conversations with and work alongside professionals in order to design, develop and improve services.

Co-production is: when all team members together agree outcomes, coproduce recommendations, plans, actions and materials as a collective. It is an approach which builds upon meaningful participation and assumes effective consultation and information sharing. In its essence, co-production is a dynamic group process and happens in the room when there is equal value for each participant's contribution and when there is a meaningful proportion of participants who are service users (in this case parent carers) present.

* Full TDC report about delivery of Short Breaks available on CAF website – summary report to be found on www.nnpcf.org.uk

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Good Practice Summary
- Appendix 2 – Reward & Remuneration Policy
- Appendix 3 – Parent Guide
- Appendix 4 - Local Offer report
- Appendix 5 – Personal Budgets Feedback & Outcomes