

ASD Family Support Services Consultation

Bromley Parent Voice was asked by LB Bromley to facilitate two parent focus groups during February 2016.

The Aims of the sessions were to:

- consider what is required for future services with the changes in the new SEND Code of Practice
- consider what outcomes future services should be aiming to deliver
- inform the specification for the future service.

The groups were facilitated by Rosalind Luff, Chair of Bromley Parent Voice and Kay Moore, Parent Participation Officer, LB Bromley. Mary Cava and Helen Norris also attended on behalf of LB Bromley.

A total of 20 parents (parents of 4 girls & 16 boys) attended the focus groups. The combined groups represented young people who attended:

- 1 college
- 10 special schools (included 3 from Glebe and 5 out of borough provision in this number)
- 3 units attached to mainstream schools
- 5 mainstream schools
- 1 phoenix preschool

The age range of the child/young person represented was 4-20 years.

The participants were asked the following questions:

1. What experience have you had of the current service?
2. What have you especially found helpful?
3. What would you like to see more of?
4. What would you like to see less of?
5. In the light of the new SEND Code of Practice what do you think a Family Support Service should be offering?
6. What outcomes should the Family Support Service aim towards achieving?
7. Any other comments.

1. What experience have you had of the current service?

All families valued the independent and impartial support that the current Family Support service offers. Most families had received support from BAT through the diagnosis process and

immediately after diagnosis, however, this did vary. Some parents had received 1:1 support with school placement issues and tribunal. Some parents had been signposted to other services and support through the existing Family Support contract including access to CAHMS and ASD Advisory teachers.

Most families had attended workshops run by BAT and found them extremely helpful; in particular the Siblings, Grandparents and Moving onto Secondary School sessions. One parent said how valuable the resource library had been in helping him to decide when and how to talk to his son about his diagnosis. Symbols and other visual supports such as timetables produced by the team that can be used at home and school were also mentioned.

2. What have you especially found helpful?

Overwhelmingly, parents said that they value the services they have accessed and the wealth of specialist expertise that BAT staff have. The Family Service team were seen as invaluable including the wider team e.g. the librarian who was 'a font of knowledge'.

Workshops (as above)

Parents valued having an organisation which was based locally and which had sound knowledge of services and schools in LB Bromley.

3. What would you like to see more of?

Parents expressed a desire for workshops on different subject areas e.g. puberty, sleep, toileting, preparing for adulthood and support around behaviours that challenge. In addition, family sessions would be welcomed.

Parents value group sessions as they offer the ability to meet other families in the same situation, build friendships and offer peer to peer support.

Closer working with other agencies who support children and young people affected autism and their families e.g. Early Years settings, Schools and Education Support Services.

Closer working with service users through an ongoing dialogue to ensure the support offered is what is actually needed; a flexible approach

A Helpline which is available at set times during the week ensuring timely responses

Drop ins

Facilitate Peer to Peer support/volunteer scheme

Autism training for schools including impact on child, young person and family delivered with LB Bromley specialist advisory teachers.

Better communication regarding the organisational changes to Burgess Autistic Trust and a clear 'Offer' of support.

4. What would you like to see less of?

Long lead times and waiting lists

Soft play and swimming sessions are not being fully utilised due to unsociable and impractical time slots. These services are wanted but at more family friendly timings.

There is a variance in the level of support families receive and their experience of the service from pre-diagnosis to ongoing support post diagnosis. There should be a clear and transparent 'offer' to families regardless of age of child/young person and whether they attend a mainstream or specialist placement.

5. In the light of the new SEND Code of Practice what do you think a Family Support Service should be offering?

A Birth-25 service

Support to all families with children and young people affected by ASD, including autistic traits with no diagnosis, and support pre-diagnosis.

An understanding of SEN Support, Pupil Resource Agreements (PRA) and Education, Health & Care plan (EHC) groups of children and young people.

Support at key transition points.

Use ASD expertise to provide advice and guidance to families and signposting to other services.

6. What Outcomes should the Family Support Service aim towards achieving?

Facilitation of information, advice and guidance to children, young people and families affected by ASD to have high aspirations for their futures.

Supporting children and young people affected by ASD to have the same opportunities and life outcomes as their non-disabled peers.

Support and advice to build strong, well informed and resilient families.

To work in partnership with children, young people and their families

To work in partnership with the ASD Advisory Service

To attend key strategic meetings within the LB Bromley as required.

7. Any other comments

In both focus groups gaps were identified some of which will fall into different contract areas to the family services contract. They include:

- supporting families with school related issues, and a need for better training/awareness of both ASD and SEND Reforms with all school staff.
- lack of leisure opportunities for children and young people with ASD, particularly age 14 years and above.
- short break provision. Concerns were raised regarding lack of provision, lack of ASD understanding, geographical issues and timings.
- bespoke support if required. (Discussed if this could be funded through personal budget attached to EHC Plan). However, there would need to be equity as many requiring bespoke support may not be eligible for an EHC plan
- More information and signposting around all aspects of health. This includes eating/sleeping issues and also raising awareness with schools and families of the various health support that can be beneficial (play therapy, sensory circuits, Occupational Therapy).
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- Parents were not aware that the current service is partly funded by LB Bromley.
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- There is a need to promote this service more through the Local Offer and other services.

The parents felt that the current contract holder provides a very good service, although parents did express concerns around delays in contact. Parents acknowledged that the current service offers value for money and provides a valuable service.

Parents expressed their thanks for being given the opportunity to give their input. This process has enabled the LB Bromley to be better informed of the support needs of children and young people affected by autism and their families.

BPV