

## Family Voice Norfolk Question Time

Monday 7 March 2022 to Friday 18 March 2022

Uncertainty around restrictions caused by the pandemic meant that Family Voice Norfolk was unable to hold its annual Conference in 2022, but we were keen to find a way for parent carers to hear directly from professionals and to ask their own questions. The result was Family Voice Question Time.

Ten sessions were held over Zoom and focused on five areas: Carers and caring, Short Breaks, Michael Bateman and the SEND Strategic Improvement Team, Norfolk SENDIASS, and SEND transport and TITAN travel training, each with a morning and afternoon session.

Parent carers with children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) aged 0–25 attended the sessions. Some sessions were also attended by carers who work with CYP with SEND in the role of a personal assistant or teaching assistant. Parent carers took part who had children with SEND in a variety of educational settings:

- mainstream primary and secondary schools
- special schools
- colleges, including higher and further education
- alternative provision (AP) or elective home schooling.

166 participants signed up and 83 attended. It is understandable that unforeseen issues and illnesses frequently affect the lives of parent carers, making planning difficult. We would encourage anyone who was unable to take part but still has questions to contact Family Voice via [membership@familyvoice.org.uk](mailto:membership@familyvoice.org.uk) and we will do our best to find a professional to give you answers.

Next year we hope to return to our in-person Conference, where parent carers will be able to meet with professionals face-to-face again.

Family Voice Norfolk would like to thank all the professionals and parent carers who took part. We believe that direct conversations like this, as well as giving parent carers vital information, also help professionals to understand what is important to families and what needs to be very clear in all communications.

If you have any feedback on your experience of our Question Time sessions, please tell us at [office@familyvoice.org.uk](mailto:office@familyvoice.org.uk)

*Thank you for the opportunity  
to speak with the people  
behind my child's support.*

Below we have summarised the questions parent carers were keen to have answered, together with useful links shared by professionals during the sessions.

## **Carers and caring, Monday 7 March and Thursday 17 March**

### **Professionals on the panel:**

Andy McGowan – Head of Engagement at Caring Together

Rob Cole – Head of Communities and Partnership (West and Breckland) and Short Breaks

Victoria Jones – Programme Director, Norfolk Carers Partnership, Bridges Outcomes Partnership

Sharon Brooks – Chief Officer, Carers Voice Norfolk and Waveney

Lisa McLean – Commissioning Service Development Manager for Early Help and Prevention (Adolescents)

Maria Plumb – Head of Support Services, Carers Matter Norfolk

### **Questions raised during Carers and caring sessions**

What is a parent carer needs assessment?

How long does the assessment take?

How can a family access a social worker?

What support is there for young carers?

What happens when a child moves to a new school?

What's the difference between the children's services offer and adult services?

What is community support?

What's is a carer's passport?

Having a passport that covers under and over 18 would make such a difference. How can we know which organisations to approach when you have over and under 18s? It isn't clear.

There isn't the time to complete all the necessary forms when you are constantly caring for other people. Who can help?

There isn't enough respite available. Where can families turn?

What emergency support is available?

Parents are often told that caring for their children is their job and some are actively told they are not carers. We know that being the parent of a child with special educational needs and/or disabilities involves additional responsibilities, work and stresses. What can be done about this?

### **Links and contact details for parent carers**

Parent carer needs assessments:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/health-and-social-care/social-care/send-children-social-care/parent-carers-needs-assessment>

Link for professionals/partner organisations about Early Help:

<https://www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/early-help/>

Short Breaks service:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/health-and-social-care/social-care/send-children-social-care/short-breaks>

Website for Young Carers and Families service:

<https://www.youngcarersmatternorfolk.org/>

Activities during school holidays:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/campaigns/big-norfolk-holiday-fun>

Welfare Rights Unit, which can help parent carers with benefits advice and with checking they are receiving what they are entitled to:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/support-for-living-independently/money-and-benefits/help-and-advice-with-benefits>

Just One Norfolk website – help, advice and information during pregnancy, birth and your parenthood journey:

<https://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/>

Information about energy costs:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/getting-extra-help-priority-services-register>

West Norfolk branch of the National Autistic Society (NAS):

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/branches/nas-west-norfolk-branch>

Norfolk Community Directory:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/norfolk-directory>

Support for unpaid carers living in Norfolk:

<https://carersmatternorfolk.org.uk/>

Online support for unpaid carers:

<https://www.mobiliseonline.co.uk/>

Contact, the charity for families with disabled children, also offering guidance to parent carer forums such as Family Voice Norfolk:

<https://contact.org.uk/>

**Norfolk County Council Children's Advice & Duty Service - 0344 800 8020**

## **Short Breaks, Tuesday 8 March and Wednesday 16 March**

### **Professionals on the panel:**

Sue Connor – Team Manager, the Short Breaks Team

Rebecca Doody – Strategic Commissioner, Specialist and Complex Commissioning

Colleen Hubbard – Commissioning and Service Development Manager, Specialist and Complex Commissioning

Amanda Peart – Commissioning Officer, Health and Disability Integrated Commissioning Team, Children's Services

Fiona Corless – Assistant Director, Specialist and Complex Commissioning, Children's Services

Rob Cole – Head of Communities and Partnership (West and Breckland) and Short Breaks, Norfolk County Council

### **Questions raised during Short Breaks sessions**

What is a Short Break?

What are Direct Payments?

When you hear 'short breaks' you think of a holiday. Could funding be used on activities to facilitate holidays? Can pre-loaded cards be used abroad?

Who is the Short Break intended for, the parent carer or the child?

What changes when your child turns 18?

Does a child require an EHCP to access Short Breaks?

If we need to provide evidence of need, what is acceptable? Would a DLA letter be good evidence?

What if a school won't help to supply evidence?

What if due to Covid a child hasn't been assessed by a professional in over 12 months, but we are required to provide recent evidence in an application for Short Breaks?

Do you mean test?

How often do you have to complete a RAS (Resource Allocation System) questionnaire?

What do you do with our private information after it's been processed? Who is the information we give you shared with? Would someone like a GP be made aware?

What provisions other than Direct Payments are available?

The Community Directory is long and confusing. Who can help us find appropriate support?

Are there specific providers we can use?

Can you recommend a PA?

Is there an internal audit on unused funds at the end of each year? Does the provider still receive payment even if a child isn't able to attend?

What is the highest amount that has been granted?

How often is the budget reviewed?

How many people do you turn down?

Is there a formal appeal process if someone is turned down?

Is the budget allocated connected to any other support budgets given in different areas?

Are you involved with the Holidays and Food (HAF) programme? Lots of families with SEND cannot access these additional services because of the ratios needed to make spaces safe for the most vulnerable children.

What if the young person has high hygiene needs?

A barrier for PAs can be medical needs, such as epilepsy or suctioning. How can those children use Short Breaks?

If a child uses the personal budget to have an annual pass to a theme park, are parents and dependent siblings allowed in for free or do they pay each time?

Is there a waiting list at the moment?

#### Links and contact details for parent carers

Short Breaks:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/health-and-social-care/social-care/send-children-social-care/short-breaks>

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/health-and-social-care/social-care/send-children-social-care/short-breaks/apply-for-a-short-break>

Beach wheelchairs:

<https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/tasks/your-community/book-a-beach-wheelchair/>

Activities for all ages and abilities:

<https://www.activenorfolk.org/2022/01/every-move-activity-finder/>

Pdf download about the Resource Allocation System (RAS):

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/children-and-families/send/care-and-support/norfolk-children-with-disabilities-service-resource-allocation-system.pdf?la=en>

**The Short Breaks Team can also be contacted directly on 01603 692455 or by email at [cs.shortbreaks@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:cs.shortbreaks@norfolk.gov.uk)**

## **Michael Bateman and the SEND Strategic Improvement Team, Wednesday 9 March and Tuesday 15 March**

### **Professionals on the panel:**

Michael Bateman – Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness

Nicki Rider – Assistant Director, High Needs SEND

Maxine Blocksidge – Senior SEND Advisor, Strategic Improvement

Steph Askew – Senior Advisor for SEND and Early Effectiveness

### **Questions raised during Michael Bateman and the SEND Strategic Improvement Team sessions**

How has the pandemic affected strategic planning?

What is early intervention?

What support is available and where can families find it?

What's the best route forward for children transitioning to young adults? You can only make the best decisions based on the advice you're given by professionals at the time.

If a young person leaves education and their EHCP is no longer active, is it cancelled for ever?

How much could/would/should a parent carer be involved in their child's SEND education plan?

What can a parent carer do if they feel they aren't being included or need support themselves?

What can be done if a school is refusing to make an EHCP needs assessment request and wants the parent carer to do so?

What were the results of the last Ofsted inspection?

What should be in place for an EHCP in a specialist school? How often should there be a review? Should educational psychologists be involved?

What if an EHCP that is no longer relevant is being used? What should parent carers do?

What can be done if a child was assessed to be able to attend a mainstream school with a specialist resource base (SRB) but the facilities and provision aren't adequate?

What is being done to ensure staff are properly trained?

What is being done to reduce assessment wait times across the local authority's responsibilities? No services are meeting their given timelines. Parent carers would appreciate honesty around wait times. If they know the true timeline they can act accordingly.

The process of a panel reviewing which school is named for a young person with SEND seems to be closed to parent carers, why is this?

### **Links and contact details for parent carers**

The SEND Local Offer website:

[www.norfolk.gov.uk/send](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/send)

Norfolk SENDIASS Information, Advice and Support Service

<https://www.norfolksendiass.org.uk/>

Contacting the EHCP team:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/education-and-learning/support-for-learning/education-health-and-care-ehc-plans/contact-us>

Subscribing to SEND newsletters:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/advice-and-support/newsletters>

Special educational provision schools, early years education providers and post-16 education providers are expected to offer:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/education-and-learning/how-education-providers-support/special-educational-provision>

Provision expected at SEN Support (PeaSS):

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/education-and-learning/how-education-providers-support/special-educational-provision/provision-expected-at-sen-support>

Reaching agreement about SEN Support:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/education-and-learning/support-for-learning/special-educational-needs-sen-support/reaching-agreement-sen-support>

## **Norfolk SENDIASS, Thursday 10 March and Monday 14 March**

### **Professionals on the panel:**

Niamh Keane – Norfolk SENDIASS Manager

Bridget Robinson – Children and Young People SENDIASS Supporter

### **Questions raised during Norfolk SENDIASS sessions**

What is SENDIASS?

What can you help with?

What help is on your website?

Is there a wait time for your services?

Can you attend meetings with a parent carer?

Does a school have to inform the parent carer if their child is receiving SEN Support?

If we have exhausted all options at the school regarding disputes, can we approach SENDIASS?

How does a parent carer know if their child needs an EHCP?

How do you get an EHCP? What if you can't?

If a child is coping in mainstream primary with lots of SEN Support but there are concerns they will struggle in secondary school, when would be a good time to apply for an EHCP? Can it be applied for in anticipation of future needs?

What happens if there is a break in education?

What can a parent carer do if the educational setting isn't doing what they are claiming they will to support the young person with SEND?

Where can we find info on mental health support that should be offered by a school?

If a child without a diagnosis needs to attend a specialist school or be home educated, what support and advice is available?

How can families and professionals help children and young people to cope with anxiety around going from a small setting with a lot of support to a large setting with unknown support?

What happens if the provider is in a different county to the child's residence and there is a problem?

### **Links and contact details for parent carers**

Norfolk SENDIASS:

[www.norfolksendiass.org.uk](http://www.norfolksendiass.org.uk)

<https://www.norfolksendiass.org.uk/useful-links/>

Information about support in mainstream schools:

<https://www.norfolksendiass.org.uk/information-booklets-resources/booklets/sen-support-in-mainstream-schools/>



Information about Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs):

<https://www.norfolksendiass.org.uk/information-booklets-resources/booklets/an-overview-of-education-health-and-care-plans-ehcps/>

Information about giving parent carers' views for an EHCP needs assessment:

<https://www.norfolksendiass.org.uk/information-booklets-resources/booklets/writing-your-views-for-an-education-health-and-care-plan-ehcp-needs-assessment/>

Information about provision expected at SEN Support (PEaSS):

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/education-and-learning/how-education-providers-support/special-educational-provision/provision-expected-at-sen-support>

Information about alternative provision (AP):

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/education-and-learning/schools/alternative-provision#:~:text=Alternative%20provision%20is%20typically%20used,to%20two%20days%20per%20week>

Department for Education (DfE) guidance for education other than at school (EOTAS):

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/education-outside-school>

Home education in Norfolk:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/home-education>

**SENDIASS Norfolk: 01603 704070**

## **SEND transport and TITAN travel training, Friday 11 March and Friday 18 March**

### **Professionals on the panel:**

Jacky Batchelor – Travel and Transport Officer

Sophie Allan – TITAN Family Engagement and Primary Coordinator

Wendy Matsell – Safe Travel Officer

### **Questions raised during SEND transport and TITAN travel training sessions**

What is TITAN?

What makes a family eligible for transport?

If a child has needs that means they cannot travel alone even though they're within the distance, what support is there?

What if the physical needs of the parent carer mean they cannot provide transport?

If a child has chronic anxiety about moving to a new school, what options are there?

How do we initiate the TITAN process?

If an allocated school is far away, what are the options?

What training are the drivers and support staff given?

If there are any problems with travel, where should the family go?

How many students do you provide transport for?

When transport contracts are being renegotiated would it be possible for the council to make changes at the change of an academic year rather than a financial year to ease the transition for the children?

Which schools are having transport contracts changed?

Will the family and child meet the driver before the service starts? Is there a maximum journey time?

Why might we be denied travel assistance?

If a young person is a looked-after child (LAC), who is responsible for the post-16 transport costs?

Is the income assessment for 16+ based on the child or parent carer's income?

If a young person is in full-time school but moves to part-time education post-16, is the budget allocated the same?

Are bursaries available?

Are there other options apart from a standard taxi service? Can the local authority help with parent carers transporting children themselves?

Are parent carers contacted via post or email?

What can a family do to prepare their child for transportation assistance?

When an email is sent, does it go to the young person or the parent carer?

What happens if the parent caring can't make the drop-off time on occasion?

Is it in contracts to share contact information of drivers and PAs?

What happens if parents don't live together?

#### Links and contact details for parent carers

Post-16 additional transport support application form:

[https://forms.norfolk.gov.uk/AchieveForms/?mode=fill&consentMessage=yes&form\\_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-8392b5fb-5d6a-404c-ba21-75a39060bd99/AF-Stage82a97f32-ed92-4054-86f4-2a928ae8166d/definition.json&process=1&process\\_uri=sandbox-processes://AF-Process-8392b5fb-5d6a-404c-ba21-75a39060bd99&process\\_id=AF-Process-8392b5fb-5d6a-404c-ba21-75a39060bd99](https://forms.norfolk.gov.uk/AchieveForms/?mode=fill&consentMessage=yes&form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-8392b5fb-5d6a-404c-ba21-75a39060bd99/AF-Stage82a97f32-ed92-4054-86f4-2a928ae8166d/definition.json&process=1&process_uri=sandbox-processes://AF-Process-8392b5fb-5d6a-404c-ba21-75a39060bd99&process_id=AF-Process-8392b5fb-5d6a-404c-ba21-75a39060bd99)

TITAN+:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-and-college-transport/titan-travel-training/titan-plus>

[educationtransport@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:educationtransport@norfolk.gov.uk)

[sophie.allan@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:sophie.allan@norfolk.gov.uk)