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**Meeting Notes: Coffee Morning Newham Parent Carer Forum, Tuesday 10 December, 10 AM to 12 PM**

**Date:** Tuesday, 10 December 2024
**Time:** 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Agenda and Topics**

1. End-of-Year Celebration
2. Ofsted Report and Next Steps
3. Parent Space Programme
4. Provisional Dates and Themes for 2025 Coffee Mornings

**Total Attendance:** 33 parents and carers (24 in-person, 9 online)
**Chair:** Yamou
**Co-Chair (Housekeeping):** Adeola
**Minutes Takers:** Rosie and Jumaimah

**Speakers:**

1. **Annabel Bates** – Director of Education and Inclusion, Children and Young People
2. **Alexander Webley** – Head of SEND (0–25), Children and Young People
3. **Florence Ham** – Project Manager, Transforming and Commissioning Children and Young People’s Services (attended online)
4. **Leandri** – Parent Space, Breve Clinic (attended online)

**Other Local Authority Attendee:**

* **Ross Gerie** – Acting Head of Commissioning and Brokerage, Children & Young People’s Service (attended online)

**Topic 1: Ofsted Report and Next Steps**

**Key Areas for Improvement from the Ofsted Report:**

* Reducing waiting times.
* Improved assessments for autism and necessary equipment (e.g., wheelchairs).
* Ensuring consistency in the quality of EHCP plans (noted as improved compared to 2–3 years ago).
* Enhancing preparation for adulthood, including transitioning to post-16 education and support planning for adult social care.
* Improving communication, particularly making information easier to access (e.g., via the Local Offer website).

**Actions Taken:**

* A meeting with the Department for Education will take place to finalise the improvement plan, which will be published in January 2025.
* Progress will be reviewed every six months.

**Current Data:**

* Approximately 9,000 children with special needs in Newham.

**Parents’ Feedback and Questions**

* Parents expressed frustration that schools are not providing adequate support to meet their children’s needs. They feel the current provision often falls short of what is in the child’s best interests.
* Schools need to collaborate more effectively with parents to support children with learning disabilities, and more inclusive.
* Parents noted that during annual reviews, schools often highlight that children are not meeting academic standards. This negatively impacts children’s confidence. Parents questioned how schools and the local authority (LA) can better support both children and their families in mainstream education.
* Some parents shared concerns that Heads of SENCOs often lack the authority / power to make changes, while headteachers are often not listening. Parents stressed the need for a collaborative partnership between the Head of SENCO, the headteacher, and parents/carers to address these issues.

**On Ofsted Inspections:**

* Parents shared that they were unaware of the detailed timeline for the recent Ofsted inspection and felt there was no clear channel for feedback on the process. Currently, information is only accessible through the NPCF.

**LA Response:**

* The LA acknowledged communication gaps and committed to improving clarity around processes and timelines. The LA noted that they were also caught off guard by the timing of the inspection and will provide feedback to Ofsted at the national level.

**Concerns About Annual Reviews:**

* Parents raised issues about the lack of follow-through on plans that are deemed effective. For example, one parent shared that a child with a learning difficulty (aged five) required a simple timetable to assist with their development, but the school didn’t provide. In other cases, schools discontinued agreed-upon activities, citing a lack of funding. Parents shared concerns over such decisions undermining their children’s progress and requested better support and consistency.

**LA Response:**

* The LA acknowledged the need to capture and act on feedback from parents and carers more effectively. They also highlighted the importance of bringing appropriate representatives to NPCF coffee mornings to address these concerns and hoped the NPCF to share their proposed 2025 meeting calendar for better coordination.

**Exclusion from Colleges:**

* A parent shared that their young person with SEND was expelled from Newham College due to behavioural challenges. The college claimed it could not accommodate the student, deeming them unsuitable. It has caused significant distress for both the parent and the child. Also, there is no alternative tuition offered to this young person.
* Other parents echoed similar experiences, particularly at Newham College and Stratford College campuses, suggesting that exclusions for students with SEND are an ongoing issue.

**LA Response:**

* The LA acknowledged that transition to adulthood, including support in further education, remains an area of weakness in Newham. While the Council has limited influence over college exclusion decisions, they committed to ensuring cases like these receive ongoing support from Family Support Workers. Feedback on these issues will also be shared with Social Care.

**Topic 2: Parent Space Programme (Breve Clinic)**

**Overview:**
The Parent Space programme supports parents and carers of children and young people with SEND (aged 0–25). It runs by The Brave Clinic, developed in collaboration with Newham Council and NPCF, it focuses on self-care, well-being, and communication strategies. The first session, held in summer, received positive feedback, with parents feeling empowered. The Breve Clinic is a group of HCPC-registered music therapists who are committed to providing parents/carers with the space and security to explore the psychological aspects of various issues based on the personal needs.

**Programme Content:**

* Parent support and psychoeducation.
* Practical strategies for families (e.g., self-care, communication).

**Participation Options:**

1. **Closed Group:**
	* Limited to 16 parents and carers.
	* Runs January–February.
	* More personalised and in-depth sessions.
	* Focused on day-to-day practical solutions.
2. **Open Group:**
	* Runs in March with four sessions.
	* Less in-depth but provides opportunities for sharing experiences.

**How to Sign Up:**

* A sign-up form and flyer will be circulated soon through NPCF.
* Exact dates are being finalised.

**Topic 3: Provisional Dates and Themes**

**Coffee Mornings/Coffee Evenings 2025**

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| **Date, Month** | **Themes** |
| 14 January | School funding (from early years, primary and post 16) |
| 13 February | Housing , director of children service and director of housing   |
| 11 March | Annual Review, Case Officer   |
| 8 April | School Funding, EOTAS   |
| 6 May | Therapies |
| 10 June | SENDIASS + Local Authorities (EHC Plan) Analysis  |
| 8 July |  |
| 12 August |  |
| 9 September |  |
| 7 October |  |
| 11 November |  |
| 9 December |  |