

Children's Services

Alison Jeffery

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Private and confidential

Sent via email to:

East Sussex Parent Carer Forum

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when responding please contact: Nathan.Caine@eastsussex.gov.uk

Dear East Sussex Parent Carer Forum

Response to ESPCF and ImPACT's concerns about ISEND's Assessment and Planning Team

ISEND would like to thank ESPCF and ImPACT for raising important concerns about the experiences of parent carers when in communication with Assessment and Planning Officers (APOs).

ISEND deeply regrets that the high level of vacancies in the Assessment and Planning team over the past six months has meant that APO responses to parent carers have not been timely, leading to a negative experience of the statutory process. The depleted team have continued to work extremely hard and, despite the high levels of vacancies, their performance against statutory timescales has nevertheless remained well above national averages (consistently over 80% since August with national averages at 55%). It is acknowledged that some processes, including interim plans to ensure continuity when staff change roles, could be much more robust, effective, and better communicated. These processes are being reviewed to ensure that this important aspect runs more smoothly in future.

ISEND is pleased to announce that a significant investment in the Assessment and Planning team has recently been agreed. Whilst this increase in APOs is extremely positive, it will take some time for the recruitment and induction processes to be completed. It is expected that more efficient processes will now be created and that parent carers will start to experience more timely and helpful responses from their APOs. To monitor the impact of the additional funding, the work of the team will be overseen by a board, which will include parent carer representation to provide further quality assurance.

ISEND would like to work together with ESPCF to develop some training for the new APO team in how best to communicate with families, so that the parent carer experience of EHCP processes continues to improve.

A range of joint work is planned with ESPCF to look at: the strategic factors that influence statutory decision-making; the reasons why local mainstream inclusion is so beneficial for our children and young people with SEND (where this can be achieved and effectively supported); and to address the issues that have been raised in relation to EHCP processes within the recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

ISEND is committed to ensuring that parent carers are meaningfully involved in improving its services and look forward to creating a range of positive change together over the coming months and years.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Caine', with a horizontal line drawn through the top of the letters.

Nathan Caine

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