Rotherham Charter

SEND and Co-production
Voices from
Telford and Wrekin

PODS CHARITY — "TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE"

Telford & Wrekin
C O U N C I L

NHS
Telford and Wrekin
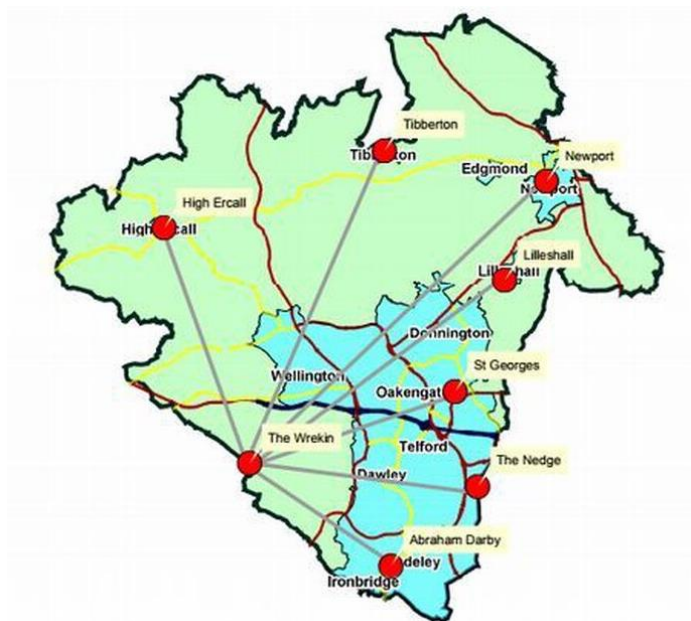
November/December 2020

Genuine Partnerships in partnership with Contact

contact *For families with disabled children*

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The Four Cornerstones: Context

Inclusion is a universal human right that is about embracing all people irrespective of race, gender, disability or other attribute which can be perceived as different. Co-production involves children, young people, families, practitioners and their partners working together in an equal and reciprocal relationship. It enables genuine participation in decision-making.

The National Alliance for Partnership Working was created in 2016 to develop a shared approach to inclusion and partnership working that would help local areas establish and embed recognisably good co-production and inclusive practice. This aim was to ensure that families, parent carers, children and young people are fully involved in the individual, organisational and strategic decisions that affect their lives. The development of the Alliance and its aims are supported by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH).

The Alliance intends to achieve its purpose by advocating the understanding and use of the Four Cornerstones of Inclusive Practice and Co-production. The Cornerstones were initially developed as a Charter by Rotherham parent carers, young people and families through Alliance member Genuine Partnerships.

The Four Cornerstones of Inclusive Practice and Co-production are:

The Alliance promotes the Cornerstones as a common language that will support local areas to go on to develop their own locally agreed and understood approach to inclusion and partnership working. This should help local partners offer consistency of values, approach, language and communication, engagement and co-production across all services, informed by evidence from their area.

Genuine Partnerships

Genuine Partnerships is a Rotherham-based team, made up of practitioners, parent carers and young people with a diverse range of experiences, which models and inspires inclusive practice and co-production. Each member of the team is considered equal in terms of expertise, so the term *professional* is either not needed or applies to everybody. Using the Four Cornerstones as a foundation, the team's packages of support, training and tools are incorporated into an appreciative inquiry approach. This enables the recognition and development of good practice promoting the meaningful involvement of parent carers, children and young people in decisions that affect them at all levels.

Genuine Partnerships works with parent carers, children and young people, schools and settings, Education, Health and Care services. In June 2016, the team extended nationally and was invited to contribute to the National Alliance for Partnership Working.

Contact

Contact is a family-focused charity covering all four nations that supports families with disabled children, whatever their disability or health condition. Support is offered via national and regional teams and includes: publications; a Freephone helpline (including specialist benefits and education advice); website and SENDirect; information on rare conditions and medical information; linking families with other families, and with support groups; parent and practitioner workshops and information sessions; hospital and hospices; and Early Years work.

Contact is the DfE's contracted partner and has been supporting the development of parent carer forums and Co-production since 2008. Contact coordinates the National Alliance, which has been a tangible opportunity to develop national standards for co-production based on the principles of Rotherham's Four Cornerstones model.

Background:

Voices across the local area of Telford and Wrekin

This report has been produced for the local area of Telford and Wrekin by Genuine Partnerships.

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Telford and Wrekin between 22nd and 26th May 2017 to confirm how well the area had taken forward the disability and special educational needs reforms set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. A number of strengths were identified, including the drive from leadership to improve provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and, as a result, rapidly improving services and outcomes. It was acknowledged that initial implementation of the reforms had been slow, but the pace was increasing and included more training and support for staff. Joint Commissioning arrangements were variable, however, and parent carers reported having to wait too long for appointments, including access for their children and young people to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). They shared that they often had to tell their stories repeatedly and that a 'tell it once' culture was not well developed across the area. Timescales for producing Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans were being met, and most children, young people and parent carers said they were involved in the process, but the quality of the plans needed improvement and some children, young people and parent carers reported not having the chance to give their views or co-produce targets and outcomes. The Parent Carer Forum, Parents Opening Doors (PODS), was well established and had been actively involved in developing the local offer.

A written statement of action was not required but, nevertheless, partners including PODS worked together to create a SEND Action Plan that included four key priorities:
- To ensure that every child and young person with SEND makes excellent progress, through access to high quality provision
- To engage with children, young people and their families to promote early identification and support that meets need
- To develop smooth progression to adulthood for all young people with SEND
- To create robust governance structures and effective partnership across key agencies that ensure services meet the needs of children young people and their families.

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These priorities have been set out in the area's current SEND Strategy. The Strategy confirms that Telford and Wrekin Council is the lead partner in delivering the SEND reforms but is also a Co-operative Council. This means it seeks to work together with other local partners (including the now combined Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Groups – CCGs) to deliver services with the joint resources available. The context for the Council has been restated through 'Being the Change', a process of transformation that promotes a 'One Council' approach and shared values and principles. The Council's core values are:

- Openness and honesty
- Fairness and respect
- Ownership
- Involvement

One of the eight principles set out in the SEND Strategy is co-production: "Parents and carers know their children and families the best. They are active participants in decision making and help to develop and shape services" (p.12). Although many of the objectives contribute to the co-production agenda, those specifically related to co-production across the priorities include:

→ Empower parents, families, young people and carers to understand and positively engage in processes to support children and young people with SEND

→ Ensure that a range of partners including young people and their families are engaged in the co-production of plans through a 'Family Conversation'

→ Engage all stakeholders, including parent representatives, to participate in a governance board which in turn can challenge all partners where the needs of young people are not being met

The success criteria included in the Strategy do not relate to co-production specifically.

One of the objectives in the Strategy is to evaluate whether or not partners are doing things in a joined-up way that is making the best use of locally available resources, and that these are making a supportive difference to children, young people and families. This year, partners worked together to create an area Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for SEND. This was led by the SEND Joint Commissioning Task and Finish group that includes PODS as the recognised voice of parent carers in Telford and Wrekin.

The JSNA builds evidence for local commissioning plans and services by collating and analysing a data, information, lived experience and feedback in a range of ways. It is

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intended to create a comprehensive picture of children and young people with SEND in Telford and Wrekin. The key findings from the JSNA are:

- There are rising numbers of children with SEND, particularly with autism and poor social emotional mental health.
- At the 2-2 ½ year old check, almost 1 in 3 children are not at or above the expected level in 5 areas of development
- Moderate learning difficulties is the most common primary need of pupils with SEND
- Parent Carers value some services but report poor experiences from others. For example, there are gaps in service provision (autism and trauma) and long waiting lists for services such as autism, speech and language therapy (SALT) and physiotherapy
- There needs to be improved access to information and support to navigate Education, Care and Health services and development of published pathways, clear information and better communication.
- Opportunities should be utilised to build on digital and information management improvements put in place during Covid times (information sharing, casework practice, service delivery).
- There is a need to improve engagement and co-production with children and young people.

Genuine Partnerships was first asked to contribute to helping the Telford and Wrekin area further improve co-production in 2019 and since then there have been communications and consultation meetings with a view to planning an interactive Voices event involving all partners in September 2020. Unfortunately, the event had to be cancelled because of the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and needing to work in a socially responsible way.

Genuine Partnerships involvement re-commenced in November 2020 with a series of virtual focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain an understanding of peoples' lived experiences relating to the Four Cornerstones of Co-production, building trust at the centre.

It is intended that a Voices event (format to be decided) will now take place in the spring or summer of 2021 in order to share some of Telford and Wrekin's experiences when it comes to co-production, documented here, and to enable a better shared understanding of co-production that can then be further embedded across the area.

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Voices Methodology

Appreciative Inquiry
Genuine Partnerships' Voices projects are purposefully grounded in an appreciative inquiry approach. Appreciative inquiry is an optimistic, strength-based model that supports organisational change and involves people in communities talking and working together towards common hopes and dreams.

Key features for the local area of Telford and Wrekin:
- Regular informal communications with Telford and Wrekin Council SEND Project Lead and the Strategic Coordinator of PODS Parent Carer Forum since February 2020
- Initial planning meeting (virtual) 12th March and further meeting 7th July 2020 to discuss how best to proceed given the limitations introduced by COVID 19
- Six focus group interviews (virtual) facilitated with all SEND partners including parent carers, young people and practitioners across Education, Health, Care, schools and settings held between 9th and 12th November 2020 plus three follow-up small group interviews with parent carers
- Informal Forum to Forum support involving discussions between Genuine Partnership representatives and PODS
- Reference to relevant documents including: the Joint local area SEND inspection report published July 2017; Telford and Wrekin SEND Action Plan 2018-19; Telford and Wrekin's SEND Strategy and the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2020
- Reports summarising current narratives reflective of parent carer, young person and practitioner experience of SEND and co-production across the Telford and Wrekin area
- Area Voices Co-production Event bringing together all partners (date and format to be confirmed)

Focus groups: critical, systemic and narrative-based
Within narrative practice there is an understanding that as they try to understand their own lives and the lives of others, people tell stories (narratives) to express meaning. These stories change over time, and they are collaborative. They are co-constructed with other people.

This approach is systemic because it focuses on relationships within whole systems like families, organisations and communities. It is also critical, because power imbalances are

acknowledged and adjusted so that all voices can be heard equally. Different versions of the same event are validated, blame is removed and relationships can be strengthened.

The use of focus group interviews as part of the Genuine Partnerships process enables individuals likely to have common agendas to share their stories with each other. Groundrules are established at the beginning to help participants feel they are in a safe, supportive space in which they might voice the 'not yet said'. Questions are purposefully open and, to avoid assumptions being made, the agenda of the participant leads the way. The voice of the researcher is acknowledged in informing the new narratives co-created.

As indicated above, the focus groups and follow-up interviews facilitated for Telford and Wrekin were by necessity virtual in order to reduce any health risk to the participants. Every attempt was made to replicate the conditions that would have occurred during a face-to-face interview but it is inevitable that, for some, participation and feedback might have been hindered because of technological barriers and for others, the virtual experience may have felt less safe and intimate. Nevertheless, it should be recognised that there was extremely good representation in most groups, including from strategic leads, managers and frontline workers, despite the current pressures on families, schools and settings, and Education, Health and Care services due to COVID. This is impressive and reflective of the strength of the partnerships that already exist across Telford and Wrekin and the joint will to continue improving co-production across the area.

It is to be noted that some of the young people who participated did not wish their voices to be recorded and two of them chose to withdraw. It maybe that they would have liked more preparation for, and choice about, whether or not they wished to attend their session.

Telford and Wrekin Voices: SEND and Co-production

The narratives presented here are organised under the headings of the Four Cornerstones and are separated into what is 'Going well' when it comes to SEND and co-production in Telford and Wrekin, and what 'Needs to be better'. Priority has been given to the voices of young people and parent carers. Their words, and the key narratives co-constructed, shape the structure of this feedback. This is done purposefully to help redress some of the unspoken power inequalities which can inadvertently be evident through body language, format or the tone of a meeting when young people, parent carers, and practitioners representing large and powerful organisations such as Local Authorities, schools and the NHS, share the same space.

It is acknowledged that sharing experiences can feel very raw at times. Focus groups create space for opening up. They expose the difference between livelihoods and real lives which hopefully helps create a climate from which equal partnerships are able to emerge.

The following narratives are taken from six in-depth focus group interviews plus smaller follow-up interviews, involving:

- 13 parent carers, 10 of whom we met again in 3 smaller follow-up sessions. The parent carers involved had children, young people and family members ages ranging from Early Years to adulthood accessing mainstream and specialist settings (2 out of area). The group included three families who are fostering. All the parent carers are members of PODS. Voluntary or charity organisations supporting parent carers were not involved.
- 10 young people (although 2 young people left soon after the interview started, and permission was not granted by all participants for a recording to be made): they attended a mix of mainstream and specialist schools and colleges.
- An Executive Head teacher (specialist settings) and SENDCos (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) from specialist settings and a primary school.
- Director of Education and Skills; Interim Service Delivery Manager SEND 0-25; Interim SEND Team Lead; Principal and Senior Educational Psychologists; Virtual School Headteacher; Sensory Inclusion Service (SIS) (2 representatives); Portage representative; Early Years and Childcare Team Leader; Independent Advice and Support Service (IASS) Manager; Lead Learning Support Advisory Teacher (LSAT).
- Children's Disability Senior Social Worker; Strategic Lead, Practice Development and Innovation; Team Leader, Strengthening Families Service (incorporating Early Help); Service Delivery Manager for Specialist Services (incorporating Children's Disability Team, Contact Team and Parenting Assessment Team); SEND Commissioner; Service Delivery Manager (LA in-house delivery of Care and Support Services, Children and Young People and Adults).
- Mental Health Lead; Senior Commissioning Manager; Therapies Manager; Coral House Learning Disabilities Nurse and representatives from Community Children's Services

(local hospital), Public Health, Healthwatch Telford, Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT) and Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust.

It is essential to recognise that these voices will provide some of the many narratives that potentially exist in Telford and Wrekin when it comes to co-production and SEND. It is inevitable that perspectives will differ and unlikely that everybody will be aware of all the developments and activities taking place across the area.

Honest, open communication is a key feature of co-production; it proves that people are listening, and that every voice matters. It is intended that these narratives will provide a starting point for further discussion in relation to what needs to happen next to strengthen co-production across the Telford and Wrekin area. By attempting to continue working together as equal partners from the start the right context for putting co-production with children, young people and their families on everybody's agenda will be created.

WELCOME AND CARE

YOUNG PEOPLE: *Wheelchair accessibility is important, they have improved it recently… which makes you feel welcomed and cared for*
PARENT CARERS: *"[PODS] wrapped their arms round me"*
EDUCATION: *"……it's felt very warm…people really do want to offer that support and make you feel welcome and secure in your job"*

Going well

- ✓ Young people we met said that it is important to them to achieve their goals and aspirations
- ✓ Accessibility and COVID safety are important elements to them feeling cared for
- ✓ It helps when adults talk to young people in a way that shows they care
- ✓ Some young people prefer a more relaxed and informal learning environment
- ✓ They also like having friends at school as this means that they feel part of a welcoming community
- ✓ Shining Stars (playgroup for children aged 5 and under with additional needs set up by parents who have been through Stepping Stones, the Child Development Centre, via a grant from the Local Authority) welcomes, involves and supports families and is very much appreciated
- ✓ Parent carers and practitioners speak highly of PODS, the emotional and practical support offered families especially during COVID, and the warm welcome everybody receives
- ✓ Organisations like IASS (Independent Advice and Support Service) work hard to involve young people so that they have a voice, which has been particularly valued since COVID
- ✓ Some individual school leaders, SENDCos, settings and practitioners are singled out for praise for their approach, commitment and leadership
- ✓ School leaders and SENDCos we met demonstrated commitment to supporting the whole child or young person through pastoral support and believe that those with responsibility for this area have key role to play
- ✓ Some secondary schools are recognised for basing their provision for children and young people on their individual needs
- ✓ It is recognised that investing time allows practitioners to develop positive relationships with parent carers
- ✓ Phone calls by Local Authority (LA) practitioners to parents, carers, schools and vulnerable individuals during the pandemic reflect a culture that cares

- ✓ Practitioners across Education and Care describe with pride the shared welcoming, caring and inclusive ethos across the area, supported by positive relationships, communications and processes, modelled by senior leaders and more important than ever during the current challenging times, which has encouraged trust
- ✓ Being child or young person centred is seen as important
- ✓ LA induction processes are valued
- ✓ Services have welcomed being encouraged to be involved at a strategic level
- ✓ Services and schools have worked collaboratively to create an effective 'Belonging Strategy'
- ✓ Individual Health practitioners spoke about their dedication and commitment to supporting others
- ✓ They have tried really hard to keep going, remain resilient and support other departments during the difficult working conditions of the pandemic
- ✓ There is a commitment to providing early intervention for children and young people with emotional and mental health needs
- ✓ Over the summer, there continued to be transition planning (online) for children and young people moving on to secondary schools with Health needs
- ✓ The Occupational Therapy team worked in partnership with other services so that building adaptations could, whenever possible, be put in place ready for children starting school in September

WELCOME AND CARE

Needs to be better

→ Young people say that they would like their needs to be acknowledged more at school

→ They don't always feel like they fit in

→ Some parent carers have had difficult and sometimes traumatic experiences associated with feedback from individual school leaders, SENDCos and practitioners from other settings and services, eroding trust, and illustrating that a more area wide, embedded and relational approach is needed

→ The emotional toll on parent carers of the role they have, combined with the complexity of navigating systems, is under-recognised and can lead to exhaustion, and giving up on challenging when help is needed but not forthcoming

→ There is a need for the right kind of peer support and understanding of the needs of young adults with disabilities, including when they turn twenty-five

→ Messages from some secondary schools expressing doubts about the ability to support a new young people without an Education, Health and Care plan at secondary age can damage relationships with primary schools and undermine parent carer confidence

→ Social Care practitioners voiced that there is room for everybody to self-check whether they are really making sure they have the human side of co-production right

→ Demands on the NHS can make it difficult to manage waiting lists for people who need care

→ Health practitioners said that they need to look after their own wellbeing so that they can remain resilient in their support and care for others

VALUE AND INCLUDE

PARENT CARERS: *"He was really behind when he started...and he's back to being the little genius that he is, his educational levels are so high now, he's really, really in a good place..."*

SCHOOLS and SETTINGS: *"Panels are a really good way of working...you might not get the outcome you want but you always get an outcome and you always feel supported and happy with the advice we've been given..."*

HEALTH: *"We [Speech and Language Therapy Service] have trained hundreds and hundreds of people in early stages of Makaton so that's been really good for parents who wouldn't normally have been able to access it"*

Going well

- ✓ Young people feel respected when their ideas are valued and acted upon
- ✓ Being part of events and going to clubs helps some young people feel more confident
- ✓ Parent carers describe how some schools and settings show excellent understanding of needs and work hard at helping to reduce anxieties that might exist for children and young people, for example in relation to COVID or different transitions, which is helping them feel settled and able to thrive
- ✓ Some of the practical adjustments schools and settings have made during COVID have been helpful for children, young people and their families and it is positive when plans can be made for them to continue longer term
- ✓ In meetings, staff from schools and settings are grateful for support from other practitioners
- ✓ Clarity around advice provided by the different panels is seen as helpful when communicating with parent carers
- ✓ Tangible area wide commitment to valuing diversity and inclusive working is appreciated by practitioners and this is manifested in their willingness to work together for the benefit of the children and young people
- ✓ Education services value opportunities to come together to share information and successes
- ✓ IASS (Information Advice and Support Service) has been working closely with schools focusing on building stronger relationships with parent carers
- ✓ With support from local and national charities, the Sensory Inclusion Service (SIS) has been facilitating peer support between young people and parent carers which has been empowering and especially helpful during COVID, contributing to the prevention of mental health issues

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- ✓ Many schools and services are trying very hard to work together to keep support going during the difficult circumstances created by the COVID 19 pandemic
- ✓ Young people continue to be able to talk confidentially about their health through 'attend anywhere clinics'
- ✓ The Speech and Language Therapy Service has used online training and remote working to reach out to a much higher number of families, with very good parental engagement and child or young person progression
- ✓ Mental Health Trailblazers reached out and extended their offer of support during lockdown and provided very timely support for a large cohort of children and young people in need of mental health support
- ✓ The dental service has worked hard to enable children and young to continue to have urgent dental treatment
- ✓ Social Care practitioners say that assessments can be thorough and involve listening to parent carers, schools and services as well as observing the child or young person in different situations
- ✓ The voice of children and young people is highly valued in decision-making and to contribute to service improvement
- ✓ They encourage parent carers to join PODS and other supportive groups, but it is recognised that this should be a matter of choice
- ✓ Empowering people to help themselves is a priority in Social Care, so that resources and services are focused on those who most need them

Sign of the Week

Small downward movement twice

friend
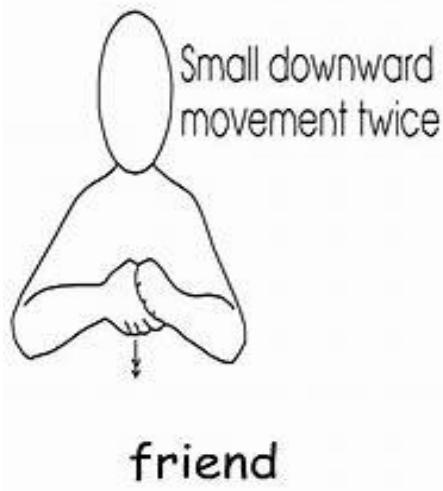
Needs to be better

→ Young people say they would like to feel more independent and trusted

→ Sometimes young people can feel forgotten and ignored at school

→ Some young people voice that they would like there to be more clubs they can access

→ Parent carers feel there can be inconsistency in the way different needs are perceived and the kind of support offered; more workforce development would be helpful in relation to additional needs

→ They believe it is good that some children and young people are thriving in their placements out of the area, but it would be better if their needs could be met locally

→ It is viewed that it is important for PODS to constantly try to be more representative of families

→ Parent carers suggest that when Care Act Assessments are being carried out it is essential to build relationships and trust over time with young people, working closely with their family, to enable a fuller understanding, and acceptance, of the possibilities that might be available

→ Looked After Children and young people with SEND cannot always access the same support as their peers with SEND, for example a personal budget or direct payments

→ There seem to be a lack of understanding, significant delays and inconsistency in the allocation of housing with the right adaptations when some families are in need of this support

→ School and setting staff suggested that lack of clarity or lack of information can lead to parent carers wanting provisions for their children or young people which may not be appropriate or timely

→ There can be lengthy waiting times for autism assessments

→ It has been suggested that if parent carers could attend one of the panels they might give a more accurate portrayal of their child or young person's needs

→ It is acknowledged that there is more to do to strengthen inclusive practice in some schools and settings

→ It is accepted in Social Care that there is always more on which honest feedback can be gathered

→ Online and digital resources are not accessible or flexible for all families

→ Strategic work on transitions is taking place but there are worries about groups attending mainstream settings who might miss out
→ It is believed there is more work to do with parent carers and young people on Transition to Adulthood and raising aspirations

Preparing for **Adulthood**

Employment

Friends, Relationships & Community

Independent Living

Good Health

COMMUNICATE

**YOUNG PEOPLE:** *Respect is very important to me*

PARENT CARERS: *"The things that B [young person] will always say is...that they make decisions with me not at me or to me, so he's always been involved in, 'This is what we're going to do'..."*

CARE: *"We have weekly communications from Directors, and newsletters, so we've got a mark of the quality of communication that comes right from the top"*

Going well

- ✓ Young people say that it is best when adults communicate with them in a way that shows they know them
- ✓ They feel that talking in a respectful way to them is very important
- ✓ When Telford and Wrekin schools and colleges have built strong relationships with children, young people and their parent carers they are trusted to communicate whenever needed, with honesty and without judgement, and are sometimes viewed like extended family
- ✓ This has felt especially important since COVID and particularly when planning transitions
- ✓ Conversations with parent carers about what their children and young people have achieved, and could achieve in the future, are valued
- ✓ Parent carers appreciate information provided by PODS and shared by other parent carer members
- ✓ The local offer is useful to practitioners, who often signpost parent carers to it; it is being updated to reflect the concerns of parent carers and young people and this work has gained momentum because of opportunities for virtual working during the pandemic
- ✓ Practitioners working in Education, Health and Care feel that information across Telford and Wrekin is transparent; pro-active systems and processes are in place involving key partners working together
- ✓ Problems are shared openly, which enables people to work together to find solutions despite pressure on budgets
- ✓ Network and data sharing systems have been created to enable more transparent and accessible communication between services, practitioners and parent carers and there is commitment to this
- ✓ There are good communication channels from, and between, services and schools about what they do which has enabled positive links that benefit everybody
- ✓ Communication between the Local Authority and independent settings has improved

- ✓ There has been good joint working to enable communication and support during COVID, drawing on already established processes
- ✓ Services came together quickly to respond by calling families and then reviewing the impact of this approach
- ✓ It has been possible to send out shared messages and communicate them in creative ways, making use of technology and social media. It is felt that social media helps communication across the area in a range of ways
- ✓ Health practitioners have quickly adapted to communicating online and value online platforms as a way of connecting with others
- ✓ They indicate that virtual working has enabled good engagement with parent carers, including those who may not have felt comfortable in more formal meetings. It has also promoted more communication with dads
- ✓ Many practitioners working within the Local Authority comment that good communication is also modelled by leaders and this is appreciated
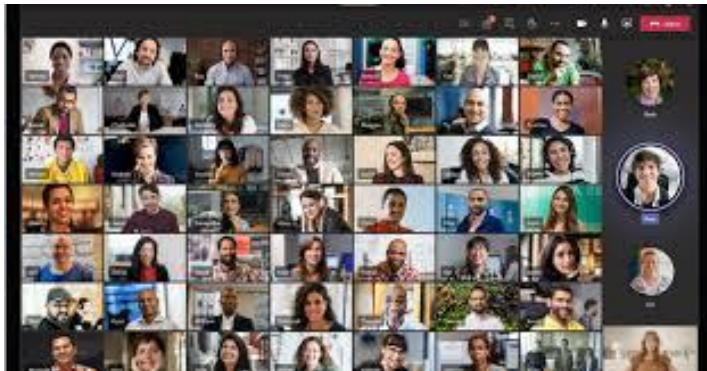
COMMUNICATE

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Needs to be better

→ Some young people voice that they would like to be treated more like adults

→ They would like to be involved and listened to in decisions which affect them

→ Having independence is important to them

→ Parent carers say that when communication between and from services is not prioritised, or feels dismissive, it can cause knock on delays in processes that then impact negatively on the experience of individual children, young people and families, affecting trust

→ There are worries that parent carers often need to be assertive advocates in navigating SEND systems and processes to achieve the best outcomes for their children or young people, and that there are some parent carers who have less confidence and capacity to do this

→ There needs to be more information about the criteria for Social Care Needs Assessments as they can feel very invasive yet, despite crying out for help, some families have been turned down more than once without any real signposting to other sources of support

→ There needs to be more guidance for families about what is available to support their young people beyond education and in preparing for adulthood; lack of accessible information and opportunity is creating worry

→ It would be useful for families to be updated about strategies being used in class to support their children or young people, especially when they cannot go into school regularly because it is a specialist setting that is not local to them, or because of COVID

→ The local offer may not be that easy for some parent carers or young people to navigate. There is an awareness in Health that the offer and next steps for families could be more clearly communicated

→ There is a concern that Annual Review paperwork does not allow schools and settings to give a complete enough picture of a child or young person despite the significant influence it has on allocation of provision for the following year

→ It is felt that it would be useful for roles to be more clearly defined, especially when services are brought together

→ Further development of the use of social media would help reach out to more partners

→ It would be helpful to continue using virtual sessions to meet with parent carers who find this means of communication more accessible

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- → Some practitioners suggest that more could be done to established shared values across the area
- → Sometimes voices are missed, so it is essential to be transparent and pro-active about putting that right
- → There is too much of an assumption that everyone has access to technology

WHO'S LISTENING,
CAUSE WE'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY.

Communication

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

YOUNG PEOPLE: *The other children [in School Parliament] can tell us something and we would talk about it*

PARENT CARERS: *" We've got our Community Participation Team Officer, so they supported us with that from day one, with any help that we needed with making sure that we're doing things safely...they advised us on things we do need to do and we don't need to do...if we've got any questions, we go back to our Community Support Officer...he's really helpful and if he doesn't know the answer he puts us onto someone else that does"*

CARE: *"Lots of things we're really proud of, but we're not resting on our laurels... I think it's important that across the whole system we form a shared understanding of co-production and what that means at all levels"*

> ### Going well
>
> ✓ Young people value when they hold positions of authority at school and have a say in decisions which affect everyone
>
> ✓ Practitioners express commitment to co-production and openness to exploring what it really means
>
> ✓ Co-production has been a focus for the Education, Health and Care (EHC) process
>
> ✓ The importance of trying to build trusting relationships with children, young people and their parent carers is recognised
>
> ✓ It is viewed as important that young people with SEND have the right to have their voice heard
>
> ✓ PODS is pro-active and has built a strong relationship with the Local Authority, which means that it is possible for parent carers to raise issues and know that they will be heard
>
> ✓ The Local Authority has supported parent carers to run sessions and regular events such as the 'Funky Fridays' disco
>
> ✓ Closing the gap between Early Help and the Children's Disability Team is a recognised area for development
>
> ✓ A family who foster describe an example of almost seamless partnership working across Health, Education and Care, together with themselves, to plan for a positive transition into school for one of their children, coordinated really well by their social worker and everybody working together

- ✓ School and setting practitioners who participated talked about valuing being able to work with families holistically
- ✓ They have found that working with service representatives with wider leadership responsibility has proved useful for forward planning
- ✓ There seems to have been a tangible move towards more partnership working across the Local Authority, with Health and with parent carers, about which practitioners feel proud. It is felt that positive relationships are ever developing and better communication between organisations is creating more effective support for children, young people and families
- ✓ Partnership working has been especially effective in enabling a shared approach to the difficult issues introduced by the pandemic, for example improving support for more vulnerable people in the community
- ✓ Working virtually because of COVID 19 restrictions has been supportive
- ✓ There are also other great examples of partnership working unrelated to COVID that have increased trust
- ✓ At a SEND strategic level, the Action Plan is structured to enable the involvement of all partners
- ✓ There is commitment to co-production within the Education, Health and Care (EHC) process
- ✓ Education practitioners suggest that an individual level there is some strong co-production taking place facilitated by several teams
- ✓ There is a move to increase Early Help's understanding of, and involvement in, SEND
- ✓ The Council is supportive of enabling groups to implement their ideas to offer peer support and activity; this endorsement and encouragement brings confidence
- ✓ In Health, Sustainability Transformation Partnerships aim to be person centred
- ✓ There have also been collaborative group sessions to encourage good peer support across services
- ✓ There is partnership working to inform the review and design of services

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Needs to be better

→ It is acknowledged by practitioners that co-production is not working consistently across the system and there is more work to be done on establishing trust at an area level and involving all partners in this

→ It is perceived that there is more to do to extend the reach of participation for parent carers and young people

→ It is hoped in Health that in the future more can be done to gather the voice of children and young people and to learn from their experiences to inform ways to support

→ Parent carers commented that better listening to, and believing, what parent carers know about their children and young people by some practitioners would improve trust

→ A next step also needs to be making sure that parent carers are always valued equal partners at a strategic level

→ The Emotional Wellbeing Panel, while good in theory, can add to the sense that parent carer experience is not enough in itself to bring support for their children or young people

→ There seems to be a gap between what is being discussed at policy level and the front line when it comes to strengthening links between Social Care, Early Help, the Disabled Children's Team and other services and providers, and offering the right kind of support for children and young people with SEND and their families

→ It is felt by staff from schools and settings that new ways of working may have reduced some opportunities for team working

→ The use of technology for communication can exclude some parent carers and young people

→ There needs to be greater clarity around the role of the SEND Officer

→ They express that the impact of budgetary constraints is frustrating and impacts on what practitioners can offer within the systems that exist; it can feel less person-centred

Conclusion

Telford and Wrekin is to be congratulated on the commitment, passion and determination being demonstrated across the area to strengthen and embed co-production. There is substantial evidence that, since the 2017 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) joint inspection, energy has been focused on bringing partners together strategically to create efficient systems and processes that will improve the experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families. Partnership working seems positive and well established and involves strong links between Education (including schools and settings), Health and Care, and has been particularly important in responding to the needs of families during COVID. Through PODS and the involvement of IASS (Information, Advice and Support Service) parent carers have a well-respected and credible voice and there is now an increased focus on young people being able to make a meaningful contribution to discussions at all levels, highlighted by the recent Joints Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Communication seems generally open and transparent and this is modelled by leaders. There is a strong focus on wellbeing and establishing trusting relationships and there are plenty of examples of a shared will to create a person-centred culture that genuinely cares.

At the same time, it is positive that there is joint recognition that there is still more to do to reach a shared understanding of co-production at strategic, operational and individual levels and to really embed this way of working across the area. Parent carers had many positive experiences to share but also emphasised the emotional and sometimes physical toll their role can have, which is too often misrepresented and undervalued. They talked about the need for clearer, more friendly and accessible pathways and processes, particularly related to Care Act Assessments and support for families including housing, mental health support for children and young people and preparing young people for adulthood. The concerns of parent carers expressed in the focus group interviews tended to match issues already identified in the JSNA. It was indicated that despite individual schools, settings and practitioners across Education, Health and Care working co-productively and with compassion, this was not always a consistent experience and when it did not happen the outcomes for children, young people and their families could be devastating.

Some young people did contribute to the Telford and Wrekin stories represented here but it was evident that engaging young people to contribute to co-production activities in a way that is representative and meaningful to them is still work in progress. It will be important to further evolve the positive work being developed by IASS to involve young people through the Shout Out for SEND (SOS) group.

The need for a more relational, warm and 'human' understanding of co-production, shared by everybody across the area, seemed to be a common message throughout this piece of work.

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Telford and Wrekin is well-placed to bring people together to create a shared understanding of co-production that meaningfully involves all partners in its creation, and to jointly shape an action plan focusing specifically on co-production and on what should happen next to strengthen and better embed this way of working across the area.

The team was impressed by the many examples of good practice shared and would recommend that further developments in co-production build upon these strengths:

A culture that cares
- ✓ Practitioners across Education, Health and Care describe with pride and trust a shared welcoming, caring and person-centred approach, where diversity is valued and relationships supportive, and communications and processes (including induction) affirm this way of working, modelled by senior leaders, and which has been more important than ever in supporting staff to be resilient and keep support going during the challenges of the pandemic
- ✓ During COVID there has been a concerted joint effort by practitioners across services to make contact with families and vulnerable individuals and alongside this there has been a tangible focus on staff wellbeing

Working with families, children and young people to support transitions during COVID
- ✓ There has been an emphasis on services working with children, young people, their families and schools/settings to support transitions so that the right preparation and adjustments could be put in place; some parent carers describe schools and settings showing an excellent understanding of their child or young person's needs, planning together with them to help reduce anxieties which has then supported them to thrive
- ✓ Young people talked about some settings working hard at making things accessible and feel safe for them, which has been especially important to them during COVID
- ✓ It is positive where there are plans for some of the helpful practical adjustments that have occurred during COVID to continue longer term

Young person and parent carer aspirations
- ✓ Young people with whom we talked have aspirations and want to achieve them
- ✓ Parent carers value it when there is communication about what their children and young people have achieved, and what they could achieve in the future

What is important to young people?
- ✓ Young people appreciate those adults who talk to them in a respectful way that shows they care, and who act upon their thoughts and ideas

- ✓ The young people we met preferred relaxed and informal environments, and having opportunities to make friends at school or at clubs and events, as this helps them feel more confident and part of a community
- ✓ Better enabling the voice of young people is recognised to be important; some young people really value having positions of authority where they can represent the views of others and make a difference to their experiences
- ✓ IASS is working hard to involve young people as well as help build relationships between parent carers and schools

Welcome and Care: PODS, Shining Stars and individual schools, settings and services
- ✓ Parent carers and practitioners speak highly of PODS, the emotional and practical support and information offered families, especially during COVID, and the warm welcome everybody receives
- ✓ Shining Stars playgroup was also recognised for the way families are welcomed, involved and supported
- ✓ Some individual school leaders, SENDCos, settings and practitioners were singled out for praise for their approach and leadership, and those we met demonstrated commitment to supporting the whole child or young person and their individual needs, and investing time in cultivating positive relationships with children, young people and their families; some parent carers described their child or young person's setting as extended family

Partnership working to evolve systems and processes that promote inclusion
- ✓ Partners across Education, Health and Care, and parent carers through PODS, have been encouraged to work collaboratively at strategic and operational levels, for example to create a 'Belonging Strategy'
- ✓ Partnership working to promote inclusion is now established through the creation of systems and processes inviting schools and settings to be more actively involved; there is also commitment to improving co-production within the EHC process
- ✓ PODS is pro-active and has built a strong relationship with the Local Authority, which means that it is possible for parent carers to raise issues and make suggestions and feel confident that they will be heard and supported

Focus on emotional wellbeing
- ✓ There is ongoing work to improve early intervention for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs which has been particularly important in recent months, for example the Mental Health Trailblazers extended their offer and

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the Sensory Inclusion Service (SIS) (with support from local and national charities) facilitated peer support for young people and parent carers

New ways of communicating
✓ New ways of communicating because of COVID, such as the use of on-line platforms and social media, have enabled some positive activities and wider engagement, for example with dads; the Speech and Language Therapy Service has used online training and remote working to reach out to a much higher number of families; virtual working has enabled updates to the local offer that better reflect the concerns of parent carers and young people

Sharing information and involving partners
✓ The local offer is viewed as useful by practitioners, who often signpost parent carers to it
✓ Some Care Act Assessments are thorough and involve listening to parent carers, schools and services as well as observing the child or young person in different situations
✓ Practitioners feel that information across Telford and Wrekin is transparent and that good systems and processes are in place, for example the Education Notice Board, newsletters and video communications from senior leaders
✓ Problems are shared openly, which enables people to work together to find solutions that focus on those who most need resources and services despite pressure on budgets
✓ Network and data sharing systems have been created to enable more accessible communication between services, schools/settings and parent carers and there is commitment to continued development

As already indicated, there were also some aspects of practice in Telford and Wrekin that suggest the need for further development:

Preparing for adulthood
→ Young people we talked to said they would like to feel more independent and trusted; they want to be treated more like adults and be involved and listened to in decisions which affect them
→ It is suggested there is more work to do with parent carers and young people on Preparation for Adulthood and raising aspirations
→ Families feel there needs to be more guidance about what is available to support their young people for life beyond education, as lack of accessible information and opportunity is creating worry

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→ Strategic work on transitions is taking place but there are particular anxieties about groups attending mainstream settings who might miss out
→ It is also indicated that there is a need for the right kind of peer support for young adults and their families, including when they turn twenty-five

Making approaches to inclusion more consistent across schools and settings
→ Young people say that they would like their needs to be acknowledged more at school; they don't always feel like they fit in and they sometimes feel forgotten and ignored
→ Some parent carers have had difficult and at times traumatic experiences with individual school leaders, SENDCos and practitioners, eroding trust
→ Messages from some secondary schools expressing doubts about the ability to support new young people without an Education, Health and Care plan at this age can damage relationships with primary schools and undermine parent carer confidence
→ These narratives illustrate that there is more to do to strengthen inclusive practice in some schools and settings and that an area wide, embedded approach is needed

Process, communication and involvement as equal partners: provision
→ It would be useful for families to be updated regularly about strategies being used in class to support their children or young people, especially when they cannot go into school regularly because it is a specialist setting that is not local to them, or because of COVID
→ There is a concern that Annual Review paperwork does not allow schools and settings to give a complete enough picture of a child or young person despite the significant influence it has on allocation of provision for the following year
→ Parent carers comment that better listening to, and believing, what they know about their children and young people would improve trust; the Emotional Wellbeing Panel, while good in theory, can add to the sense that parent carer experience is not enough in itself to bring support for their children or young people
→ It has been suggested that if parent carers attended one of the panels they might give a more accurate portrayal of their child or young person's needs
→ School and setting staff suggest that lack of clear information can lead to parent carers wanting provisions for their children or young people which may not be appropriate or timely
→ Parent carers feel that although it is good that some children and young people are thriving in their placements out of the area, it would be better if their needs could be met locally

Process, communication and involvement as equal partners: support, limitations and impact on experience

→ The emotional toll on parent carers of the role they have combined with the complexity of navigating systems is under-recognised and can lead to exhaustion, and giving up on challenging when help is needed but not forthcoming

→ There seems to be a gap between what is being discussed at policy level and the front line when it comes to strengthening links between Social Care, Early Help, the Disabled Children's Team and other services and providers, and offering the right kind of support for children and young people with SEND and their families; more workforce development would be helpful

→ Parent carers describe inconsistency in the way different needs are perceived and the kind of support offered; when Care Act Assessments are being carried out it is essential to have the right information about criteria and what to expect, and for practitioners to build relationships and trust over time with young people, working closely with their family, to enable a fuller understanding, and acceptance, of the possibilities that might be available; assessments can feel very invasive yet, despite crying out for help, some families have been turned down more than once without any real signposting to other sources of support

→ Some decisions seem unfair to families, for example Looked After Children and Young People with SEND cannot always access the same support as their peers with SEND, for example a personal budget or direct payments

→ Young people would like more clubs and activities they can access

→ There seem to be a lack of understanding, delays and inconsistency in the allocation of housing with the right adaptations when some families are in significant need of this support

→ Waiting lists continue to be hard to manage due to the demands on the NHS and other services, and a shortage of resources; schools/settings express that the impact of budgetary constraints is frustrating and impacts on what can be offered within the systems that exist, it can feel less person-centred; waiting lists for autism assessments are particularly long

→ Parent carers say that when communication between and from services is not prioritised or feels dismissive it can cause knock on delays in processes that then impact negatively on the experience of individual children, young people and families, affecting trust

Accessibility of communication

→ Online and digital resources are not accessible or flexible for all children, young people and families; it has been suggested that social media could be more widely utilised

→ The local offer may not be that easy for some parent carers or young people to navigate
→ There is an awareness in Health that the offer and next steps for families could be more clearly communicated; some roles could be more clearly defined, especially when services have been amalgamated

Young person and parent carer representation as equal partners
→ Some voices are missed, for example a wider range of young people, so it is essential to be transparent and pro-active about putting that right across all services; it is acknowledged that PODS also needs to constantly strive to be representative
→ It is felt that a next step also needs to be about making sure parent carers are always valued *equal* partners at a strategic level

It is acknowledged by practitioners that co-production is not always working consistently across systems and more could be done to involve all partners in establishing greater trust. Although Telford and Wrekin demonstrates significant strengths, including drive, passion and joint working to create processes to support this agenda, it is important that further work takes place to help make co-production everybody's business, and that opportunities are provided to further evaluate practice focusing on relational, 'human' factors.

It is hoped that the Voices process will bring partners together to agree a shared understanding of co-production, the values needed and next steps to be undertaken.

Recommendations

➢ Give the time and space needed to build on Telford and Wrekin's strengths by further developing relationships and trust across the area so that experience of co-production feels more consistently meaningful at all levels, particularly for parent carers and young people

➢ Begin by establishing a shared understanding of co-production together, moving on to agreeing Telford and Wrekin's co-production priorities and creating a joint action plan

➢ The Telford and Wrekin Voices event will provide a positive start to involving partners in developing the shared understanding of co-production and identification of the values and behaviours that need to be more consistently implemented across the area

➢ Plan this and future co-production activities in partnership from the start in order to ensure that strengths and resources can be fully shared and utilised, and needs accommodated, in how activities and outcomes shaped

➢ Work closely with organisations like IASS and PODS to ensure a wide representation of young people and parent carers are meaningfully involved in this and future co-production activities, providing sufficient time for preparation, planning and support so that they can contribute as equal partners in planning and delivery in a way that suits them best

Young People

10 Participants (although 2 young people left soon after the interview started): the young people attended a mix of mainstream and specialist schools and colleges. [Not all the young people gave consent for the focus group interview to be recorded so the narratives here reflect notes made of the words of the young people rather than their words verbatim. As a result, the extracts are not in speech marks. Some of them are records of the words of the young person captured in the first person and others are from notes about what the young people were saying, written in the third person. The narratives in bold are written in the first person to offset any distance this creates]	

Going Well	Could be Better
Helping me to achieve my goals and aspirations is important	**I would like my needs to be acknowledged more at school**
Accessibility and COVID safety are important elements of feeling cared for	**I don't always feel like I fit in**
It helps when adults talk to me in a way that shows they care	**I would like to feel more independent and trusted**
I prefer a more relaxed and informal learning environment	**I'd like there to be more clubs I can access**
Having friends at school means that I feel part of a welcoming community	**I have felt forgotten and ignored at school**
I feel respected because my ideas are valued and acted upon	**I would like to be treated like an adult**
Being part of events and clubs has helped me feel more confident and part of a community	**I would like to be involved and listened to in decisions which affect me**
It is best when adults communicate in a way which shows they know me	**Having independence is important to me**
Talking in a respectful way is very important to me	

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I hold positions of authority at school and have a say in decisions which affect everyone	
WELCOME AND CARE	**WELCOME AND CARE**
Helping me to achieve my goals and aspirations is important: Many people have walked away with qualifications for the future; Qualifications are important because people will not be able to get their future jobs without the qualification. **Accessibility and COVID safety are important elements of feeling cared for:** The school is making improvements so everything in our playground is accessible to wheelchair people. It makes me feel really happy that we have wheelchair accessibility; Wheelchair accessibility is important, they have improved it recently... which makes you feel welcomed and cared for; In college we have been following rules... college has put in lots of safety measures, put in lots of procedures to keep us safe [related to Covid-19]; Stay to the left and wearing facemasks in the corridor, there are security guards to make sure people have facemasks and ID so we are not worried, so we don't get it [COVID-19]. **It helps when adults talk to me in a way that shows they care:** I think when teachers talk to you, they speak to you with a calm... it is very understandable when they get the child's level;	**I would like my needs to be acknowledged more at school:** I never used to get the help I deserved. I feel more calm here than at my old school; My old school didn't do anything, and I just used to walk around. **I don't always feel like I fit in at school:** Getting care at the right time is important; Last year in my last class I didn't feel quite part of it and didn't connect to anyone, this year I really fitted in and get on with the group; I did enjoy my first year, but the 2nd year I didn't... I liked the cooking and food... but I was always getting told off and told what to do. I felt like I didn't have confidence, they kept knocking it down.

We have teachers and tutors that go in with us for class… they are helpful and supportive.

I prefer a more relaxed and informal learning environment:
I like being here, it is calm and doesn't make me feel claustrophobic. When I am in massive groups with people it makes me feel claustrophobic… I can take a break when feeling stressed and I like to listen to music when I need to take a break.

Having friends at school means that I feel part of a welcoming community:
Last year I lost my confidence a bit… Last year I lost 'me'. Plus, this year I have [my friend] in my group again and we bounce off each other really well. Because of that we get lots of friends. I feel like I was trying too hard to make friends last year and now I am more relaxed;
…But in my new group I am able to connect to my confidence. I can motivate others.

VALUE AND INCLUDE

I feel respected because my ideas are valued and acted upon:
School Parliament has been a positive experience for one group of young people. They feel that other children in the college respect them more as a result of their involvement. One young person was the Prime Minister of the Parliament;
Positive changes were made in the college because of Parliament, including new accessible playground equipment and a wheelchair accessible

VALUE AND INCLUDE

I would like to feel more independent and trusted:
Young people spoke about the desire to be more independent and to feel more trusted. They want to feel like they can go to school on their own;
They do not like the transport to school as they feel this removes any sense of independence;
For one young person it feels like school is always watching over them. They would like to be able to spend time with their

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bus. Young people feel that every voice is heard because of the Parliament;
Two young people are elected members of their School Council. They feel that this gives them a say in the college. One particular success they shared was getting more space in the canteen for lunchtime. A compromise was reached with school staff so that this could be achieved.

Being a part of events and clubs has helped me feel more confident and part of a community:
One young person spoke about their school disco which happens every three months. Young people value this event as an opportunity to 'hang out' with their friends, in a space where they are able to be free;
One young person spoke about being involved in the Special Olympics and taking part in sporting galas;
Clubs for those with complex needs was shared by one young person as an example of being included. This means that young people who aren't ready for youth clubs can access social environments;
One young person volunteers in a café. This makes them feel included and more confident.

friends without the need for constant supervision.

I'd like there to be more clubs I can access:
One young person felt that there are no youth clubs for people with complex needs and expressed frustration that they could not attend any clubs;
Those with hidden disabilities felt that there were limited opportunities for them to be included in activities. They feel incompetent when trying to join in the usual activities and so don't bother.

I have felt forgotten and ignored at school:
One young person said that there was no structure in his old school and he was left to wander around like they didn't know what to do with him.

COMMUNICATE

It is best when adults communicate in a way which shows they know me:
One young person spoke about how they prefer it when adults talk to them in a calm way;
You could like basically communicate to us by having text.

COMMUNICATE

I would like to be treated like an adult:
One young person said that they like written communication and would like to be talked to like an adult;
I wanted to be talked to like a human… don't treat me like I am something else;
[People should] treat you like an individual and your individual needs.

Talking in a respectful way is very important to me: We both believe… we like to be spoken to like adults and treated like equals rather than kids; My grandma said treat others how you want to be treated. There is a song that is it is not okay to be okay and we can relate to that, like other people said earlier, people wanted to have time out…. so it is okay to have your quiet time to yourself and to have space when you need it; Respect is very important to me.	**I would like to be involved and listened to in decisions which affect me:** I have wasted quite a lot of my life because of not being able to say this is not okay… that makes me feel sad when people don't listen to me; It is okay for people to say what they want to say; I want people to respond to you at the time; I used to do trampolining and I got told to stop because of my neck thing. One doctor said it is okay because it is exercise and another one went against it. I burst out crying and now it is taken away from me. It is important to have a consistent message I have done research on mental health stuff and I go to the doctor to see if I have them or not, but my parents don't want me to. **Having independence is important to me:** My parents are being picky about what I can and can't say. I want to be in a country where I am free and able to speak out on my platform.
WORK IN PARTNERSHIP **I hold positions of authority at school and have a say in decisions which affect everyone:** We have a School Parliament; I am a bus ambassador; The other children [in School Parliament] can tell us something and we would talk about it; We got a new bus that is accessible to disabled young people [through our School Council];	WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

We have been chosen as class rep… we give suggestions of how things could be improved in our school; We said about needing a bigger space for the cafeteria and they tried to get us more space. It came from one of our other students.	

Parent Carers

13 parent carers participated in the initial focus group, 10 of whom we met again in 3 smaller follow-up sessions. The parent carers involved had children, young people and family members ages ranging from Early Years to adulthood accessing mainstream and specialist settings (2 out of authority). The group included three families who are fostering. All the parent carers are members of the Parent Carer Forum, Parents Opening Doors (PODS).

Going Well	Could be Better
Key narratives	Key narratives
Shining Stars (playgroup for children aged 5 and under with additional needs set up by parents who have been through Stepping Stones, the Child Development Centre, via a grant from the Local Authority) welcomes, involves and supports families and is very much appreciated	**Some parent carers have had difficult and sometimes traumatic experiences associated with feedback from individual school leaders, SENDCos and practitioners from other settings and services, eroding trust, and illustrating that a more area wide, embedded and relational approach is needed**
Parent carers speak highly of PODS and the emotional and practical support offered, especially during COVID	**The emotional toll on parent carers of the role they have, combined with the complexity of navigating systems, is under-recognised and can lead to exhaustion, and giving up on challenging when help is needed but not forthcoming**
Organisations like IASS (Independent Advice and Support Service) work hard to involve young people to have a voice, which has been particularly valued since COVID	**There is a need for the right kind of peer support and understanding of the needs of young adults with disabilities, including when they turn twenty-five**
Some individual school leaders, SENDCos, settings and practitioners are singled out for praise for their approach, commitment and leadership	**There can be inconsistency in the way different needs are perceived and the kind of support offered; more workforce development would be helpful in relation to additional needs**
Some schools and settings show excellent understanding of needs and work hard at helping to reduce anxieties that might exist for children and young people, for example in relation to COVID or different transitions, which is	**It is good that some children and young people are thriving in their placements out of the area but it would be better if their needs could be met locally**

helping them feel settled and able to thrive

Some of the practical adjustments schools and settings have made during COVID have been helpful for children, young people and their families and it is positive when plans can be made for them to continue longer term

When schools and colleges build strong relationships with children, young people and their parent carers they are trusted to communicate whenever needed, with honesty and without judgement, and are sometimes viewed like extended family

This has been especially important since COVID and particularly when planning transitions

Conversations with parent carers about what their children and young people have achieved, and could achieve in the future, are valued

Parent carers value information provided by PODS and shared by other parent carer members

PODS is pro-active and has built a strong relationship with the Local Authority, which means that it is possible to raise issues and know that they will be heard

The Local Authority has supported parent carers to run sessions and regular events such as the 'Funky Fridays' disco

Strategic work on transitions is taking place but there are worries about groups attending mainstream settings who might miss out

When Care Act Assessments are being carried out it is essential to build relationships and trust over time with young people, working closely with their family, to enable a full understanding, and acceptance, of the possibilities that might be available

Looked After Children and Young People with SEND cannot always access the same support as their peers with SEND, for example a personal budget or direct payment

There seem to be a lack of understanding, delays and inconsistency in the allocation of housing with the right adaptations, when some families are in significant need of this support

When communication between and from services is not prioritised, or feels dismissive, it can cause knock on delays in processes that then impact negatively on the experience of individual children, young people and families, affecting trust

There are worries that parent carers often need to be assertive advocates in navigating SEND systems and processes to achieve the best outcomes for their children or young people, and that there are some parent carers who have less confidence and capacity to do this

Closing the gap between Early Help and the Children's Disability Team is a recognised area for development Foster carers describe an example of almost seamless partnership working across Health, Education and Care and together with themselves, to plan for a positive transition into school for one of their children, coordinated really well by their social worker and everybody working together	There needs to be more information about the criteria for Social Care Needs Assessments as they can feel very invasive yet, despite crying out for help, some families have been turned down more than once without any real signposting to other sources of support There needs to be more guidance for families about what is available to support their young people beyond education and in preparing for adulthood; lack of accessible information and opportunity is creating worry Sometimes it would be useful for families to be updated about strategies being used in class to support their children or young people, especially when parent carers cannot go into school regularly because it is a specialist setting that is not local to them, or because of COVID Better listening to, and believing, what parent carers know about their children and young people would improve trust The Emotional Wellbeing Panel, while good in theory, can add to the sense that parent carer experience is not enough in itself to bring support for children or young people There seems to be a gap between what is being discussed at policy level and the front line when it comes to strengthening links between Social Care, Early Help, the Disabled Children's Team and other services and providers, and offering the right kind

	of support for children and young people with SEND
WELCOME AND CARE	**WELCOME AND CARE**
Shining Stars (playgroup for children aged 5 and under with additional needs set up by parents who have been through Stepping Stones, the Child Development Centre via a grant from the Local Authority) welcomes, involves and supports families and is very much appreciated: "...we turned up there on a Friday, not knowing anybody and within a few minutes it was like we'd always been there...lots of advice, lots of sensory toys for T to play with while we're there, and it's just a really lovely hour...it gives us a bit of a break as well"; "It's really successful." **Parent carers speak highly of PODS and the emotional and practical support offered, especially during COVID:** "[PODS] wrapped their arms round me"; "We went on a lovely day out with them"; "We bought a cookbook, which is extremely child friendly, really good...there's workshops as well we've been involved with...an amazing bunch, absolutely"; "They [permission cards to allow travel during lockdown] were offered, dealt with and delivered, and it was like quite seamless really...because in the first lockdown nobody was allowed out, we were all a bit scared the first time, weren't we?...It was good to have that card, sort of, to hand";	**Some parent carers have had difficult and sometimes traumatic experiences associated with feedback from individual school leaders, SENDCos and practitioners from services, and settings, eroding trust, and illustrating that a more area wide, embedded and relational approach is needed:** "...some social workers don't have an understanding, and it's hard to work with somebody who doesn't understand the role in the disability sector, and that just opens up another conundrum"; "They said you need to come [on a school trip] or he's not going. I tried to talk to them...so I went to the LA and complained and I said, 'Look, they've got this funding'...so the day before he went on the trip they excluded him, so he didn't get to go. They won't admit it, but I feel to this day that they did that on purpose"; "[The Head teacher said] just take him home...I don't really know what to do with him"; "He's been to so many mainstream schools, it's so sad"; "Six months later the SENDCo left and the new lady came in and it was all, naughty and...let's label him and let's put him in solitary and let's do this and let's do that and that carried on...I said at that point we can't carry on we either need a new school or a specialist school"; "We had no support from the previous Head...a dinosaur...and the SENDCo was next to useless"; "She told me on the Thursday or Friday...that there was a meeting on the Monday...that she'd arranged without my

"There were offers...because we foster as well, from Social Services, you know, from multi-agencies, but the reality is nobody could do anything, nobody could do PA [Personal Assistant], nobody could do respite, nobody could be there with multiple meltdowns...it was just nice sometimes to have an adult conversation [with workers from PODS checking in]...if you had any sort of questions or queries..."

Organisations like IASS (Independent Advice and Support Service) work hard to involve young people to have a voice, which has been particularly valued since COVID:
"[They] work really hard to do a good job";
"Before lockdown they used to have face-to-face groups...they transferred that to on-line, so...they invite young people along...they actually increased the frequency during lockdown, which has been really good, and then each month they try and do...an activity like a quiz or something like that...but they really give the opportunity to give the young people the chance to say and do things they really want to do...they're really pro-active asking for ideas, so if a young person suggests something that they want to do they really try and make that happen...my son looks forward to the next group...it works really well and the ladies that run it do a really good job of involving the young people and keeping it going...it's just like a good check-in I think for the young people and making sure they're okay, and if they have got any issues they can say and they can suggest

knowledge for the Educational Psychologist to come in...or the ELSA...to assess him on the Monday...because [I could not be there] she was literally extremely rude to me, told me that I didn't care about my child and she'd tell them that I was refusing to come to the meeting";
"[They] can't see the traits...so many kids."

The emotional toll on parent carers of the role they have, combined with the complexity of navigating systems, is under-recognised and can lead to exhaustion, and giving up on challenging when help is needed but not forthcoming:
"You become very accepting, don't you, in our life, because everything's a fight and you have to accept that you will lose battles";
"Things do get you down, when you're with that young person that you're looking after 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without that understanding, or they can't give you a plausible answer, it all comes down to, 'Oh I'm sorry but finances, and that pot'...I'm sorry but I don't need to know your logistics. I just need to know a layman's term answer as to why you can't help";
"You choose your battles...";
"It's really annoying that kind of all the Local Authorities and the Government just leave us, it is hard, SEN children, and foster parents who take on that role, I couldn't imagine to do that, because I sometimes think, 'I've got no choice and you have to carry on'...but what would happen if [foster] carers said, 'Do you know what, it isn't safe to look after this child in this house, if you don't find somewhere in the next six

where they can go for extra help...they ran a session on...mental health issues...so that was really useful."

Some individual school leaders, SENDCos, settings and practitioners are singled out for praise for their approach, commitment and leadership:
"They are lucky to have D [social worker]...she is so dedicated, she's a star";
"The first school, Reception he was actually given lots and lots of support and he got his brand new EHCP [Education, Health and Care Plan], lots of funding and they were really, really hot on what he needed and the SENDCO was amazing, he literally had one-to-one all the time...he had everything he needed and it was great";
"...hats off to the Head teacher, she leads right from the front, I can't fault any of them";
"The Head left and the new Head came in and you could see that things were changing, just in general, and the staff that had my son, their attitude towards him had changed a little bit";
"This new one [SENDCo] started in September...O was moved to the top of the list...his curriculum was instantly changed to a more accessible curriculum for him...he's taken out now in small classwork with the SENDCo herself and the dyslexia test I've been asking to carry out for God knows how long has been eventually carried out and, no surprise, he's got severe dyslexia...you wouldn't believe the change";
"She's very, very passionate about autism and special needs children...the

months'... you're going to have to rehouse him, and give them that issue back, you know, you would never do it and risk losing that child, but...opening their eyes to how much we're doing that we shouldn't be...they expect us not to ever fight back";
"You shouldn't have to have a tantrum or use a blackmailing tool...you accept it, or you will fester on it and it just makes you quite ill, to fester on things...";
"...and we still smile all the way through it";
"You don't know what emotions to let yourself have."

There is a need for the right kind of peer support and understanding of the needs of young adults with disabilities, including when they turn twenty-five:
"There is a need...there is a difference between the older generation and young children...they still need a lot of the things their whole lives, it doesn't stop because they become an adult...and the fight to get anything and to sort things out [for families]...we've always just struggled along with everything";
"They will say to me, 'You need to put it in writing that he's allowing you to speak to me...in this COVID situation that's very difficult...I need to deal with it there and then, he's in an emergency situation...but they won't talk to me...people don't understand."

SENDCo...is now a fully dedicated SENDCo, no teaching...she's young, she's fresh and she's highly motivated...she's keen to really make a difference and an impact...the Head has given her free reign to do what she wants to develop it."	

VALUE AND INCLUDE	**VALUE AND INCLUDE**
Some schools and settings show excellent understanding of needs and work hard at helping to reduce anxieties that might exist for children and young people, for example in relation to COVID or transitions, which is helping them feel settled and able to thrive: "During the lockdown period, it was sudden for everyone...initially there was nothing much but later on they started sending work...for my son he just thought, 'Everybody's disappeared'...when I spoke with his teachers they said, 'Okay, we're happy to do a Zoom meeting with him so that he understands that we're still there and everything' so that happened, and we...could organise it every fortnight, it was very good for him, and then er...a few children were in school...he was really missing his friends, they reassured him, 'We're also missing all of you and when we come back it's going to be positive' so it was just a lot of positive reinforcement, you know. They used to listen quite keenly to him, 'What have you been up to at home' and 'How are you doing?' He would like to share, 'Look at me reading this book, I've been building this, I've been colouring this' and that kind of thing. He felt very happy and he felt motivated with that as well. Another	**There can be inconsistency in the way different needs are perceived and the kind of support offered; more workforce development would be helpful in relation to additional needs:** "It's very hard for services to understand"; "When you say somebody's got a disability, is that a visible disability, or an invisible disability...and I think the focus has to be on that fact that it's both...my brother has muscular dystrophy but because he has muscular dystrophy, I once had a worker say to him, 'Huh, it's your legs that don't work, not your brain' but actually what she didn't understand was, the muscles in his brain are deteriorating and they are not working, he gets himself into terrible states about things...people need to...not judge...because they can't see the disability, it's... still there...they can get quite nasty with him...they do not understand the mental health problems that go with it...sometimes it's workers, sometimes he will ring people...and they don't understand two minutes after you've told him he won't have a clue what you've said"; "They get judged because you can't see it...I think it's training for workers to understand that actually it might not be what you see, it might be what you don't see";

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thing the school did they made a video of all the teachers singing for all the children...and they requested the children to send them some dance moves...and they made a video. So, they could all see each other like that, it was virtually but it was a very positive way for the teachers to address their children and the children to see their teachers. And when it was time for them to go back in September, they sent a social story for going back, they also asked us if we wanted any other reassurances for the children, and they shared the risk assessments with us, how things would be, so all those things were...so when our minds are at peace...So far so good, the school has been really, really...well-managed...their bubbles have been strictly maintained, and the fact that he's happy to go back, a living example itself";

"My son he wears glasses and he broke his glasses and this happened during lockdown and he was getting very anxious that he'd have to wear a mask...so when I shared it with them [school] they were able to send me a little social story...and when I went through the social story with him...even five minutes before his appointment we went through it again and he was like, 'Okay, fine, I'll manage";

"F did not want to go to nursery, I would drive down...it's literally at the bottom of the road, but I would drive down to get her there otherwise it would be meltdowns all the way there, and her telling me she doesn't want to go...she didn't want to get out of the car, she was screaming and hitting me all the way to reception...she missed a few and they said, 'Look, what's going on' and I said, 'I'm really struggling to

"There needs to be more education in schools as to how some children can mask, they are very good at holding it in, and fooling them into thinking that they're neurotypical, when they're not...they need that support."

It is good that some children and young people are thriving in their placements out of the area, but it would be better if their needs could be met locally:
"It would be better if it wasn't so far away but the placement's going well...it's twenty-five miles away."

Strategic work on transitions is taking place but there are worries about groups attending mainstream settings who might miss out:
"I worry about that because I worry about families like M with K...that they might get missed out a little bit...because he's been in mainstream school, being in mainstream he's missed out on social work access, he's probably not needed it but he probably does need it now and there's that gap."

When Care Act Assessments are being carried out it is essential to build relationships and trust over time with young people, working closely with their family, to enable a full understanding, and acceptance, of the possibilities that might be available:
"We registered for Care Act Assessments and we had someone come out from the Carer's Centre to do an initial assessment, who made little effort to understand our family or needs. We weren't allowed to see the assessment questions to prepare us, or our son, which we felt could have been

get her there'…the nursery assistant started coming downstairs and meeting her downstairs…and walking up the stairs with me, and they did that for a couple of weeks and she goes in absolutely fine, and the minute we're there they're ready to greet her. You can't ask for more than that";
"They're helping to get him to not think about the person causing trouble, and distracting him by doing something else with him";
"He went…for a couple of hours a day, all the way up to the summer holidays…if he couldn't do the work, they'd like chuck it away and do a game with him…and they'd have lots and lots of fun stuff going on, you know, everything is about fun and being happy and nurturing him";
"He is amazing…he's gone on a school trip today…to choose a Christmas tree, and this is the first trip he's been on in two years, probably why I'm a bit tearful today, because…they've not asked me to go, they've not asked me for any lunch, they've not asked me for any money, they've not asked me for anything…and he's gone in today and I'm really excited for him";
"He was really behind when he started…and he's back to being the little genius that he is, his educational levels are so high now, he's really, really in a good place";
"A lot of work to do with pastoral, he has a little card in his wallet, and it tells him who to go to if he's having a hard time of it…and they will listen…and stuff that he can do."

Some of the practical adjustments schools and settings have made during COVID have been helpful for

helpful. It was decided that my son didn't need any help as a young man seeking independence. We feel this is an opportunity that's been missed. He's not getting any help now, so it's all down to mum and dad to sort things out, which is fine, but as a young man he needs a more peer led approach rather than parent led, to support him into adulthood and independence."

Looked After Children and Young People with SEND cannot always access the same support as their peers with SEND, for example a personal budget or direct payment:
"Why does my child have to sit next to another child at school who has the luxury of staying with mum and dad, and having the luxury of that extra budget which is provided by the Government, not out of everybody's own pocket…so why can't a Looked After Child access that support for them, to enhance their life? And I still to this day not…have to accept it…"

There seems to be a lack of understanding, delays and inconsistency when decisions are made about the allocation of housing with the right adaptations when families are in significant need of this support:
"My brother is fifty, and it's taken until now to get an adapted house…it was [Housing] that said it was his legs that didn't work, not his brain…that was last year";
"We've been asking for five years for suitable accommodation";
"I felt, because we foster for a Local Authority, there'd be some sort of clout…because we've got a child that needs adaptations, he needs grab rails to

children, young people and their families and it is positive when plans can be made for them to continue longer term:

"When you arrive [specialist setting]...you've got buses, you've got cars, you've got taxis, and what they've done is that they're using the back door as well as the front door and you have time slots and there's members of staff there waiting so when you arrive with said child, they would ring direct to class, staff would come and fetch them so there was no hanging about, and the system has worked that well they're going to continue it...when it goes back to normal. It's a really good system...normally you'd do the queuing system, so if you've got rather anxious, get to school and get out the car...it has actually relieved a lot of pressure for many."

get in the house...he needs a wet room, and OT [Occupational Therapist] identifying...he's sixteen nearly so he's taller than me, so when we have a problem during a bath, it's both dangerous for H as well as us...we've got the OT report and it's just gone...we just carry on...I directly spoke to my Social Worker who then took it to the Director of Fostering, who then spoke to the Director of Housing, and it was just like, 'Oh right, sorry, we have nothing available';

"...if P was trying to get somebody out of the bath and he fell and everyone's covered in bruises and someone gets hurt...he shouldn't be in that situation, I get quite cross";

"...what really sticks in the teeth is that you know, in our circle...I know of five who've had specialist, brand new housing, all adapted, and it's like, 'Right, great, thanks'...sometimes you just have to be in the right place at the right time, or your face fits or it just has to be ideal and great smashing, wonderful, and sometimes we're just not there."

COMMUNICATE

COMMUNICATE

When schools and colleges build strong relationships with children, young people and their parent carers they are trusted to communicate whenever needed, with honesty and without judgement, and can be viewed like extended family:

"He'd got into a bit of a bother with somebody in college...he came home and... said he'd had a telling off and I thought, 'Oh God, what's going on?' And we sort of like left it as we knew they'd dealt with it and then the school staff emailed me on the Friday

When communication between and from services is not prioritised, or feels dismissive, it can cause knock on delays in processes that impact negatively on the experience of individual children, young people and families, affecting trust:

"...I raised a doubt that something might be going on, you know, something not be right with him, that was when the Health Visitors let me down really badly...the trainee who couldn't share her report with me...the person whom she was mirroring when she finally came, she

detailing it all...so I ended up having a conversation with them, 'You do know he's got that reason why he's there because of the social communication difficulties...' and stuff like this...and they were like, 'Yeah, but, at the end of the day' so they did that pushback thing to us, at the end of the day he still needs to be told it wasn't right, and we'll work through how to make it better...I could have just gone in there...but he's twenty in January and he's got to learn to live in the real world...and that's the sort of conversation that we could have";

"It's very much a peer approach";

"We learn together";

"The things that B [young person] will always say is...that they make decisions with me not at me or to me, so he's always been involved in, 'This is what we're going to do.'"

This has been especially important since COVID and particularly when planning transitions:

"It's just being able to have a conversation, whether it be via email, or whatever, she has never made me feel guilty about the amount of times that I've emailed in asking a question, because obviously we've never met...we had a Zoom introduction to the teachers, we haven't met them yet...its feeling that you can ring up and talk to them...when I have asked she hasn't judged me...she's always made it very clear, if I've got a question, just ask"

Conversations with parent carers about what their children and young people have achieved, and could achieve in the future, are appreciated:

refused point blank...'My style of working is that I don't write anything in the red book' and when you go for any kind of appointment they ask for the red book...the letter to the paediatrician, that was delayed by six to eight months and because of that his multi-disciplinary assessment was delayed because, you see, there's a queue everywhere, I had to chase it up for about four months...obviously I didn't bother where the blame game is, I didn't want to get into that, I wanted results for my son. Eventually, that meeting happened somewhere in June, and then... his multi-disciplinary sometime in October, November...things could have been set in motion a little bit earlier...."

There are worries that parent carers often need to be assertive advocates in navigating SEND systems and processes to achieve the best outcomes for their children or young people, and that there are some parent carers who have less confidence and capacity to do this:

"I was lucky, he got diagnosed early, I argued with the Educational Psych., got him into a special school, so he's thrived. Not all parents have the ability to do that...I could have been one that didn't have the confidence to argue...I often wonder if I hadn't challenged it [the decision] when he was five, would he be such a thriving, chatty...munchkin that he is now...I think I would have had a different child...he still has his issues, he's still behind, but on other things he really thrives";

"I worry about families in a similar situation";

"That's what really worries me, I mean I've been there, I'm out the other side a

"I've already now been told that he probably will be able to do one exam, at least, which to me is a big deal, I want him to thrive, I want him to be independent…but then I want to make sure it's all done right and not too stressed…he has subjects which he thrives on and subjects which he doesn't, and it's getting the balance in that right."

Parent carers value information provided by PODS and shared by other parent carer members:
"Information I get from PODS is still quite relevant [for older adult in family with a disability] regarding housing, Occupational Therapy, things like that, I get a lot from PODS, somebody will say to me, 'Oh well I've got an adult son, or whatever, and we did this, this and this'…I think that is key for everybody to keep sharing all the information that they can…although you might have a young child, surely it's still relevant to an older child? I was listening…where a gentleman said about housing, adaptations to housing and things like that…the wealth of knowledge that they've got, people [families with adults with disabilities] should be able to tap into that as well";
"I saw the original SOS group, Shout Out for SEND [IASS young people's group]…that was advertised, probably through PODS, and on Facebook";
"Lots of advice that we've had…Facebook posts."

bit, but I know that the battles are still going on…we speak to so many families who have this problem."

There needs to be more information about the criteria for Social Care Needs Assessments as they can feel very invasive yet, despite crying out for help, some families have been turned down more than once without any signposting to other sources of support:
"I would scream and shout and cry on the phone…I'm not getting any sleep…it's very hard";
"We just need to know what the criteria is so we're not fighting for things that we're not entitled to and the biggest thing for me is that the social worker kept digging for more and more stuff and I kept saying to her, 'If you need to tick a box just tell me what that box is…and to this day I don't know how close we were";
"I found the process really invasive…they go through bank accounts…they came and looked all around the house";
"They say they can't do anything to help";
"Social Care are similar…I don't get signposted, I've had four people who are supposed to be support workers and they say, 'There's no groups, there's nothing there' or you get the opposite, 'Perhaps you could find a group where he could go, you could find something' it seems like the Holy Grail, the continuous battle, but there doesn't seem to be any communication between everybody about things going on."

There needs to be more guidance for families about what is available to

	support their young people beyond education and in preparing for adulthood; lack of accessible information and opportunity is creating worry:
	"It is down to guidance so that we know we offer the right support...";
	"...as to what's going to happen in four years...who knows?"
	"I hope that he'll get another year at college but after that I don't know what's going to happen and on my mind...at some point in the future he needs to start living more independently and I've got no idea how that process is going to happen, I don't know who to speak to...some people...seem to have social workers. We don't have a social worker and I've no idea how we get one, do we need one?...all these questions...";
	"[What would be helpful?] A posting so you know where to ask for?"
	"That signposting, that checklist, really, about what you can ask for, what you can't ask for and make it fairer, you know that hidden disability stuff...it's not just about the learning disability, you know, it's wider stuff as well";
	"Saying...'If you're starting to think about in the future'...just saying this is who you need to be talking to...you do pick up bits and pieces from PODS and you learn things from that but then the trail can go a bit cold and you don't know what your next step is really";
	"Because he's going to be moving into something in mainstream...then we've got the whole, new transition process to go through as well...but we're not ready for supported employment currently";
	"Where's he going to go?...I don't know who to talk to";
	"...there doesn't seem anything in that community where we can go and get a

job, where we can find out a world, not just hanging onto mum...";
"He's on the list for transition, but I don't know what will come of it...part of me is quite jaded and wonders if things are actually going to happen...a career, job is not happening because we just don't tick the box...he's nearly finished and it's the 'jump off' at the end...jumping off a cliff."

Sometimes it would be useful for families to be updated about strategies being used in class to support their children or young people, especially when parent carers cannot go into school regularly because it is a specialist setting that is not local to them, or because of COVID:
"I'm not a hundred percent what's working in class because I've not been told."

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

PODS is pro-active and has built a strong relationship with the Local Authority which means that it is possible to raise issues and know that they will be heard:
"PODS is very active, driven by X [Strategic Coordinator], if there's any situations or issues come up, you know, X jumps on that...and goes out and asks people's opinions, contacts the people that need to be contacted...that's really good...and because she [X] has that good working relationship with people in the Council, you know, if she says something I believe they respect what she says and they'll look into what she says and not just ignore it, that's really important."

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Better listening to, and believing, what parent carers know about their children and young people could improve trust:
"I said to the LA at that point, 'I need a specialist school' and the one-to-one working with him...said, 'When he goes up to Year One he's not going to be able to cope...with the rigid way that we teach, there's not going to be much leeway for him, so he needs a specialist school'...I went to the LA with this, and the Head master, and...the LA went, 'Well she's just a one-to-one she doesn't know what she's talking about' and we had an EP report...absolutely everything...I went home crying that day because it was so sad to hear that he needs a specialist

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The Local Authority has supported parent carers to run sessions and regular events such as the 'Funky Fridays' disco:
"We've got our Community Participation Team Officer, so they supported us with that from day one, with any help that we needed with making sure that we're doing things safely...we're not set up as a formal group...they advised us on things we do need to do and we don't need to do...if we've got any questions we go back to our Community Support Officer...he's really helpful and if he doesn't know the answer he puts us onto someone else that does...and they helped us with advertising it as well which has been really good, they put it on the Local Offer and on various Facebook pages as well, and helped us promote it."

Closing the gap between Early Help and the Disabled Children's Team is a recognised area for development:
"I know that they're looking at doing some work with the Early Help Team and Strengthening Families Team as well...plugging that gap in between...the good news is that there's now a SEND lead in each Strengthening Families Team...that's positive."

Foster carers describe an example of almost seamless partnership working across Health, Education and Care, and together with themselves, to plan for a positive transition into school for one of their children, coordinated really well by their social worker and everybody working together:
"...with her being Looked After...she gets so well looked after, with

school and so frustrating that nobody else is listening";
"The child is masking, the school's not seeing it, pretty much accused him of being a liar and told it's a parenting problem";
"A very high percentage of those families that we [PODS] deal with have that issue in school";
""Especially in mainstream schools, that SEN Support stuff, you know...families aren't believed and they come to us or they will go to IASS and , you know...they're just told by school, 'No, that's it' not, 'No, but you can try this...' there's no signposting to any other support or anything like that";
"...and I think it's getting over the barriers that parents know their children, professionals sometimes think their opinion is always right and it's not, we know the children 24/7 and I think that we just need more weight as to what we say";
"...my only grudge is that kind of...attitude from the professionals on whom we are depending so much for our children's... wellbeing should not have happened...being very dismissive of our own fears, and our own worries for our children...every professional meeting that we go to they say, 'You know your child best' but if I know my child best then trust in what I'm saying."

The Emotional Wellbeing Panel, while good in theory, can add to the sense that parent carer experience is not enough in itself to bring support for their children or young people:
"The Emotional Wellbeing Panel is...now the access route into CAMHS...it's a multi-disciplinary panel...good in theory

everybody within her...support group...it was probably September last year we started going...for an MDA...one of the ladies on the panel was one of the ladies who is sort of doing a one-to-one with T so thought that's a positive for her, so they've seen her transition from a little child just plonked in the middle of a table...collapsing, no movement whatsoever, she's come a long way with what we're doing with her and the support that nursery have put in with her as well, she's now transitioning into the next group up, and now she's got funding for an extra day a week at nursery as well, so the transition from being looked after and nurtured in a little nursery to big school isn't quite so dramatic...so hopefully that will be a nicer transition for her...we have lots of people looking out for her and fighting for her cause and stuff...the Headmistress comes out and does an assessment on each individual child...we had Speech and Language Therapy this week...they're hoping an Educational Psychologist will get involved with her as well...the...Social Worker N is beyond all...she's the coordinator for everything that we need";
"A lot of things have changed...it sounds more positive now."

but it's another gatekeeping process really";
"I was talking to the new SENDCo...and she was saying that from a school's perspective as well they're frustrated with the Health and Wellbeing Panel because they build up all this evidence and everything and they go to the Health and Wellbeing Panel and they turn round and tell them to go away";
"And I think that's the problem for the families, where the school aren't seeing it, they're reluctant to take it to the panel because they're aware of what's going to happen, they're going to be told to turn around and walk back out the door."

There seems to be a gap between what is being discussed at policy level (Learning Disability and Autism Pathway) and the front line when it comes to strengthening links between Social Care, Early Help, the Disabled Children's Team and other services and providers, and offering the right kind of support for children and young people with SEND and their families:
"We're developing a framework at the moment with commissioners around providers to come in and provide services for these families, so what's really important...is they're brought into to provide services who don't get access to Social Care...everything takes time, doesn't it?";
"I feel when I have a support worker, you almost need a course to know how to use them properly, when I have a support worker, I've had four and they give you a circle of things where you're supposed to tell them what you'd like, but when you're not feeling great or feeling a bit rubbish, sometimes you don't know what you want,

	but the other thing is that the stuff they were offering me is something I could find out with a computer...the Holy Grail is...I want my child out, I want my child doing stuff, and we've been to meetings where we've just had a moan about it and not got anything done. There doesn't seem to be any networking between people, if that makes sense"; "Then they say, 'Oh we can't help you, good bye'...six months later we've got a new one because he's got in trouble in the community again, or something's going wrong so we're on a vicious circle"; "We are too advanced for a lot of the special needs groups, but we've been thrown out of a lot of the mainstream groups. Please tell me where I'm supposed to take this child, other than school, and it's a complete blank...or how do I get support so that he can go to a group, because they turn round and say, 'You need support'...'Well, I don't want my mother'...there's no networking...the support worker we've got now, he's lovely, it's not his fault...he's almost agreeing with me, we need to go to Children's Disability Team...but they just say, 'No, we haven't got a group suitable, no, we don't do children like that, you can go back and find something in the community' and the community say, 'Well, we can't do it without support'..."

Schools and settings

5 participants: Executive Head teacher (specialist settings) and SENDCos from specialist settings and a primary school.	
Going Well	**Could be Better**
<u>Key narratives</u> **There is commitment to supporting the whole child or young person through pastoral support and those with that responsibility are key** **Some secondary schools are recognised for basing their provision for children and young people on their individual needs** **Investing time allows practitioners to develop positive relationships with parent carers** **Support from other practitioners in meetings and clarity around advice provided by the different panels can be helpful when communicating with parent carers** **Area wide commitment to inclusive working is valued by the practitioners and this is manifested in their willingness to work together for the benefit of the children and young people in their care** **The local offer is useful to practitioners, who signpost parent carers to it** **School practitioners who participated value working with families holistically** **Working with service representatives with wider leadership responsibility**	<u>Key narratives</u> **Messages from settings around their ability to support a new child or young person without an EHCP at secondary age can damage relationships with previous settings and undermine parent carer confidence** **A lack of clarity or lack of information can lead to parent carers wanting provisions for their children or young people which may not be appropriate or timely** **Parent carers could give a more accurate portrayal of their child or young person's needs if they attended panel** **The local offer may not be as easy for parent carers or young people to navigate** **There is a concern that Annual Review paperwork doesn't allow the school to give a complete enough picture of a child or young person, yet it can have significant influence on provision for the following year** **New ways of working have reduced some opportunities for team working** **The use of technology for communication can exclude some parent carers and young people** **There needs to be clarity around the role of the SEND Officer**

has proved useful for forward planning There has been a move towards more partnership working across the Local Authority and with Health	The impact of budgetary constraints is frustrating and impacts on what practitioners can offer within the systems that exist, it can feel less person-centred

WELCOME AND CARE

There is commitment to supporting the whole child or young person through pastoral support and those with that responsibility are key: "Pastoral work within settings is where the heart of it lies…pastoral work within schools seem to be where that beacon of supporting partnership working, pastoral leads in schools bring it all together." **Some secondary schools are recognised for basing their provision for children and young people on their individual needs:** "I know the secondary schools where children will get the support regardless of SEND support, EHCP, whatever, they will get their needs met based on the child." **Investing time allows practitioners to develop positive relationships with parent carers:** "What works really well is that I'm non-teaching, so I'm here three days a week, so I have good relationships with parents who phone or email me. However, that is not the case for all parents, some don't take us up on that."	**Messages from settings around their ability to support a new child or young person without an EHCP at secondary age can damage relationships with previous settings and undermine parent carer confidence:** "I can guarantee every year that when my parents have been to visit the secondary school, I will have at least one or two parents coming back and asking why hasn't their child got an EHCP because they've been told that they will only get support at secondary school if their child has got an EHCP. And I know I have got some specific schools that give that message then they come back to me as their SENDCo and ask why have I let their child down, I'm not getting them an EHCP because they are going to be let down when they move onto secondary and not get the support that they should have"; "I find it frustrating because we are working with these children from such a young age and you build up relationships with the parents and practically overnight you will have those parents coming back questioning those professional judgements that we've made it's really hard to build up. I don't think secondary settings realise that those slightest comments can wobble parents on the top of them"; "A lot of our secondary providers are very nurturing and welcoming and want to

meet our children's needs but not all. The Local Authority have done lots of work to address this. We're not supposed to recommend schools but we love these kids and work with them since they've been three years old and we're not going to recommend going to an environment where they will be set up to Fail";

"As a secondary SEND provider, we have a lot of families coming to look round our schools where they have looked around the secondary school and the message that they've been getting, the schools have been feeding that they can't meet need. And you are schools that welcome the parents but then there are schools that challenge."

VALUE AND INCLUDE

VALUE AND INCLUDE

Support from other practitioners in meetings and clarity around advice provided by the different panels can be helpful when communicating with parent carers:
"When you have lots of professionals together you can back each other up. You really feel for the parents because they come to school for help and they want an ASD diagnosing and you know there is a pathway for that and you know how long that pathway is and the parents sometimes don't understand and they are always trying to look for quicker ways and having the professionals there as well means you get back up from other agencies, and it can put a strain on the relationship with parents because some parents feel it is somehow the schools fault and the schools are not doing things quick enough, but it's actually the

A lack of clarity or lack of information can lead to parent carers wanting provisions for their children or young people which may not be appropriate or timely:
"What's on my mind is parental choice. Parents have a lot of weight with that, but there is the duty of professionals to support parents with that, because that is a big responsibility for parents if that is not well informed, and how do we help them be well informed? But there are times where parents want a provision and professionals don't think it's appropriate, but what has got parents to that decision? And what steps have gone before to help them understand where the professionals are coming from? As a parent, if education isn't your background how do you make those decisions? There is a duty of care for us as advocates for the children and the parent to make sure those children's

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system and you might agree with them. Everything comes back to school";
"As much as the panels are a nightmare, it has worked from both sides, for panel to say it might be this, this, this or this, for that to come the panel rather than the school who can then continue that really good relationship with the parents has worked really well. It's like having your own clinical supervision for that child";
"Panels are a really good way of working with, and you might not get the outcome you want but you always get an outcome and you always feel supported and happy with the advice we've been given. The time constraints can be frustrating when you have so many children you need to get to panel but you can only put so many forwards. It's useful even if you don't get the funding you want it can open so many doors."

Area wide commitment to inclusive working is valued by the practitioners and this is manifested in their willingness to work together for the benefit of the children and young people in their care:
"Because schools work so well in their clusters it strengthens the Authority. People are willing to share that good practice and get things out. Within the schools and within that Local Authority there are people who really value inclusion, and that people know they can contact and talk to and just pick up the phone and email. As a colleague of Telford and Wrekin I feel quite valued and I think the children really value the experiences that they get from Telford and Wrekin schools";

needs are being met whatever environment they are in";
"Sometimes CAMHS...say to parents, 'I don't think that school can meet your child's needs and actually we think they should go to a specialist support provision' and that can cause issues for those families and the expectations of what schools can or cannot meet need."

Parent carers could give a more accurate portrayal of their child or young person's needs if they attended panel:
"Some parents would love the opportunity to go to panel and often we have to go to family workers or social workers to try and get that input because they are the professional";
"Parents have lots of different profiles and some would definitely benefit from going to panel and them hearing that information firsthand and for them to get all that information from the skilled practitioners and if things were happening at home and that teacher can't answer all the questions because it's just they aren't at home and it's about putting those families at the heart of everything we do and it's about choice."

"I go back to the Belonging Strategy that we put together last year and colleagues I work with in the Behaviour Support Service working together, and it's all about making sure that children no matter which school they go to in Telford and Wrekin get the same experience in belonging and we wanted every child to feel the same whether they are south of the borough, or north of the borough, and it's been good to see that schools can look and see that consistent approach and that high level of expectations for all schools and all pupils, which adds value, and it's been a good strategy and it's been out there for schools and parents."	
COMMUNICATE	**COMMUNICATE**
The local offer is useful to practitioners, who signpost parent carers to it: "The SEND systems in Telford have been improved and the communication between everyone in the Authority and the SEND network meetings have been very useful for that support from other SENDCo and colleagues. That support from across the Authority has really seen a big improvement and the stuff that's on the local offer for us as professionals and parents. I always signpost my parents to the local offer and many just don't know about that local offer website and I think that's something we need to do; I don't know how but we need to highlight that local offer website."	**The local offer may not be as easy for parent carers or young people to navigate:** "Re-the local offer: It can be hard to navigate for some parents. It's okay for us as professionals but when I used it with my parent hat on it can be hard to navigate … Things we are looking for are not in the place. I thought they might be but even as a professional the bits I don't know can be, can be a bit overwhelming, so I do a Google search and it will take me into the place I want to be." **There is a concern that Annual Review paperwork doesn't allow the school to give a complete enough picture of a child or young person, yet it can have significant influence on provision for the following year:** "The Annual Review paperwork is very light touch, does it need to be more of a

report, a bit more of a professional report and a critical view of the provision: Does the provision meet the child's needs? Not just the crude objectives that are on that plan, but the whole child. How well are we meeting her social and communication needs? How does our environment add to her anxiety? But our documents don't capture that. The Annual Review documents need to be credible, and school reports need to credible like the EP's report. We see that child every day. The proforma is restrictive and doesn't allow schools to write a professional report. At least as a professional you would be satisfied that you have said what you believe to be true."

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

School practitioners who participated value working with families holistically:
"The Trail Blazers project is working very well as they work with both parents and children, for a set amount of weeks, and schools work alongside them as well."

Working with service representatives with wider leadership responsibility has proved useful for forward planning:
"I do a monthly meeting with the SEND Team Lead and it's like a mini Annual Review, it gives you an overview. And it's also helped that when we have had children in the special placements that we've been able to get them back into mainstream settings so instead of…they're going to be there forever and this is… we look at what are their

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

New ways of working have reduced some opportunities for team working:
"It's seems harder than ever now, getting people round a table and at least when you had a TAC [Team Around the Child] you could have those conversations."

The use of technology for communication can exclude some parent carers and young people:
"Everything has gone onto Teams or Zoom and I think a lot of that is inaccessible for parents. I was on a Forum meeting and it was quite well attended and it was lovely but parents couldn't speak on it, it all had to be typed, and there is an assumption about parent's literacy skills, never mind their ability to type."

There needs to be clarity around the role of the SEND Officer:

Commented [1]:

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needs now, and how their needs can be met in a mainstream setting."	"The only time I hear from our SEND Officer is when the Annual Review hasn't been done on time. It's looking at the role of the SEND. Are they there to tell me the Annual Review hasn't been done on time or is it to help and support? It's about unpicking further and get into schools to unpick that role of the SEND Officer";
There has been a move towards more partnership working across the Local Authority and with Health: "Definite shift in working in partnership – still got a long way to go, different teams work with different agendas."	"There is the frustration that some are part-time, so you get the automated response. When I do get through, they are always available and answering, then."
	The impact of budgetary constraints is frustrating and impacts on what practitioners can offer within the systems that exist, it can feel less person-centred: "We've got panels that people can go to but ultimately it always seems to come back to funding. I'd love to be able to sit a room and offer all this money";
	"If I had a magic wand, I wish we could go back to Team Around the Child where we weren't worried about the money, and they could have what they needed at the right time";
	"The old TAC model where everyone came together to talk about that child but that sort of went, it's because of funding and budget cuts, there's a lot of budget cuts, and actually let's put the child in the middle of the table, let's get everyone around that table and discuss who is going to do what around that child. Lots of good work is going on, lots of good SENDCos are doing good work, pulling people in, …we've lost the ability to sit round as a group."

Local Authority (LA) Education

13 participants: Director of Education and Skills; Interim Service Delivery Manager SEND 0-25; Interim SEND Team Lead; Principal and Senior Educational Psychologists; Virtual School Headteacher; Sensory Inclusion Service (SIS) (2 representatives); Portage representative; Early Years and Childcare Team Leader; Independent Advice and Support Service (IASS) Manager; Lead Learning Support Advisory Teacher (LSAT).	
Going Well	**Could be Better**
<u>Key narratives</u> **There is pride in the welcoming and caring ethos across the area, supported by positive relationships, communications and processes, modelled by senior leaders and more important than ever during the current challenging times, all of which encourages trust** **Phone calls to parents, carers, schools and vulnerable individuals during the pandemic reflect a culture that cares** **Local Authority induction processes are valued** **Services have welcomed being encouraged to be involved at a strategic level** **Services and schools have worked collaboratively to create an effective 'Belonging Strategy'** **There is tangible commitment to valuing diversity and inclusion across the area** **Services value opportunities to come together to share information and successes**	<u>Key narratives</u> **There is more to do to strengthen inclusive practice in some schools** **It would be useful for roles to be more clearly defined, especially when services are brought together** **Further development of the use of social media would help reach out to more partners** **It would be useful in the future to continue using virtual sessions to meet with parent carers who find this means of communication more accessible** **There is more to do to extend the reach of participation, for parent carers and young people** **A next step needs to be making sure that parent carers are always valued *equal* partners at a strategic level**

IASS has been working closely with schools focusing on building stronger relationships with parent carers With support from local and national charities, SIS has been facilitating peer support between young people and parent carers which has been empowering and especially helpful during COVID, helping to prevent mental health issues Many schools and services are trying very hard to work together to keep support going during the difficult circumstances created by the COVID 19 pandemic Information sharing is open and transparent; pro-active systems and processes are in place involving key partners working together There are good communication channels from and between services and schools about what they do which has enabled positive links that benefit everybody The local offer is being updated to reflect the concerns of parent carers and young people; this work has gained momentum because of opportunities for virtual working during the pandemic There has been good joint working to enable communication and support during COVID, drawing on already established processes Communication with independent settings has improved	

Social media helps communication across the area in a range of ways **Positive relationships ever developing and better communication between organisations through partnership working is creating more effective support for children, young people and families** **Working virtually because of COVID 19 restrictions has supported partnership working** **At a SEND strategic level, the Action Plan is structured to enable the involvement of all partners** **There is commitment to co-production within the EHC process** **At an individual level there is some strong co-production taking place facilitated by several teams**	
WELCOME AND CARE **There is pride in the welcoming and caring ethos across the area supported by positive relationships, communications and processes, modelled by senior leaders, and more important than ever during the current challenging times, which encourages trust:** "The Welcome and Care I receive from colleagues across the board, partnership wise, of coming into this post...from everybody, from all organisations, is outstanding, just from how you feel positive, you feel good to work in Telford and Wrekin"; "[feedback from the team]...the care shown within the team [Educational Psychology Service] to supporting each	**WELCOME AND CARE**

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other...they work in very supportive environments, very supportive teams...I can give a perspective on being new...people have felt very supportive, very open, very keen to work with me...it's felt very warm...people really do want to offer that support and make you feel welcome and secure in your job";

"...the [SIS] team were very grateful for the virtual coffee mornings and things offered...from the top [Chief Executive], really, 'Ask me anything' and the kind of focus on people remembering to take some time out and to be...kind to each other as a priority...our team certainly has really, really valued that";

"Particularly over COVID...with having a young family, I think the message from the top...was that we're not talking about time at the computer, we're talking about... what we manage to do within our time and it's not how much time we're there and we've got that flexibility to support our family over this time and I think it's really good to have got that message, because I think than when we're trusted to work flexibly we're going to feel more valued and that's been really, really important for me...I know how other members of the team have appreciated that";

"...the Council has looked after us over COVID...the coffee mornings, and all the strategic messages coming through and being very clear and we all know where we're standing, and the daily videos that we get [from the Chief Executive]...it comes from the top and it goes through every team, and every team has just pulled together to work

through this particular period, but
they do normally";
"We've been on a big journey and
people have really embraced this kind
of system-wide leadership and working
together."

**Phone calls to parents, carers,
schools and vulnerable individuals
during the pandemic reflects a
culture that cares:**
"Through the pandemic one of the
things we did as a Council...we did
phone calls to every individual person
that had an Education Health and Care
Plan, every parent at the start of the
pandemic...we personally called as a
Local Authority so everybody in this
room and all of their teams did phone
calls to every parent, we did phone
calls to schools, we still continue to do
phone calls to schools whenever the
bubbles are closed";
"We [Virtual School] rang all of our
foster carers and we liaised with
schools when it first hit";
"...it's things like having a telephone
number to call, we've had, sort of,
families who've been contacting
members of the team [SIS] at the
weekend...when families and carers are
on the edge it just takes that little
thing to create a real crisis that needs
to be sorted out really quickly, that's
gone on very well";
"It's not just been about families that
we work with but the Council as a
whole, all teams pulled together and
were phoning families, people that
were on their own, self-isolating or
vulnerable or had been in hospital with
COVID, checking that they were okay,
they got more than one phone call,
giving advice on where they could get

somebody to help with shopping or shopping online, prescriptions and all of that work was going on, on top of the work that everybody was doing within their teams as well."

Local Authority induction processes are valued:
"We've actually had a new member of the team starting with us this half term and they've actually commented on the [corporate] induction process and how helpful that's been from an admin. point of view and actually getting things set up and that's helped that person enormously";
"...new members of staff have a mentor within the team to deal with specific processes";
"The induction process was really useful and being able to talk to people across the service, not just in your team, was really helpful."

Services have welcomed being encouraged to be involved at a strategic level:
"As a service we've [IASS] been welcomed in sort of strategic developments as well within the Local Authority, so we've been able to contribute and participate in those areas as well."

Services and schools have worked collaboratively to create an effective 'Belonging Strategy':
"We [Telford Pupil Support Services*] launched a 'Belonging Strategy'...all the schools have bought into that really in terms of every child needs a sense of belonging when they come into school, so we've noticed for our vulnerable

children that our exclusion rate has significantly reduced."	
VALUE AND INCLUDE	**VALUE AND INCLUDE**
There is tangible commitment to valuing diversity and inclusion across the area: "I have a visual impairment and I have particularly valued the Welcome and Care approach from the Council, but *all* the teams that I work with including the team I belong to, which demonstrates to me a very clear line on celebrating diversity and inclusion"; "Quite a high proportion of schools are committed to inclusive practice." **Services value opportunities to come together to share information and successes:** "We have whole SEND service events…pre-COVID where everybody got together in a room, we all had biscuits and tea which was very much appreciated…it was really nice from a communication point of view but also a valued point of view that we got to meet everybody, that we got to celebrate our success, because they were always really, really positive and it would be nice if those did start up again, they were really useful and helpful." **IASS has been working closely with schools focusing on building stronger relationships with parent carers:** "…what we've tried to do is create that sort of positive relationship around how we can work with schools to support that engagement of parents to enable that support to be put in place earlier or to have those positive	**There is more to do to strengthen inclusive practice in some schools:** "We know we've got some work to do with some schools to make them more attachment friendly and trauma informed accredited schools."
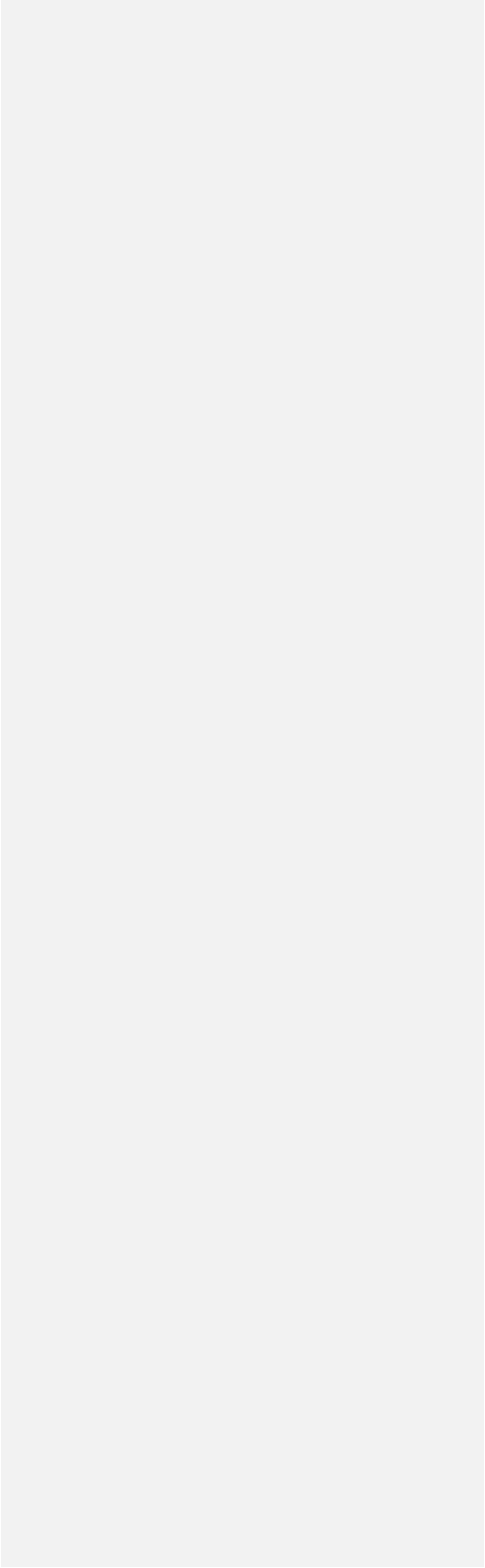
communications with schools and their parents...it's been very much about parents feeling confident to be able to express their views in school and having those better relationships to do so..."

With support from local and national charities, SIS has been facilitating peer support between young people and parent carers which has been empowering and especially helpful during COVID, helping to prevent mental health issues:
"...young people are beginning to be representatives...so the Deaf Children's charities have trained some of our young people to be mentors to other young deaf people and to take part on national forums, that's been a hugely positive thing and through lockdown when mental health issues have certainly been quite high in our service, for the children, then the children have been mentoring each other and the parents have been mentoring each other, and we've taken that little bit of a step back and just facilitated that, and I think parents and kids have found that very beneficial...we get quite a lot of funding from our local Deaf Children and Vision charities to help us do that work."

Many schools and services are trying very hard to work together to keep support going during the difficult circumstances created by the COVID 19 pandemic:
"Just from a SIS pint of view, that we have with Health, processes that have been put in place for a number of years and how they've really held up

over the COVID period in terms of referrals from Health, because obviously the referrals we get for visually impaired and hearing impaired children come through Health, and it's been critical that those referrals are acted upon quickly and there's not been a gap in support for those families...a real strength is the fact that that's been carrying on and we're having bi-weekly meetings with Health professionals over the various platforms to make that work well, so I think that seamless approach from Health to Education has been a real strength";

"Of course, lockdown, everything stopped, but we're now re-engaging and we've got four schools doing virtual coffee mornings...we [IASS] want to support that...we just support to facilitate them really";

"We've [IASS] been able to provide parents with those weekly wellbeing sessions, we've become extremely skilled in the team on virtual platforms and parents have been able to adapt, and valued the support that we've offered to families during this time...our children and young person's work, we've been contacting people to make sure they're okay, you know, to support them with their own anxieties, we highlighted the need for parents to feel reassured around transition for our children going back into school in September, so we worked jointly with our Parent Carer Forum to deliver a transition workshop for families, to talk about their anxieties, to look at some of the tools that might support their children going back into school, and I think that was really valued as well from the feedback that we

received...we've been through some really challenging times but I think we've achieved so much through these challenging times that I hope it will continue, really";

"Through COVID none of that [Portage working in partnership with parents] stopped at all and we've had so much feedback from our parents to say, that because weekly visits have gone on, albeit by Teams, but sometimes we've been the only person the parent has spoken to outside their house so it's not just been supporting the child, it's been supporting the family as well around Education, Health and their mental wellbeing as well";

"...all our PEPs [Personal Education Plans] were done virtually...we've [Virtual School] done it all [training with foster carers] online with Microsoft Teams and our peer mentoring as well, with our young people, we continued to do that...we sent lots of communication out anyway before COVID but we just increased that as well."

COMMUNICATE	COMMUNICATE
Information sharing is open and transparent; pro-active systems and processes are in place involving key partners working together: "And the data as well...feels open and transparent, which for me, coming in new, makes me think, okay, once that's in place we can know that we're really focusing our work on the vulnerable children and families and schools to support them rather than...constantly just trying to negotiate and sort messy processes...music to my ears";	**It would be useful for roles to be more clearly defined especially when services are brought together:** "...just that clarity of roles...because we've [Pupil Support Services] had...some new people...from other services join our teams so there's that cross over, we just need to be a bit more clearer about responsibilities and raising the profile of that with all stakeholders, and linking up better with organisations to create a wider, more service offer really."

"I was invited to something called 'Tribunal hour' that happens every week, and all the SEND Officers are there and the Principal Psychologist is there, weekly, everybody that needs to, altogether in a meeting in keeping on top of it...everybody who needs to be...in the same room at the same time...sharing the information live, as and when we need it...later on that week I was in the Quality Assurance Panel that happens weekly, and again, all the people that needed to be there were there, again, reviewing, discussing any issues that arise from that and it happened again the next week, so that level of communication...it just means that those processes can run smoothly";
"...it's about making sure we've made the right decisions."

There are good communication channels from and between services and schools about what they do which has enabled positive links that benefit everybody:
"Coming in new, I am so impressed with the level of communication and inter-working between people in different roles, different teams...it's really quite astounded me...this is brilliant...there are processes and set-ups and commitment to those that make it work really well";
"The Education Notice Board...it gets sent out to all schools...you could have something from Virtual School, something from SEND, a variety of providers so that's been really helpful";
"All of our SEND information goes out on there";

Further development of the use of social media would help reach out to more partners:
"We're [SEND] looking at setting up social media so that we can communicate more effectively with parent carers, we know that they like using social media to get messages, so we're looking at developing that."

It would be useful in the future to continue using virtual sessions to meet with parent carers who find this means of communication more accessible:
"One of the things I'd like to see moving forwards is that we do more virtual sessions directly with parents and carers, we did them before about SEND Support and them understanding what SEND Support meant and the graduated approach, I'd really like to see that more so."

"We've got quite a strong SEND newsletter, that we've had for schools and settings, we're developing that to go electronic at the moment to our local offer";

"So similarly from SIS we send out Hearing specific and Visual specific newsletters and those are very closely linked to...the sector, the charities, there's a lot of links to the National Children's Society and Sight Loss Shropshire, Blind in Business, all of that, and the feedback from all of those organisations is that they get a very high level of response from Telford and Wrekin so I think we are quite pro-active in making sure that the parents, more and more electronically, are getting all the key messages coming out from the bigger, national forum if you like...you feel like you're delivering a much more holistic package, to parents, especially people who might not be aware";

"...through publicity, promotions, talking to school, telling them what we [IASS] do, building up that profile telling people how we want to work with people to make it feel more positive, get that information out there at an earlier stage, and that's brought about, you know, schools are wanting to sort of facilitate those coffee mornings...there's a range of stuff that goes on there, so there's other educational providers as well, so it's being able to link in...bringing in more information as well, so it's been really helpful, and schools that we're working with have welcomed that really and seen that as enhancing their SEND offer really within their schools";

"The way we have a 'Comms Tree' I suppose, the way it moves up, the way

the SEND Coordinators are able to speak with the SEND Officers who then speak to the Service Delivery Manager, so that works really well...us working as a team";
"I think people joining the team find processes very, very clear and they know where to go when they don't, so for instance they've just offered a one hour slot on Annual Reviews and our new members of the team, of which we have several, found that really, really helpful, they could go and see how it works on the bigger picture, not just SIS."

The local offer is being updated to reflect the concerns of parent carers and young people; this work has gained momentum because of opportunities for virtual working during the pandemic:
"...we're updating the local offer because we're understanding more about what's 'hot' in the area, what's our feedback from our parents and carers as to what the real anxieties, what the concerns are and how we can get information out there to support them";
"Our local offer...over this time we've had resources to help with Home Education...we get a lot of feedback from our internal teams like our LSAT [Learning Support Advisory Team]...and our EP [Educational Psychology] team will give us information to put on the local offer to support parents and to support professionals working in schools so that's been really well received...and we've developed a whole page just for frequently asked questions...so it started off as a COVID questions...so at the PODS and

IASS Communications meetings we go through frequently asked questions and themes that we're having from parents and then we'll produce the answers on the local offer so that all parents can see what we're doing, so that gets updated every few weeks...as soon as we get an answer to a question we try to get it on there."

There has been good joint working to enable communication and support during COVID, drawing on already established processes:
"Our Sensory Inclusion Team and our SEND Team where there's contact with parents and carers, if that young person is at home, we did...I think it was every three weeks we did online virtual sessions with schools and settings about understanding what the COVID pandemic meant, how to support them through it; we did weekly meetings with PODS and IASS at that time...one thing that was really important...for us as a Local Authority, was that our PODS Parent Carer Forum were able to report back in to us about strengths and weaknesses about what's happening, what's going well and what's not going so well from Education, Health and Care and that was able to model what our discussions were around...so now we have our Health and Social Care colleagues at that meeting and that meeting was flexible dependant on the amount of queries that were coming through from our parent carers...we did it on an individual level, we did it with our schools and made sure that message was going out...we did newsletters to parents as well as the schools and settings throughout COVID, but we

did that before COVID...and have SENDCo network meetings";
"I think all the work we've done over many years on communication with parents and carers, putting that at the forefront of how we work...has borne fruit over the COVID period, we do run sort of family groups and we've managed to get them running virtually, and for the families we have been calling during lockdown periods, I know feedback from the team would be, as much as the work has been about supporting carers, it has actually been about supporting the children and young people through all those times...that's including sort of dropping off equipment."

Communication with independent settings has improved:
"X has done a lot of work with regards to independent settings...that's a strength we've got at the moment...our communication with our independent and out of county settings"

Social media helps communication across the area in a range of ways:
"We've increased our social media presence as well with the young people";
"You get really high level communication that goes out through our social media sites...about how great it is to be living in Telford...that's a huge positive."

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP	**WORK IN PARTNERSHIP**
Positive relationships ever developing and better communication between organisations through partnership working is creating more effective	**There is more to do to extend the reach of participation, for parent carers and young people:**

support for children, young people and families:

"We're [in SEND] working quite strongly with Social Care about those vulnerable learners and understanding who's known to services, and if young people are at home, what support's going in...we're having conversations directly with schools and with our Social Care colleagues about making sure that our most vulnerable are safe and we've got that real connection of data information and that collective conversation...only today we were talking about extremely clinically vulnerable children...Social Care and Education are coming together to collectively send those messages out";

"...we've [Virtual School] got really good working relationships with a range of services, so Health, Education and Social Care providers";

"We [Portage] work very closely with Health especially around the MDA [multi-disciplinary assessment] process, and obviously no assessments were going ahead face-to-face to start with and we worked very closely with Telford and Shropshire CDC's [Child Development Centres] because they didn't know how the assessments were going to go ahead, so working together, and with the family, sending in reports and what we'd been doing...changing the pro-forma...so the assessment still went ahead even though they weren't face to face";

"...doing some joint events...some of the stronger partnerships at the moment is the Future Focus, that is around post-16 support...we've [IASS] been doing work alongside them and the strength of that relationship's developed over the last twelve months.

"...more integrated working, so look at more, like systemic consultations...we've got an active pupil voice but we'd like to get that wider for more vulnerable students...we just need to improve to ensure that all our student voice is captured to improve and inform our practice";

"We're working on our young people's voice, we work with the IASS service to run a young people's group and we're looking at projects where we can extend that reach as well...how we can work with School Parliaments to kind of get more young people involved, not just ones that are able to come to the group";

"Widening the reach, we've got PODS, we've got IASS, we've got strength in their parent communication and partnerships and from a Local Authority perspective I'd like to see that widened reach a lot further, so when we're doing these online meetings or virtual meetings with our parents and carers about understanding, I feel that would be a real positive move forward."

A next step needs to be making sure that parent carers are always valued *equal* partners at a strategic level:

"The thing that I think we need to move onto is co-production with parents...in terms of understanding co-production and the culture of co-production where they're really valued as a true partner, that's our next bit in the journey...it's great to hear that together we work really, really well but have we got to that same level when we are working with parents, and that's the bit I'm not sure about...we've got some fabulous work going on, but how do we get to that next level with parents around strategic work

It takes time to develop those relationships but I think once you do then you can do some good work together";
"...and also welcomed within the Early Years team to do a lot of the work around Early Years and also Post-16 so we've got a lot to feel quite posiitve about at the moment";
"There's been great strengthening of our links with the wider SEND team, SIS works 0-25 across Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire, it's a joint arrangement across those two authorities so that in itself takes some managing, so being really tied into the SEND processes, particularly in Telford and Wrekin, and now we're building links with the Educational Psychology Service to give us more specific advice, we feel that the links...with Health and with parents...and with settings...are already very strong, so our focus is how do we tailor what we're doing with the larger SEND agenda; that's been great, actually."

Working virtually because of COVID 19 restrictions has supported partnership working:
"Certainly from a partnership arrangement I think it's actually been strengthened through COVID with our Parent Carer Forum...with IASS because we're having more frequent meetings because we're able to do them virtually";
"Virtual meetings have had higher attendance and stronger links with other teams";
"I think we've reached out...it's sometimes easier to get meetings together with everybody round the

and really making sure that they're a valued partner as we move forward";
"The parent voice and carers voice...a little bit more in things, there's a real platform for doing that...all those structures and communications are in place, we perhaps need to use it more systematically...we do have lots of communication with parents, lots of support for parents and carers, but actually trying to do that more systematically I think would be a useful thing to look at."

table...it's more accessible for people if they're based at home...I've managed to meet with many other members of the team and Social Care and Health...I think it's having a positive impact on the children in Telford and nothing has stopped because of COVID...I think it's got stronger in some respect and we're more aware of what's going on in all of our schools."

At a SEND strategic level, the Action Plan is structured to enable the involvement of all partners: "We've got all sub-groups...I think we've got a really good picture of where we are and ...I know from our Parent Carer Forum, from a strategic level and from IASS, they're involved in all of those sub-groups to have their voice, because I think that's really important...we've made sure that's in place and that we've got that feedback."

There is commitment to co-production within the EHC process: "Education, Health and Care Plans...I think our co-production is a real positive for us as a team and when that links with communication with our stakeholders, with regards to the families, with the parents, the young people and the settings, even through COVID we've been able to enable that co-production to still happen when putting Plans together and Annual Reviews through the virtual platforms";
"When there's a draft Eduction Health Care Plan the SEND Officers have close relationships directly with the families of the cases they hold and will always have a meeting with the family

to go through the Plan...it seems to be engrained as part of that process...I know from other places I've worked that that doesn't always happen, it can be much more distant and sent out rather than genuine coming together and look at the Plan";

"If, following the request for a statutory assessment, the decision is 'No' to assess then there is always what's called a Moving Forward meeting and again the SEND Officer and school and whoever else, I know there's one case I've been involved in over the last two weeked where the EP [Educational Psychologist] is going out to discuss with that parent why that decision was made, what else can be put in place, how these children's needs can be met, to get a joint understanding...that's not always the case [in other areas]";

"On the Education Health Care Panel here schools come directly to the Panel to talk about the cases being referred and again, I've not worked anywhere that's happened, so it's actually a conversation...between the Panel and the schools and the parents...in a way that I think is really impressive."

At an individual level there is some strong co-production taking place facilitated by several teams:
"Co-production, as well, individually with parents is really strong...at an individual level we really do some excellent work";

"That's where our work is, for Portage, is working with parents and working in partnership, it's what we do."

*Telford Pupil Support Services include: The Virtual School, Behaviour Support Advisory Service, The Student Engagement Programme, The Linden Centre Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), Music Service, Arthog Outreach (Outdoor Education)

Social Care

6 participants: Children's Disability Senior Social Worker; Strategic Lead, Practice Development and Innovation; Team Leader, Strengthening Families Service (incorporating Early Help); Service Delivery Manager for Specialist Services (incorporates Children's Disability Team, Contact Team and Parenting Assessment Team); SEND Commissioner; Service Delivery Manager (LA in-house delivery of Care and Support services, Children and Young People and Adults).	
Going Well	**Could be Better**
<u>Key narratives</u> **PODS is very welcoming** **Being child or young person centred is seen as important** **It is felt there is a shared welcoming and inclusive approach** **Assessments can be thorough and involve listening to parent carers, schools and services, as well as observing the child or young person in different situations** **There is encouragement for parent carers to join PODS and other supportive groups, but it is recognised that this should be a matter of choice** **The voice of children and young people is highly valued in decision-making and to contribute to service improvement** **Empowering people to help themselves is a priority, so that resources and services are focused on those who most need them** **Problems are shared openly, which enables people to work together to find solutions despite pressure on budgets**	<u>Key narratives</u> **There is room for everybody to self-check whether they are really making sure they have the human side of co-production right** **It is important to constantly try to be more representative of families** **There is always more to gather honest feedback on** **There is more work to do with parent carers and young people on Transition to Adulthood and raising aspirations** **Values need to be shared** **Sometimes voices are missed so it is essential to be transparent and pro-active about putting that right** **There is too much of an assumption that everyone has access to technology** **Co-production is not working consistently across the system** **There is work to be done on establishing trust at an area level and involving all partners in this**

There is commitment to making communication transparent and accessible for all families	
Services came together quickly to respond to the pandemic by calling families and then reviewing the impact of this approach	
It has been possible to send out shared messages and communicate them in creative ways, making use of technology and social media	
Good communication is modelled by leaders and this is appreciated	
There is commitment to co-production and openness to exploring what it really means	
The importance of trying to build trusting relationships with children, young people and their parent carers is recognised	
It is viewed as important that young people with SEND have the right to have their voice heard	
There is a move to increase Early Help's understanding of, and involvement in, SEND	
There is pride in the Partnership working that is established across Education, Health and Care and with parent carers, and how this has been effective in enabling a shared approach to the difficult issues introduced by the pandemic	

There are also other great examples of partnership working unrelated to COVID that have increased trust

The Council is supportive of enabling groups to implement their ideas to offer peer support and activity; this endorsement and encouragement brings confidence

WELCOME AND CARE

PODS is very welcoming:
"…we work closely with…PODS…and whenever I've needed to go and discuss some fairly thorny issues at times, and see what parents think, the PODS organisation has always made me feel very welcome in terms of coming into the room with a lot of parents, being invited to stay on for some of the social stuff after our discussion. So, personally, even when the topic is quite difficult, parent carers have still made me feel very welcome."

Being child or young person centred is seen as important:
"In relation to caring about the young people in Telford and Wrekin, I think they're at the forefront in decision making and we really want to make sure that they've got improved outcomes and life chances. So, the support that we try to give them is always focused around their needs….but seeing them as children first within the Disability Team…..";
"It's about giving choice and making sure that the children's voices are heard, including their likes, dislikes in what they want from the team really."

WELCOME AND CARE

There is room for everybody to self-check whether they are really making sure they have the human side of co-production right:
"But there's something about embedding co-production so that we check ourselves against it and …support each other in a positive way…saying, 'What did it feel like to be on the receiving end of us?'…because Local Authorities are large organisations but we need to ensure we challenge us, as individuals, to be human and embed co-production in ourselves."

It is felt there is a shared welcoming and inclusive approach: "Telford has a particular approach, which by its very nature is quite welcoming, is quite inclusive, which is how we work with each other, how we speak, all that sort of stuff."	
VALUE AND INCLUDE **Assessments can be thorough and involve listening to parent carers, schools and services, as well as observing the child or young person in different situations:** "We're very keen on observations as well, so that we see and hear what parents/carers are telling us, what schools are telling us, what Health colleagues are telling us. We try and observe the child in a range of settings to build up our own impression of what their behaviour might be telling us, for example, in a range of different settings, and then use that in part of our formulation, our analysis to assess in terms of next steps." **There is encouragement for parent carers to join PODS and other supportive groups, but it is recognised that this should be a matter of choice:** "The other thing about the representation is that of course it's parents and families' rights not to join Forums and organisations but if I can support PODS in that, I will. But also, where they're not representative of certain groups, then I need to know that so that I can make efforts in that area to engage with those people. It's not about forcing them down one route."	**VALUE AND INCLUDE** **It is important to constantly try to be more representative of families:** "I've sent out a challenge to our Parent Carer Forum to say, 'Demonstrate to me how representative you are of the broader spectrum of parents and families in Telford, show me what your membership is so that I can make sure that, in terms of my work with you, that I'm getting the best spread of input and opinion from as wide a representation as possible. If I can't see that that's the case, I will make additional and different communication methods to make sure that we get to that"; "I'm very keen to go back to meetings where we meet in a physical space so that we can capture a broader range of parent carer views." **There is always more to gather honest feedback on:** "We've got several others that we need to work on. We've got PCF reps on all of our Aiming High task and finish groups….but where can we continually improve that – because I'm never satisfied…and that requires some honesty I think…to people like me, people saying, 'F, you didn't include this, this and that or we could have done it in a different way, or asked different people to lead on different pieces' and it's just

The voice of children and young people is highly valued in decision-making and to contribute to service improvement:

"For me, it's about how we can really and truly gain the voice of that young person, how we make sure that's at the forefront of our thinking and the forefront of our decision making and that we can then truly value the voice of the child in the same way that we value the voice of the parent carer. We make sure that they're [young people] included in decisions that both affect their lives but also…in terms of reviews of services and of future service delivery."

Empowering people to help themselves is a priority, so that resources and services are focused on those who most need them:

"It's about empowering people isn't it and I know that's not just a value base of ourselves, it's also of the whole of the Council. There's very much a view…a priority is about empowering communities to support themselves….it's about making sure that the service[s] that we have… are focused where they're most needed, where people can be supported to empower each other and themselves….That's very much a focus of the Council."

having that feedback in a constructive way to improve."

There is more work to do with parent carers and young people on Transition to Adulthood and raising aspirations:

"I think, from my point of view, there are still a significant amount of difficulties, where parents views are very different to the children and young people, especially when the young person is transitioning through to adulthood….the views of some of the parents, of what they wanted, are very limited aspirations for their loved ones were…quite challenging really if I'm going to be perfectly honest and certainly not in line with some of the views that we've had from the children and young people themselves";

"So, I think there is a lot of work and engagement that needs to be done….collectively, not just from the Council, around trying to balance out what the children and young people's aspiration is for their adult life…recognising that at the end of the day a [parents] want the positive things for that young person but also allowing that young person to make their own life choices";

"Agree, absolutely an area that we are frequently toying with and training ourselves in terms of how we move forward in that regard… there is more work to do in that area."

COMMUNICATE

COMMUNICATE

Problems are shared openly, which enables people to work together to find solutions despite pressure on budgets:

Values need to be shared:

"It's shared values really, in order for co-production to work we all need to be in the same cultural change to see those values changing across the board and

"…that's our style, that's how we approach any number of significant challenges that we've had over the last 12-18 months. We go out there, we share the problem and then collectively we look at solutions and then we start to work up those solutions…the shared position across all involved was that we need to offer something and on this basis we were able to say, 'Well what does this look like?'";

"Yes, so it even comes down to the way that we discuss budgets…being transparent about budgets and costs with parents to share the issue and opportunity and come up with the solution together."

There is commitment to making communication transparent and accessible for all families:
"So…different families will have different communication needs or have different levels of views of organisations and roles, so what we try and do is communicate on several different levels, but in a transparent way…bringing things together so that it's all there together."

Services came together quickly to respond to the pandemic by calling families and then reviewing the impact of this approach:
"But to support the strategic get-togethers, we then had to bring in a panel to look at additionality of need caused by the pandemic… That happened very quickly and very effectively, at the same time we did work with PODS…We also shared information on who was calling who. For example, the PCF would call families,

implemented across all agencies and services."

Sometimes voices are missed so it is essential to be transparent and pro-active about putting that right:
"We will always hear that we've missed a cohort of people…it's about being as transparent as we can and getting to as many forums as we can for getting that message across";
"I think also…the parents/carers of children with learning disabilities weren't fully aware of the consultation we were undertaking to shape Adult Services and they only got to know about it because my service straddles both. Whereas, the rest of the support services, there's Children's and there's Adults, and it was on our Facebook page and so that's how those parents…PODS actually, that came to the meeting. So, I think some of those communications can shape further provision…I took a lot of learning from that… It just highlighted to me that we didn't fully focus on that bridge…."

There is too much of an assumption that everyone has access to technology:
"To move away from the assumption that everyone has access to technology and its creating that balance that we don't go, 'Everything is done virtually, electronically' because there is still a cohort of people, parent carers, families and young people, who don't engage in technology";
"I can just speak on behalf of my staff team and a lot of my staff are out and about in the community and don't sit in front of a computer every day. I think we need to reflect…on how we engage with the children and young people we

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case workers would call families, we know that Education were calling families and so too were Community Health Services. So, we shared all of that intelligence and it made us think, are we over calling? But it also helped us to ensure that there were no gaps in that…it just demonstrates how we all, very quickly, needed to just drop everything and very quickly come together."

It has been possible to send out shared messages and communicate them in creative ways, making use of technology and social media:
"As a collective, we've been very good at getting shared messages out…it becomes a shared communication, it's not the LA saying this is what's going to happen and imposing that on people, it's about saying we've done this piece of collaborative work, this is what's come of it and this is how we're moving forward and that's certainly what we've seen in terms of communication around our overnight short break provision and sharing those messages across the partnership";
"Facebook, emails and the local offer pages, using that far more creatively…using virtual space."

Good communication is modelled by leaders and this is appreciated:
"Internally to the LA, we've seen some really excellent leadership around communication that comes from the top. So, our Chief Exec. sends us videos at least twice per week. When we were at the height of the pandemic it was more. We have weekly communications from Directors, and newsletters, so we've got a mark of the

support and their family/carers. A Zoom meeting isn't for everybody. So, we just need to keep that balance really…its about recognising those who can't engage in that way."

quality of communication that comes right from the top."

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

There is commitment to co-production and openness to exploring what it really means:
"Lots of things we're really proud of but we're not resting on our laurels – hence this work. For me, it's taking it that step further and understanding it across the whole system...with ourselves, with Education and with Health. Given the dependencies, Social Care can't do what they need to do in isolation. We absolutely have to rely on Health and Education to meet the children and young people's holistic needs and I think it's important that across the whole system we form a shared understanding of co-production and what that means at all levels";
"Thinking about a time where we might need to move away from a true sense of co-production because a particular need means that that's the way that we've got to work... If there's a significant change in policy for example, then we need to almost step back and understand what that means as an organisation in terms of duties/requirements and then go back to the partnership or parent carers and then understand about what that's going to look like in practice and how we co-produce some of the responses to changes in legislation or guidance, but getting agreement that that's an okay way to work within the essence of co-production";
"… I'm pretty confident that all partners would be in agreement that that was *true* co-production and I

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Co-production is not working consistently across the system:
"I concur….that it's [working in co-production] not consistent through all aspects of the system….we need to have those conversations about how we get there and I think there's good consultation and interaction with our Parent Carer Forums but I think one of the things we need to work better, work harder on is how we meet those parents needs or discuss with those parents who aren't involved in those forums, that hidden cohort of parents. Clearly, that will always be a challenge but that's something we need to consistently strive to improve on";
"In terms of this exercise [focus group] what I'm aware of is the potential for difference across, less the LA, less Education and Social Care, particularly as we work so well together, we come from the same value base, but I'm talking about, probably more about the *CCG* at leadership level there. Have they got the same understanding and ethos and approach to co-production? Community Health Services are a bit more closer to people and I see a difference there, but just from a *CCG* leadership level everybody in Telford and Wrekin talking co-production and there's a danger of different understanding and applications emerging."

There is work to be done on establishing trust at an area level and involving all partners in this:

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think it leads back to some of the values, some of the things that you've already mentioned, so just being open and transparent…"

The importance of trying to build trusting relationships with children, young people and their parent carers is recognised:
"Yes…so we [Children's Disability Team] work alongside our colleagues in Education as well, so if we've got children that have got communication issues we'll work closely with other agencies and it's about building that relationship up with children and young people to get to know their needs, working alongside parents/carers as well as the young people. We use specific communication tools, so we've got some PECS symbols…it's just getting to know that young person. The trust in that relationship is key and building up that connection";
"It takes a degree of honesty but it's also about making these institutions and policies human."

It is viewed as important that young people with SEND have the right to have their voice heard:
"I was Lead Commissioner for our SENDIASS [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service] service and that's another good example where we've worked together with a broad spectrum of people including two parent carers to commission that service, but within that service there is a person who is solely dedicated to just that, gathering voice. So that there is a separation between SENDIASS officers and the person

"I think it's about making sure that there's trust, in order that when we discuss an issue, we're then able to trust each other to come up with the best way of working with that particular issue…. I guess what I'm trying to get to is that it's not one size fits all, it's about getting to that trust position first";
"We could have improved the young people's element [of the SEND JSNA]."

that gathers the voice of children and young people and she's very present in schools and colleges and provides clinics and those sorts of things. We're very clear as well about the legal rights of young people to have their voice heard, particularly in making decisions after the age of 16";
"We've got the 'Shout Out for SEND' young people's group and we're very keen to establish our connections and develop that group moving forward."

There is a move to increase Early Help's understanding of, and involvement in, SEND:
"Within Early Help, we've been looking more recently at doing more targeted approaches about opening more access to SEND children… It's in its infancy… within the three locality teams we're going to nominate SEND champions so they are Strengthening Families practitioners but they're going to have that dedicated role of being a SEND champion…";
"We'll also be looking at joining up with the SEND coffee mornings that are delivered in some of our primary schools";
"…. up until now the Strengthening Families capacity has been taken up with all the children that have safeguarding needs, rather than looking at a wider perspective of how we can stretch ourselves with an offer that's across the board really…. our service manager is keen for us to work with that and so I do feel that we're making progress";
"We have also been meeting up monthly now with the PODS Forum, that started back in July, and that's been

quite a success as well so it's just sort of generated from that."

There is pride in the partnership working that is established across Education, Health and Care and with parent carers, and how this has been effective in enabling a shared approach to the difficult issues introduced by the pandemic:
"I think one of the things that we do value is the importance of the partnership to do with shared outcomes for children and families and I think that was something that has been highlighted and exacerbated to some extent, by the pandemic…. when Social Care come together with colleagues from Health and Education to ensure that service delivery is consistent and targeted to those areas that need it ….The fact that we've been able to come together and plug those gaps and meet need in challenging times is something that we should be rightly proud of";
"When the pandemic hit, we very quickly got to a position where we worked strategically. So, OK, 'What's going on? What does this mean? Can nurses get here? What's going to happen to SALT? What's happening to schools? So, very quickly we got together. That's been a real success in terms of consistency, in terms of making sure that we're targeting those families most in need and we all had to share information and data to do that. That has worked so well that we are continuing that way of working because it's just benefiting the whole area";
"…a really good example, for myself, is how…across the Council, with Education providers, have worked together in

order to provide some provision for children. Especially…during the summer, we would normally provide a playscheme for children with disabilities mainly based around one of the bigger special schools that we have in Telford and obviously we weren't able to do that. It required a significant amount of joint work between my services, Education, social work services and family carers et cetera and I think we re-modelled it…. it was a prime example of really good co-production….Not just across different agencies but with families and carers as well."

There are also other great examples of partnership working unrelated to COVID that have increased trust:
"So, one of those examples is the way in which we conducted our SEND JSNA [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment] and that was very much a partnership approach that included PODS as well as a young person….We also used a Parents Annual Survey and actually, that was probably the most valuable information in the room that was presented on the day…which was the event where we brought together all the evidence from which we create the JSNA and we squared that information with Public Health information";
"Steering groups…come together and we talk about what's going well from agency perspectives and most importantly from PCF perspectives and then we look at the work of SENDIASS and how we can respond to some of those challenges";
"An example…it relates to overnight short break respite provision…. I

received an email from our provider just saying that the lease on the building was being ended….so basically giving us notice that by May we would no longer have respite provision in the borough…as I've eluded to on a number of issues that we would just kind of face it, and we would go out and we set up a number of consultation forums, at a range of different times, a range of venues and with our PCF, with parents from our special schools and with the provider themselves. We sent communication out via schools, via social media platforms and we just said we need to come together, there's a real, real issue here, but let's talk about it, let's look at what we can do and because we were very open about that issue …joint communication out and we had those consultation groups and as a result of that, parents/carers and Education stakeholders developed a sense of trust in myself and F and in the LA……";

"I think by working in true partnerships with the provider and parent carers and with the organisation that owned the building, we were able to resolve that issue… I think that there would have been a sense of mistrust from families and from young people about what the LA were up to…. This has created a lasting trust."

The Council is supportive of enabling groups to implement their ideas to offer peer support and activity; this endorsement and encouragement brings confidence:

"In terms of being representative of a Local Authority…it's a big thing, a big institution, some of our role as well is to pave the way and almost suggest

new ways of doing things and give permission to whatever you might want to call it, so for example, trying to set up an activities centre and by virtue of the fact that I'm in the room, representing the LA gives confidence to parish councils and parents to just get on with it. Sometimes, it's just about understanding the strength of your role and representation to start those things off. Not to dictate, but just to give confidence to others to continue that work or shape it in whatever way they need to….then you've got parents coming forward saying, 'Oh, I could do Lego, or I could do…I've got a steel band coming, or we've got this happening and then it just…you know it's just going to ripple effect out."	

Health

9 participants: Mental Health Lead; Senior Commissioning Manager; Therapies Manager; Coral House Learning Disabilities Nurse and representatives from Community Children's Services (local hospital), Public Health, Healthwatch Telford, Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT) and Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust.	
Going Well	**Could be Better**
Key narratives	Key narratives
Individual Health practitioners spoke about their dedication and commitment to supporting others	**Demands on the NHS can make it difficult to manage waiting lists for people who need care**
They have tried really hard to keep going, remain resilient and support other departments during the difficult working conditions of the pandemic	**Practitioners need to look after their own wellbeing so that they can remain resilient in their support and care for others**
Over the summer, there continued to be transition planning (online) for children and young people moving on to secondary schools	**Online and digital resources are not accessible or flexible for all families** **There can be lengthy waiting times for autism assessments**
The Occupational Therapy team worked in partnership with services so that building adaptations could, whenever possible, be put in place ready for children to start school in September	**There is an awareness that the offer and next steps for families could be more clearly communicated** **There is a hope in the future to gather the voice of children and young people and to learn from their experiences to inform ways to support**
There is a commitment to providing early intervention for children and young people with emotional and mental health needs	
Young people continue to be able to talk confidentially about their health through 'attend anywhere clinics'	
The Speech and Language Therapy Service has used online training and remote working to reach out to a much higher number of families, with	

very good parental engagement and child or young person progression	
Mental Health Trailblazers reached out and extended their offer of support during lockdown and provided very timely support for a large cohort of children and young people in need of mental health support	
The dental service has worked hard to enable children and young to continue to have urgent dental treatment	
Health Visitors, Nursery Nurses and School Nurses have continued to provide a service using a combination of virtual and face to face contacts	
Health practitioners have quickly adapted to communicating online and value online platforms as a way of connecting with others	
Virtual working has enabled good engagement with parent carers, including those who may not have felt comfortable in more formal meetings. It has also enabled more communication with dads	
Network and data sharing systems have been created to enable more transparent communication between services, practitioners and parent carers	
The pandemic has encouraged Health practitioners to work more in partnership with others and virtual platforms have enhanced this	

The pandemic has encouraged more partnership working to improve support for more vulnerable people in the community **Sustainability Transformation Partnerships aim to be person centred** **Within Health there have been collaborative group sessions to encourage good peer support across services** **There is partnership working to inform the review and design of services**	
WELCOME AND CARE **Individual Health practitioners spoke about their dedication and commitment to supporting others:** "I'm passionately involved and passionately care about youngsters and adults with learning difficulties and I really will do everything I can"; "I think, as most of us probably felt as the pandemic first hit, we all wanted to do something and make a difference… when push comes to shove you just want to get on with it and do something useful"; "We're all working for the same outcome here which is obviously the best Health outcomes for those children and young people that we work with." **They have tried really hard to keep going, remain resilient and support other departments during the difficult working conditions of the pandemic:**	**WELCOME AND CARE** **Demands on the NHS can make it difficult to manage waiting lists for people who need care:** "Waiting lists all over the show, they don't suggest that people are well cared for do they? If you are on a list, you don't feel well cared for. Quite often, if you divert resources to caring for people on the waiting list it takes away from dealing with people at the top of the waiting list. How we care for people waiting is one of the big things that we need to resolve. How we put in support for that, for that part of the system, that would be my wish." **Practitioners need to look after their own wellbeing so that they can remain resilient in their support and care for others:** "I hope we are all reflecting on how this way of working is impacting on us. I don't know about you guys, sometimes I feel like…I'm stuck in front of this screen

"Obviously, it's a different world we're operating in, but I think the fact that we just had to adjust… we didn't give up and we just kept going, it's been tough…"

"Some of my team, especially the mental health nurses, they actually went on to Redwoods (adult acute ward) and did a number of shifts in the first few months of lockdown to support the wards as well… I could only send qualified staff who'd worked on patient wards before, especially in acute adult wards. We had to be very mindful of who was able to do that";

"I think we're always conscious that people could get pulled and redeployed if the situation worsens but luckily, we've still been able to deliver the support."

Over the summer, there continued to be transition planning (online) for children and young people moving on to secondary schools:

"I'm just gonna throw in there that we did the fluency transition group for the youngsters who are leaving primary school and going to secondary school. We prioritise that normally over the summer holidays and they did that remotely. So, a group of young people joined, and a group of parents joined separately. So, they still got their thinking and planning time ahead of going to secondary school which was super."

The Occupational Therapy team worked in partnership with services so that building adaptations could, whenever possible, be put in place ready for children to start school in September:

for most of the day… just making sure that we're looking after ourselves and our colleagues really."

"I've got some feedback from the Children's Occupational Therapy team about the partnership working to try to support young people who are going to be joining a school or transitioning to another school who needed adaptations to the physical environment. For them to be able to do that, you can imagine that whilst that was happening, it would normally be kicked off just about the time that we all went into lockdown. And a lot of people have been redeployed …they did a really good job and the Trust worked really hard to get them back to us. Those therapists with those particular skills, they could go back and work with Local Authority, the architects, the engineers, the schools and the Local Authority access teams to make sure that those adaptations could, whenever possible, be put in place ready for them to start school in September. So that was a huge piece of partnership work. It's not always smooth is it, that kind of stuff. You can imagine builders' merchants and builders et cetera trying to work with everybody. They were really pleased to get that done. It was a good piece of partnership work. It was nice that they were able to go back when the year group went back rather than waiting."

There is a commitment to providing early intervention for children and young people with emotional and mental health needs:
"We're seeing a lot of young people in schools, in fact schools are saying where they've had young people at primary level who have been quite resilient, since they've come back

after COVID, some of these young people are really struggling and everything's a bump in the road. I think it's important that we don't lose sight of still supporting at that level because unfortunately they are the young people who may come through later then with more entrenched difficulties which are harder to shift and cost more."

VALUE AND INCLUDE

VALUE AND INCLUDE

Young people continue to be able to talk confidentially about their health through 'attend anywhere clinics':
"A lot of the young people that we're working with now we've been able to do 'attend anywhere clinics' with them. Although we're not able to go into schools to see young people we can actually do 'attend anywhere clinics' with them which is really good because we can catch up with them. It's still providing them with a confidential place to speak to someone about their health."

The Speech and Language Therapy Service has used online training and remote working to reach out to a much higher number of families, with very good parental engagement and child or young person progression:
"We have trained hundreds and hundreds of people in early stages of Makaton so that's been really good for parents who wouldn't normally have been able to access it, and settings. It's been really exciting";
"Quite a few parents really welcomed the remote working and they learned a lot about how to do some of the therapy and where their children were

Online and digital resources are not accessible or flexible for all families:
"I think, on the converse, quite a few parents have struggled with the digital access offer and for some people the remote working is really, really challenging. Sometimes our platforms are not as flexible as we'd like them to be or as accessible as we'd like them to be for families";
"At a system wide level, we've been talking about digital poverty a lot. We've just been trying to explore what the offer can be for parents who don't have all this kit. A lot of it works okay on a laptop but not so much on a phone or a tablet. That's something we've been talking about as a system and people are really engaging with those conversations."

There can be lengthy waiting times for autism assessments:
"We're still getting a lot of families and schools who are looking for that support around children who they believe may be on the autistic spectrum. As much as we know we're not a team to assess for that, we're doing the best we can to try to support parents to understand what the processes are. It just feels like there's

up to….they were feeding back to us that it was really great they could actually see what the therapist was doing and what a difference it made. We've had really, really good feedback. Because we had a bit of a hiatus the therapist continued working with some of those children over the summer whereas there would normally be a big gap over the summer. They kept some of that therapy ticking over and so the children have done really well and two of the children are about to be discharged at Christmas from the service, which is really remarkable. That speaks volumes for what the parents have been able to achieve as well during the lockdown, which is really exciting. I think for the future it gives us a sense of what we can achieve."

Mental Health Trailblazers reached out and extended their offer of support during lockdown and provided very timely support for a large cohort of children and young people in need of mental health support:
"We've got the Mental Health Trailblazers and they had to work very differently during COVID …end of March we went into lockdown and all the students disappeared from the schools and suppose we knew there'd still be a lot of young people struggling….we did have some schools that weren't part of our Trailblazer but we got in touch and we offered them support around how to support those young people that they were concerned about…as you can imagine we got really busy then. In fact, I was just looking at our statistics. We have done about 175 consultations in the

quite a long wait for some of these young people";
"We've got very complicated systems, so you've got to go to a paediatrician, you have to come on to the Child Development Centre and it's a really, really long wait with very, very high demand and over recent years increasing. And we've certainly got a piece of work around understanding where that demand is coming from. Is it reflective of the numbers of children living in Telford, or is it reflective of a change in the incidence and prevalence of autism, is it possibly higher than the national statistics suggests that it might be?";
"Yes, we have improved our waiting lists across our services but for children and families waiting for an Early Years multidisciplinary assessment - there are long waits."

period between the end of May coming up to the end of October. We've helped schools think about 175 children and we've converted those into 75 interventions where we've actually delivered support to our young people…we could have been overwhelmed but we found ways of managing that."

The dental service has worked hard to enable children and young to continue to have urgent dental treatment:
"We've had a really, really difficult times trying to get theatre lists at the local hospitals for dental appointments for children needing treatment under GA (general anesthetic). The hospital has worked really, really hard with us and NHS England to try to get all of that back up and running again. We've done really, really well with that. We're hoping to have cleared our backlog of children waiting for extractions under GA by the end of about November or maybe early December. We've got fingers crossed that our access continues in the current lockdown."

Health Visitors, Nursery Nurses and School Nurses have continued to provide a service using a combination of virtual and face to face contacts:
"From a 0 to 19 perspective for our Health Visitors and Nursery Nurses, they continued to provide a service to children and families that they work with using face to face contacts …still going out on home visits to support children and families as well providing support via virtual clinics";

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"And from a School Nursing perspective as well for emotional health and wellbeing, we pick up in the other areas the low level emotional health and wellbeing with young people and we've been in a unique position where we've been allowed to go into schools to continue to deliver as well, that's been really positive;"

"Well we do actually have a Health Visitor and School Nurse who's our SEND practitioner. She's continued to pick up referrals and go into schools and we've offered a 'drop in' at one of our alternative provisions as well."

COMMUNICATE	**COMMUNICATE**
Health practitioners have quickly adapted to communicating online and value online platforms as a way of connecting with others: "As much as I thought …I don't want to use Microsoft Teams, I actually quite enjoy it now …I think that really helps at the moment that we can actually do this face to face, those meetings with virtual platforms. I welcome that as a positive"; "… the fact that we've connected as a team despite that we are living in a virtual world, we've done really well. Using this platform has really helped"; "I think that finance services are going to be happy because I'm sure that financially it makes much more sense to attend meetings virtually than travelling around the country. So that's been a real positive for our service." **Virtual working has enabled good engagement with parent carers, including those who may not have**	**There is an awareness that the offer and next steps for families could be more clearly communicated:** "I don't think we always clearly communicate to families what the offer is they are going to get. I still don't think we're always good at communicating the next steps, especially when they go from one organisation to another or one service to another. We kind of say, 'You're referred into that now' and they move on. We're not very good at that being seamless. It all links to communication between ourselves as professionals within organisations and outside of organisations and then how we communicate that clearly to young people and their parents/carers. I think that's something we can all improve on even if it's really good We've definitely got improvements we can still make."

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felt comfortable in more formal meetings. It has also enabled more communication with dads: "One of the things that's gone well for me using the virtual stuff is that we have been able to engage with parents quite quickly. We have been able to use the newsletters, engagement in meetings and get feedback from parents. You kind of think it would all have just stopped or become very difficult; we've probably got more than normal"; "When we are engaging with the public using Teams, we're finding we're getting a different audience. So, people who wouldn't normally come along to a meeting that we're holding will come along to a Teams meeting because it's much easier to sit and watch than it would be if you were sitting in a meeting room with other people . You can play as big or small a part as you want when you've got the Teams meeting going online"; "Potentially more involvement with dads. Before lockdown and face to face you'd often see mums because dads would be at work. For the meetings that we had because of video we can be a little bit more adaptive in when we're speaking and have the video calls. It's been really good to time that and to have both parents and both parents' views has been absolutely fantastic, it's been really positive." **Network and data sharing systems have been created to enable more transparent communication between services, practitioners and parent carers:**	

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"I wanted to mention something that everyone's been involved in, the networks that we've set up and the network sharing. Through those networks we have been able to very quickly make newsletters for parents and carers and professionals. To put on national links and local links to mental health support, bereavement support, emotional health and wellbeing support, any support we thought would be helpful";

"The other thing we did really well with during lockdown that I'm hoping we can keep was data sharing. So those children that were really high need and a high majority of those were SEND children, we had a central shared database, so we knew who was phoning, whether it was Social Care or ourselves, or whether it was PODS. Some parents were getting three or four calls a day and quite liked it, you know checking in, and we could keep an eye on those families and be aware of who else was involved. And we had mental health on there as well so that was a real success for us that we are hoping to keep."

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP	**WORK IN PARTNERSHIP**
The pandemic has encouraged Health practitioners to work more in partnership with others and virtual platforms have enhanced this: "We've still been able to forge some really good links with other agencies and partners and I think, like a lot of us now, we're thinking what bits can we actually keep, moving forward when normal happens for us. Having these kinds of platforms has definitely	**There is a hope in the future to gather the voice of children and young people and to learn from their experiences to inform ways to support:** "Involving parents and young people in our services and how we operate. We hope as a team now, certainly moving forward, when we can have more access to meeting with parents and young people that they can be a bit more involved with how our services operate, a bit more co-production. We are a team effectively

helped us as a team, it's continuing to go well."

The pandemic has encouraged more partnership working to improve support for more vulnerable people in the community:
"Partnership working and the enthusiasm for partnership working has arisen through this crisis. Partner agencies have been really enthusiastic and really willing to come together and work together to see how we are able to improve our offer for people who are more vulnerable in the community. That's been working with sexual health, drugs and alcohol teams and homelessness as well";
"It's actually been really positive on the whole in terms of what we've managed to do together and there's a lot of information now for people who are more vulnerable on the internet and they are able to access services through different agencies and there are specific slots available for them";
"It's been really positive the partnership working, and I hope it continues in the future 'cos with the partnership working and the communication, that will improve it for them."

Sustainability Transformation Partnerships aim to be person centred:
"I know COVID is changing the world, but it's the fact that we are much better at putting the patient in the middle, which is what we always should have done, and we should always still do, rather than moving blame around. We're getting much better at doing that, that partnership working. The

set up to support young people's emotional health and wellbeing and we don't feel at the moment we've really heard their voices in terms of how that could look like for them. We've kind of linked with schools, which obviously is important, we've set up processes and we've got really good partnership working now with other services. I think, certainly, we're still missing the voices of the young people. Because, you know, they're going through a really unique experience that we've never had in our lives and I just think, you know, we can probably learn a lot from them about what things have helped them during this time and what things will help moving forward, but certainly that's what we want to improve on";
"If we can do it now, we talked to some of our secondaries in particular about groups of young people who might be interested in talking to us about the sort of team we are. What would help them and what would it look like for it to fit? What's going to benefit them? At the end of the day, that's what we're here for. We're not here for any other reason so for me that's a definite";
"We did a survey a few years ago in schools on mental health. I think we reached out to about to 4,600 children in total. We're looking at the feasibility at this time of how we can re- engage with young people to see how they are feeling at this present time, what are the real issues, and feed this back to authorities which we did five or six years ago, and I'm pleased to say it had a massive impact on what is happening in the schools now. We do need some time to do that, we've got the team looking at the feasibility of how we can involve youngsters at maybe looking at this

ethos of an STP (Sustainability Transformation Partnership), we're finally starting to get there. We've still got a way to go but I've definitely found that that has been an improvement. We put the family and the child in the middle of discussions much more often than we used to."

Within Health there have been collaborative group sessions to enable good peer support across services:
"I lot of people here have done some amazing group sessions engaging people through group work. where perhaps sometimes we would have done it one-to-one. That does increase the peer support and everything else as well and I think that's really positive that they've opened that up to people and perhaps sometimes in the past we haven't, and it'll make us think a bit differently";
"We've done a lot of work meeting the Head teachers from the different special schools and PODS as well, which offers child and family support. We've been working very closely with the peer teams and as time is going on what we're finding is a lot more children and families are at crisis, which I think is something that we expected, and we knew that we had to try and join together to try and support these families consistently, because you know one of the concerns was that we're all going our separate ways all delivering information which wasn't necessarily that helpful, but to come together and offer solid information and not conflicting has been really, really, helpful and really useful."

survey again. Working with the teachers and doing another massive trawl, hopefully we can help that and maybe share some ideas with people who are here today."

There is partnership working to inform the review and design of services: "The Children's SLT's [Speech and Language Therapists] have held two events, one for parents and one for schools, to help with the review and redesign of the service. The next sessions will be with children and young people. We are hoping parents will help us with the knotty issue of developing outcomes for Education Health Care plans and in other care planning processes."	