

## PaCC Position Statement: Proposals for the reorganisation of secondary school catchment areas from September 2018

April 2016

This is the response of the Parent Carers Council (PaCC) to the consultation by Brighton and Hove City Council on the proposed changes to secondary school catchment areas in Brighton and Hove.

PaCC understands the necessity to review the catchment areas due to increased pupil numbers and the opening of the new University of Brighton School. We feel strongly that the most disadvantaged in society must have a strong voice in this process, and we welcome the broad engagement events that have taken place across the city.

PaCC has considered the proposals from the perspective of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families. It is noteworthy that nowhere in the consultation document are the needs of this group considered, despite the fact that outcomes and life chances for these children are very poor compared to their peers.

From this perspective, PaCC believes the highest priority should be to **“Raise the attainment of children in the most disadvantaged circumstances.”** This includes children with SEND. PaCC also favours reducing journey times to school for more vulnerable children, while acknowledging that these two priorities are not always compatible.

### **Children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)**

Children with an EHCP currently have priority. However, parent carers report variable attitudes from secondary schools towards admissions of children with SEND, with some effectively turning parent carers away. Good practice and a welcoming attitude by other schools show that it is possible to cater very effectively for a wide range of SEND.

**PaCC strongly believes that all mainstream secondary schools should welcome and cater for children with SEND, so that children with an EHCP (or on SEN support) can choose and be welcomed by their local school.**

### **SEN School Support**

While there is currently a priority for children with an EHCP, outcomes for children on SEN Support are also very poor compared to their peers and they do not have priority. Children on SEN support often struggle enormously with the educational environment, both academically and socially, but do not have the protection and support provided to those with an EHCP. These children have very individual needs.

Some need to go to a school nearby, others are very dependent on their friendship group, while others need specific facilities or expertise at a more distant school. It is for this reason that all children with SEND need to have priority so that they have genuine choice based on their individual needs. This supports the priority of "Raising the attainment of children in the most disadvantaged circumstances".

**PaCC therefore requests that children on SEN Support are given priority.**

### **Sibling Carers**

Sibling carers not only care for their disabled siblings, but frequently live with high levels of stress and social isolation. Many siblings do not have the home support available to other children and young people, and therefore require a more supportive school environment, as well as being more dependent on their peers and/or are vulnerable to bullying.

**PaCC therefore requests that sibling carers are given priority**

### **Free School Meals (FSM) Priority**

PaCC supports this as a priority. However, one concern is whether this would deplete struggling schools of their more motivated students, therefore further disadvantaging those who don't take advantage of the FSM priority. How does the Local Authority plan to support eligible families to access this priority. For example, will access be facilitated by, for example, increasing the number of dedicated school buses, and will transport costs be subsidised?

### **A, B or C Model**

PaCC does not collectively support one of the models. Individual parent carers have expressed concern about each of the models, depending on their child and circumstances, and so PaCC is not in a position to give support to a specific model. However, we would like to stress that the needs of children with SEND, as described above, should be considered in the new design of catchment areas for 2018. The change in admissions criteria is giving the city an opportunity to improve equality across the city. It is therefore critical that the needs of all children with SEND and their families are considered within the proposals, alongside other disadvantaged groups.

PaCC welcomes communication on any of the issues contained in this document. You can contact us by emailing Diana Boyd

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The Parent Carers' Council (PaCC) is a parent-led forum which represents parent carers with children and young people with any kind of physical disability, learning disability, complex or long-term medical/health condition, or special educational need. The group was formed to enable parent carers to work closely together to help improve services and support. It aims to help parents get more directly involved in the strategic delivery of services for disabled children in Brighton & Hove and now has about 285 signed up members. This position statement was developed through discussions with our Steering Group members and our eight partner groups: mASCot, Kaleidoscope, Barnado's Link Plus, Extratime, Pebbles, Sweet Peas, T21 and Face to Face.

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