PaCConnect on SEND Review and Proposed Changes 17th November 2015

Attending:
Representing Parents: Fiona England PaCC Chair, Diana Boyd PaCC Vice Chair, Jo Levi PaCC Admin and Communications. Steering Group members: Lisa Russell, Jade Duffill, Pippa Hodge, Martin Jones, Helen Arnold-Jenkins, Amanda Mortensen
Council Members: Regan Delf; Assistant Director of Children's Services at Brighton & Hove City Council, Jenny Brickell; Head of Integrated Services (Social Care Lead) Children & Young People's Trust, Jo Lyons; Assistant Director Children's Services (Education and Inclusion)
Around 20 Parent Carer's

1st Part: Introduction and Overview from Council Members

Regan Delf:

- Points out that they are not ducking away from fact that the council are looking for a saving on the spend on services but also genuinely feeling that this is a reorganisation. Stresses the importance of feedback. Certain themes have come through talking to parents and the main theme was one of fragmentation and we felt we needed make improvements and join up. There are still areas that need work we're being told. If we are not organising things in an efficient way that needs to change. Autism in particular – previously rare and low incidence now I can tell you that is the most prevalent category so things have to be reorganised and changed. Points out things are still open to discussion and the **consultation period ends on 31st January**.

Intergrated Services:

Regan explained that integrating services was one recommendation – principle of this has been broadly welcomed – some of you may disagree. 8 services all separately managed in different locations in different ways. Behavioural difficulties resources were tiny. We felt we needed to address this. Lots of parents and schools have been telling us social emotional and health issues are on the increase.

- Flexibility – parents say it's easier to get help with a diagnosis – if no diagnosis children can get lost between services. We wanted something that worked with children because they need help not just because they've got a diagnosis. Wanted something that retained expertise but a flexible element and something that goes from pre-school to 18. Parent said the SEN services are too school focused. We wanted to say that all the services that run are equal to families as well as schools, which is behind the proposal that people want to work outside term time. Don't want to employ teachers – but people with expertise – delegate money to schools about how to meet these needs. It's not ring fenced – we check by outcomes – we don't have to power to change this. 12.5 million pounds shared across schools.

Parent Question: are figures available to show how things are spent across the LA?
Answer: section 251 has tables on spending for LA in the country. We're a high funder in terms of SEN support services.

- Jo Lyons – points out the figure doesn't include further projects such as 'Every Child a Reader'.
- Regan Delf – we wanted the price to be 10% lower saving £350 thousand – that money would be to meet Special needs not to pay off debts.
- Other areas we now have to provide funding for 19-25 which is new to us. No increase in funding for that and it's proving increasingly expensive. More top up funding from schools being asked for – we don't have that number. Spent whole budget for school top up in first term. Other challenges are personal budgets – don't have the money because it's been spent on services we've already got. Short of money to meet these needs.
- Jenny Brickell – Jenny then explained how things may change with regards to social care;
  Key themes:
  - Short breaks – there is a commitment to no reductions in this area. Priorities are how we increase transparency and create a fairer system. A resource allocation tool will role out and sit alongside social assessment.
  - Personal budget agenda.
  - Creating better links with adult services.

Children's Services Proposal

Regan Delf:

- Integrated team of specialist advisors with specialist posts within it for Autism and Hearing – the rest will have more general provision
- No fewer places in specialist schools – in fact we're looking at a few more – no intention to reduce class sizes.
- Vision – more of a one stop shop. A lot of kids in the city who have more complex needs they will need health services support too almost every time, speech, OT, Paediatric, CAMHS. Families often under intense strain and families will often need a range of respite – a lot of very complex needs – Jenny is the lead in that area.
- Talking about the young people themselves and their families a lot of feedback that things can feel disjointed and there's more than one plan – we think we're giving you more support than you're actually getting. We can offer a better service – 3 providers – other places to better integration than us – health teams and an actual team around the family and as a part of that there will also be home support. That's the vision.
- Within that we want a kind of menu of extra activities after school and at weekends because we recognise that it isn't a term time only issue if your child has complex needs. Expensive but we're being encouraged to do this. Integrated working never really happens and we're pitching that this is actually happening. The only way we can make this work is by integration of the smaller units – cost of infrastructure, if a child moves from a school the school becomes financially unstable to they need to pay transitional (something) to cover the space. Haven't even started consultation – we might not start until January – while this is going the capacity of the council is being reduced.

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2nd Part: Group Session to generate questions

For the second part of the forum parents and carers were split into 4 tables to discuss and formulate the most important questions. The room was then opened up to a Question and Answer session as follows:

Table 1

Q: If capacity is staying the same and if numbers of children who are getting diagnosis is increasing and the money isn't ring fenced we see this as a problem – how are you going to create more support with the same amount of money or less and how do we make the schools accountable? How are we going to make sure that the schools are spending money on this?
A: Jo Lyons – we do monitor them really closely on outcomes we have a lot of teams working in the schools and we have a lot of intelligence within schools. So if SEN was coming up as an issue it would be flagged up and addressed. Also have SEN advisors. Part of their role is to advice schools on how they are spending money. Schools need to report to their governing body as well.

Q: Is that information available easily for parents?
A: Regan – this question comes up a lot I wonder if maybe there should be some info from parents and could this be followed up with Amaze and Sencos and officers. Schools will say there are many ways to achieve these things. We have a contract with Amaze to provide support and guidance. If you have an EHCP plan what is says a child is meant to receive something they will receive it. If there is no EHCP plan then I can see why parents are concerned.

Q: Fiona England – as PACC steering group we can discuss with the council, how we can monitor this?
A: Jo Lyons - Literacy support – most schools do buy into that service and part of the consultation will they buy in traded service. We invest heavily in every child a reader and schools get pupil premium funding as well. Regan Delf: Some schools don't buy in and they usually have a very good reason for that, for example one of their members of staff may be trained to deal with a certain issue without having to bring an outside service in.

Parent comments – we want the information to be more readily available.

ACTION – Improving information to the community perhaps how schools meet as certain need can be included in the Local Offer.

Following questions were asked to Jenny Brickell when she came to visit table 1:
Q: Is there any truth in the rumour that the Outreach service (Drove Road) is being cut?

A: No there is a manager overseeing the 2 budgets for outreach and direct payments together. There are families who have outreach which needs to remain. We are looking at how we can strengthen direct payments over outreach.

Q: Is the plan for Tudor House and Drove Road to come under integrated provision – how do they fit in?
A: This is the general plan and the principle is there but the mechanics have yet to be decided.

Table 2

Q: We have a child with hearing loss that doesn't have an EHCP plan – my child is very well supported in his school with specialist help. Are you able to guarantee that my child will continue to be supported?
A: Regan – your child will definitely be supported. They may be reorganised but we are not taking anything away from support assistance.

Q: We have had reassurance that specialist services for hearing won't be cost cut – can we have a commitment that this support will still be available?
A: Regan – there will be less management I can't commit that this will be exactly the same – but if your child is getting support then they will still get support. We've got to make this work for everybody which means working behind the scenes. But if you have a child with complex needs this service will not be cut.

Q: The Phrase "or equivalent" rang alarm bells – there is no equivalent support for death children.
A: Regan - I can't give the assurance that there will be the same amount of teachers but your child will not receive cuts to frontline services.
Jo Lyons – we are working towards more efficient admin and ways of doing things. We can't give you one number – we have to look at individual cases and see how we can work out more efficient ways of doing things.
Regan – a stakeholder group, parent reps, school reps, young people and members of the council will look at these questions and make all these decisions together.
Fiona England – within the SG they all sit on a partner group and I'm mindful that we need to ensure that we have a mechanism to be able to talk to all these groups that are not part of the SG.
Regan we're very happy to meet up with other groups.
Fiona lets create mechanism of communication.

Q: Martin Jones – initial consultation – some of the wording within is causing a lot of problems. Is there any way that the language can be readdressed? For example using phrases such as 'generic provision'. This is generating a lot of fear.
A: Regan – totally accept this point – we did issue a statement – because the original documents weren't written for parents – we accept that language was not quite right.
Jo Lyons – a paper for staff was what was released.
Regan – when you're changing someone's post from one to another it will say 'deleted' –it was just the terminology being used for HR purposes. The statement is on the website and it will be circulated.

Table 3

Pippa Hodge comments considering how much time diagnosis takes – we welcome the idea that there is a front door parents can go to and start support for our families straight away.

Q: If schools are buying in traded services how can we ensure that the services being brought in are properly monitored?
A: Regan – I agree it's a quality control issue.

Q: Who decides whether SEMH? Are these schools all being put under one spot? Is that inclusion? If it's not inclusion – how will safety be addressed?
A: Jo Lyons – our intention is not for all children to be there and be in one place very much in the model we want to work into mainstream schools. Want to work in models where they might be in different parts of the city. We will use SEMH outreach.
A: Regan – virtual SEMH places. Schools will get full funding and really good offer of support services and also to support alternative programme. Maybe they need a personalised programme but the school can do this. Junior Pupil referral unit – at risk of exclusion. They're supposed to go to PRU for a short period and then return to school but this isn't working very well. Go through secondary in SEMH system doesn't always work well. Older children – also looking at establishing spaces around the city e.g. spaces in university where children can go there to work.

Q: Diana – Learning difficulties and SEMH – there is a risk that PRU parents don't want children to go to PRU – how do we manage that?
A: Jo – the ethos is one of provision.
Regan – we want to keep children with these problems in mainstream as much as possible. Where do they go? Co-produced with parents – the decision is made together about what's best for their child. There are low complaints and tribunals. It is in the area of SEMH that is a problem because parents feel like there's no option for this.

Table 4

Q: How will you retain specialist staff and how many are there? Are the SEN case workers integrated into the new set up? Can you cut caseworkers? If they're the decision makers then surely it should be the integrated teams that make up the support. If you're going to make cuts isn't there anywhere else you can make cuts?
A: Regan – statutory role –whether the SEN support services could pick this up is questionable. Decisions about whether someone gets EHCP are brought to a panel it's not just council workers.

Q: How are you going to retain the specialist provision that is already there? Who's going to be working full time / term time? We don't see why they can't be available in term time
A: Jo Lyons – holiday offers – summers schools – transition groups. There's a range of work that needs doing. How we retain people is a really good question. People coming to end of career people have decided they want to move on. We hope that the people who want to say will stay.

Regan – this is the first point – there are definite rules about what a teacher does, that on the whole isn't what the support services do. We feel that we can see a role for people working year round – we feel that is right for people working for the LA. Looking at what it would cost us to have people working all year round, for example preschool; what's the rationale for term time? If it's a service supporting families outside term time we feel we're offering that.

Jo under employment law we have people on pay and conditions that are not right for their role. Historically we are correcting their roles- schools say these people advise rather than teach.

Q: Will the level of skill still be there?
A: Yes are advisers are all very experienced teachers. These are expert people and they are called advisors and work all year. We advise schools how to manage children.

Q: You're relying on the schools to ask for help. Schools don't always know about this. For example if a school has a specialist ASC teacher advising that a child with autism never gets a detention for foot tapping; the outside services come in and help them to understand why the child is foot tapping in the first place. (Parent comments that removing teachers from their original positions is unethical).
A: Regan – retention – we think we're right - I don't see it as an ethical issue. However I do think there is a retention issue.

Q: Diana Boyd: are you putting in measures to address that issue?
A: Jo – we've got that issue and we're trying our very best to retain as many good people as we can.
Regan – sensory needs – SEN teachers learn on the job. There is a lot of expertise in ASC that has to be accessed. We are mindful of it where you need a specialist qualification. We are doing our best to talk to staff. We want the specialist people not to be moved to TA roles but to be moved to management positions.

PRESENS

Comment: Pippa – the concern is that PRESENS is seen as a specialty and the concern is that there will be less experienced staff and at that very early level it very important to have experienced staff.

Comment: Regan - PRESENS are the generic service – they deal with everything – so they don't have a specialism

Comment: Sam Bailey – They do have a specialism - their specialism is ages 0-5

Comment: Regan – It is not a SEN specialism. The other teams will deal with pre-school children. ASC service will deal with Pre-school children. There will be a different way of organising things. We have organised the services slightly differently. The people with expertise will work in their particular services. You may feel that's not the right way to do it we're here to listen but that's the way we feel is best way to do it.

Q: Are you having one person one week seeing early years, then that same person seeing someone much older?

A: Regan – no we won't be doing it that way- you'll be saying your expertise is in this area but this is your area. It's flexible but people will be deployed in terms of their strengths. If you pitch in for integration it has to be carefully managed.

Comment: Sam Bailey – you've got people who have great expertise and there is a concern that if they're juggled around that they won't be retained.

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Annex 1: Parent and carers key concerns, questions, comments and suggestions with regard to SEND changes

Unanswered Questions and further comments unaddressed at the meeting:

Integration of Special Schools

- What are the actual benefits of the integrated services?
- Will the Hubs go up to the 18-25 age group? Will this age group be affected by the need to make a transition to a different hub?
- Will the integration effect parent's freedom of choice and ability to choose where their child goes to school?
- Within the merging and creation of Hubs – How will you ensure that there will be separation and safety when children aren't compatible by age or diagnosis?
- Will the creation of the 2 main hubs decrease the sharing of knowledge and experience between special and mainstream schools? What can be done to promote this exchange?

Changes to Specialist Services

- While we are told direct frontline staff numbers are roughly the same as before re-structure, how will the quality of the staff/teachers be maintained if salaries are lower yet terms and conditions have increased? Why would staff want to stay in the circumstance of being asked to re-apply for their jobs at lower status and extension of jobs? 'If we pay peanuts we get monkeys.'
- Has the integrated plan been agreed with health providers?
- How will school Governors be consulted about the proposals?
- What is the situation with Language specialist support?
- Are the EHCP case workers integrated into LSS and if not why not?
- What happens to children in mainstream schools without EHCPs? Who will support them?
- What about learning and Communication needs being the root cause of BEMH difficulties?
- It's difficult to respond to the proposals without a clear picture of the proposed plan: how many posts? What will each involve? Which posts are 52 weeks or term time only? What are the qualifications and skills are for those posts?

- How are you going to retain specialist staff you currently have? How many teachers are there now; what specialisms and how will this change?
- Have you gone through a data analysis of EHCPs to ensure funding meets statutory requirements?
- What specialisms do you legally have in the meantime?
- How will it work capacity wide if now have to support secondary schools as well as primary with same staff?
- Are you reducing the ASCSS specialist teachers?
- How is the funding for ASCSS service ring fenced?
- Is there a mechanism to calculate how many pupils in schools identify as needing specialist outreach? How many of these children go on to receive specialist outreach? Is there an existing shortfall of unmet need?

Presens

Roles:

- Will there still be specialist area SENCOs for preschools and how will the role be retained - quality control issue?
- Will there still be support workers going into nurseries?
- How will support for parents be retained re stages of development i.e. specialists teaching parents crucial skills etc?

- Has the LA talked to nurseries yet about the planned changes?

Sensory Needs/ Hearing Impairment/Visual Impairment

- Will funds for specialist places be accounted for?
- Because of the importance of early intervention we would like specific details of how the new provision for pre-school will compare with what is currently provided
- Clarity needed on NUMBERS of specialists and reassurance the Educational Audiologist will be retained post (one only); who will carry out support at home if reduction in staff? (Communication and learning needs - have these providers said they'll do it: schools, SALT, audiology eg.
- Job descriptions; when are they available? What will they look like, how will they protect specialism and specialist knowledge now and in future?
- Has SALT been included in the consultation?
- TEACHERS of the DEAF already work in the holidays:

- attend new diagnoses, babies etc (statutory guidance says this must be done in 7 days!)
- ear molds/impressions taken
- emergency phone line manned
- family groups run in hols by teachers

This is an all year round service already. Will this change?

Further comments regarding LSS:

- Support currently feels limited and inadequate. The limited number of hours that the LSS has available for a child often have to be spent briefing the Teaching Assistant working with the child, as there is insufficient time to spend with the child face to face. A parent commented that LSS should involve the Teacher and direct intervention with the child, on a regular basis, not just a couple of hours a term. Concern that with restructure, and a shift from 'teachers' to 'advisers' this will worsen, not improve.
- Parents, who can afford to, will buy in additional support for their CYP, to top up inadequate school-based interventions, which creates a tiered and discriminatory system.
- Parents don't necessarily want LSS staff available to them during holidays. They want respite solutions and inclusive activities that their CYP can take part in.

Further comments regarding Social Care:

- Still a feeling that parents who need respite/short break help don't know what's available or how to go about asking for it
  Many parents are 'copers' - don't want to admit they aren't coping, or don't want social services involved, may be coping 'now' but living on the brink of crisis. Proposals to shift to a fairer assessment of eligibility is welcomed, but some cynicism that it will improve current status as parents are being turned down for direct payments and told there's no money.
- Personal Budgets:
  - are a huge responsibility and time-consuming to manage
  - are beyond the scope of some parents
  - not everyone wants them
  - won't work if there's no services/people to actually buy in
  - devolves the central buying power - hundreds of parents separately negotiating contracts
  - will create a tier system of care - if you're a good negotiator, can top-up funds yourself etc.
  - exposing - having to advertise and interview and make critical decisions, pay for D&B checks
  - real concern over safeguarding and quality standards