

# STOCKTON PARENT CARER FORUM

SPCF have been asked to submit evidence regarding partnership working in Early Help for the People Select Committee. Unfortunately, on this occasion, we are unable to attend in person but wanted to share parent carer views, some context and our current position. In our absence we would be happy to be forwarded any questions with regards to this report and we will provide a response.

SPCF are a volunteer led service, we are parents and carers of children and young people with Special educational Needs and/or Disabilities aged 0-25 and the recognised voice for those parent carers in Stockton. We currently have a database of over 2000 and an extremely active social media platform.

The response to this Survey has been small but it is a reflection of opinion that we hear from parent carers and have heard over the last 4 years, and before. In our view it also cements the concerns for SEND families around Early help and their experiences over the years and the lack of trust in a system.

Parent carers have shared experiences and feedback about the system for a considerable number of years with nothing ever changing or being done. Parent carers are exhausted fighting a system that works against them and is not fit to meet their families need- often looking via a safeguarding lens rather than a specific SEND 'meeting need' lens. There isn't clear information about the offer, what to expect or how to navigate it. This would go a long way to support and help families.

Whilst looking at co production we need to firstly ascertain and agree coproduction based on its principles. This needs to be embedded. Before we get to co production we need to establish engagement and participation which is meaningful, and builds in feedback loops, rather than a done to approach based on meeting someone else's agenda and ticking a box. True coproduction is rare but we should not discount partnership working, consultation and working together- we just need to be clear that that is not coproduction. Purposeful communication, listening and hearing what people say underpins every aspect of what is needed alongside building relationships, accountability, trust and transparency. Following through with actions and positive impact on families is where the outcomes will be seen. These key fundamentals cannot be discounted when looking at an Early help offer. We don't currently have this in place.

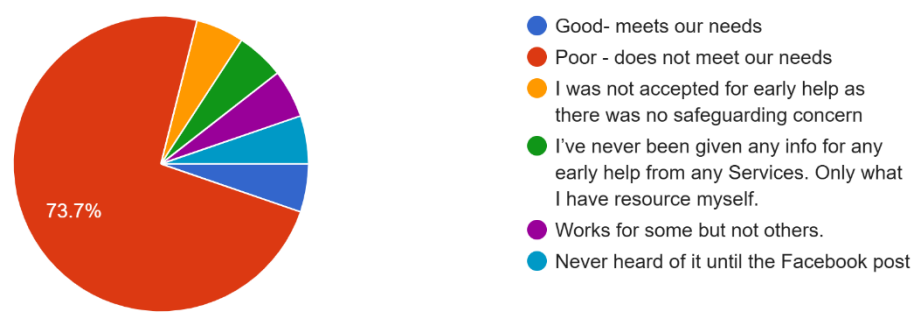
Whilst the experience of early help for many parent carers hasn't been a positive one over the years, SPCF are now involved with the Families First Social care reforms and sit on the board too. Our current experience isn't reflective of the previous years with evident partnership working and a want to do better for families. It's also important to recognise that SEND is a smaller part of the social care system but an important part that needs its own understanding. Whilst still in its infancy, it is clear that families voice is integral to implementation of the reforms but there is considerable work and

commitment needed to allow for this to happen- we recognise that parent carers don't feel this on the ground as yet.

Parent carers were asked their views on specific questions detailed below- This is raw data and demonstrates the need for getting in early, much earlier intervention. For clarity of information to make informed choices to meet the families need and for them to be involved in decision making regarding things that will affect them, being seen through a SEND lens not a Safeguarding lens, if not appropriate Is really important to families too.

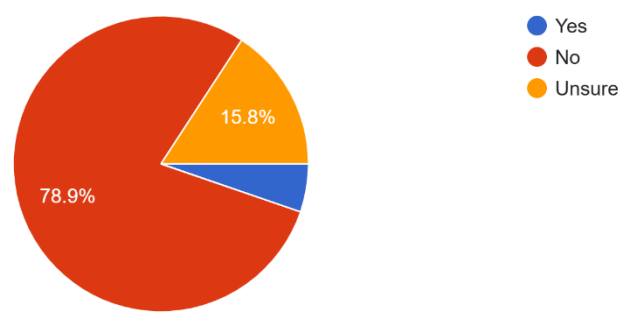
What you think of the early help offer across Stockton?

19 responses



Do you feel like you are involved in the planning of early help and that the services are co-produced?

19 responses



### **In particular relation to SEND, what works well within the Early Help offer?**

Nothing

In my experience nothing works, early help was offered far too late for my son, this should be offered as soon as possible

The support for my son

Understanding family's needs who speak other languages and understand language cultures having school support

Nothing, did not receive adequate support

Not sure

Nothing

Again, I've had to research Early help myself and reach out to Services, i.e. send Health visitors, disability social worker etc

It's not explained what is available

Poor, no help

Early help Caseworkers such have training in SEND to help their understanding in order to support families.

Our experience was poor. Professionals did not understand the complexities of our daughter's disability

Nothing worked for us

Nothing they wouldn't help and said it was nothing to do with them.

Unable to answer

### **In particular relation to SEND, and are there any gaps in the Early Help offer?**

Yes, massive ones, we were only offered these 6 years down the line

No, it's all good

Language, school support, helping families to understand a diagnosis and what that means

It only seems to be a sign posting service. Limited ability to actually make a practical difference other than agreed the relevant referrals to support services had already been made as we were proactive parents. Need more practical support and counselling available for families who have SEND.

Definitely, families that are crying out for help reaching out to early help often get sign posted to Stockton local offer and no support. Then told don't qualify for social worker. Families can feel very alone.

Seems pointless

Yes

Not meeting with me or contact me after school application. I did not no it had been rejected and was waiting for someone to get in touch.

Lots of gap's communication is the biggest gap

Early help for me seems to be only offered from age 5, I get no support for my 3 yrs old

No information

Alot of gaps

Knowing how to help and where to point in the right direction. Also find you get passed from person to person no follow up and no help

Lack of SEND awareness and training makes it hard for Caseworkers to understand families with SEND children.

Support for young adults with additional needs. System too complicated

Yeah, not fit for purpose

Yes. They said 'the issues are all send related so we can't help'

Yes, they don't actually help, they told me it was nothing to do with them.

Unable to answer

## **How well do you think partnerships are working in early help?**

Partnerships from who

Very well

Not very well information is not shared well enough

Comes too late

Not very good, a-lot of the time they are dismissive and don't listen to your concerns

Not well

They don't

Not well, unless it was poor communication from the school my son was in at the time.

Again, nothing has been offered

I don't know what is available so not well

SPCF 23/09/25

I don't know

Not

Works for some but not others which isn't good. Everyone should receive the same level of support as other families with similar needs.

Parents need to be part of the partnership and it be collaborative working not being dictated too. Particularly with children who have suffered significant trauma on top of their Sen

No idea what they are despite having had 2 early help referrals and an assessment

It isn't

Unable to answer

### **Would you like to add anything else regarding SEND and Early Help?**

I think all of this should be offered as soon as a child is put on the SEN register, if we had this help very early on, I don't think my son would have struggled as much as he did

Should be easier to connect and get information to help your child diagnose and information of different agencies that can help in one place

It needs to offer real practical support and not feel like another ticky box exercise to jump through the next hoop to get any real support to make a difference

Got told I was more qualified than them to help my Sen child with his behaviours

I received no help when I needed it

Early help is a key service for families and if utilised correctly could be invaluable for families

More parents support, more parent access to courses more help within a mainstream environment

More visibility particularly due to the length of time you are on the pathway to diagnosis

No

Not enough knowledge about FASD. Stockton is ASD only focused need to understand all neurodiversity effects children

Any support is better than I had, which was just the usual gaslighting 'you are amazing, you are doing really well'