

Question from Family Voice:

Family Voice Norfolk captures the views and experiences of families with children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and shares them where it matters.

Children and young people with SEND are not a homogenous group. They are individuals with differing circumstances.

Some are struggling without their usual support and education. Some are thriving outside a school environment. One outcome of the pandemic could be an increased understanding that children are different. More flexibility could mean an education better suited to each child.

How is the LA increasing its understanding of the needs of CYP with SEND and working to individualise the ways they are supported?

Supplementary question:

What feedback have you had from teachers of CYP with SEND during this time?

Answer by Executive Director:

*Firstly we would like to thank Family Voice Norfolk for raising this question. FVN were mentioned in the recent Ofsted/CQC Area SEND Inspection report with the lead inspector stating ‘...Family Voice is tenacious in the challenge that it offers to area leaders. Many very positive changes are the result of Family Voice championing the rights of families. Area leaders have listened and taken action accordingly, particularly since 2018...’. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that they are now championing children within SEND in the context of COVID.*

*We know that Family Voice, and three of the other main parent/carers groups in Norfolk for SEND, have been working with Children’s Services staff throughout the past 3 months of the pandemic on our approach to mainstream and special school support for children and young people. Specifically, last week, the issue that FVN have raised through this question was discussed; in the context of the numbers of pupils increasing in schools and the way that Learning & Inclusion services are supporting and challenging schools to include pupils and/or provide support for home learning. These Services have:*

- Established dedicated advisers to work with schools at a cluster level*
- Issued expert advice and guidance through the SEND Inclusion teams*
- Continued the Inclusion help line for schools throughout the pandemic*
- Issued new guidance and Risk Assessment template for schools based on DfE COVID guidance*
- Agreed that Individual family queries will be managed through a ‘single point of contact’ via the SENDIAS*

*Throughout the pandemic we know that the Learning & Inclusion services, within Children’s Services, have mobilised all staff to support the efforts of early years settings, schools and colleges to provide educational support within settings and in the home environment. Feedback from staff in these services and feedback from schools has also identified this issue, i.e. that many children are coping well with the situation, some are*

*thriving and some are finding the ongoing situation increasingly difficult. This of course is mirrored within families themselves and each situation is individual.*

*These Services will continue to meet with the parent/carers groups as part of the COVID recovery work and also as part of the ongoing improvements to Services following the SEND inspection. These teams are now working on a new plan, to start from September, to build support around schools, settings, colleges and communities; doing this in a way that considers the unique and individual circumstances, not only of children and families, but also of our education providers.*

*This new way of working, starting in September, will also align directly with the date when the formal response to Ofsted inspection outcome is submitted to Ofsted. The parent/carers groups are co-producing this plan through 3 workshops in July and these will all contribute to the whole range of services planned for September onwards.*