WSPCF Parent Carer Engagement Toolkit for Schools

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1. Introduction

Hello and welcome to the WSPCF Parent Carer Engagement Toolkit for Schools

This toolkit has been written by the West Sussex Parent Carer Forum (WSPCF) - a parent carer-led organisation representing families of children and young people (0–25) with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) across West Sussex. Developed as part of the Autism in Schools project, it reflects learning, insights and best practices gathered through that initiative.

At WSPCF, we have seen the positive impact of parent carers supporting each other and sharing ideas with their child or young person's setting. As a result, we have created this toolkit to help schools to better engage, communicate with, and support parents and carers, offering practical templates and ideas you can adapt for your setting.
It is designed to be flexible, so just use what works for you, and keep the rest for future reference.

There are many ways to engage and support parent carers, and we hope our resources will help you find the approach that's right for your community.

The most important thing is to persevere; it can take time to build strong relationships with parents and carers. Over time, this can enable them to support each other - perhaps even in a more formal sense through setting up a mini forum.

We know it can be difficult to get busy parents involved, but by consistently making space and time for connection, more parents will join and benefit.

Warm regards,

West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

2. About the Forum

West Sussex Parent Carer Forum (WSPCF) is your local Parent Carer Forum. We work alongside education, health, and local authorities to ensure services meet the needs of families.

"Parent Carer Forums are representative local groups of parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities who work alongside local authorities, education, health and other service providers to ensure the services they plan, commission, deliver and monitor meet the needs of children and families."
(SEND Code of Practice 2015, Para 1.13)

Why signpost your parent carers and staff to WSPCF?

Schools play a vital role in connecting families and staff (professionals) with WSPCF. Please encourage them to get in touch and sign up to become a member (its free).

Explore our Pinboard for practical tips and resources: https://www.wspcf.org.uk/parent-carer-pinboard/

See what Events we have coming up: https://www.wspcf.org.uk/our-events/

WSPCF helps parents and carers:

- share experiences
- stay informed
- help shape better SEND services

And it can also help you as a professional to:

- access practical resources
- stay updated on local SEND developments
- collaborate with families and other professionals

Membership is FREE and easy to join:

- Parent Carers: Parent Carers Sign up here
- Professionals: Professionals Sign up here

3. How to Build Strong Foundations

a. Coproduction

Coproduction means working together as equal partners. In SEND, this means parent carers, children and young people, and education settings making decisions together about support, planning, and outcomes. It's not just being consulted, it's being involved from the start. Real partnership working ensures that families and settings share responsibility for shaping what support looks like. The SEND Code of Practice says:
"Local authorities must ensure that parents, children and young people are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision." (Section 1.3)

What Does Coproduction Look Like in Action?

- A teacher meets with a parent carer to co-write a support plan, using the child's own words and drawings.
- A SENCO invites families to a coffee morning to gather feedback on the school's SEND provision.
- A setting uses a communication book or app to share daily updates and celebrate small wins.

Why Does It Matter?
Because when families and settings work together:

- Children and young people feel more secure and understood.
- Support is more consistent across home and school.
- Outcomes improve academically, socially, and emotionally.
- Trust grows, and problems are easier to solve.

b. Websites & Policies

Websites

Your school website is often the first place families look for SEND information. A clear, accessible SEND section builds trust, demonstrates compliance, and shows your commitment to inclusion.

What Schools Must Publish (Statutory Requirements)

- SEND Information Report

    - Updated annually or when changes occur
    - Must include: identification process, support available, family involvement, staff expertise, progress review, transition arrangements, link to Local Authority Local Offer
- SEND Policy
    - Outlines vision, roles, responsibilities, and procedures
    - Reviewed regularly and approved by governors
- Accessibility Plan
    - Covers curriculum access, physical environment improvements, and accessible information
- SENCo Contact Details
    - Name, role, email, phone number
- Link to Local Authority Local Offer

Best Practice Tips

- Use plain language and a welcoming tone
- Make SENCo visible (name, photo, contact details)
- Include FAQs for parents
- Add links to resources (see our Resources and Signposting Section for ideas)
- Ensure documents are easy to find and downloadable

Policies

School SEND Policy

Information is available on WSCC's Tools for Schools around writing your school's Send Policy. This policy can often feel very official and so doesn't reflect the supportive culture of your setting. These documents also often use language that is not easy for parent carers to understand, so it is recommended that when you review these documents, you do so in coproduction with parent carers

https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/tools-for-schools/send-toolkit/supporting-children-and-young-people-with-send/national-send-guidance/

SEND Parent Involvement Policy

One of the main goals of the Autism in Schools Project is to help schools build strong relationships with parent carers of children on the SEND register. The coproduction of this policy is a key outcome of that work and supports settings to better engage and support their parents and carers. All West Sussex County Council schools can now adapt and use this policy for the 2025 to 2026 academic year. There are four versions:

- SEND Parent Carer Involvement Policy (Primary, short version) (Word, KB)
- SEND Parent Carer Involvement Policy (Primary, long version) (Word, KB)
- SEND Parent Carer Involvement Policy (Secondary, short version) (Word, KB)
- SEND Parent Carer Involvement Policy (Secondary, long version) (Word, KB)

c. Surveys

Surveying parent carers annually is one of the most effective ways to understand what's working well and where improvements are needed. Feedback helps you identify areas of difficulty, celebrate successes, and strengthen communication and coproduction with families.

How to Run Effective Surveys

- Choose an accessible platform and use tools like Microsoft Forms, Google Forms, or similar. These are free, easy to use, and allow responses from any device.
- Share widely and inclusively
    - Send the survey link and QR code through all your usual communication channels (email, newsletters, text alerts).
    - Display posters in reception with QR codes.
    - Provide printed copies for families who face digital poverty.
- Explain the purpose; Tell parents why you're asking for feedback and how their responses will be used to improve SEND support.
- Keep it short and clear; Avoid jargon and keep questions focused on key areas such as communication, support quality, and inclusion.
- Make it anonymous where possible; This encourages honest feedback and builds trust.

- Consider adding a question about preferred communication methods.
- Review responses with staff and parent representatives to agree on actions.
- Share the results and next steps; Let families know what you learned and what actions you'll take, this shows their voice makes a difference.

Examples and Templates

We've provided sample surveys in our Appendices for Nurseries (see Appendix 1), Primary Schools (see Appendix 2), and Secondary Schools (see Appendix 3).

4. How to Communicate Effectively

One of the main things parent carers have told us through our work in the Autism in Schools project, is that they often don't know who to contact or how to raise concerns. Clear communication builds trust and ensures that families feel supported and informed. In all communications with families, use plain language and make any correspondence accessible (create virtual and print options). Communication should be consistent, clear, and inclusive. By combining sharing (coproduced) structured processes (flow charts and forms) with regular updates (newsletters and social media), schools can build strong partnerships with families.

a. Letters and Forms

To make communication easier, we have created sample visual guides showing:

- Who to contact for different concerns (see Appendix 4)
- What happens if a teacher or parent is concerned about a child's progress (see Appendix 5)

These charts help parents understand:

- The first point of contact (usually the class teacher).
- When and how the SENCO becomes involved.
- The process for monitoring progress and adding a child to the SEND register if needed.

Including charts like these on your school website, in welcome packs, and newsletters is highly recommended.

We've also included the following letter templates in the Appendices to support clear communication:

- Introductory letter to all parents/carers at the start of the year (see Appendix 6)
- Letter explaining the SEND register (see Appendix 7)

- Individual Communication Form for parents to request a meeting or raise concerns (see Appendix 8)
- ILP Family Input Form (two versions – one easy read) to gather parent/carer views for Individual Learning Plans ((see Appendix 9 & Appendix 10)

These documents will help parents and carers feel informed and involved from the start.

b. Newsletters

Regular newsletters are a simple but powerful way to keep families updated, you should include:

- SEND updates and upcoming events.
- Links to resources and organisations listed in this document (see Section 2 - About WSPCF and Section 6 – Resources and Signposting).
- Reminders about surveys and events
- Positive stories or tips for supporting children at home.

c. Social Media / Messaging Apps

Best Practice:

- Set clear rules for privacy and respectful communication.
- Use these channels for reminders, not sensitive discussions.
- Always provide an alternative for parents who prefer email, letter or phone.

Many schools successfully use:

- Closed Facebook groups for (SEND) families.
- WhatsApp groups for quick updates and peer support.
- School apps (e.g., ClassDojo) for announcements and messaging.

5. How to Engage Parents and Carers (Face-to-Face or Online)

Engaging parents and carers is essential for building trust, reducing isolation, and creating a strong partnership between families and your setting. When parents feel connected and

informed, they are better able to support their child or young person at home and contribute meaningfully to school life and decision making.

This section explores practical ways to bring parents together, through coffee mornings, information sessions, themed events, and online opportunities, so that every family has a chance to participate. Whether your setting is large or small, rural or urban, these approaches can be adapted to meet your parent and carer community's needs and capacity.

a. General Events / Coffee Mornings / Information Sessions

By running parent carer coffee mornings/events the following outcomes can be achieved:

- Parents are provided with support and information to better support their child or young person at home.
- Isolation is reduced, improving mental wellbeing for parents and children or young people.
- Well informed parents and carers can engage in meaningful coproduction both at an individual level and as part of a wider community.

When setting up the coffee morning we recommend the following:

- Coproduce the format with parent volunteers where possible.
- Hold events on a rolling basis (e.g., coffee mornings after drop-off or before pick-up).
- Alternate between informal chats and sessions with speakers.
- Publish dates well in advance (ideally for the whole academic year).
- Offer online sessions in the evening for working parents or those with caring responsibilities.
- Use surveys to shape your offer (or review recent survey results).

The first event can be a great opportunity for parents and carers to share their experiences and views. There will be some parents and carers who will not feel seen and heard, so changing this will mean they can better engage constructively with the setting, receive information and/or support.

Whether you do your parent carer events online or face to face, should depend largely on the needs of your parent carers and the capacity you have to support them. We suggest combining online and face-to-face for maximum reach and to consider online engagement especially for the following:

- Secondary or AP settings
- Hubs (see below) or professional presentations/information sessions.

b. Hubs (multi-setting collaboration)

In rural areas, Academy groups, locality groups, infants and junior settings that are linked, small settings with low numbers of SEND children and young people or those settings of a similar type across the county (ie Alternative Provision Colleges), offering events as hubs can improve parent engagement.

Working in this way means that as well as providing more parents and carers opportunities to network with wider groups of parents and carers, it also means the workload can be shared between staff from different settings. Some specialist settings could be asked open their parent carer engagement offer to the locality, inviting parent carers with children and young people in mainstream settings, or a Specialist Support Centre to join.

c. Mini Forums (A structured way for parents to feed into decision-making and share information with others)

Coffee mornings are a great way to start building relationships, they provide an informal space for parents to connect, share experiences, and receive information. However, if your goal is to embed parent voice into decision making and work in true coproduction, setting up a Mini Forum offers more structure and sustainability.
They have:

- Agreed agendas and actions, so feedback leads to change.
- Provide a formal channel for parents to influence SEND provision.
- Encourage shared responsibility through roles like chair or note-taker.
- Create continuity, ensuring engagement isn't dependent on one-off events.

Think of coffee mornings as connection and conversation, and Mini Forums as collaboration and influence.

There are many ways to run a Mini Forum, and we hope that our resources will enable you to find the way that's right for your community. This means that some parts of the pack won't be relevant to you, for example, your group may not want to have formal minutes taken at meetings, so you can just ignore the bits of this pack that you don't need. However, as the group evolves, your needs may change, so we recommend not deleting any pages from the digital copy in case the group wants to run a different way in future!

This is a list of suggested documents needed, we have supplied templates for some in the Appendices.

- Invitation letter (see Appendix 11)

- Terms of Reference (see Appendix 12 & Appendix 13 – informal version)
- Feedback Form - sharing ideas with the setting (see Appendix 14)
- Group Rules (see Appendix 15)
- Members list/contact sheet/what app list
- Sign in sheet
- Agenda
- Minutes - REMEMBER – do not record personal conversations and experiences
- Speaker Request Form (see Appendix 16)

d. Low Engagement

Low engagement can limit the diversity of parent and carer voices and reduce the effectiveness of coproduction. Understanding the possible barriers helps ensure inclusion and equity.

Common barriers:

- Neurodivergent parents or those with learning differences.
- Rural or small settings, high numbers of working parents.
- Families with negative past experiences of support.
- Specialist/AP settings where parents have limited energy for peer support.
- Children and young people traveling to school via school transport (reducing informal parent networks).

Additional considerations:

- Engagement may fluctuate over time, so don't assume low engagement means lack of interest.
- Engagement needs to be done regularly, new parents at a setting may not be ready to engage until the Spring or Summer Terms.
- Some parents may prefer to contribute anonymously.

Solutions:

- Offer online and hybrid options for accessibility.
- Be realistic about capacity and sustainability, avoid overloading parents or staff.
- Share responsibility across staff to avoid gaps.
- Use multiple channels (social media, newsletters, WhatsApp groups) to reach parents where they are.

- Provide clear, simple feedback loops so parents see the impact of their input.
- Consider incentives or recognition for participation (e.g., certificates or thank you notes).

e. Themes and Topics

Planning ahead for the year or term can make your sessions/events with parents and carers more engaging and relevant. Whether your group is a formal mini-forum or a casual coffee morning, having themes in mind can:

- Encourage more parent carers to attend if the topic resonates with them.
- Provide opportunities for learning and sharing experiences.
- Allow flexibility, some themes may be popular enough to repeat annually.

You can invite guest speakers for certain topics, but informal group discussions often work just as well.

'Setting' focused discussion topics:

These can be used at any type of event, to help parent carers share feedback and ideas about their child's setting:

- What is working well in the setting?
- Areas for improvement or development, what can be learned from other settings?
- Reviewing setting policies, are they clear and inclusive?
- How does the setting communicate with parent carers? How can this be improved?
- What 'support' is available in the setting? For example, time out cards, alternative playtimes etc.
- Clubs and wraparound care, and how to ensure they are accessible to all children.
- Events in the setting, and how to ensure they are accessible to all children.
- How can parents be supported to help their children with learning at home? Is this working for children with SEND?

Themed coffee morning topic guides

We've created five themed sheets to guide conversations at coffee mornings. Each sheet focuses on an important topic and includes a short video, useful signposting to organisations and services, conversation starters and top tips to support you on each topic.

The five topic guides are:

- Parent Carer Wellbeing (see Appendix 17)
- School Anxiety / Mental Health (see Appendix 18)
- Sleep (see Appendix 19)
- Eating (see Appendix 20)
- Toileting (see Appendix 21)

Information sharing session ideas:

These sessions can be informal or include guest speakers. As well as the topics listed above you could also consider:

- Navigating social situations (comic strip conversations, social stories)
- Sensory difficulties and the zones of regulation
- Executive Functioning
- Finding out about local organisations and activities

Use these ideas as a starting point for events or sessions that feel useful and relevant to your setting, and that help build a more supportive, connected parent carer community.

6. Resources and Signposting

Engaging and supporting parent carers effectively means having access to reliable information and practical tools. Below are a few suggestions to help strengthen engagement and provide meaningful support, please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

Throughout this pack, we've referenced templates, sample letters, and example policies; you'll find all of these in the appendices as ready-made resources to help you put ideas into practice.

Resources:

WSCC SEND Toolkit

Practical strategies and resources for supporting children with SEND in mainstream settings.
Link: SEND toolkit - West Sussex County Council

WSCC Inclusion Framework

A self-evaluation tool for schools and early years settings to support inclusive practice.

Link: Inclusion Framework - West Sussex County Council

WSCC Ordinarily Available Inclusive Practice (OAIP)

A guide for schools and early years settings developed by West Sussex County Council. It explains how to meet the additional needs of most children and young people without an EHCP.

Link: OAIP - West Sussex County Council

WSPCF Guide to SEND Support in Mainstream Settings

A practical guide for parent carers, based on the West Sussex OAIP, to help families understand, navigate, and make use of the support their child should receive in a mainstream school.

Link: https://www.wspcf.org.uk/wspcf-guides/

WSCC Sensory Toolkit & Transition Toolkit

Link: Autism and Social Communication Team - ASCT | West Sussex Services for Schools

WSPCF Parent Carer guides to the Sensory Toolkit and the Transition Toolkit

Link: Info & Resources - West Sussex Parent Carer Forum

Signposting:

SENDIAS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service)

Free, impartial, and confidential advice for families and young people with SEND.

Website: https://westsussexsendias.org/

IPSEA (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice)

Leading charity providing free legal advice, template letters, and training on SEND law.

Website: https://www.ipsea.org.uk/

Contact

A national charity for families with disabled children, offering advice on benefits, education,

and local support groups.
Website: Contact

Aspens Charities
Provides family centred support for neurodivergent children and those with learning disabilities across Sussex.
Website: Aspens Family Support

7. Appendices

These appendices contain all the supporting materials referenced throughout this guide, including templates, sample letters, example policies, and practical tools. These resources are designed to save you time and help you put ideas into practice quickly. Use them alongside the guidance in this pack to make engagement with parent carers easier and more consistent.

To download an editable version of our Appendices please click here.

WSPCF Parent Carer Engagement Toolkit for Schools - Appendices

Appendix 1

Sample nursery survey example questions from the Autism in Schools project

1) How old is your child?
2) Does your child struggle with settling into the nursery when they arrive? (e.g. they could struggle with leaving their parent/carers)
   - Choice of 3 tick boxes for the answer with Yes, No and Sometimes

3) Do you feel that your child is well supported in nursery with transitions (for example moving from a baby room to a toddler room, transition in times of the day e.g. lunchtime, or leaving to go to school)
   - Choice of 3 tick boxes for the answer with Yes, No and Sometimes

4) Please may you expand on your child's struggles with transitions
   - Text box answer

5) Do you feel that you are able to support your child with transition?
   - Choice of 3 tick boxes for the answer with Yes, No and Not sure

6) How could you be helped to support your child with transitions?
   - Text box answer

7) Do you feel confident about... or How confident do you feel about....

   Talking to the nursery about your child's needs

   Talking to professionals about your child's needs

   Talking to your child about their own needs

   Your understanding of the systems in place for SEND support in the nursery

   Talking to and/or supporting other parent carers about SEND

   Where to find more information and/or support (e.g. charities)

   Rating Yes, No and Sometimes or a scale 1-10 or a likert scale (a popular rating scale in surveys that measures attitudes, opinions, or perceptions by asking respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements, typically using a symmetrical range of options (e.g., 5 or 7 points) from one extreme to another, like "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," providing quantifiable data for analysis.)

8) Does your child have an ILP (Individual Learning Plan) or ISP (Individual Support Plan) in place?
   - Choice of 3 tick boxes for the answer with Yes, No and Not sure

9) (Branching from yes) Please tick the box that best describes your level of input to the ILP/ISP (for example when it is noisy at home this certain strategy works...)
   - Choice of 5 tick boxes with 'I have not seen my child or young persons ILP/ISP',' I am sometimes sent my child or young person's ILP/IPS but I am not asked to comment or input', 'I always receive a copy of my child or young person's ILP/ISP but I am not asked to comment or input', 'I receive my child or young person's ILP/ISP and I am sometimes asked to comment or input' and 'I am always asked to comment or input to my child or young person's ILP/ISP before it is completed'.

10) Are there opportunities to speak to your child's SENDCO as well as key worker?
    - Choice of two tick boxes 'Yes', 'No' and a last option called 'Other' with an opportunity to explain further

11) Does your child have an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan)?
    - 5 Tick box answers for 'Yes', 'No', 'Currently applying with support from Nursery', 'Currently applying without support from Nursery' and 'Not sure'.

12) Is your child autistic? We are asking this question because some of the work we are doing is part of the Autism in Schools Project.
    - Tick boxes for 'Yes, they are diagnosed', 'They are on the pathway for assessment', 'The nursery and/or I believe they may be, but they are not yet on the pathway for assessment', 'No' and then 'Other' with an option to write in.

13) (branching for yes) How well do you feel you understand autism?
    - Tick boxes for 'Not at all', 'Abit' and 'Very'

14) Does your child find it difficult to attend nursery because of their needs?
    - Tick boxes for 'Yes', 'No' and 'Maybe'
    -

15) Would you be interested in a coffee morning at nursery?
    - Tick boxes for 'Yes - in nursery', 'Yes - online', 'No' and 'I already attend a coffee morning at the nursery'.
    -

16) If you answered yes to the above question, please add your email address so we can let you know when these events will take place.
    - Open text box

17) If you would like to provide any other information or make any comments please do so here.

- Open text box

Appendix 2

Sample primary survey example questions from the Autism in Schools project

1) Which school year is your child or young person in.
   - Tick boxes for ‘Reception’, ‘Year 1’, ‘Year 2’, ‘Year 3’, ‘Year 4’, ‘Year 5’, and ‘Year 6’

2) Do you feel that your child or young person is well supported in school with transitions (for example moving from one school year to the next, or moving from nursery to primary school?)
   - Tick boxes for ‘Yes’, ‘No’, and ‘Not sure’

3) Do you feel that you are able to support your child or young person with transition?
   - Tick boxes for ‘Yes’, ‘No’, and ‘Not sure’

4) If you would like to provide more information about transition, please do so here.

   -open text box

5) Do you feel confident about… or How confident do you feel about….

   Talking to the nursery about your child's needs

   Talking to professionals about your child's needs

   Talking to your child about their own needs

   Your understanding of the systems in place for SEND support in the nursery

   Talking to and/or supporting other parent carers about SEND

   Where to find more information and/or support (e.g. charities)

   Rating Yes, No and Sometimes or a scale 1-10 or a likert scale (a popular rating scale in surveys that measures attitudes, opinions, or perceptions by asking respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements, typically using a symmetrical range of options (e.g., 5 or 7 points) from one extreme to another, like "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," providing quantifiable data for analysis.)

6) Does your child have an ILP (Individual Learning Plan) or ISP (Individual Support Plan) in place?
   - Choice of 3 tick boxes for the answer with Yes, No and Not sure

7) (Branching from yes) Please tick the box that best describes your level of input to the ILP/ISP (for example when it is noisy at home this certain strategy works...)
   - Choice of 5 tick boxes with 'I have not seen my child or young persons ILP/ISP',' I am sometimes sent my child or young person's ILP/IPS but I am not asked to comment or input', 'I always receive a copy of my child or young person's ILP/ISP but I am not asked to comment or input', 'I receive my child or young person's ILP/ISP and I am sometimes asked to comment or input' and 'I am always asked to comment or input to my child or young person's ILP/ISP before it is completed'.

8) Does your child have an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan)?

   5 Tick box answers for 'Yes', 'No', 'Currently applying with support from School', 'Currently applying without support from School' and 'Not sure'.

9) About your young person's EHCP

   Answers on a likert type or similar

   The EHCP is reviewed annually

   We receive the paperwork at least 14 days before the meeting

   I have the opportunity to input my parent carer views

   My child or young person's voice is included

   Rating Yes, No and Not sure (please see Primary survey for example of a likert type)

10) Is your child autistic? We are asking this question because some of the work we are doing is part of the Autism in Schools Project.
   - Tick boxes for 'Yes, they are diagnosed', 'They are on the pathway for assessment', 'The school and/or I believe they may be, but they are not yet on the pathway for assessment', 'No' and then 'Other' with an option to write in.
   -

11) (branching for yes) How well do you feel you understand autism?

- Tick boxes for ‘Not at all’, ‘Abit’ and ‘Very’

12) Does your child find it difficult to attend school because of their needs?
    - Tick boxes for ‘Yes’, ‘No’ and ‘Maybe’

13) Does your child or young person have difficulties with their mental health?
- Tick boxes for ‘Yes’, ‘No’ and ‘Maybe’

14) Would you be interested in a coffee morning at nursery?
- Tick boxes for ‘Yes - in school’, ‘Yes - online’, ‘No’ and ‘I already attend a coffee morning at the school’.

15) I you answered yes to the above question, please add your email address so we can let you know when these events will take place.
    - Open text box
16) If you would like to provide any other information or make any comments please do so here.
- open text box

Appendix 3

Sample secondary survey example questions from the Autism in Schools project

1) Which school year is your child or young person in.

   Tick box options for ‘Year 7’, ‘Year 8’, ‘Year 9’, ‘Year 10’ and ‘Year 11’

2) Do you feel that your child or young person is well supported in school with transitions (for example moving from one school year to the next, or moving from primary school to secondary school?)
- Tick boxes for ‘Yes’, ‘No’, and ‘Not sure’

3) Do you feel that you are able to support your child with transition?
   - Choice of 3 tick boxes for the answer with Yes, No and Not sure
   -

4) If you would like to provide more information about transitions, please do so here.
   - Text box

5) Do you feel confident about...
   - Answers on a likert type or similar

   Talking to the school about your child's needs

   Talking to professionals about your child's needs

   Talking to your child about their own needs

   Your understanding of the systems in place for SEND support in the school

   Talking to and/or supporting other parent carers about SEND

   Where to find more information and/or support (e.g. charities)

   Rating Yes, No and Sometimes or or a likert scale (a popular rating scale in surveys that measures attitudes, opinions, or perceptions by asking respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements, typically using a symmetrical range of options (e.g., 5 or 7 points) from one extreme to another, like "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," providing quantifiable data for analysis.)

6) Does your child have an ILP (Individual Learning Plan) or ISP (Individual Support Plan) in place?
   - Choice of 3 tick boxes for the answer with Yes, No and Not sure

7) (Branching from yes) Please tick the box that best describes your level of input to the ILP/ISP (for example when it is noisy at home this certain strategy works...)

- Choice of 5 tick boxes with ‘I have not seen my child or young persons ILP/ISP’,’ I am sometimes sent my child or young person's ILP/IPS but I am not asked to comment or input’, ‘I always receive a copy of my child or young person's ILP/ISP but I am not asked to comment or input’, ‘I receive my child or young person's ILP/ISP and I am sometimes asked to comment or input’ and ‘I am always asked to comment or input to my child or young person's ILP/ISP before it is completed’.

8) Does your child have an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan)?
   - 5 Tick box answers for ‘Yes’, ‘No’, ‘Currently applying with support from School’, ‘Currently applying without support from School’ and ‘Not sure’.

9) About your young person's EHCP
   - Answers on a likert type or similar

   The EHCP is reviewed annually

   We receive the paperwork at least 14 days before the meeting

   I have the opportunity to input my parent carer views

   My child or young person's voice is included

   Rating Yes, No and Not sure

10) Is your child autistic? We are asking this question because some of the work we are doing is part of the Autism in Schools Project.
   - Tick boxes for ‘Yes, they are diagnosed’, ‘They are on the pathway for assessment’, ‘The school and/or I believe they may be, but they are not yet on the pathway for assessment’, ‘No’ and then ‘Other’ with an option to write in.

11) (branching for yes) How well do you feel you understand autism?
   - Tick boxes for ‘Not at all’, ‘A bit’ and ‘Very’

12) Does your child find it difficult to attend school because of their needs?

- Tick boxes for ‘Yes’, ‘No’ and ‘Maybe’

13) Does your child or young person have difficulties with their mental health?

- Tick boxes for ‘Yes’, ‘No’ and ‘Maybe’

14) Would you be interested in a coffee morning at nursery?
    - Tick boxes for ‘Yes - in school’, ‘Yes - online’, ‘No’ and ‘I already attend a coffee morning at the school’.

15) If you answered yes to the above question, please add your email address so we can let you know when these events will take place.
    - Open text box

16) If you would like to provide any other information or make any comments please do so here.
- open text box

Appendix 4

Who to contact for different concerns?

Appendix 5

What happens if a teacher or parent is concerned about a child's progress?

Appendix 6

Sample Introductory letter to all parents/carers at the start of the year

Dear parent or carer,

We/I am writing to introduce ourselves/myself, we/I work in the setting to make sure children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) have their needs met.

If you have any worries about your child – for example academic progress, or difficulties making friends, you can speak to your child's class teacher, or you can email us on the address(es) below. You don't need to wait for us to approach you if you feel there are concerns, you know your child best!

We are also available for a chat on a drop-in basis. On [e.g. first Wednesday of the month] you can pop in between [times] for a cup of tea and a chat about any worries you have about your child.

There is also a WhatsApp group for parents with children who have additional needs, which is a great way to connect with others and share advice. Please email your phone number to [staff member above] if you would like to be added!

Kind regards,

[insert name, title, email address]

Appendix 7

Sample letter explaining the SEND register

Dear parent or carer,

I am writing to explain a bit about what the SEND Register is and what it means if your child or young person is on it.

The SEND Register is a list held by our setting, of children who are receiving additional support. Children or young people do not need a diagnosis of anything to be on the register, it is just a way of identifying who needs a little extra help with something, such as social skills or literacy.

For these children, their parents or carers will be contacted about putting an Individual Learning Plan in place. This is a way of making sure that we put the right support in place for each child or young person's needs.

You can find out more about SEND provision in our setting here: [insert link to SEND section of setting website].

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need advice about other aspects of SEND.

Warm regards,

[SENDCO/Inclusion Lead name(s)]

Appendix 8

Sample Communication Form for parent or carer to request a meeting / raise concerns

Date:

Name of child/young person: Class:

Name of appropriate adult:

Best contact number of appropriate adult:

I would like to discuss a need around: (tick box that applies)

My child's needs or development	
A referral	
Support in the setting	
A specific incident at the setting	
A need at home	
Other	
Any additional information that you think might be useful?	

I would like to receive the following support:(tick box that applies)

A face to face appointment	
A follow up phone call	
Support in the setting	
A follow up email	
This form is just for your reference – no follow up necessary	

Thank you for continuing to work in partnership with me to meet the needs of my child inside the setting and at home.

Appendix 9

Sample Individual Learning Plan (ILP) Family Input Form

The aim of this document is to gather your views and knowledge of your child's needs, so we can write an ILP for them. We will then review this ILP every _____.

Don't worry if you can't answer every question, add as much or as little detail as you want to. If you have any questions about this process, please email [insert SENCO email address].

Child's name:_____ Child's class:_____

1. What does your child like doing?

2. What are they good at?

3. What are your/your child's hopes for them this year? (For example: making friends, being able to sit at the dinner table, reading more confidently)

4. What do you feel your child needs more support with?

5. How does your child learn best? Do you have any suggestions for what might help your child at school? (For example movement breaks, larger print handouts etc)

6. What has worked well in the past to support your child at school?

7.What has not worked so well in the past to support your child at school?

8. Do you notice any differences in the way your child presents at home compared to at school?

9. What does your child feel would help them at school? (NB we [will/may] discuss this with your child at school too, but we know that they may find it easier to tell you)

10. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your child's support needs?

Thank you!

[insert SENCO name]

Appendix 10

Sample Individual Learning Plan (ILP) Family Input Form – Easy Read

The aim of this document is to gather your views and knowledge of your child's needs, so we can write an ILP for them. We will then review this ILP every _____.

Don't worry if you can't answer every question, add as much or as little detail as you want to. If you have any questions about this process, please email [insert SENCO email address]

Child's name: _____ Child's class:_____

1. My child enjoys...

2. They are good at...

3. This year, my child hopes to...

4. My child needs more support with...

5. My child learns best when..

6. At home, my child...

7. This is a space for your child to tell us what they feel would help them. They can write or draw pictures, or you can write for them.

Thank you!

[SENCO name]

Appendix 11

Sample Mini Forum Invitation letter

Dear parent carer,

We are writing to invite you to our setting's Parent Carer Mini Forum. This is for all parent carers of children on our SEND register, and membership is free and voluntary.

We hold regular meetings in order to:

- Work cooperatively with the setting
- Ensure that parent carers have their voices heard by the setting
- Bring parent carers together to share experiences

At the meeting, we will be planning how our sessions will run for the next academic year, and what parent carers would like to theme sessions on.

The meeting will be held [insert details of meeting including location, availability of refreshments etc].

We welcome input from parent carers with running the Mini Forum , for example taking Minutes , so please let us know if you would like to take on a role within the group.

Please try to join us and also to encourage other parent carers to come along too.

We look forward to seeing you.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

.....

Let us know you are coming by completing this form and handing it in at the setting's office.

I would like to attend the Parent Carer Mini Forum on [date and time].

Name: .....

Parent carer of: ..... in ..... class

Delete as appropriate:

I am/might be/am not interested in taking on a responsibility within the group.

Appendix 12

Sample Terms of Reference - Parent Carer Mini-Forum

This version of the Terms of Reference is more appropriate for those that are aiming at a more formal group, who will contribute ideas and feedback regularly to the setting. It is useful to read through these Terms and decide if anything needs amending to fit with the needs of the group.

Membership:

The group is open to all parent carers of children at [insert name of setting] with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their family members. The group is led and run by parent carers (and facilitated by the setting) /the setting. Membership is voluntary. All members of the group will have an interest/involvement in the setting (grandparents etc).

Purpose of the Parent Carer Mini Forum:

The group aims to work in coproduction with the setting to share information, decrease isolation and strengthen and develop positive relationships. The group believes that by working cooperatively with the setting, parent carers can have their voices heard and contribute to improvements in the services delivered for children and young people with SEND at the setting.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Chair – to chair meetings, encourage productive discussion and support the group to make decisions

Co-chair – to cover for the Chair in their absence

Secretary – to record discussions during the meetings to feedback, record actions and compile future agenda, to ensure group meetings are publicised

Representatives will be selected by initially showing interest. Following this the group will hold an AGM to select roles for the following academic year – it is envisaged that the Chair and other roles will rotate within the group members.

Pre Meeting:

Venues and meeting times will be arranged for the convenience of parent carers. Meetings will be during term time and within setting hours where possible. Details should be sent to all interested parent carers; with invites sent to them to attend the meeting on a set date and time. Ask all parent carers if they would like to raise or add anything on the Agenda. Chair to contact the setting to discuss the Agenda for the upcoming meeting, including any points they would like to raise.

Meeting Structure:

The group is to meet on a regular basis, usually once monthly or every half term [delete as appropriate]. The meeting will have a time limit of 1 – 1.5 hours with a break for drinks if required. Set Agenda items should include -covering housekeeping: toilets, fire alarms etc. New members to be introduced to the group Items for discussion. Actions and timeframes for completion agreed during the meeting and recorded. End meeting by setting a date and time for next meeting.

Decision Making:

There should be a quorum of no less than 3 members or one third of members (whichever is greater) including a Chair or Co-chair present for a decision to be made. The group recognises that there will be differences of opinion and priority between members. Decisions will be made by consensus where possible, or where not possible, by majority. All views will be respected, and each member is entitled to share their views fully without interruption.

Following the Meeting:

Minutes will give a broad outline of issues discussed; reference to individual views and perspectives will not be recorded. Minutes will be completed and circulated within 2 weeks of the meeting. Agreed actions to be completed by named person on minutes. Minutes including actions to be sent to all group members, setting staff, governors and leadership. They should also be added to the setting website and/or the next setting newsletter.

Appendix 13

Sample Informal Terms of Reference - Parent Carer Mini-Forum

This version of the Terms of Reference is more appropriate for group that would like a less formal arrangement, focused mainly on building connections and sharing advice. It is useful to read through these Terms and decide if anything needs amending to fit with the needs of the group.

The group is open to all Parent Carers of children at [Insert name of setting] with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their family members.

The aim of the group is to reduce isolation and forge positive relationships as a SEND community within the setting.

The group is to meet on a regular basis, usually once monthly or every half term [delete as appropriate] at a time convenient to parent carers.

Meeting dates (and topics if applicable) should be advertised to all parents or carers with children on the SEND register. This should be done via email, and any other methods of communication such as setting apps, Facebook groups etc.

The SENCO/Inclusion Lead will facilitate the meetings by providing a space and refreshments.

If the group feels it is appropriate, the SENCO/Inclusion Lead will open the session, and then leave to give the group a private space to discuss topics. In the future, the group may feel it preferable to have a more formal group arrangement. However, until such a time, the SENCO/Inclusion Lead remains committed to facilitating and arranging the sessions.

The SENCO/Inclusion Lead or a Parent Carer can take minutes to summarise the topics discussed, and email these to group members. <u>These must not include sensitive issues, for example if someone has shared a personal experience</u> – it is only for ideas and actions that need to be recorded.

Sometimes an issue with the setting may be discussed. If the group wishes to feed this back to the setting, they should use the Feedback Form (see below Appendix 14). The SENCO/Inclusion Lead is committed to reading this Feedback Form, giving fair consideration to the ideas and ensuring the response/relevant action is fed back at the next group meeting so it can be captured in the minutes.

Appendix 14

Feedback Form – sharing ideas with the setting

Date:

The issue we would like to raise is:

The reason this needs addressing is:

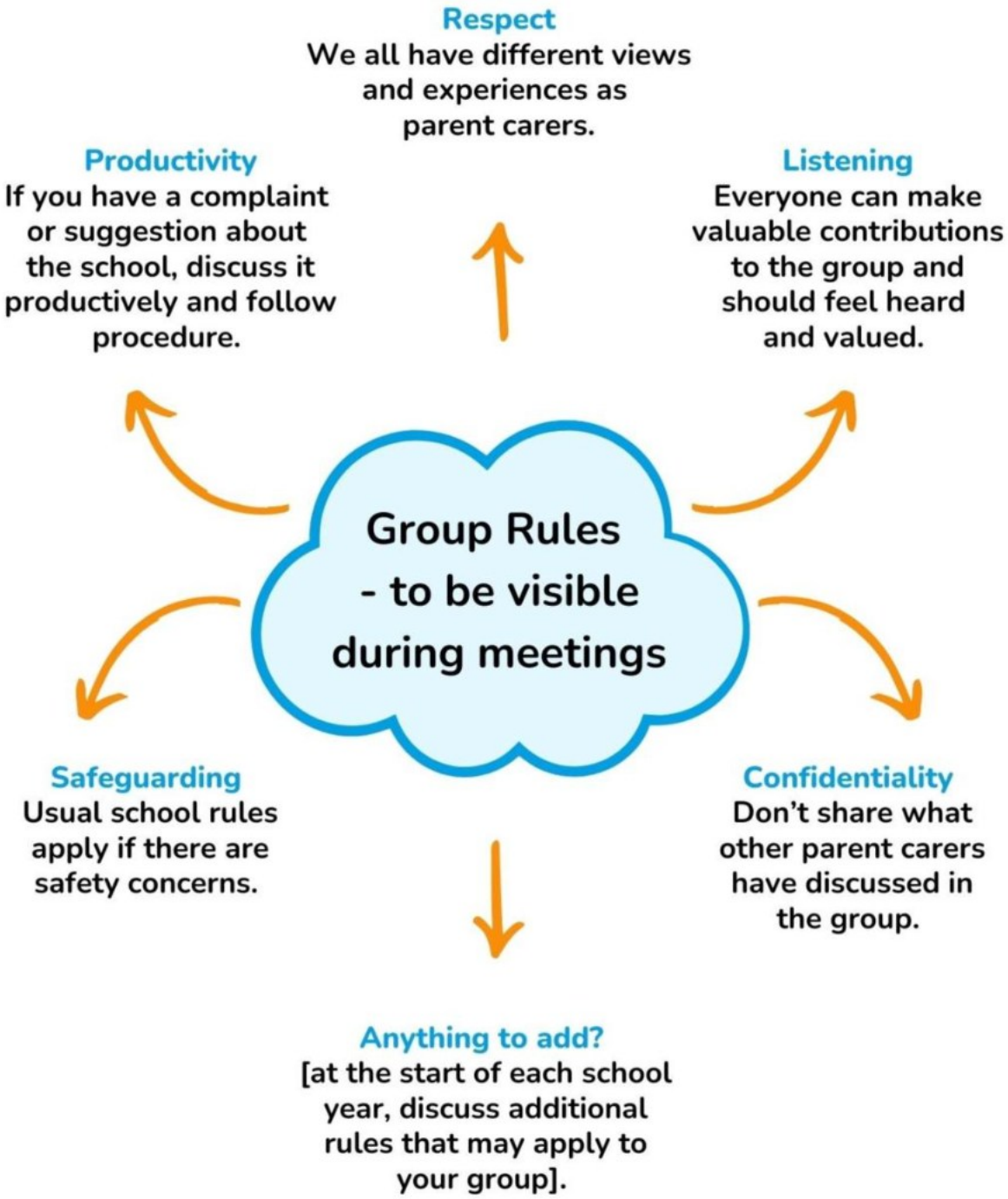
Our ideas for improvement/solution:

Signed, the [insert name of setting] Parent Carer

Mini Forum

Appendix 15

Group Rules



Appendix 16

Speaker Request Form

If the hub would like a guest speaker (for example from a local charity or council department), this form should be completed.

Parent Carers' responsibility:

- To agree as a group which speaker/organisation is required
- To find and add the contact information for the speaker

SENCO/Inclusion Team's responsibility:

- To use the information provided on the form to contact the organisation in a timely manner
- To keep the Hub updated on arrangements

It is important to remember that not all speakers will be available – submitting this form is not a guarantee, but the setting will do their best to arrange and facilitate the session.

Speaker Request Form

- Who would you like to visit the setting? Include organisation and department if known.
- Contact email address and phone number
- What would you like the speaker to talk about?
- How would the session benefit Parent Carers?
- Would the session also benefit other parents (of children who do not have SEND)
- Would you want to have the session in usual hub meeting time, or in the evening?
- Is the Hub happy to fundraise if the speaker charges a fee? If so, indicate the maximum cost.

Appendix 17

Themed coffee morning topic guides - Parent Carer Wellbeing

Parent Carer Wellbeing		
Video Link: Rest: Ideas for productive rest as a carer - YouTube		
Signposting		
Name of organisation/doc	**Description**	**Link**
Carers Support West Sussex	Register with Carers Support West Sussex they can help with, grants, counselling and hold coffee mornings.	Supporting West Sussex Carers with the Carers Smart Search
West Sussex Parent Carer Forum	Sign up to West Sussex Parent Carer Forum and email us, call us or Facebook message us to find out where to get help when you need it. We also have a wellbeing section on our website with helpful resources and highlights from the recent Wellbeing course we ran. We support Parent Carers of children and young people age 0-25 with SEND, diagnosed or un-diagnosed.	Wellbeing - West Sussex Parent Carer Forum
Conversation Starters		
What do you already do to support your wellbeing?		
Who supports you and are they aware of how you are feeling?		
What else can we do to improve our own wellbeing?		
Top tips from other Parent Carers		
Try and take some time for yourself wherever possible		
Be kind to yourself, being a parent carer can be very challenging at times		
Don't be afraid to ask for help		

Appendix 18

Themed coffee morning topic guides -School Anxiety / Mental Health

School Anxiety/ Mental Health		
Video Link: How to support your child if they're struggling with school anxiety - YouTube		
Signposting		
Name of organisation/doc	**Description**	**Link**
Young Minds	They provide young people with the tools to look after their mental health. They empower adults to be the best support they can be to the young people in their lives. And they give young people the space and confidence to get their voices heard and change the world we live in.	YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People | YoungMinds
MIND charity	MIND provides information, support and advice on mental health problems. They campaign for better services and rights and offer local and online communities.	Home - Mind
Emotionally Based School Avoidance and Autism	Advice for Emotionally Based School Avoidance	Emotionally Based School Avoidance | West Sussex Services for Schools
West Sussex Parent Carer Forum	Sign up to West Sussex Parent Carer Forum and email us, call us or Facebook message us to find out where to get help when you need it. We have a dedicated Mental Health section on our website. We support Parent Carers of children and young people age 0-25 with SEND, diagnosed or un-diagnosed.	Mental Health - West Sussex Parent Carer Forum
Conversation Starters		
Do you feel your child/young person struggles with their Mental Health?		
Does your child/young person struggle to attend school because of their Mental Health?		
Is school supportive?		
Top tips from other Parent Carers		
Explain to the school what is going on and ask for support to be put in place, e.g. you could ask about EBSA resources		
Don't be afraid to reach out for help from family/friends or charities		
Connect with other parent carers		

Appendix 19

Themed coffee morning topic guides - Sleep

Sleep		
Video Link: School Nursing Team - Sleep Video		
Signposting		
Name of organisation	**Description**	**Link**
National Autistic Society	Article on advice for parents relating to sleep in Autistic children	Parents and families
West Sussex Parent Carer Forum	Sign up to West Sussex Parent Carer Forum and email us, call us or Facebook message us to find out where to get help when you need it. We support Parent Carers of children and young people age 0-25 with SEND, diagnosed or un-diagnosed.	West Sussex Parent Carer Forum | Information | Training
Conversation Starters		
Does your child experience difficulties with sleep?		
What effect does this have on you or your family, including siblings?		
Top tips from other Parent Carers		
Reach out to your GP or child's pediatrician for help		
Lack of sleep can be difficult for parent/carers. Please try to be kind to yourself		
Keep a sleep diary as this can be useful to show professionals		

Appendix 20

Themed coffee morning topic guides - Eating

Eating		
Video Link: ARFID https://youtu.be/nBbB98bMaRg		
Signposting		
Name of organisation	**Description**	**Link**
Beat	Website for advice on support with eating disorders	www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk
ARFID Awareness UK	Charity dedicated to raising awareness and support for those with ARFID	https://www.arfidawarenessuk.org/
West Sussex Parent Carer Forum	Sign up to West Sussex Parent Carer Forum and email us, call us or Facebook message us to find out where to get help when you need it. We support Parent Carers of children and young people age 0-25 with SEND, diagnosed or un-diagnosed.	West Sussex Parent Carer Forum | Information | Training
Conversation Starters		
Do you have a child who struggles with eating/is a restrictive eater?		
What worries you the most about your child's diet? (you won't be alone!)		
What effect does this have on mealtimes in the home? Have you shared with the school how disordered eating may affect your child's learning?		
Top tips from other Parent Carers		
Connect with other Parent Carers with similar lived experience.		
Visit credited websites to learn as much as you can about the 32 steps in eating!		
Remember, it is not your fault, the more stress around eating the harder your child will find it! Start to try introducing foods at the developmental stage they were at when they stopped eating, not with foods 'appropriate' to their current age.		

Appendix 21

Themed coffee morning topic guides - Toileting

Toileting

Video Links
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2llHtvYno9g&list=PLCziuzRdKY1N-WrKCEdUUhJHXTXgTknXo&index=1

Community Bladder and Bowel - Top tips (Paeds)

Signposting

Name of organisation	Description	Link
ERIC	ERIC is a bladder and bowel charity that provides information, advice, training and support to children and their families affected by continence issues.	Home - ERIC
Bladder and Bowel UK	Bladder and Bowel charity which has a separate section for children offering advice.	Bladder & Bowel UK home page - Bladder & Bowel UK
West Sussex School Nursing Service	The school nurses (also known as specialist community public health nurses) provide a service for children, young people, and families, offering health needs assessments with additional support when needed.	https://www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/services/school-nursing-service

Conversation Starters

Does your child struggle with constipation?

Does your child struggle with bedwetting?

Does your child find using the toilet away from home difficult, such as in school?

Top tips from other Parent Carers

Visit the ERIC website, it has a whole range of useful information on all the various topics of toileting. It also has downloadable resources such as social stories and visuals.

Reach out to the GP/medical professionals for help.

Though toileting can be a subject that is not commonly talked about, please don't feel alone, bowel and bladder problems are common in children.

www.wspcf.org.uk

West Sussex Parent Carer Forum