



## **Protocol between the Parent Carers Aiming High and Bath and North East Somerset Council for the involvement of parents in meetings, consultations and focus groups.**

### **Purpose:**

The protocol was drawn up between Bath and North East Somerset Council and the Parent Carer Aiming High Forum, to outline the agreed principles, objectives and subsequent implementation of parent carer involvement and participation within Bath and North East Somerset Council's children's department, with particular focus around parent carer involvement in the long term development and implementation of the Disabled Children's Strategy.

### **Context:**

Government initiatives such as *Every Disabled Child Matters- Change for Children* and *Aiming High for Disabled Children* set out a clear vision for all families with disabled children to have the support they need to live ordinary family lives. *Aiming High for Disabled Children* intended to ensure that parent carers in all local areas become actively involved in strategic decision making in relation to the provision of services for disabled children. The government expected local areas to build on good practice in engaging parents of disabled children e.g. through parent groups/forums, aided by staff who had the skills to support participation, to engage, support and train parents to influence the design and delivery of services.

**"Involving parents and carers in planning and developing services is the best way of creating cost-effective, responsive services that work for families." – Aiming High for Disabled Children.**

As part of the AHDC programme, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) committed £5 million between 2008 -11 to support the development of parent and carer participation in service development

Over the period 2008-2010, £3 million was available through a programme of grants and support groups to help develop participation activities in each local authority area across England.

### **Local Context:**

As a result of these initiatives Bath and North East Somerset Children's Services extended its work with parent carer's and other local groups, providing support to disabled children and their families, and keen to inform and engage in the process of participation.

Significantly, in order to look at the broader impact of services to families, the Council supported the Bath Carers Centre to apply for central government funding to set up a parent carer forum and as a result the Parent Carers Aiming High was formed. To support the group to develop in size and infrastructure, Bath & North East Somerset Children's Services funded a Parent Carer Facilitator post at the Carers Centre. Since that time the council has been working in close partnership with Parent Carers Aiming High.

*Parent Carers Aiming High* is an independent group led by local parents who provide an opportunity for parent carers to work together to have their voice heard and to influence changes to local services.

### **Mission Statement of the Group:**

*Parent Carers Aiming High* is a group of parent carers of children and young people with a range of disabilities in Bath and North East Somerset who aim to improve the services and support for children and young people with additional needs by raising awareness of unmet needs and by being a collective voice. We work in partnership with policy makers and practitioners, sharing experience, knowledge and skills to ensure that all children with additional needs are fully included in society and have access to the support and facilities necessary to sustain their wellbeing and that of their families throughout their whole lives."

### **Objectives of the Protocol:**

The objectives of the protocol are to ensure that both the Parent Carers Aiming High Group and Bath and North East Somerset work towards a model of partnership in all aspects of planning and delivery of local services. The aim is to ensure that participation becomes embedded across all services that affect parents of disabled children, such as Transitions and Housing departments. In addition it is recognised that participation should be part of

everyone's every day practice, from senior strategic decision makers to frontline staff and that all agencies and departments who are involved at any level, should work to the same level of participation.

At the outset of this collaborative, co-operative approach to supporting families it was and still is important that Bath and North East Somerset creates, promotes and sustains a culture of parent participation that is across the board.

In order therefore to support parental involvement as outlined above a number of Agreed Processes were developed.

### **Agreed Processes in Place for Parental Involvement.**

#### **Before meetings/focus groups.**

Bath and North East Somerset Council agree to:

- Seek the involvement of Parent Carers Aiming High in all meetings that impact the lives of disabled children. To include Adult Services Meetings. (this excludes meetings which discuss individual cases)
- Ensure parents are aware of the purposes of the meetings and the extent/impact of their involvement.
- Ensure parents are on circulation lists for minutes and agenda's.
- Plan timing and venues of meetings to ensure parents are able to attend -equality of access.
- Ensure a feedback mechanism be in place.
- Pay parents appropriate expenses and costs for attending meetings.

Parents agree to:

- Consult with the parent group in order to get a wide representative view.
- Consult with the Chair or meeting lead beforehand if unsure of any aspect of the meeting.
- Be prepared for the meeting and have done any relevant background meetings.

#### **At meetings.**

Bath and North East Somerset agree to:

- Ensure parents are comfortable and know who the Chair is.
- Ensure a minimal use of acronyms and ensure that everything is clearly explained.
- Ensure introductions are carried out.

Parents agree to:

- Be clear whether their view is a personal view or representative of the parent groups.
- Agree on confidentiality where appropriate.

**After meetings.**

Bath and North East Somerset agree to:

- Give parents the opportunity to debrief after meeting with appropriate professional.

Parents agree to:

- Give feedback to Parent Carers Aiming High at the next available opportunity or in writing.