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| **You said……** | **……..We did or are doing.** |
| Families said that they currently feel like “everything feels like a fight” when navigating processes around SEND. This concern also extends to other services, such as medical professionals. | We acknowledge the significant challenges faced by families and the broader systemic issues within the SEND system. During our discussions, we emphasised the importance of maintaining open and constructive dialogue with parents and carers, working collaboratively to support children and young people. To strengthen this partnership, we will explore:   * **Regular Parent/Carer Forums** – Creating dedicated spaces for families to voice concerns and share experiences. * **Clearer Communication Channels** – Ensuring families feel heard and informed through transparent and accessible communication. * **A centralised point of contact or key worker model** – Providing a more consistent and streamlined communication process for families.   There was also discussion about the wider education system, with concerns that it is not fully meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. Recognising the ongoing government efforts towards SEND reform and more inclusive schools, the SEN and EP team will actively seek input from parents and carers. We will:   * **Signpost families to relevant consultations** – Empowering them to contribute to policy and practice discussions. * **Advocate for reforms** that reflect the real needs of children and young people with SEND.   **Addressing Housing Challenges for Families with SEND**  Families raised concerns about the suitability of council-provided housing, particularly issues such as unsafe outdoor spaces and the prolonged processes required to address these concerns. To support families, we will:   * **Engage more closely with local housing teams** – Raising awareness of the specific needs of children with SEND. * **Advocate for housing policies** that prioritise accessibility and safety for families.   **Strengthening Support Networks for Parents and Carers**  Another key issue highlighted was the lack of strong support networks for parents and carers with SEND themselves, often leading to feelings of isolation. In response, we will:   * **Develop peer-to-peer support initiatives** – Encouraging connection and shared experiences. * **Facilitate community-based support groups** – Providing safe discussion and mutual support spaces. * **Signpost families to existing services** – Ensuring emotional and practical support access. |
| Families raised concerns about the waiting list for special schools and the unpredictability of children and their families waiting to be allocated a place at a specialist setting. They shared that challenges within family dynamics could be alleviated with greater consistency and clearer communication around this process. | A key focus of our work is developing and embedding a graduated response framework, enabling schools to:   * **Identify, assess, and support** children’s needs early. * **Shift from crisis-driven interventions** to proactive, integrated SEND support. * **Ensure SEND support is embedded within everyday teaching and learning.**   To support this, we provide training and resources for school staff, equipping them with the skills to effectively implement inclusive teaching strategies. This approach ensures children receive the help they need without immediately resorting to one-to-one support.  School staff training will focus on adaptive teaching techniques and scaffolding learning to foster independence. This will ensure that children develop key skills while receiving appropriate support.  **Co-Producing Change with Parents and Carers**  Parents and carers must be at the heart of decision-making for meaningful change. Through co-production, we ensure that families have a voice in shaping the future of SEND provision in Tameside. We will continue to:   * **Engage with parents and carers** to seek their input on SEND reforms. * **Work collaboratively to create more inclusive schools** that meet the needs of all learners. |
| Attendees discussed the role of parents and carers in identifying the most suitable specialist provision for their child, particularly in relation to parental choice within the EHC and placement process. They considered whether parents should proactively explore potential settings or wait for confirmation of where their child may be placed.  Concerns were also raised about school placements being determined by a panel that has less direct knowledge of the child and their specific needs. | The team recognises the importance of parents and carers making informed decisions about school choices but cannot directly advise on specific placements due to a conflict of interest. Instead, we encourage families to seek guidance from Tameside Service Information Service SEND Support Services - Tameside MBC or independent organisations such as IPSEA (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice) for impartial advice and support.  In addition, we recommend that parents and carers engage with local parent/carer forums, such as Umbrella or OKE, where they can connect with other families who have firsthand experience navigating the SEND system. The insights and recommendations from other parents and carers can be invaluable in understanding different settings and what to expect.  Visiting schools remains one of the most effective ways for parents and carers to assess suitability and trust their instincts. Professionals highlighted the importance of ensuring families feel a sense of belonging within a school community, as this plays a crucial role in their child’s overall experience. While there is unlikely to be a “perfect school”, the SEN team is committed to supporting families in finding the “best fit”—a school that can effectively meet the child's needs and provide a nurturing environment.  When visiting schools, parents and carers may find it helpful to ask the SENDCo key questions, such as:  🗸 “Have you got a child with similar needs?” – This can provide insight into the school’s experience in supporting children with similar profiles.  🗸 “How does the school support inclusion?” – Understanding their approach to differentiation, interventions, and additional support can help parents determine the school's suitability.  🗸 “How does the school work with families?” – A strong home-school partnership is essential for ensuring ongoing support and communication.  By signposting families to trusted sources of advice, encouraging peer support, and emphasising the importance of visiting schools, we aim to empower parents and carers to make well-informed decisions |
| Families discussed how their views were sometimes at odds with professionals, highlighting the example of exploring what is available to parents and carers, as well as their rights. They expressed concerns about the need for clearer information and greater transparency in these discussions. | We discussed the value of participating in school activities and events, which can:  • Strengthen the sense of belonging for both parents/carers and children.  • Improve relationships between families and schools, fostering better communication and collaboration.  • Provide informal opportunities to share knowledge and experiences, helping to build a more inclusive and supportive school environment.  To support this, we are:  • Encouraging schools to offer inclusive events that cater to the needs of SEND families.  • Promoting local parent/carer forums and networks, ensuring families are aware of the support available to them.  • Facilitating connections between families, helping them access the wider SEND community. |
| Parents reported concerns around the lack of advice around Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices. | The LA is Supporting the Use of AAC Devices and Picture Cards for Communication.  We recognise the importance of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in supporting children with communication needs. Families shared their experiences of children preferring AAC devices over picture cards and the challenges they have faced in encouraging engagement with different communication methods.  Discussions were held around how AAC devices and picture cards are provided and funded, with families raising questions about accessibility and financial support. To address this, we are working on:  • Providing clearer information on funding options for AAC devices, including support from local authorities, NHS services, and charities.  • Exploring training opportunities for parents and carers to help them implement communication strategies effectively at home. EPS will look at how their training offer can encapsulate this.  • Signposting families to specialist services that can offer guidance on choosing the most suitable communication tools for their child. |