

**Dear John and relevant stakeholders,**

**I write to you on behalf of SENDAC (the Statutory Parent Carer Forum for Cumbria). The motivation for this letter comes in response to the move from the SEND Improvement Board model and working groups to a Continuous Improvement Programme. Whilst we understand the need to move forward with the CIP, given the need for SEND to remain on the agenda amongst the ongoing work with LGR and the change from ICGs and CCGs into the NHS, the draft proposal and discussions we have been party to have highlighted some concerns.**

**Our relationship with partners is an extremely positive one, therefore we feel confident that bringing these concerns to light will continue to strengthen the partnership and help develop and shape services to support SEND effectively. The Forum and parent carers across the county need reassurance that parent, families and young person’s voices are going to remain at the heart of ongoing work; that they will have the opportunity to influence the decision-making process and that actions taken and progress made will be transparent and open to challenge. It has been said by practitioners, in the working groups, that ‘challenge and input is appreciated and valued.’**

 **The Local Authority have signed an MOU, which demonstrates a commitment to work in and abide by the principles of coproduction with the forum; that they value the experiences and views of parent/carers of children and young people with SEND, including their role in raising issues and providing constructive feedback through open dialogue. With this in mind, SENDAC are concerned about the lack of detail as to how co-production will happen in practice.**

**It is clear that some sections of the plan regarding ASD and transition from child to adult services are robust, with clear, sensible actions and timescales. In comparison, the section on the plan for EHCPs is sparse and the actions are process focused, rather than child-centred. To ensure the best outcomes for children and families there is a need for the plans to be clear in terms of language and specificity of provision. There is also a need of a clear breakdown to show how the backlog of annual reviews will be tackled and a detailed plan needs to be issued to show how this will be managed effectively, to ensure that the legal deadlines aren’t missed and that the reviews remain on track.**

**Whilst we welcome the idea of a Children’s Commissioning Partnership, it brings about the same need for assurance: that families are going to be included in the partnership, as equal stakeholders.**

**SENDAC are pleased to see that parent priorities are reflected with the inclusion of the section on the plan for Outcomes and Sufficiency of provision. However, the actions in this section are very weak in SENDAC’s view and require significant attention to ensure it delivers on the priorities identified. The plan should clearly set out how future needs will be tracked and monitored in terms of education placement and how the Local Authority will ensure it uses this data to properly plan to ensure appropriate education placements are available to meet the needs of children coming through the system in the years to come.**

**In addition to what has been mentioned above, we would suggest that SENDAC should be party to regular meetings with the service leads, existing partnership groups or task groups who will take responsibility for the ongoing work from the working groups. Also that knowledge and understanding of the forum and coproduction should be a key priority for the new leads to ensure that they remain accessible for parent carers and that they understand the importance of feedback that they provide.**

**I am aware that the SEND Improvement Board will take place next week and that it is hoped that the CIP will no longer be in the draft stage, howeverI urge you to take into consideration the points we have made and make relevant amendments to ensure the quality of co-productive work, that has been evident in the working groups, is not lost in the move to the Continuous Improvement Programme. I look forward to your timely response in the next few weeks.**

**Kind Regards**

SENDAC- Cumbria Parent carer forum