

Talking points

The NNPCF is a membership organisation and our mission states that “we aim to empower our members to ensure that their voice is heard at a local, regional and national level.”

Working with our membership we have identified a number of key “talking points” - these are topics and themes that are the most important to our membership and the ones that have been prioritised by the NNPCF.

Based on feedback from our membership and from other partners and stakeholders, the “talking point” summarise:

- The lived experience of our members about each topic,
- What is working and what is not working, and
- What we would like to see changed.

The talking points have been created using a range of feedback which includes:

- Surveys (including the SEND surveys)
- Feedback from our annual conferences
- The topics raised at regional meetings
- Themes and topics raised by our membership on social media
- Face to face conversations with our membership

Local Area Inspections

The NNPCF welcomes the joint Ofsted / CQC inspection regime. Following its introduction, we have seen a marked improvement in the focus and urgency from local areas in their implementation of the SEND reforms. In particular, we have seen an improvement in the engagement of CCGs.

The inspections have been an overwhelming success from the point of view of forums and we will be urging the DfE during to extend them beyond the current five-year period to become a permanent part of the regulatory framework.

Forums have raised some concerns about some aspects of the inspections, specifically, making suggestions on how they could be conducted differently to engage parent-carers more effectively and to minimise the impact on forums. We also recognise the additional burden that inspections have placed on forums

but have been impressed with the way that they have risen to the challenge to engage with inspectors in an active and meaningful way.

Highlighting the right issues

The NNPCF are pleased to note that the inspections are highlighting many of the issues that forums have been raising with us. The emphasis on leadership, joint commissioning, joint working, the quality and timeliness of EHCPs, waiting times for key services, personal budgets and transitional arrangements mirrors areas of concern for parent carer forums.

We have shared our top priorities with the joint inspectorate following our meeting with them in March 2017. Our list included:

- EHCPs
- Joint commissioning
- PfA
- SEN support
- Short breaks
- CAMHS
- Health engagement

Continuation of the inspection regime

We believe the regular inspections must be a permanent part of the regulatory regime for SEND.

They have quickly become the cornerstone of the compliance and monitoring of the reforms. Forums across the country report a renewed focus on the reforms as a result and improved engagement from partners, notably CCGs as a result.

We have informed the DfE that we would like to see the inspection regime continue beyond its current five-year period.

We will be working with them during the evaluation phase to see them becoming a permanent feature.

Expert parents on inspection teams

We believe inspections could be made more effective by the inclusion of “experts by experience” on inspection teams. We would like to explore this further with the joint inspectorate.

This was raised following delegate discussions at the NNPCF 2017 conference.

The CQC already includes experts by experience in some of its inspection activities. These experts would not necessarily come from the parent carer forum movement and would be required to be from a different geographical area.

Some potential improvements in the inspection process

There are several concerns / comments that parent carer forums have noted about the inspection process:

- Forums have reported some resistance to their involvement in parts of the CQC inspections on grounds of confidentiality and data protection. However, given that levels of engagement by health and social care partners are a consistent source of concern amongst forums, this risks inspectors missing out on the full picture. *We believe forums should be invited to all relevant meetings. Forums understand the need for confidentiality and would willingly step out of sensitive parts of such meetings.*
- The inspections place a heavy burden on parent carer forums, many of whom have very limited resources (both people and money). *Local authorities may need to make some additional monies available to forums if required.*
- Some forums have reported that they themselves have felt like they are being inspected – with heavy reliance on volunteers and goodwill of parents this

We have shared these concerns with the joint inspectorate when we met with them in March 2017.

In addition, the joint inspectorate held two training days for inspectors in April 2017 at which NNPCF steering group members presented as key note speakers. We emphasised these points to the joint inspectorate and they were clearly understood and were well received.

The senior inspectors have since clarified that forums are not being inspected and there is no expectation for forums to attend all inspection meetings.

We emphasised these points at the joint inspectorate training days in April 2017.

is unhelpful and may damage long term involvement in participation.

- Communication and engagement around the inspection is a common concern. Some forums have reported late communication and miscommunications with inspection teams. Others have reported that their local authority have not shared the draft letter they have received after the inspection. Some inspections have been understanding of forum requests – for example changing times of focus groups and webinars to accommodate local needs whereas others have not. *We recommend early and regular communication and engagement with parent carer forums. This should involve planning discussions about how best to engage the local community (e.g. timings of webinars).*
- Some forums have felt that inspectors have not had a good understanding of the difference between individual and strategic co-production and understood the parent participation agenda, what a PCF is and what its role is.
- There have been some cases where forums have felt that their views have not been given enough emphasis and that local authority explanations or rebuttals have been accepted unfairly.

For examples of surveys, see note 2 below.

How should forums approach inspections?

- The key thing that inspectors want from parent carer engagement is evidence that they have reached a broad section of the community. The best ways forums can do this is to maintain membership and activity lists and highlight any recent surveys you have conducted.
- Forums should not regard themselves as the exclusive voices of parent carers – inspectors will seek to understand the views of any active, representative groups in the area and of parents who are not a part of a formal group.

We emphasised these points at the joint inspectorate training days in April 2017.

- Parent carers should be at the heart of strategic processes, not just “let in”. If your forum feels that co-production in your area is not what it should be, then you should tell the inspectors.
- Some forums have found that their relationship with the local authority and CCGs has deteriorated following an inspection because the forum was critical. It may be an idea to ensure that Forums regularly update stakeholders in their local area on what they consider the key issues to be in a formal capacity to prevent any fall out following inspections.



From the summary findings from joint inspectorate reports – see note 5.

Notes:

Sharing best practice / communication points

1. See Contact a Family Webinar on Local Area Inspections
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60_Cgx4mNds&feature=youtu.be
2. Suffolk parent-carer surveys to prepare for inspections (based on Hertfordshire survey)
 - a. <http://spcn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SPCN-Survey-Results.pdf>
 - b. <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/EHCfeedback>
3. The NNPCF were closely involved in the implementation of the current inspection framework. For our briefing paper on the inspection framework see. <http://www.nnpcf.org.uk/ofsted-and-cqc-send-inspection-framework/>
4. For a link to all of the published inspection reports see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspection-outcome-letters>
5. Local Area SEND inspections: one year on Care Quality Commission and Ofsted October 2017
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspections-one-year-on>