



## Bexley Voice - Parent Carer Forum

Supporting parents and carers of a child or young person under 25 with a disability or special need living in Bexley and giving parent/carers the opportunity to have a 'voice'  
Together we can make a difference...



## Bexley Voice “Making a difference survey” March 2019

This report presents the findings of the Bexley Voice “Making a difference” member’s survey. There are currently 1192 members registered with Bexley Voice of which 481 are members of the Facebook group. The survey took place in March 2019 and was responded to by a total of 56 members. The survey link was sent to all members via e-mail. It was also promoted on Bexley Voice’s website, Facebook page, e-bulletin and at various events. Participants were not asked to share their personal details and no demographic information was captured. The survey explored participant’s experiences of Bexley Voice’s services. Questions were open ended and participants were encouraged to write freely and share their personal experience. Bexley Voice (BV) would like to thank all their members for participating and for their valuable contribution.

### Key findings:

The majority of parents and carers who responded reported feeling emotionally supported by BV. They cited post diagnosis support, peer support and the help BV provide to navigate what can be a complex system as being significant to their feeling supported. Respondents indicated that the BV are a reliable first point of contact when parents and carers are in pursuit of information, support or signposting.

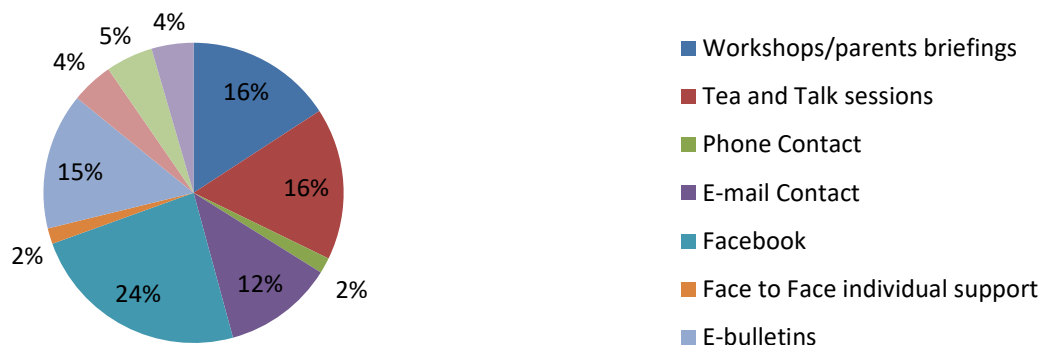
A small minority of respondents stated that Bexley Voice did not always offer information relevant to their child’s needs.

## Results of the Survey

### Q1. Type of Contact with Bexley Voice

The chart demonstrates that the majority of contact with Bexley Voice is through its Facebook page (75%), followed by Tea and Talk (52%) and workshops/parent briefings (50%). This demonstrates that while social media is a useful method of accessing information and support, half of respondent’s access face to face support.

### What contact have you had with Bexley Voice? Please list all that apply



## **Q2. Type of support accessed**

Members were asked to specify what support they had accessed and how useful they found it. This include sign-posting, a listening ear and information. Members stated they had accessed support ranging from EHCP support, transport and travel assistance, specialist education, dyslexia, school support, preparing for adulthood and signposting to other services and information. The majority of respondents stated that the information and help they had received has been very helpful and had a positive impact on their ability to deal with a situation.

Two respondents, who had accessed the Facebook page for support, stated that they did not find the interaction with Bexley Voice helpful, as the information was not relevant to their child's needs:

### **Bexley Voice Response:**

*In response to this feedback the facebook admin team reviewed all posts over the last 12 months. Over 150 of the posts in this timeframe did not focus on ASD or ADHD. The posts covered a range of topics including education, SEN Support, EHC Plans, Financial, Health and Medical information, social activities, preparing for adulthood, local and national consultations, local and national organisations and events.*

*As the facebook group is member led and the majority of our members have children/young people with ASD and/or ADHD, there will be a higher number of posts on these conditions. Bexley Voice will continue to monitor the facebook group to ensure that the majority of posts are pan-disability and are researching many various special needs and disabilities to share information with the members.*

## **Q.3 Workshops & Briefings**

Almost half of the respondents (26) reported taking part in a workshop. Several respondents stated they would have liked to attend a workshop but were unable to due to work commitments. The type of workshops people had attended included education welfare, early Intervention, ADHD, ASD post diagnosis, EHCP workshops, eating issues, supporting young people in a digital world, universal credits, sensory processing workshop, short breaks and SEND transport meetings. All of the respondents reported a positive experience from taking part in a workshop/briefing.

### **Bexley Voice Response:**

*BV organise workshop on subjects requested by parents. They continue to be open to any workshop suggestions from parents. BV have arranged several evening workshops for parents who may be unable to attend during the day. These workshops are often poorly attended. BV is voluntary led and it is essential to consider the best use of volunteer time when scheduling workshops.*

## **Q4. Tea and Talk**

Bexley Voice organise monthly Tea and Talk sessions for parents and carers and regularly invite guest speakers to come and share information on services. Members were asked if they had attended Tea and Talk and what they found most useful. 30 people stated they had attended Tea and Talk and their feedback demonstrates that meeting and talking to other parents is the most valuable aspect of Tea and Talk (15), closely followed by guest speakers (12) and receiving information (7). 17 people stated they had not attended Tea and Talk. Some of the non-attendees stated work commitments as a barrier as other said "not yet" but were hoping to attend in the future.

## What do you find most useful when you attend Tea and Talk?



The majority of respondents positive feedback and comments related to being able to speak to other parents in the same situation. Guest speakers attracted a significant amount of positive responses with speakers from Carers Support Bexley, the Bexley Family Wellbeing team and Mind in Bexley identified as particularly valuable. Respondents also valued speaking directly to Bexley Voice volunteers/staff for one to one support. One person stated receiving help with their child's EHCP was particularly valuable.

One respondent, who had been to one Tea and Talk event, felt that the session was "overtaken" by one parent who dominated with questions that were relevant to her situation. The respondent suggested that the person should have been asked to speak to a Bexley Voice volunteer at the end of the session.

### **Bexley Voice Response:**

*BV has offered 3 evening Tea and Talk sessions. These sessions attracted a very small number of parents compared to our daytime sessions. BV will continue to offer evening Tea and Talk groups once per term to ensure that all members have the opportunity to attend a group.*

*BV have implemented ways to ensure that all members have the opportunity to speak. This includes referring members who have further questions to speak to one of the BV team after the group discussion has finished. From September 2019 BV will also be providing a 'session agenda' that will include housekeeping rules for the group.*

### **Q5. Facebook group**

The Facebook page is a closed, parent/carer members only, group. The Facebook page is used to advertise events, signpost, promote services and ask members for feedback on particular issues. The group is also used for members to post questions or share personal experiences. At present here are approximately 480 members of the closed group.

Members were asked if they use the Facebook page, how useful they found it and why. The feedback demonstrates that 90% of Facebook users thought the group was useful, with the majority of members expressing very positive comments in relation to how they had found it useful.

However, a small number of people (4) stated they had accessed the Facebook page but had not found it useful. The main reason given being that the posts and information were not relevant to their child's need. There was some feedback that the majority of posts relate to ASD and ADHD and that this left some parents feeling excluded from the group.

## **Bexley Voice Response:**

*Please refer to Q2 Facebook group response.*

*The BV team are all parents or carers of a child or young person with various special needs and disabilities including Down Syndrome, Dyslexia, Social emotional and mental health (SEMH), Epilepsy, Global development delay, genetic conditions and Hearing Impairment. Any member who would like support or information on a particular need can post themselves or contact Bexley Voice by email/telephone to post on their behalf.*

### **Q6. E-bulletins**

Bexley Voice issues a monthly e-bulletin to all of its members. The e-bulletin contains information about upcoming events, such as Tea and Talk, how to get involved and service development updates. Members were asked to describe how useful they have found the e-bulletin and what information in particular they found useful.

The majority of respondents, 83%, stated that they found the e-bulletin useful and the majority of positive responses related to information about upcoming events and courses. Respondents also appreciated having all of this information captured in one place.

Of the 9 people who did not record positive feedback, 4 stated “not applicable” and 4 said they did not find the e-bulletin useful, although wider explanations were not provided.

## **Bexley Voice Response:**

*BV are keen to understand why 4 members did not find the E-bulletin useful and welcome any further feedback by telephone or email.*

### **Q7. School visits**

BV offer a school visit programme for parents and carers. It is an informal visit to meet the parents and carers of children and young people SEND to let them know what BV can offer them.

Members were asked if they had attended a school visit, whether they found the visit useful and why. The majority of respondents had not attended a school visit with some stating “not applicable” or “not yet”. One parent said they would have liked to attend to but hadn’t received an invitation from the school.

Of the 11 people who had attended a school visit all responded with positive feedback. Much of this related to the benefits of the SENCO being part of the visit and receiving the same information.

## **Bexley Voice Response:**

*Bexley Voice promotes our school visit programme to nurseries, primary, secondary, post 16 and to both mainstream and special schools. Schools must invite Bexley Voice as our service is not a statutory requirement.*

*Bexley Voice are now promoting the school visits booked via our Facebook page to ensure that all members are made aware of the visit in advance and are encouraging schools to send a pre-prepared letter to any parent who has a child/young person with special needs including those that are not yet on SEN Support or have an EHC Plan.*

### **Q8. Contact via telephone and e-mail**

Bexley Voice offer support, signposting and information via e-mail and telephone to its members. As question 1 demonstrate, less than half of respondents (21) have contacted Bexley Voice via

telephone and only 3 people stated they had used e-mail to access support. Around one in four respondents reported having used either telephone or e-mail to contact BV and 100% of respondents reported a positive experience and found the support helpful.

### **Bexley Voice Response:**

*BV supports parents and carers during term time only and have a voicemail/email auto reply for parents during the holidays including contact details for the Bexley Local Offer, Contact A Family and our website if support is required urgently.*

### **Q9. Members views of Bexley Voice**

Members were encouraged to use one word to describe what BV means to them. The words used to describe BV were overwhelmingly positive with “invaluable”, “helpful” and “supportive” being the most cited words.



One person used the word “unwelcoming” to describe Bexley Voice.

### **Bexley Voice Response:**

*As the member did not state in which way BV were ‘unwelcoming’ we are unable to provide a detailed response. If any members have feedback we encourage them to get in contact so that we are able to address the issue and offer appropriate support.*

### **Q.10 Personal success stories**

Members were asked to share any personal success stories that had involved the support of BV. 20 respondents shared their stories of which 19 recorded positive feedback in relation to the support they had received from BV. Comments broadly relates to the wealth of information and resources that BV offer to parents/carers.

One parent who responded to the question felt that BV did not offer support that related to their child and felt isolated as a result:

### **Bexley Voice Response:**

*Please refer to Q2 and Q5 responses.*

## **Conclusion and key findings:**

This survey demonstrates that the services BV offer to their members are highly valued. It highlights that access to peer support and information has a positive impact on emotional wellbeing. The majority of parents and carers who responded reported feeling emotionally supported by BV. They cited post diagnosis support, peer support and the help BV provide to navigate what can be a complex system as significant positive factors. Respondents indicated that BV are a reliable first point of contact when parents and carers are in pursuit of information, support or signposting. A small minority of respondents stated that Bexley Voice did not always offer information relevant to their child's needs.

## **How do parents engage with BV and what are the key topics they engaged with?**

Facebook page (75%), Tea and Talk (52%), Workshops/parent briefings (50%) - Members stated they had accessed support ranging from EHCP support, transport and travel assistance, specialist education, dyslexia, school support, preparing for adulthood and signposting to other services and information.

## **What did parents tell us that they valued about the services BV offer?**

- ✓ Having a reliable point of contact who can support and/or signpost to other services
- ✓ Speaking directly and face to face with BV volunteers
- ✓ Meeting and sharing experiences with other parents
- ✓ Hearing from guest speakers at workshops and tea and talk sessions
- ✓ Having access to the facebook group
- ✓ Having e-bulletin information in one place
- ✓ Attending school visits with their child's SENCO

## **What steps have BV taken to address areas members highlighted as requiring further improvements?**

- Reviewed the Facebook posts to ensure topics remain varied
- Continue to respond to workshop suggestions by parents
- Continue to offer one evening tea and talk session per term
- Provide a session agenda and housekeeping rules for group sessions
- Continue to encourage parents/carers requiring support to contact BV or post on Facebook
- Make use of Facebook posts to promote school visits