

## **Social Care Feedback from the Oxfordshire SEND Room**

*(a facebook peer to peer support group for parent carers who care for a child/young person and access services in Oxfordshire, hosted by OxPCF and OxFSN)*

*Earlier on in November, a parent carer posted a question about accessing a children's social care assessment. This post had multiple comments and responses from group members. Please find below the question and the comments made.*

**Question: Have you ever asked OCC for a social care needs assessment for your autistic child and been turned down? I ask because OCCs social care policy says children who are "just" autistic can't get social care from the disability team.**

**I wonder if there are other families with autistic children who've had similar experiences to us of not having their social care needs assessed or met?**

**Responses** = 14 parents responded to comment that they have also been turned down due to this reason. Engagement was 87 comments on this post on the 12th November 2021.

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### **This is what some parent/carers said:**

"I was turned down twice and for carers. My son is now 20 and has only just been allocated a social worker... but in name really"

"I made a formal complaint but didn't get anywhere. Feels very much like discrimination"

"I have asked for social workers from the disability team and they just say it's for people with severe disability or some other discriminatory phrase. Yet under standard social services they have had me for neglect. Some of the things they said that really upset me as a carer included I was over reliant on calling 111 and that I had to use the police to support on two occasions. If I have been part of calling them and asking for that support for my child in meltdown doesn't that make me part of a team of professionals rather than a neglectful parent"

"My child is autistic but that's not her primary need, she also has physical disabilities. Despite being a single parent of two and having had two safeguarding referrals and involvement of children's services/social worker due to behaviour of ex-husband we aren't at the threshold of needing any support. So don't pin any hopes on an assessment actually achieving anything - did not formally have a social care needs assessment, but we had a social worker (they sent a student) come to assess whether my kids were safe and whether we needed further support, and the answer was no. I had requested support and was offered a TAF which again concluded that I didn't warrant any support and any respite we needed could be provided by their dad (who was the reason the safeguarding process was instigated). I gave up, because constantly being told you don't need help is so utterly demoralising that my mental health is better assuming I get nothing than hoping I could get something or being angry when they say I don't need it"

"Been there, and my son is autistic and also has a physical / medical disability. He was also refused any assessment and told he didn't meet the criteria. After having written a formal letter, my son was assessed and we have now had our assessment report from the social worker and they have refused any support for us. The assessment acknowledges my child has complex and often

severe needs yet refuses any support and I'm now currently seeking legal advice. I am left feeling my time has been colossally wasted so far in going through with the assessment - it's even more of an insult to me as a mother of a disabled child that they would waste my time and energy like this when the whole point is I need more support and don't have enough time and energy."

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### **Breakdown of issues raised regarding Social Care Needs Assessments for those with Autism:**

- Student Social Workers on placement carrying out the social care needs assessment
- Mental health concerns - parents wellbeing and mental health concerns
- Demoralising - to be told "no you do not need support - you do not meet the criteria"
- Safeguarding process instigated due to care provided by parent but still being asked to use this parent as child care option when they are a problem
- Being told to contact police if concerned and then some parents being labelled neglectful due to the number of times they have contacted 111 but there is no support being put in place
- Parent carers feel this is discriminatory
- Being refused an assessment even though the child has Autism and medical needs - parents turning to charities such as Cerbra for free legal advice and support
- After formal complaints a child was assessed and this child met the criteria. However, they are now struggling to implement his plan as he's still not eligible to be under the disability team.
- Parent said safeguarding would need to run the CiN plan as the child was "just" autistic. Safeguarding initially refused and said it had to go to early help. After a long delay and a meeting they've now started to support the family - but are trying to get direct payments out of the disability team as that's clearly what the child needs and it's unclear if they can get them still.
- CAMHS have asked three times on behalf of a family's young person and every time they say 'what exactly would you like us to do? Everything is already in place and there's nothing more we can offer'. This parent's young person has multiple complex needs including ASC and SPD.
- Single parent with 2 autistic Sons. The eldest is autistic, has severe mental health needs with regular absconding in a panic-stricken state, he goes to a special school, has learning disabilities, has a rare gastrointestinal condition. The youngest has ASC (possibly ADHD) SPD, anxiety disorder and neuro-muscular condition affecting his mobility/muscles/nerves - so much so that he sometimes needs a wheelchair... and I, myself am registered disabled with numerous medical conditions under various specialists... BUT even with all of this between the 3 of us, my repeat requests for a OCC disability team to just assess us is constantly just "NO, YOU STILL DON'T MEET THE CRITERIA FOR US TO OFFER AN

ASSESSMENT THIS TIME" ...CAMHS have repeatedly asked on our behalf, the police have asked on our behalf and the Early Help team at MASH have also been pushing for it... But none of that has carried any weight at all....So after hitting the dead end with all of that for the past 5-6 years or so, I have just accepted that it's a NO and it is what it is. And now just having to look at paying privately with DLA & PIP to get extra practical hands-on support.

- Parent with asd/adhd. The young person is asd/adhd/pda/anxiety disorder and others. Under tier 4 CAMHS. This family had a family assessment which highlighted the need for respite yet the disability team said the yp needs are too low for an assessment from them, early help said his needs are too high for help from them!
- Parents being told Oxfordshire follow the safeguarding model and not the support the family model
- Concerns that families are reaching out in extreme circumstances and they are not being supported.
- Even though CAMHS and the Police are asking for the family to be assessed, this still is not happening.
- Didn't get as far as a Social Care Needs Assessment because family told the needs could be met by the 'Local Offer'
- Parents requested numerous times for an assessment to get support but it's always turned down despite numerous diagnoses. When the parent questioned why, they were told it was because the child's EHCP state's learning difficulties and NOT disabilities.
- Parents are informed that the threshold is so high that they look for things like Autistic kids being non-verbal, having severe learning difficulties and severe cognitive impairment, being fed by tube/peg, wheelchair bound etc. They don't see high functioning autism, moderate learning difficulties, sensory issues etc as valid enough reasons to offer assessment. This has been repeatedly told to parents - the family receives a duty social worker from MASH/Early Help each time a new referral is made, we have a few phone calls, a couple of check-in homes visits to see what other support they can offer and because we are already linked in with AFSO, OASIS and other outside contacts they are refused support.