Together is Better Agreement

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Together is Better Agreement

The context for our agreement

- This is an agreement setting out how we as the following organisations and individuals can work together: -
- **SEND and You** (SAY), Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS),
- **North Somerset Parent Carer Working Together** (NSPCWT), the Parent Carer Forum (PCF) for North Somerset,
- **Bridging the Gap Together!** (BtGT!), offers a holistic approach to supporting families and individuals with neurological conditions.
- The purpose of our joint agreement is so that families of children and young people with additional needs and disabilities who use our services, benefit from the best support, advice and meaningful participation opportunities possible, enabling them to achieve the best outcomes.

The overarching principles we share are:-

1. The shared belief in raising the quality of life, improving outcomes and opportunities for all disabled children and those with Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or additional needs and their families.
2. Cooperative partnership working as professionals and actively promoting positive communication in our working relationship.

(See North Somerset SEND Strategy and SEND partnership co-production charter)

The five principles we agree to are: -

- Clarity over each other's respective roles and responsibilities
- Commitment to working together to support and empower people to be their own voice
- Acknowledge the development of each other's practice
- Communication is open and honest and solution focussed
- Publicly promote, support and champion each other.

PART ONE

Our Common Goals and Values are: -

1. We agree to work together to identify and resolve shared concerns and improved outcomes.
2. We agree that events and co-production activities planned together are timely and positive for parent carers and young people.
3. We agree to plan our shared activities so that all parent carers, children, and young people feel appropriately, respectfully, and meaningfully involved.

Our common code of conduct

Individuals and our organisations agree to:

- Behave with respect and professionalism towards each other as per the expectations and standards set in the Nolan Principles of public life.
- Communicate in an open, constructive and honest way that is diplomatic and not personalised, being mindful of SAY's confidentiality and impartiality function, as well as NSPCWT PCF role.
- Agree to be honest when there are challenges or differences to enable us to find a useful way forward that best enables parent carer voices to be heard.

Building positive working relationships

We acknowledge the importance of partnership working and the maintaining of professional relationships and as such agree to resolve and mitigate any mistakes, tensions, and disagreements as soon as they arise.
We agree the following:

- We will meet twice per calendar year (face to face where possible) so that we can best understand each other's works and capacity issues, priorities, and plans - to coordinate our efforts, plan ahead and work jointly when needed. This can be meetings or phone conversations.
- We acknowledge that SEND is a complex arena and there are a range of views, passions and capacities.
- We agree to talk and find a solution at the earliest opportunity and put any learning into place so that when the issues arise again we know how to avoid problems escalating.
- Do our best to share and promote information on each other's events.
- Advise each other of potential duplication or conflicting work or events as soon as possible.
- We commit to working together on the annual SEND event, and other events that may take place.

Building positive working relationships (cont.)

- Contact one another to discuss any potential areas of disagreement if they arise to consider concerns and discuss a way forwards.
- Be respectful of volunteer time.
- SEND And You agree to act as Secretariat for the bi-annual “Together is Better” meetings in as much as they will arrange the meetings and take minutes, but where there is additional work or cost involved this will be shared on an equal basis and agreed beforehand.
- We will only use each other’s branded logos if we are holding a joint event unless we request a prior agreement for an individual event. We agree to signpost to each other’s services via the use of logos on each other’s website.
- We agree to all register if we intend to attend each other’s events even if we are exhibiting. We agree not to charge each other attendance at events but in order to meet liability insurance requirements, we must register attendance. Where possible we will have representatives available reflective of the size of the event.
- Commit and encourage other organisations to keep NSPCWT updated on experiences of parent carers they are working with, to feed back into the collective voice of parent carers that NSPCWT represents locally at a strategic level.
- Promote our own and each other’s events, sessions and groups on our respective websites at NSPCWT calendar, BtGT! events, SAY’s events and bookings and social media (see part two below).
- Commit to being accessible in our service delivery as a joint commitment and will endeavour to work together in our access arrangements for parent carers, children, and young people.

PART TWO

Our Organisation Specific Goals, Values and Responsibilities

NSPCWT

North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together (NSPCWT) is a not for profit Community interest Company (CIC) representing parents and carers of children and young people up to 25 years with additional needs and disabilities. They aim to support parent/carers across North Somerset in a number of ways. These include:

- Hosting free information events (including information, training and engagement), coffee mornings and social groups where parents can meet and talk in relaxed surroundings.
- Listening to parents and gather their opinions.
- Share these views and opinions with decision makers in the local authority, education and health commissioners and providers.
- Make those views count when decisions on services and provisions are made.
- Provide an informative website and social media presence where parent/carers can chat with one another.
- Publish news and information in all media so parents stay informed.
- Keep parents connected with each other and to groups that can help them.

NSPCWT will be Responsible for:

- Representing the collective voice of Parents and Carers within North Somerset
- Recruiting and training Parent Reps to ensure our Reps are representing the wider community and needs of families
- Reaching out to as many parents as possible by linking with other parent groups, organisations and settings to encourage families to join our database
- Listening, Collecting and Collating the views and experiences of Parents and Carers, both directly and from other organisations working with them, so that Parent Reps can better represent families at strategic meetings
- Co-producing at a strategic level across Education, Health and Social care informing and influencing local and national policy
- Running networking, Information and Participation events to help inform our families and members
- Providing support to our members through various means depending on what our members ask of us (i.e. Support Groups, Information Events, Counselling, Wellbeing, workshops / Training, Peer Support)
- Signpost families requiring support for SEND related questions and processes only to organisations that have trained advisors.
- We will actively signpost and advertise families requiring this support to the local SENDIAS service
- We will maintain open and honest communication with all parties
- The responsibility to coordinate Consultations falls within the NSPCWT remit but we acknowledge that ALL parties will need to support the NSPCWT to carry out that responsibility.
- Publicising the work of SAY and BTGT!, including key projects and events via our social media platforms, in line with our policies and practice.

SEND And You SENDIAS Service

SEND And You (SAY) provides the statutory Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) in North Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

SAY SENDIASS is free, impartial, confidential, and independent. Our role as a SENDIASS is to help parent carers, children and young people aged 0- 25 build their knowledge, understanding and confidence in SEND procedures, policies, practices, and law. In doing so, we want to enable people to communicate their own needs, wishes, aims and rights during their own journey.

We aim to empower parent carers, children and young people to play an active, informed role in making decisions about their education, health and social care. Professionals can use the SENDIASS to build their own knowledge and understanding. They can enable the people they work with to access SAY.

We cover: -

- SEN (Special Educational Needs) Support in early years, school, or college
- Improving communication with educational settings, local authority, health, and social care
- Transition between educational settings, phased transfer or moving between Children's and Adult's services
- Transport to educational placement
- Annual Reviews of Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) EHCP Application and Needs Assessment
- Appeals to Tribunal for refusal to assess for an EHCP, refusal to issue an EHCP, contents of an EHCP, ceasing to maintain an EHCP, and placement
- Exclusions and part-time timetables
- Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Disability Discrimination
- Making a complaint Health and social care queries related to the child or young person's disability. (See 'What to expect from SEND And You' guide).

SEND And You SENDIAS Service will be Responsible for:

- Providing trained staff to deliver free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support (IAS) to children, young people and their parents with any type of special educational need and/or disabilities (SEND) aged 0-25 years, in line with the requirements of the Children & Families Act 2014
- Offering an all-year-round service with a dedicated information advice and support line, including a 24-hour answerphone service within the current expectations of our contractual agreement
- Supporting a young person to access the service when they request as a separate service to their parent/carer
- Feeding back to NSPCWT and BtGT! on key issues and themes arising from service users and providing further information and data at the trustees' discretion.
- Publicising the work of NSPCWT and BtGT!, including key projects and events via our social media platforms, in line with our existing policies and practice.
- Signposting people who use SAY to NSPCWT and BtGT! based on individual enquiries.
- Maintaining open and honest communication with all parties.
- Sharing knowledge of Local and National SEND developments and the work of the service.
- Help represent the legal backdrop behind health and social issues and support NSPCWT in raising concerns with the LA and offering challenge where this is appropriate.
- Work collaboratively with NSPCWT and BtGT! in emphasising and maintaining good practice and policies to the LA to ensure positive impact can continue.

Bridging the Gap Together!

Bridging the Gap Together!'s (BtGT!) aim is to provide social activities and training workshops to help children, young people, their parent/carers and extended family members to have a better understanding of Autism including other Neurological and Mental Health conditions.

- We work collaboratively with other service providers to deliver the best possible range of events that best meets the needs of our members.
- We provide themed social activities for children and young people with Autism and Neurological and Mental Health conditions to help them learn and develop their social skills.
- We encourage everyone with Autism and Neurological and Mental Health conditions to get out in the fresh air to have better awareness of the world around them, encourage them to build friendships through our outdoor activities.
- We provide a relaxed and friendly safe space for parent/carers of children with Autism and Neurological and Mental Health conditions to take part in a whole family activity to help reduce family stress. A private space will be available for parents and carers to talk confidentially to a member of the team should they need any help or advice.
- A diagnosis is not required to attend any of our events as they will be open to all.
- We advertise all Parties' events on our Facebook page and at other appropriate opportunities and expect this to be reciprocated.
- When we are working with NSPCWT and/or SEND And You, we will advertise the event via our mailing list, but we will abide by the restrictions of GDPR legislation in withholding personal details of delegates unless explicit permission has been received
- Funding permitting, we will host activities and workshops that are directly targeted at children and young people with Autism and other disabilities.

Accessibility

NSPCWT, SAY and BtGT! agree to do our best to ensure that people know how to find and access our services, ensuring we plan and make adjustments to support individuals.

Together is Better Agreement

Agreed on 26th of February 2024, reviewed August 2025 by:

Kenton Mee
NSPCWT Chair / CEO & Director
Signature: Kenton Mee

On Behalf of **North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together (NSPCWT)**

Liz Kelly
BtGT! Managing Director
Signature: Liz Kelly

On Behalf of **Bridging the Gap Together! (BtGT!)**

Santie Human
SAY External Strategic Lead
Signature: Santie Human

On Behalf of **SEND And You SENDIAS Service (SAY SENDIASS)**

To be reviewed on:

Date: **July 2026**