

Healthwatch Summit 2025 – Breakout Session Notes

Topic: *Supporting Young People and Children with Neurodivergence*

Comments from Parents and Carers:

- Discussion around **dysgraphia** – limited understanding and support available; mainly affects the hands.
- Question raised about whether **neurodiverse conditions are genetic or familial**.
 - *Answer:* They can be genetic or passed down as a different neurodiverse condition.
- **Teacher query:** Why can't a neurodiverse child have one consistent TA instead of being supported by multiple on a rota?
 - *Answer:* Due to capacity and to prevent dependency on one TA. Children should learn to work with different adults in case of staff absence. Promotes independence.
- **Comment:** Children are not always informed about a change in TA and need preparation for this.
- **Grandparent's experience:**
 - 15-year-old, high-functioning grandchild in mainstream school.
 - Few friends, acts as class clown to fit in.
 - School has a *zero-tolerance behaviour policy*; his tics and comments are punished rather than supported.
 - Placed in bottom class; often late and disciplined for it.
- **Comment:** In mainstream schools, **TAs often lack SEND training** and are "thrown in at the deep end."
- **Question:** How can parents find out what support schools should provide?
 - *Answer:* Each school has a **Link Specialist Teacher**. The **OAP toolkit (online)** outlines expected school provisions.
- **Comment:** Children often show **multiple traits** and do not fit neatly into one diagnostic category – this should be recognised.
- **Comment:** The system tries to make children fit into rigid structures rather than adapting support around their needs.
- **Comment:** All schools should **adopt adaptable strategies** to support neurodiverse pupils.
- **Comment:** Neurodiverse young people often have **unique strengths** that can be channelled positively (e.g., Louis Smith).

- **Observation:** Increase in **Tourette's diagnoses** noted.
- **Comment:** Many neurodiverse young people have **co-occurring physical or mental health conditions**, increasing complexity of needs.
- **Key issue:** **Anxiety** identified as the **main cause of school non-attendance** among neurodiverse young people