



East Devon Parent Carers' Voice
Notes from the meeting held on Wednesday 28th January 2009 – Exmouth Leisure Centre,
Exmouth

Present:

10 parents

Nicky Ruane	Development Worker
Jennie Waldron	Complex Cases Manager, East Devon JAS
Sue Phillips	DISCplus

Apologies

Steve West	CAMHS Manager, Eastern Region
Debbie Wheeler	Parent Partnership Service

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Ian welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave apologies.

2. Minutes from previous meeting

Training

One parent queried what was meant by training. Nicky explained that currently she has a small budget for training and that can be used for whatever sort of training families would find most useful. This could take the form of information days or sessions and she would like to hear from any parent or carer who feels there is need for training in any particular area, She would be talking more about this later in the meeting.

Devon PCT and accessing specialist consultants out of county

There is a clear protocol on this and where a specialist recommends this he or she should make the necessary referral.

The minutes were agreed.

3. Children's Services - Updates and questions from parents

Joint Agency Service

Jenny began by giving an update on Direct Payments. Direct Payments (DPs) are used for families to purchase their own carers breaks instead of using a provided service. The aim is that this will then be more suited to individual needs.

The range of services that are offered can vary considerably and can include overnight respite, enabling services, day care and activity schemes.

Children are assessed and the allocations are made according to the level of need of the child and the family. The aim of the system is to be equitable.

The guidelines on how the DPs can be used are being re-drafted to provide a greater clarity to families. The first draft has been sent to the County Forum for their comments.

Lois informed everyone that parents will now sit on a working group to look further at the guidelines and take the matter forward.

Jennie then answered questions from parents about keyworkers and how families can find out whether they have one. She explained that if a child was assessed by the Joint Agency Service (JAS) but they did not meet the threshold for services that child would normally be held on the system as Joint Agency Record only. Where a child had been involved with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) only, once the child was better they would normally have no need to have a JAS record.

Jennie offered to check for any parent who was unsure where their child was on the system and could speak with the parents to see whether a re-assessment was warranted.

The discussion then moved on to the different keyworkers a child might have. This would usually be decided either as part of the process or at a meeting following the integrated assessment for the child.

If they require active keyworking there are three possibilities. Depending on their need they will go on a waiting list to be allocated a JAS key worker or they will be allocated one straight way. The parent may choose to become the keyworker for their own child, in which case they will be supported in this role by a dedicated JAS worker. The third option is that the child may be keyworked by someone outside of the JAS, such as a school or health professional.

Where a child does not require active keyworking, which is where the situation is stable and usually the service for that child is in place, the child may be placed with the care co-ordination team. The family are given a contact number for them to contact someone on the team should the need arise. Plans are underway to ensure that every child will, by this time next year, have a named worker that the family can contact should the need arise.

Jenny offered to return in May and give a presentation about the JAS structure and about keyworking, should families find that useful.

Other questions from parents

One parent raised the issue of when those absent for more than 20% of the time are marked as persistent absence and asked what could be done for those who are absent on medical grounds.

The following points were discussed in relation to the above:

- A 'persistent absence' on the school record could cause problems later with university admissions
- Schools also mark a student absent when they ask parents not to bring a child back in after a CAMHS appointment
- It is also an issue where children find it difficult to cope in school and sometimes just need some time out.

One parent felt it was important to rely on your own intuition and, if as a parent you felt your child needed a day off, that it was important to follow those instincts. Too many rules can disempower parents.

4. Other updates and information

County Forum

It was explained that the County Forum is the meeting into which the views of parents locally were fed and that any issues that either could not be resolved locally or that had an impact across the County were discussed.

Elections had taken place for the roles of Chair, Vice-Chair, and for representatives for the Children's Trust Board and the Parenting Strategy Board.

Lois asked if any parent has any needs in relations to communication.

Some of the topics discussed at County included:

- Lack of provision for children with special needs
- Support for children with ASD in secondary schools
- The illegal exclusion of children from school when Ofsted visits (details to Nicky please)

The Parent Partnership Service will be moving buildings soon, but they are not sure where yet.

The Fair Access to Carers Breaks budget is under considerable pressure at the moment. They are working to bring it back on track and hope that the current freeze on new provision will end when the new money comes down at the start of the new financial year.

The Library Service is looking to make libraries more accessible to families of children with additional needs and is asking families if there is anything that would help. This could be a longer loan period, more touchy-feely books or anything else that parents can think of. If anyone has any ideas please feed these back to Nicky.

CAMHS Unwrapped

There will be an information day all about CAMHS on March 3rd in Tiverton. It is open to the parents of any child who would like to find out more about the service and what it can offer, not just those already receiving a service. Further details will be sent out or contact Nicky for more information.

Education Day – Wednesday 25th March

The next meeting in East Devon will take the form of an education day and look at how the process of obtaining support for your child in school. Again, further details will be sent out or contact Nicky.

Conversation Events

Ian reminded everyone that the Conversation Events were taking place the following week, with the Exeter one being held at County Hall on Monday 2nd February.

5. Local issues and individual questions from parents

Q. When a child is held back a year in school what happens when they are in Y5? Do they have to transfer to secondary school at the end of the year or can they go from Y6 to Y8? Can they remain back a year all the way through the school?

A. Those in the room knew of examples of each. It was suggested that the parent speak to the schools involved and to CSET to find out what would happen in this instance.

There followed a discussion about schools meeting the needs of children with special needs, especially at secondary level.

There was also a discussion on the varying experiences of school transport. It was felt this discussion should be returned to at a later meeting.

Ian thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Date of next meeting:

Education Day
Wednesday 25th March
The Heathfield Inn, Honiton

Nicky Ruane,
Parent Carers' Voice, Exeter CVS, King William Street, Exeter, EX4 6PD

Telephone: 01392 201572
nicky.ruane@exetercv.org.uk