



East Devon Parent Carers' Voice
Notes from the meeting held on Wednesday 2nd July 2008 – East Devon Tennis Centre,
Exmouth

Present:

12 parents

Sue Phillips DISCplus

Nicky Ruane Development Worker

Glenn Lobb Resource Manager, JAS

Louise Edmonds Activity Scheme Co-ordinator

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Nicky welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Glenn Lobb and Louise Edmonds.

Apologies had been received from 3 parents who were unable to make the meeting

2. East Devon Activity Scheme

Louise began by explaining that she was both the scheme co-ordinator and also that she worked within the scheme as a worker.

She then went on to explain that a survey had gone out to all parents who received a service from the Joint Agency Service asking them what they would like in the way of out of school provision for their children. One of the results from this had been that parents had wanted longer day care, so the response to this was to change the sessions to run from 10 – 4.

There would be 3 schemes running; the Exmouth scheme would be based at the Children's Centre, the Honiton scheme would be based at Mill Water School and the Exeter scheme would be based at the 100 Club.

They had also appointed 4 new team leaders to work across the schemes.

Louise went on to explain how the schemes had previously been set up and funded. Originally they had been set up with money from the Children's Fund, and then had continued to rely heavily on funding to keep the costs down. This level of funding is unsustainable and therefore the schemes will now have to operate on a full cost recovery basis.

When questioned as to why it was taking so long to inform families as to what was happening Glenn acknowledged that it was taking longer than he had hoped to get things up and running, and that one of the reasons was the current job evaluation process which delayed the recruitment of staff for the schemes. He has hoped that the schemes would be fully operational by 1st July, although now it looked more likely to be after the summer holidays. There would however be activity schemes running throughout the holidays.

Glenn and Louise then answered questions from parents and carers.

One family questioned what would happen to those families who did not have funding but could not afford the £55 cost per day.

They discussed the possibility of accessing other mainstream schemes and the possibility of accessing additional support for the child in that setting.

For those who felt this was not a possibility Glenn said that he was happy to discuss individual cases outside of the meeting.

There were also concerns raised that many parents are the key workers for their child and that they feel they need to have their allocations reassessed. Many parents also felt that the letter that had been sent was confusing and that the response by the Joint Agency Service to queries was slow. They felt that most of them had heard rumours about what was proposed long before any official letter had been sent out to families.

Glenn responded to these by firstly explaining the Fair Access to Carers Breaks (FACB) process and that its aim is to have a fair system for carers across Devon based on identified need.

Parents understood this but queried the position with regard to the number of outstanding assessments that needed to be done. They felt the backlog was considerably greater than those running the scheme understood it to be. Many families were not aware of what their allocation was under the scheme and many others felt their assessments were out of date and their needs had changed considerably.

Glenn acknowledged that there was still a lot to be done and that he was not making excuses. FACB provides parents with a menu from which to choose from. Direct Payments is one choice. FACB can allow families the choice of setting or choice of which play scheme their child attends, rather than just being offered a certain number of sessions in one place. As direct payments is government money it cannot be used to buy services direct from the local government, such as a County Council run scheme, however there was always the option of taking part of the allocation as Council run services and part as direct payments.

Another parent asked what direct payments could be used for and whether it could be used to purchase items such as playstations and computer games.

Glenn advised that direct payments have to be used to buy items or services that are specified on the young persons care plan. Any use of direct payments for other purposes should be agreed in advance with the keyworker. Parent keyworkers can negotiate with Caroline Smith, the parent keyworker support officer.

For those families who are neither keyworkers themselves or who have a named keyworker they are likely to be on what is known as care co-ordination. This is generally where everything is set up and ticking over and where they do not have the need for a designated keyworker. Care co-ordination provides a named team instead of a named worker.

Returning to the subject of the activity schemes Glenn stressed that the aim was to get something in place to get people through the summer and then to sort things out properly after that. He acknowledged that there had been a lack of information, for which he could only apologise.

Lois felt that it would have been better to have been told about the changes sooner and to have been kept informed as that would have reduced the rumours that were going around.

Glenn appreciated that there was both concerns and anger over the increase in costs but explained that the schemes were losing £40,000 per year and that could not continue so decisions had to be taken to make them viable. The schemes cover their costs only and do not make any profit. Staff will be recruited to meet the demand of the schemes.

Parents expressed concern over the staff ratio in the schemes, especially when taking children off the premises. Louise assured everyone that she had assessed the levels of support needed for individual children and that she was confident that these levels were sufficient. If however they were not she would revise them.

When asked about the booking grid Louise explained that it had been done this way to give flexibility by allowing families to choose which scheme to use or whether to use a mixture of different schemes.

The discussion then returned to the issue of cost. It was acknowledged that some families may see a reduction in allocation compared to what they have previously had, but this is all about fairness and having a fair system in place where the allocations are made according to need and not about who shouts loudest.

Everyone thanked Glenn and Louise for coming to the meeting and for being so open in answering the questions from families. They agreed to return to the September meeting where they could update families as to any further progress made and hear about how families felt the schemes worked over the holidays.

3. Information/reminders

Challenging Behaviour Day 8th

Nicky reminded those present about the conference being held the following week at Exeter Racecourse and the need for families to select their workshops preferences in advance.

Request for feedback on new forms

Glenn had sent through some draft information sheets about the LSUs and the Enabling Service for parents to comment on.

Parents reading through the forms like the layout and felt they were generally clear and easy to understand. The one comment that was made was that it would be useful to state what age range the enabling service covered on the leaflet as some families had thought that it was only available for teenagers.

Sue Phillips – DISCplus

Sue brought copies of a booklet on school transport which she felt parents may find useful. She chatted with parents answering queries and providing information.

4. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 17th September

11.00 – 1.00 at the East Devon Tennis Centre, Withycombe Village Road, Exmouth