



Exeter Parent Carers' Voice
Notes from the meeting held on Tuesday 18th November 2008 – Cowick Barton, Exeter

Present:

7 parents

Nicky Ruane	Development Worker
Debbie Wheeler	Parent Partnership
Hil Rundle	Complex Cases Manager, Exeter JAS

Apologies:

Apologies were received from 2 parents.

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence

Nicky welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave Margaret's apologies. Those present introduced themselves.

2. Exeter RD&E

This issue was raised during the round of introductions when one parent recounted her recent experience whilst visiting the fracture clinic at the hospital.

The Doctor had asked the child a question and when the parent tried to answer on behalf of the child she was told quite abruptly that he was talking to the child. As the child had a learning disability and was unable to respond that parent felt that the way she had been spoken to was inappropriate.

This was felt to be a problem by several in the meeting and it was queried whether there could be a card or something that parents could show that would alert hospital staff to the fact that this was a young person with additional needs. This would be especially beneficial if a parent did not wish to say this in front of the young person themselves.

Nicky agreed to find out whether there is any system in place or on the records of the young person that alerts staff to their additional needs or whether it would be possible for something to be done.

3. Hil Rundle, Exeter Joint Agency Service

One parent began the discussion by saying how fantastic her keyworker was and that she felt the support she had received had been invaluable.

Another parent asked what care co-ordination meant. Hil explained that there were not enough workers to hold cases long term for all the families coming into the Joint Agency Service. As the service grows those families whose needs have been met and whose situations are settled move onto care co-ordination where instead of having one named keyworker the family is looked after by a care co-ordination team.

Parents felt that having a named person to contact was important and felt that over a period of time that one person would come to understand the needs of the family as a whole and that a team that had not had that personal contact could not do so.

Hil went on to say that they were looking at how they could have designated keyworkers for families in the community that would be supported by Marie Oliver in the same way that she supported parent/carer keyworkers.

Glenn is currently looking at this and it was agreed that Nicky should contact Glenn to ensure he is aware of how much families value having a named keyworker and would like to continue to do so.

The discussion continued about the role of the keyworker during the transition process. It was felt that for many families it would be essential to have a named keyworker supporting the family at this time as they would be in the best position to liaise with adult services to secure the necessary provision for the young person involved.

4. Tips and Strategies for Meetings – Debbie Wheeler, Parent Partnership Service

Debbie Wheeler was welcomed to the meeting. Debbie is the newly appointed Parent Partnership Officer for part of Exeter and the East Devon area.

Debbie brought with her a useful checklist that she hoped would make parents feel more confident before attending meetings. She then went on to discuss some of the key points on the list which included:

Before the meeting

- Asking for an agenda in advance
- Taking a list of questions you want answered with you
- Asking in advance whether the child should attend
- Knowing what you want to achieve at the meeting – ensure that your expectations are realistic
- Taking someone with you
- Sorting any necessary childcare
- Eating something!

At the meeting

- Ensuring you know who everyone is and what their role is
- Asking questions to clarify any points that you may not understand
- Letting people finish what they are saying before you challenge them
- Saying what you hope to achieve at the meeting
- Not becoming aggressive
- Offering solutions to the problems
- Staying focused on the matters being discussed

At the end of the meeting

- Ensuring someone summarises the main points and any actions
- Making certain that all your questions have been answered
- Setting the date of the next meeting
- Thanking everyone for attending

Debbie then went on to answer questions from parents.

Q. How can you stop a school from making decisions about a child without consulting the parents?

A. Plans for children should not be made without consulting/informing the parents. If you think they have done/are doing so you should ask for a meeting to discuss it. Try to take a professional with you such as the keyworker or someone from the Parent Partnership Service.

Q. What is nobody has taken notes at the meeting or you do not receive a copy.

A. Write to the Chair of the meeting and ask for a copy. If no notes were taken then write back to them summarising the meeting; who said what, who is responsible for any action points and details of any timescales. Add a line at the end saying that this is your understanding of what is to happen and would they let you know if any of it is incorrect.

There then followed further discussions about schools and how they interpret the provision on a child's statement and how to promote friendships outside of school.

A parent asked about flexi-schooling as it is something that she is considering for her child. It was felt that any agreement for a family to part home-school their child should be formalised with the school and the education authority rather than it being just an ad-hoc arrangement.

Independent Parental Supporter (IPS) training

Debbie reminded parents that IPS training will be running shortly and is open to anyone who may be interested. Information sessions will be held in Ottery St Mary on Thursday 27th November and in Newton Abbot on Thursday 4th December. If anyone would like to attend or would like more information they should contact Debbie Wheeler or Georgie Cridland on 01392 383080.

5. Inclusive Play Park

Work continues to progress with the park. Those present were invited to look at some designs for equipment and play markings for the tarmac areas and to state their preferences. Nicky will forward this information to Miriam.

6. Training

There was a short discussion of what training parents would find helpful. Any suggestions should be sent to Nicky.

7. Information and Any Other Business

Dates for the Christmas lunches and the coffee and mince pie drop-in have been sent out to families. Anyone wishing to come to one of the lunches is asked to contact Nicky so that a table for the right number of people can be booked.

Nicky thanked everyone for attending.

Date of next meeting: **Tuesday 20^h January**
Venue **The Cowick Barton, Exeter**

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