

MINUTES of COUNTY FORUM of PARENT CARERS' VOICE
for Families of Children with Special Needs
held on 9th January 2008 at Fisherman's Cot, Bickleigh

Present:

Jeanette Kemlo	County Chair/Locality Chairperson – North Devon
Nicky Ruane	Development worker – Exeter and East Devon
Pam Hogan	Development worker – Mid and North Devon
Helen Phillips	Development worker – Teignbridge and South Hams & West Devon
Beryl Perrin	County Carers Development Worker for CYPS
Liz Carroll	CYPS Early Years & Childcare Service
Tim Tod	Young Devon Transitions
Dennis Platt	DISCPlus Co-ordinator
Bronwyn Nott	Locality Chair person – Mid Devon
Anne Porter	Special Educational Needs Strategy Officer, Devon County Council
Lois Markworth	Locality Co-Chair - East Devon
Cathie Wreford-Holden	Locality Chair - Teignbridge
Ann Whiteley	Director Children's Services for Devon

Apologies:

Julia Lock	Parent Carer's Voice Project Co-ordinator (DACVS)
Chris Aston	Devon County Council
John Shaw	Head of Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)
Miles Hapgood	Director Children's Services, Devon PCT
Margaret Ladbury	Locality Chair Person - Exeter
Ian Simmins	Locality Co-Chair - East Devon
Ann Deadman	
Nichola Winstanley	Parent/Carer –South Hams & West Devon

Minutes of previous meeting of 7.11.07 were agreed.

Matters Arising

ACTION: Invitation -Parent Partnership Coordinator is to be interviewed on the 1st October. They had requested a PCV representative.

Update: Sue Brailley has taken up post

Transition Team -Kate Sandel attending next meeting to update

ACTION: Pro-forma Letters for parent lobbying –Jeanette has provided these as requested in previous meetings. She has asked the Forum to review and feedback.

No feedback received from pro forma letters therefore are ready when required

ACTION: Pathfinder Status –John Shaw welcomed a statement of support from PCV to be put forward to support Devon's application for Pathfinder status

No feedback from John Shaw about support for Pathfinder

ACTION: Parent/Carer difficulties communicating with JAT –John Shaw suggested that if it was not possible to resolve this problem through the JAT managers, then the parents should email him directly: john.shaw@devon.gov.uk

Update: Beryl has been signposting parent carers to email John

ACTION: Ann Whiteley and Chris Aston to be invited to January's County Forum to discuss issues raised by parent/carers

Ann Whiteley attended the Forum meeting and Chris Aston sent his apologies

ACTION: Gwen Pearson to contact development workers and Jeanette Kemlo for individual case studies in each locality for inclusion in report.

Update: No feedback from Gwen Pearson

ACTION: Beryl Perrin to keep Forum updated on the progress of the Conversation Days

Update: Beryl present at meeting to provide update

ISSUES/CONCERNS SURROUNDING SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Update: School transport on agenda and to be addressed at the County Forum in March

Ann Whiteley - Devon County Council

Mike Young and Ann have been attending the SEN scrutiny group and have contributed to the recommendations for the action plan. A formal response is to be made to the Council executive on Tuesday 15th January. Ann would welcome parents' participation in the SEN task group.

News on recent/ future appointments:

Judith Johnson (OT) from Surrey County Council, who has a wealth of experience in health and education, has been appointed Director of Learning in Schools replacing Deborah McGill.

The posts of Assistant Director for Integrative Services and Director of Social Care are to be advertised early this year; the latter is to be advertised in approximately March, with a three-day recruitment process.

These new posts will drive the integration of different agencies in a new and cohesive way, Ann hopes that the next twelve months will see the progression of an effective order that can be trusted to deliver on local and county-wide action plans. Jeannette asked if PCV will be involved in recruitment process and this is expected to be the case. Dates and processes to follow.

Funding arrangements in schools:

Bronwyn Nott asked Ann whether parent/carers would still be relied upon to find money for school buildings, transport, equipment etc. Ann related to the Forum her grievance that this was found to be a common practice in the county's schools and revealed to members that children in Devon received £70 less than the national average for their education, compared to the rest of the country. Ann has attended several meetings with Ben Bradshaw and representatives from school forums to discuss new funding arrangements for SEN before Christmas.

ACTION: Bronwyn is to send details to see if any of the equipment should be purchased by school budget funds not voluntary funds

Ann is committed to securing additional monies to support frontline services and has been involved in the composition of a number of bids. She is convinced that the current formation of services should be restructured and so release money from duplicative agencies, this, Ann hopes, would directly benefit children and would bring about a more streamlined and coordinated service.

Beryl Perrin promoted the idea of Devon developmental work groups working together to secure monies, supporting each other.

Ann recommended that Judith Johnson (the newly appointed Director of Learning in Schools) attend the next County Forum

ACTION: Invite to be sent out to Judith Johnson before next meeting in March

Person-centred planning reviews:

Jeanette Kemlo raised the issue of current review regulations - unless a child has a statement, they are not necessarily given the opportunity to arrange a person centred planning review. Jeanette would like Ann to take the lead in supporting the need for all children to be given equal access to the reviews.

ACTION: Jeanette to attend meeting arranged by Ann and her CiC associates to facilitate this

Lois Marksworth discussed with Ann her concerns regarding the transition process for her son between primary school and Bidwell special school. It seems that it is really the parent carer that is driving the process rather than the education and social care agencies.

Nicky Ruane expressed her concern that a lot of teachers do not recognise that they are discriminative in their regulation of children with ADHD, autism and behaviour problems, despite the fact that they are required under DDA to recognise the needs of children with these disabilities. Jeanette added that there exists a great inconsistency within SEN policies in the county's schools.

Ann would like to see in the near future, joint meetings held between PCV representatives, School Associations and SENCOs, conversing together on a strategic level.

Helen Phillips asked Ann whether there is any way in which SEN children might be able to graduate into the six form at the mainstream school that they attend, rather than going to an FE college if they do not get the grades necessary at GCSE. Helen related the concerns of parent/carers expressed at the South Hams and West locality meeting, regarding transport issues, unforeseen costs and the loss of friendships that the children might have made.

ACTION: Ann to check on the current criteria relating to sixth form schools

Ann would welcome regular communication from PCV, Jeanette recommended that Ann attend the Forum at least once a year and receive regular updates and minutes.

The Forum agreed that Ann's presence at the County Forum had been beneficial to all and the discussions held covering a wide range of topics had been both informative and helpful.

New Funding Arrangements for SEN in schools –Anne Porter

Anne recognises the discrepancy between funding of SEN children in Devon's schools. She has conversed with representatives from Devon Finance, DFES and primary, secondary and special schools to review the existing SEN funding process.

It is hoped that the new funding arrangements will enable schools to:

- Intervene early and work with children with identified, emerging needs
- Meet ongoing needs without having to seek a statutory assessment
- Underpin flexibility of support as needs and circumstances change
- Underpin flexibility of staffing
- Break the cycle of unmet need where funding has only been available after failure has been experienced

Funding allocations will be assessed using 'Guidance Criteria for Statutory Assessment and Resource Allocation'

ACTION: Jeanette to email out electronic copy to Forum members

The new funding arrangements make no change to the responsibilities of schools and the LA as set out in the Code of Practice. There is however, a significant responsibility placed on both schools and the LA to monitor the effective use of resources, linked particularly to pupil process.

The new funding arrangements are subject to review and this will take place at the end of the academic year 2008/09

Anne would welcome any feedback from the Forum about the new arrangements for SEN funding

Anne passed round printouts to Forum members of guideline materials associated with the recent development of a Special Educational Needs framework for schools. She has been actively involved in promoting to governors and SENCOs the importance of the assessment, which will support schools in their evaluation of children's needs and addressing the implementation of effective teaching methods. It allows schools to review their own budgeting process and the allocation of monies to resources and equipment. It is hoped that priorities will be revised and so release further money to the provision of facilities dedicated to SEN children.

The framework is currently a voluntary commitment; however Anne is working hard to encourage as many primary and secondary schools as possible to complete the self-evaluation.

The SEN framework forms have many purposes:

- **Forms 1-3:** (I) To identify the school SEN profile (II) To analyse the needs of the school's SEN pupils
- **Form 4:** To record identified/ vulnerable groups of children
- **Form 5a:** To plot transition provision
- **Form 5:** To plot current and planned provision
- **Form 6:** To identify resources (human, financial, equipment, other)
- **Form 7:** To identify impact/ pupil outcomes
- **Form 8:** To provide a record of training that has taken place and that is needed in the future to ensure that the school can respond to identified needs
- **Form 9:** To provide an SEN action plan which is based on findings when completing the SEN framework forms

Locality Reports:

Brief updates from each locality were given.

The full notes from all meetings can be found on the PCV website, together with the details of all future meetings. Action plans for each locality are attached.

Children's Trust Update

No meetings have been held since the last County Forum

PPI forums have done a survey on Young Persons views (14-19) report will come to the Forum and the Childrens Trust

Any Other Business

Dennis Platt (DISCplus Coordinator)

The DISCplus website is to be updated and Dennis hopes that it will be running at the end of next week (18-20th January). **Note –The website address will remain the same**

Major changes are being made to the current service search facility, from next week an interactive search engine should be in place, which will allow users to look for services across the board: social and health care, education, money facilities, sports providers etc. All of which will be addressed in the next DISCPlus newsletter.

DISCplus has been nominated for the Devon's Equality award, the winner of which is voted for by Devon County Council staff. The award ceremony will be held at Exeter County Hall on the 21st January; Dennis would like a service user to attend.

Conversation Events –Beryl Perrin

All four events were very well attended by parent/carers, providers and professionals alike. Beryl and her team have been developing spreadsheets of the six to seven hundred comments made and will be using this feedback to inform the ongoing process of service development.

The main points raised within the comments were:

- **Early assessment and diagnosis:** *Enthusiastic support was shown for the notion of making sure that we have a consistent model for assessment across the county, of which early diagnosis and support is seen as key*
- **Education, statements and support services:** *Concerns were expressed relating to the experiences of parent/carers who feel that some mainstream schools are not fulfilling their responsibility to support children with additional needs. There is also growing concern surrounding the reduction of statements and the expectation that mainstream schools will be required to support SEN children from their own budgets*
- **Carers Breaks:** *Families requested more information about what is available so that they might make an informed choice. The need for an expansion in day care services and the provision of 'key workers' was identified*
- **Direct Payments:** *Many families are very happy with the principle and practice of Direct Payments, however, the inclusion of a variety of options for parents and carers is seen as important*

Following the Conversation Days, an extra event was held for county providers, where finances, CRB procedure, commissioning processes and expansion plans were discussed.

Beryl would like to set up a reference group perhaps corresponding via an interactive forum and a website where questions could be posted -any ideas/views would be appreciated.

Another round of Conversation Events have been planned for the end of February/ beginning of March. The Forum was united in the recommendation that professionals wear badges so that parent/carers and service users know who is in attendance.

The County Forum would like to thank the parent/carers that attended and contributed to the success of the Conversation events

Mission Statement/ Action Plan

The drafting of a mission statement was rescheduled to the next County Forum meeting in March 2008.

Date for the next meeting reminder: Wednesday 12th March 2008 at The Fisherman's Cot, Bickleigh.

**Parent Carers' Voice
East Devon work plan**

Issues raised	Action / Responsibility	Time Scale	Outcome
Nov 07 Concern over whether health professionals will be replaced when they leave or whether colleagues are being expected to pick up their caseloads	Parent to find out what is happening with Exmouth S and L therapist Ask other localities if they have experienced problems. Find specific examples to ask PCT	By locality Forum Feb 08 January 08 Feb 08	
Nov/Dec 07 SEN/ Inclusion in schools	To be discussed at County Forum in January		Ongoing

**Parent Carers' Voice
Exeter work plan**

Issues raised	Action / Responsibility	Time Scale	Outcome
Nov 07 Apparent inequality of service availability for some families, especially where children have 'hidden' disabilities	Continue to encourage families to ask for assessment. Raise awareness of what help is available	Ongoing	
Nov 07 SEN/ Inclusion issues	To be discussed at County Forum in January	Jan 08	Ongoing
Dec 07/Jan 08 TAs off sick and children left unsupported	Raise at County Forum in SEN discussion	Jan 08	Issue raised at County. Responsibility lies with school

**Parent Carers' Voice
North Devon work plan**

Issues raised	Action Responsibility	Time Scale	Outcome
Concerns over appropriate use of SEN funding in mainstream schools	County Special Education Team to monitor	At schools annual review	
Information requested re support when problem arise for parents of children with additional needs in mainstream schools	Contact Marion Argent, Team Manager Special Educational Needs & Inclusion, County Special Education Team	As required	
Information required re the support available for parents of children with Aspergers	Locality Group members to pass on information and contacts	Immediate In the minutes	Support welcomed Contacts listed & distributed
Feedback required re NCH plan to compile database of adults providing day care for children with additional needs	Locality parents to review material and respond to Shelley Davies - Service Co-ordinator, Family Breaks NCH Devon,	By mid December	

**Parent Carers' Voice
Mid Devon work plan**

Issues raised	Action / Responsibility	Time Scale	Outcome
Information required re the transition process in North Devon	Presentation given/questions answered by Robert Chugg, Manager of the Joint Agency Service Information distributed in the minutes	Immediate Within 3 weeks	Process clarified
Clarity required re the new person centred planning review and outcomes	Review demonstrated by Jeannette Kemlo, Pat Herman (from Pathfield School) and colleagues Multi agency response to issues raised	Immediate	Process clarified Other issues identified
Concerns re procedures for children with additional needs in medical settings.	Chair and Development worker to organise a conference dealing with medical matters	Conference to be held on May 20 th 2008	
Concern expressed re the lack of dedicated care services for children and adults with ASD	Appropriate issue to take to the conversation days being organised by County Officers	December 6 th 2007	

**Parent Carers' Voice
South Hams and West Devon work plan**

Issues raised	Action / Responsibility	Time Scale	Outcome
FLEXIBLE BREAK GRANTS – available Carers Link and Flexible Break Grants Nov. 07	Leaflets and info given to parents Invite Carers link to attend future meeting Follow up next meeting		
SEN / lack of life skills within mainstream provision and gap in 16 – 19 as 6 th forms within Community Colleges require grade C GCSE'S	HP to attend MENCAP's 'What are we Educating our children for' and to promote through newsletter. Raise at County lack of 16 – 19 provision	Jan 08	

**Parent Carers' Voice
Teignbridge work plan**

Issues raised	Action / Responsibility	Time Scale	Outcome
<p>Concerns over inaccessible play equipment in local parks for wheelchair users June 07</p>	<p>Write to local council and invite response July 07</p> <p>HP to attend Teignbridge ADHD meeting in Nov as Liz Carroll will be speaking on Inclusive Play</p> <p>Debbie Marshall Project Officer for Play Areas Teignbridge Council to attend locality forum 27.11.</p>		<p>Debbie Marshall to meet with Teignbridge Parents for a walk / wheel round Decoy Park to work together in the parks refurbishment</p>
<p>Lack of Pastoral Care / Counselling / Support within Primary Schools linking to SEAL (Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning) – many parent carers within main steam schools feel that primary schools are struggling to meet their children's needs especially in this area Oct 07</p>	<p>Discussion on this issue and the implementation of SEAL throughout Devon. Parent carers felt that this issues could be addressed with counselling being available within Primary Schools Raise issue at County Forum Jan 08</p>		
<p>New Funding arrangements for SEN Schools Oct 07</p>	<p>Raise at County Forum Nov.07</p>	<p>Jan 08</p>	<p>Discussed at County Forum</p>