

Notes of the Plymouth Parent and Family Forum
12th July 2006 - 6.30 p.m. – 8.30 p.m.
John Kitto Community College

Welcome and Introductions

JB, Forum Chair

- Opened meeting
- Reviewed main points from the notes of the last meeting and it was agreed that they were an accurate record.
- Gave overview of the activities of the Forum Working Group

MC

- Plymouth Parent Partnership Service is aware of the need for greater parent representation at the Forum and continues to work on widening participation from key groups.

Update of activities since last meeting

- Further to discussions between VJ and DF at the last Forum, Plymouth City Council was able to provide £2000 for activities for Young Carers during Carers' Week.
- HM has offered to provide some financial support for refreshments at Forum meetings.
- EB is now sitting as part of the group developing eligibility criteria for disabled Children Services in Plymouth.
- Several members of the Forum attended the Healthcare Commission – Public and Patient Engagement Test Site Project on the 15th June at Plymouth Pavilions. Feedback from the event will be presented to the Forum as soon as it becomes available. Attendees agreed to meet with PO and HM to discuss the main themes of the day.

Blue Skies Thinking

- SR presented a flyer prepared by PPPS on behalf of Councillor PP seeking views on how parents and carers see education in the future.
- Attendees were asked to consult with the groups they represent in order to feedback to the Forum. Plymouth Parent Partnership Service will be collecting and collating the information gathered.
- The meeting then broke to allow for smaller group discussion around the Blue Skies Thinking project. Following the break, SR presented the main themes to the group.
- Plymouth Parent Partnership Service will be contacting parents across the City and the work will be ongoing.
- CH agreed to forward details of events for parents (re. extended services) around the City to PJ.

What do service providers want to know?

Service providers and commissioners attending the Forum introduced themselves and outlined current work where consultation with parents would be beneficial.

- CH asked for feedback on what the core offer of extended services should be. Meetings will be held across the City in the different neighbourhoods to gather views on what services are needed.
- DF stated that the Council is now beginning to deliver the outcomes from the recent service commissioning and wants parents to assist with the roll out of services.
- HM outlined the possibility of parents being included in the interviewing process for new staff. There may also be opportunities for parents to attend training along with staff to better understand how staff are trained. Primarily looking for an exchange of ideas between parents and the service.
- PO will be establishing a strategic planning group for health services starting in the autumn and would like a parent representative from the Forum to attend a quarterly meeting.
- MJ. The new build at Longcause Community Special School is near to completion and will include a multi-agency resource centre for parents in the local area.
- GH. Consultation is underway to develop a play policy and strategy for Plymouth. Members of the Forum will be sent questionnaires via Plymouth Parent Partnership Service and are asked to consult with their respective groups.
- MC stated that the aim for Children's Services is to build a nucleus of parents that service providers can have open dialogue with. She also gave the Forum an update on activities within the Council
 - Joint Area Review (JAR) in September 2006 will be the first time that all services for children have been inspected jointly. The inspectors will be assessing the impact of service provision on children, young people and families, and will be asking to speak to parents.
 - The lead inspector has asked to attend the next Forum meeting. At this stage it is not clear what, if any, input they would have or if they would just be there to observe. MC will liase with the inspectors and feedback to the Forum Working Group.
- MC stated that the inspectors wish to speak with young carers and also a pre-existing group of parents of children with learning difficulties. DF agreed to act as a point of contact for young carers.

What do parents want to know?

PJ informed the group that Plymouth Parent Partnership Service is able to carry out consultation work with parents outside of the Forum. Further to discussion at the previous Forum meeting, work is ongoing gathering the views of foster carers in the City. Results of this will be passed back to the Forum.

- PJ reported that Plymouth Parent Partnership Service has received frequent requests for help with completing DLA forms, and is unable to assist parents due to insufficient capacity. This is a real need in the City and most services that are able to offer help with DLA have long waiting lists.
 - Children's Information Service will be offering DLA assistance in the near future as soon as staff have completed training.
 - Surestart Keystone is also able to assist with DLA forms but only within their area.
- There is a clear need for more support for parents of children with special needs who are just coming into the system. The possibility of mimicking the Expert Patients programme from health (whereby patients act as mentors for the newly diagnosed) was discussed and it was suggested that service providers find a way of supporting this.
- The lack of parental consultation in schools was raised. Parents must be made to feel more included.
- Availability of support for young carers was also questioned. Of the four services put out to tender, one was for young carers. This has now been awarded to a local provider. Respite care has also been awarded locally. More details will be available as soon as the information is made public.

It was agreed that more time would be made available at the next Forum to allow for a more full discussion of issues raised by parents.

Transitions for children with additional needs 16+ - Information update from MC

- Plymouth currently offers lots of opportunities for children aged 16+, but there is not enough variety and flexibility for vulnerable groups where mainstream provision is not appropriate.
- As part of a Government push to develop Key Stage 4 provision, the Council is developing Personalised Learning: packages of learning tailored to the needs of the individual young person.
- The philosophy is to have a menu of options that will cater for all children, allowing parents and young people to make their own decisions based on what is best for them.
- It is hoped that this will engage disaffected young people as well as those with additional needs. The provision need not be in schools but could be work related learning.

- Plymouth already has the providers in place to offer this but needs better coordination and better information for parents. To this end MC will be meeting with the Learning Skills Council (LSC), the College of Further Education (CFE) and other providers and is looking to involve parents and carers at this stage.
- SF is the Council lead on 14 – 19 education and will be attending a conference on 18th July. A request was made for a parent to attend or thoughts on how to build parental input into the system. BB agreed to liaise as a parent representative.
- Plymouth Parent Partnership Service is currently preparing an information leaflet for parents and carers of young people with additional needs around the issues of post 16 transitions and would welcome opinions to help inform the process,

Date of next meeting

Thursday 14th September 2006
9.30 am for 10.00 am prompt start
Community Education Building at John Kitto Community College