

Notes of the Plymouth Parent and Family Forum

6th June 2007

6:30 pm – 8:35 pm

Spurgeon Hall, Mutley Baptist Church

1. Introduction and Welcome

- BB and JB introduced EW as new Administrator and note-taker.
- Apologies were given for those unable to attend.

2. New Forum Members

- Introductions were made to new people attending the forum: AB (Mutley Greenbank Trust), Z I (Plymouth Islamic Community), 15 new Parent Support Advisers, 15 new School Based Parent Partners and 2 representatives from the DELL Children's Centre forum.

3. Forum Activities

- SR spoke about Four Woods Children's Centre funding cuts. She has spoken to Maggie Carter and JB and now has information on what is happening. They had their first parent's forum and have obtained feedback on what has been happening in the Stakeholder's Group.
- BB explained that this situation stemmed from the parent's worry about budget cuts, therefore they requested the forum to attempt to clarify the situation.
- PJ spoke about the Foster Carers Survey. Several forums ago, foster carer representatives raised some queries. A postal survey was then commissioned and had a 20% return. There was a delay in putting together the report, however the information is soon to be released. Some urgent themes have become apparent and as such, management in Social Care will see the report before it goes public. It will be available on Plymouth Parent Partnership Service website in due course.
- JC – Although Plymouth is making some changes the focus still centres on finance. Even during the survey it felt like we were still not being listened to..
- PJ – Things are not just centred on finance. Key areas will be looked at carefully.

4. Register of Parents Interests

- BB –. At the meeting before last, a form was given to everyone to indicate their interests, e.g. bullying, mental health etc. By completing the form you will be indicating that you would be happy to be contacted in relation to the marked interests. Service providers will contact Parent Partnership and Parent Partnership will contact members to check availability and suitability to take part. Training will be offered to anyone that volunteers to assist in any resultant working groups or committees.

5. Service Developments Parents

JB – Members of the key services were asked to introduce themselves and state what their role is:

- Carol Henwood – Children's Services, Lead Extended Services
- Helen McLindon – Children's Services – Hospitals
- David Forrest – Integrated Service for Children with Disabilities, bringing social care and health together. Recently had a consultation with parents, happy to talk to anyone about it.
- Maggie Carter – Assistant Director of Children's Services Learner & Family Support, works across educational and social services. New developments and joining services together.
- Gay Hickling – Early years Education & childcare, ages 4-5.
- Richenda Broad – Policy and Planning. Helping managers with service improvements. Particular interest in engaging in the Forum and focussing on this area.

JB – requests that questions/enquiries be put forward to these people now they have been identified.

- KO, – She has encountered a number of parents who have had issues with their children being refused statutory assessment for a statement. Although the school is very well supported and has good staff, children being statemented has become a difficult issue. The response to this has been, if the school is meeting its requirements, why statement the child? She is unhappy that resources seem to be put more into secondary schools than primary schools and that the support isn't there for when the child makes the transition into secondary school. Would like to have some answers.
- MC – Stated that special needs are her responsibility. There is a system in place where all schools have resources for special needs. It is a complex process seeing if it is right to statement a child. The system in place delegates resources to schools and the schools have to act upon them. It is not the case that secondary schools are more resourced in this area. This issue can be put as a main agenda point for the next meeting.
- PJ – There has been a national drive to reduce the number of statements issued due to the cost and the process. We are aware that parents are having dilemmas regarding their children's needs not being met. All agencies and services are seeking to work together more effectively. It is a bit of a red herring to worry about the statementing issue. There has not been a reduction in funding, it has been dispersed in a different way. Therefore we need to reassure parents that their child's needs will be met – not just through being statemented.
- RG, PAG – the criteria for statementing and ADHD has been cut down, so it is harder for children with SEN to get statemented. The authorities look into it, however this takes a long time and by the time something happens, the child has grown up and it is too late.
- JB – Suggests to take up MC's offer to have a fuller discussion on this issue due to the concerns raised.

- AB – Parents are not aware of the changes in the process of statementing, therefore they believe they are going about it the right way, lack of communication.
- PJ – It is the role of Parent Partnership to ensure that parents do have access to this information and notification of changes in processes.
- For children living outside of Plymouth who have been statemented and then move to Plymouth, the process has to start again because Plymouth does not accept the previous statement.
- HS – Has seen the reduction of statementing at schools and can understand the money issue. The specialised TAs are very good. The biggest problem is that there is no room in schools to deliver the specialist provisions. Therefore we need to look at the amount of staff required to deliver.
 - JD , John Kitto – She has previously worked in a special school where all the children were statemented and has a range of experience around the city. There are children at John Kitto who have not been statemented and have managed well in the mainstream school system. Also there are those who would manage better if their needs were being met more effectively. Quality of evidence is needed to put together a statementing case. Some parents are desperate for their child to be statemented, however they would not get any better provision than is already being provided. Those that need the extra individual support are those that need statementing. She has picked up on primary/secondary transitional issue for parents, wants to get good communications going with primary schools.
 - JB – This would prevent small problems from getting bigger. This will be looked at in depth in the future.

6. Service Developments, Service Providers

- BB – We have had three requests for parent representatives.

Shaping Health:

- The Primary Care Trust has commitment to know what services parents would like to be provided. There hasn't been representation for Children's Services. There has been no specification in this area, primarily the focus has been on Adult Services. Therefore we would like to discuss this and know if anyone would like to contribute? We need to focus on children's health.
- HM – The population of Plymouth is 24% children. This is not focused upon in the Health Services. Children with serious illnesses may try to access Derriford Hospital but if this is not possible, the treatment automatically becomes national. She proposes that we represent this within Plymouth and beyond.
- BB – If anyone present knows anyone at their school, who would be interested, please put their names forward for this.

School Admissions Forum:

- BB – the forum meets three times a year, usually in June, November and March at Windsor House. At the last Admissions forum a request was made to increase the parent representation to include a parent representative from Primary schools and a parent representative from secondary schools. After a show of hands the following parents volunteered to become members of the admissions Forum.
- Primary representative is KO
- Secondary representative is CE

Children's Trust Board:

- PJ – PPS were asked to provide two names to represent parents for the shadow Children's Trust Board. Two names have been put forward and accepted who Peter believes are well placed in terms of contacts and already have a good place in the forum. They are:
 - AS: passionate about fathers and will ensure that dads' views are represented. Andy has contacts across the city.
 - EB: has very good contacts as a City wide Parent Partner, as well as general parents across the city. Therefore a balance is being represented.
 - Both have attended the first meeting and the organisers were very receptive to their comments.
- It was then suggested to JB that we ratify the forum arrangement. A show of hands confirmed that it has been agreed.
- AS – feedback on the Childrens Trust Board Meeting:
The meeting explained how the board is run. People were introduced. Hopefully there will be more about what action will be taken in the next meeting.
- Richenda Broad – also attended Children's Trust Board meeting. Can confirm that it was chaired by Councillor Monahan, Bronwen Lacey, John Richards, the Health Hospital Trust, Verity Jones, the Director of the Practice Hospital Trust, the Primary Care Trust Board, Ruth Marriot, from The Zone and Elaine Marshall from the police.
- AS – There were also two children from the School Parliament on the Board.
- EB – Points out that some parents may feel intimidated, however she does not. Attended the Every Disabled Child Matters Conference in April because she is fascinated how this is being dealt with. Families with disabled children are being sidelined.
She also found out that Plymouth is very ahead of the game in this area, yet we aren't signed up to the Charter "Every Disabled Child Matters".
Questionnaires have been sent out in order to find out why.
We want to keep a high profile on this subject. Opportunities will arise in Carers Week, which is coming up.

7. Dave Schwartz – Alcohol, Drug and Substance Misuse.

- See attachment for the presentation.
- Some questions were raised afterwards:
- EB – If a young person is in difficulty, is it possible to go to a service and take the young person along?
- DS– Yes, however the specialist services are aimed more at the severe drug and alcohol problems.
- What about preventative measures? Can services provide help for young people who are about to enter drug/alcohol abuse?
- DS – Schools and GPs can deal with that. The system is rather adhoc.
- JB – Cm from the Honicknowle board has requested that she ask DS how we can ensure that money is going back in to the locality. What will happen to the money that is ring-fenced? A preventative approach within the local community, such as Youth Workers, would be good. E.g. The Criminal Damage Scheme paid for itself due to a small amount of funding.
- DS – The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund should work towards this but is time-limited till the end of March 2008. A more mechanised system is required for money distribution.
- PJ – PPS is making a map of localities in Plymouth which is going to specify what is required in each of those localities. Parent Partners, Parent Support Advisers and Family Workers will provide information, which will subsequently go through the Forum and be networked across the city. Requests that parent representatives attending can gather information, which can be passed to PPS, who will inform Dave of the results. This should be very effective but will take time.

8. Parents Week Event (13th October 2007)

- PJ – Week beginning 13th October is National Parent's Week. A lot of things are happening and it is a chance to celebrate how well we have been doing. A parent strategy has been developed across key services. PJ, AM and LH are working on the strategy to create clear messages. At the beginning of Parent's Week we will be holding an event on the Plaza in the City Centre, where we will set up stalls to provide information for parents and also to get information *from* parents/carers about what they want. We also want to know how parents perceive services.
- BB – There is information as to what is happening on the PCC website. A team of four is working on the event and there have been three meetings so far.

9. Future Forum Dates.

- Next Forum meeting will be 25th September at Welcome Hall during the day.
- BB requests that everyone bring a parent with them to the next Forum in order for them to see what we do. Please contact Plymouth Parent Partnership Service with the details of the person you are bringing.
- Wherever possible we would prefer to email forum documents to attendees, so please ensure that Parent Partnership Service has your current email address.
- Future Forum dates confirmed.

10. AOB:

- JD, JKCC – Further to AS's attendance at the Shadow Children's Trust Meeting. It is important that the city addresses the serious issue of fathers separated from partners. There have been instances where the mother as carer has not been able to control their child and the father has been unable to step in as they would like to.
- Richenda Broad – Each time a parent representative gets involved with Commissioners, they should request feedback from them in order to ensure that they have been listened to.
- NW – Suggests we purchase a radio mic for events such as the Forum so that everyone hears properly.
- MC – Expresses thanks to the parent representatives who helped with recruiting over the last few weeks.

End of Forum