

**Forum Meeting
Thursday 9 July 2009
Engage Plymouth
6.30 – 8.00pm**

72 attendees

1. Introduction and Welcomes

EW welcomed SN, Manager, Beckley Centre:

- An activity centre for children with disabilities.
- A playscheme open to children across the city will be held at the Beckley Centre, during the summer.

JO informed everyone about the Plymouth Children's Information Service (PICCS):

- funding has been obtained for children aged 12 and above, particularly for those with ADHD and Autism
- Funding will be used for various activities eg kayaking, basket ball.
- PICCS will be at 'School's Out', on Plymouth Plaza, Saturday 11 July 2009.

SF, Voluntary and Community Sector, informed the Forum about a newsletter she has prepared for parents and providers of short breaks for disabled children.

- The newsletter has been funded by Aiming High for Disabled Children grant for Short Breaks.
- It is available on Plymouth Parent Partnership website and the Schools' Room website.
- The newsletter can be sent to parents as a word document or other format. Contact SF on sarah.flay@yahoo.co.uk.
- The newsletter contains information about PICCS and short breaks available in Plymouth.
- A second newsletter will be available in September 2009. Please let SF know if you work with parents/providers/services for disabled children and young people. SF will be happy to work with you to include something in the next newsletter.

2. Transitions Aiming High for Disabled Children

EP, Transition's Co-ordinator for Plymouth, asked for Forum members' opinions about a 68 page Transition Guide she has produced for vulnerable young people:

- Aim of Transition Guide is to be a 'one-stop' booklet to enable parents / young people to find out who to contact.
- Young people have been included in discussions about the Transition Guide.
- Forum members' honest opinions welcome please:
 - Would you like your own copy?
 - Would young people like a copy?
 - Does it need to be made more accessible?

Can it be made available on the Plymouth Parent Partnership and City College websites?
Is it accessible in the current format?

Please contact EP with your views. Email emma.pullen@plymouth.gov.uk

- Transition Event, Wednesday 28 October, Guildhall, Plymouth.
The aim of this annual event is to provide a range of information for young people with disabilities and their parents / carers about transition into adulthood.
Parents and young people welcome.

Questions re Transition Event:

1. *When will posters for the Transition Event be available?*

Ans: LD, Parent Partnership Information Support Worker, is completing the art work. Posters should be ready by September 2009. Posters will be sent out to schools, Parent Support Advisers (PSAs), Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs), colleges. It will be publicised as widely as possible.

2. *How many children did you have last year?*

Ans: 20 young people and quite a few SENCOs.

3. *What age is it aimed at?*

Ans: 15+.

4. *Do you have any flyers?*

Ans: We are in the process of producing flyers. Let me know how many you need.

5. *Will there be any music?*

Ans: We'll ask the Music Zone to contribute.

JT commented that 'It is a wonderful event'. She asked representatives to please let parents know about it. Transitions for young people to adulthood is one of the areas of concern for parents. This event will hopefully help answer people's questions.

3. Feedback on Forum Activities

3a Parents Reference Group Children's Integrated Disability Service (ChIDS) (JT)

- ChIDS has had a busy few months
- has been involved in consultation around short break activities
- Another pot of money from the Small Grants Fund is available for small groups, parents' groups and other small organisations. Funding can be applied for to run activities throughout the year.
- £40,000 is available; groups can apply for up to £5000 for any activity.
- Contact JGS

(janet.greaves-stocker@plymouth.gov.uk) to apply for Small Grants Fund.

- The Parent Reference Group has been involved with looking at applications for Small Grants funding, giving recommendations for approval, whether or not money is being usefully spent and that activities are accessible to a wide range of parents across the city.
- Information on the Small Grants Fund, application forms and a report is available on the Plymouth Parent Partnership website. The report is from the Short Breaks Project Board about monies allocated in the last financial year to various groups.
- There is another round of £40,000 available for small groups, parent groups and newly started support groups for parents of children with additional needs/disabilities.
- The Parent Reference Group meets regularly on a monthly basis, generally the last Wednesday of the month.
- If you know of any parents involved with support groups or who are parents of children with additional needs/disabilities and would like to be involved in the planning of services around additional needs and disabilities, contact JT or EB.
- We want to ensure a wide range of parent representation as possible; any parents of children with additional needs/disabilities are welcome to attend. There is an increased focus of involving and consulting with parents, particularly with the Parent Participation strand of Aiming High for Disabled Children. Other consultations include the Inclusion Strategy for the city, Lamb Inquiry and National Ofsted Survey for parents of children with disabilities.
- The Parent Reference Group has been successful in their application for £10,000 from the Aiming High for Disabled Children Parent Participation grant, to help fund parent participation training and other events.
- Special School Parent Support Advisers (PSAs) have been involved, consulting with parents at their schools. Parents of children with additional needs/disabilities attending mainstream schools who would want to be involved can contact JT or EB.

3b Parent Reference Group (Parent and Family Support Strategy) PJ

- The Parent & Family Support Strategy, which started 18 months ago, comes under the Children's Trust.
- The plan was to identify, for the city, the best moves to go forward to support parents and their parenting to ensure that a coherent set of services are available to parents and families.
- Initially, this involved a large amount of consultation with parents. 9 key themes were identified.
- The Parent Reference Group was established with a parent representative for each of the 9 strands. This group has continued to meet on a regular basis.

- From the Parent Reference Group point of view there has been a period of confusion and some frustration as to the purpose and direction of the group.
- Meetings have taken place to look at how services might be clear about their overlaps and avoid duplications. A plan will be forthcoming looking at how these services fit together.
- At the last meeting of Parent Reference Group, the group considered carefully the best way of how to keep parents across the city informed about developments.
- PJ met this week with RB, Parenting Commissioner. The provisional plan is for a parent newsletter to go out across the city to keep parents informed about progress on each of the 9 priority themes.
- The Parent Reference Group will meet next week to develop this further. Details of this meeting will be shared with RB, Parenting Commissioner. The Forum will be kept informed.

3c Parent representation Locality Manager appointments (AMcG)

- AMcG thanked parents who were involved on the Locality Manager appointments.
- Three appointments were made on 22 June 2009.

3d Service User Feedback

- PB, PSA, informed the Forum that LC, Commissioning Services, is looking for parents to take part in service user feedback.
- Aim: to help improve services for children and young people who are out of education from mainstream schools, either through managed transfers or exclusion.
- Will include looking at whether more support could be given to intervene earlier.
- LC would be glad to hear from any parent representatives. Contact no: 307310.

4. Service Developments - Parents

4a Outstanding Questions from Parents

- BB reminded the Forum that if people have asked a question and have not received, or are not happy with the response; they can bring it back to the working group of the Forum.

- Question: *'What was the reply to the Stonehouse Peninsula GP surgery question some Forums ago? ie There is no doctor's surgery within the Stonehouse Peninsula. Is there an explanation or a plan to provide one?'*

Reply from Jan 2009 Forum:

- Health said that for new GP Surgeries to be provided, registrations (residents without a designated GP living in the area) need to be between 4000 and 5000. This is the minimal number of registrations required for a surgery to be cost effective.

Reply from March 2009 Forum:

- SP responded on behalf of the Director of Primary Care Services. There is a surgery in Adelaide Street, Stonehouse and a number of GP services around the Stonehouse Peninsula. If a GP service was placed in the Stonehouse Peninsula it may draw services away from the surrounding area, making them less viable and they may have to close.
- SP agreed this was not the most ideal response and will take it to the Director of Primary Care again. He will be happy to come to the Forum and discuss in greater detail at a later date.

4b New requests from parents.

A parent representative expressed that she was shocked to find that when she and a parent went to a bank in Crownhill to complete a form the disabled access ramp was broken. The parent representative then went to a number of Cafes in Crownhill village and found that they did not have suitable disabled access.

Ans: EB The Disability Discrimination Act says that any business has to make reasonable adjustments. The Forum will take this forward to the department responsible within the Local Authority.

Who decides which schools qualify for the Targeted Mental Health through Schools (TaMHS) project?

Ans: PO, Director of Child and Adolescent Mental Health, answered that TaMHS is a national pilot and Plymouth has been successful in its bid for this. Because it is a pilot, it is to be tried in a few schools at a time. If successful, it will be rolled out to other schools.

The criteria for eligibility for inclusion in TaMHS includes both national and local guidance plus the school being engaged and willing to engage in meeting those standards and taking on board the project.

5. Service Developments - Service Providers

5a Children and Young People's Mental Health Strategy for Plymouth. (PO, Director of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service – CAMHS)

- PO thanked those who contributed to the development of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Strategy.
- A joint strategy for 2005 – 2008 helped develop key target services for young people. It had been proven nationally that certain young people have a higher mental health need than others. They are:
 - Children with learning disabilities
 - Children involved in offending

Children in Care.

- During the course of these three years the development of a targeted service, for those who need a specific way of supporting their needs, has been attempted.
- In the current strategy, a broad, all encompassing approach is being developed. Schools require a culture that promotes good emotional development and requires staff to be able to identify an emerging mental health need early on and requires a co-ordinated approach.
- The strategy aims to ensure the understanding that '*there is no health unless we look after emotional and mental health*' (in addition to physical health).
- The strategy stretches from '*How do we support the encouragement of healthy schools?*' to '*ensuring there is a co-ordinated approach from a range of professionals to those who have an identified need.*'
- PO raised awareness of the Launch Day of the strategy and merging 'fun' strategy:
 - 4 September 2009, Guildhall, 12.00 – 16.00.
 - Children and young people to attend.
 - To include a range of workshops including TaMHS, Healthy Schools, SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning).
 - Drama production 'On the Edge' (about emerging psychosis).
 - Details are available on the Plymouth Parent Partnership website.

Question: *Is there anything within the strategy relating to training of teachers?*

Ans: (PO) 'We have engaged young people to be involved in developing a universal training strategy for frontline workers eg teachers, health visitors, general practitioners. A DVD has been produced 'Beneath the Smile – are you identifying my need?'

Question: *How can we obtain a copy of the DVD?*

Ans: (PO) 'It will be shown as part of the training programme and parts will be shown at a future Forum.'

Question: *How do you get onto the training?*

Ans (PO) 'Information will be on Plymouth Parent Partnership website or email tanya.crocker@plymouth.gov.uk

Any further questions can be emailed to BB at bob.burton@plymouth.gov.uk. These will then be forwarded to PO and replies will be given at a future Forum.

5b Schools Out (BB, JO'D)

- Run by Extended services Co-ordinators and Parent Partnership
- To be held on Plymouth Plaza, Saturday 11 July 2009.
- Provides children a chance to experience taster sessions of what activities will be on offer during the holidays.

- See website: www.plymouthschoolsout.org.uk Website is updated on a daily basis.

5c Parents on the Plaza

- To be held on Saturday 17 October 2009, at the beginning of Parents' Week.
- Facilitated by the Forum. Groups/organisations/services that support parents are invited to hold a stall at the event.
- This year there will be more information about support to parents of children with additional needs/disabilities.
- At the last Parents on the Plaza event a 5 page questionnaire about parent and family support was given out. This year, a similar questionnaire will be produced.
- BB asked for volunteers for the working group.

5d 'Get your computer fixed for free'

- BB raised awareness of free (labour) for computers at Achievement PC Clinic pcclinic@achievementtraining.com
- Information is available on Plymouth Parent Partnership website.

6. Social Care (MB), Head of Service for Children in Care & Care Leavers

- gave a presentation which incorporated answers to questions emailed to BB from Parent Representatives
- Social Care consists of:
 - a) Advice and Assessment
5 small teams based at Ballard House. Provides advice. Short term pieces of work.
 - b) Children in the Community
4 teams. Involved in longer pieces of work for children in need and children subject to a child protection plan.
 - c) Adoption and Fostering: Two separate services.
Responsible for recruitment, assessment and ongoing support of either adopters or foster carers.
 - d) 16+ Service
Provides long term work to young people in care and care leavers. Statutory responsibilities up to age of 21, or 24 if in full time education.
 - e) Family Support Service
Provides supervision around contact arrangements for children to see their parents and also provides planned pieces of family support work.
 - f) Independent Reviewing Service
Senior Social Work Practitioners. Chair child protection conferences and statutory reviews for children in care.

They are responsible for ensuring that care plans are regularly monitored and reviewed.

g) Out of Hours Service

A service that does the work of the other teams during out of hours.

The following questions had been sent in by Parent Representatives and answered by MB:

1. Would social care be able to explain the protocols for interviewing children when a child protection disclosure has been made to an adult within school? If the professional concerned has been disclosed to, but the child is unable or too scared to confirm an allegation would evidence from the professional be enough?

When a child protection disclosure is made by a child this should be referred to the Duty office Advice & Assessment Service, Plymouth City Council. A strategy meeting will be convened usually with the Police.

The Police investigation and the social worker enquiry should be closely coordinated with the joint objective of protecting the child and convicting the alleged abuser. The Police will lead on the criminal investigation; particular care is taken when interviewing potential witnesses particularly children.

It is difficult to say what would be enough in terms of a criminal investigation and this is a matter for the Police. From the social care perspective a testimony from an adult who has spoken to a child is very useful in terms of future planning but may not be enough on its own in terms of criminal prosecution or public law proceedings.

2. The feedback I have received from PSAs is that they would value an overview of the process that is followed when a case is referred - e.g. what criteria they work to in selecting what cases they will become involved with, what meetings are then instigated (and their purpose) and what agencies are represented at these meetings?

- Initial assessments within 7 working days
- Core assessments within 35 working days
- Child protection enquiries and investigations
- Child protection plans
- Family & child support
- Care proceedings
- Permanence planning
- Statutory duties to children in care and care leavers (until 21 yrs old)

The eligibility criteria for the service is:

- Children who are thought to be suffering or at risk of significant harm
- There is a serious concern about the health and development of a child
- A child who is in need of accommodation or homeless

Key meetings are Child Protection Strategy meetings, Child Protection Case Conferences, Child Protection Core Group meetings (to review child

protection plan), Children in Care Statutory Reviews, Personal Education Planning meetings.

Some other planning meetings – Meetings are important to share information and jointly plan. The agencies involved in these meetings are those agencies involved with the particular client or their family.

3. I know there is frustration that Social Care often fail to send a representative to CAF meetings when they have been invited and PSAs would like to know what leads them to take the decision not to attend?

It is true we have not got involved in the CAF as much as we would like to. The work we do focuses on children in need and child protection and we have not had the capacity to respond to lower levels of need. We do recognize this is important and will share what we know about a family in order to help the professionals working with a particular child if we are able to.

4. A number of PSAs have also asked why no proactive work takes place - at a guess both are resource issues but I think it would be good to get some feedback from Social Care around this?

See below

5. This information will help support the understanding of the process and in turn enable them better support parents. I hope it will also foster a better understanding of the pressures and the legal framework and guidance that Social Care work under.

A lot of proactive work takes place in each area of the service. We undertake a lot of very successful work on parenting, managing difficult behaviour, supporting foster carers and adopters. Our Family Support service is currently working with 286 families.

6. What areas does social care cover?

- Advice & Assessment
- Children in the Community
- Adoption & Fostering Service
- 16+ Service
- Family Support Service
- Independent Reviewing Service
- Out of Hours Service

7. When working with Parents do Social workers inform Parents that there is a Parent Representative (Parent Support Adviser) in each school?

I don't have confidence that this is done on a routine basis. Some social workers will do it routinely because they know the PSAs and the work they do. It would be good if we could invite PSAs to our Management Communication Meeting so we begin to create better links between the services.

8. **Are Advice & Assessment phone enquiries recorded and logged for future reference? If yes, why does there seem to be no record when follow up calls are made by the parent?**

The call centre logs all contacts. If a caller calls the Advice & Assessment Service direct and there is important information exchanged about a child, this will be recorded on the child's file but would not necessarily be picked up by other workers or admin staff in the service unless they had the child's electronic file open.

9. **Would it be useful to arrange a half day workshop with Parent Support Advisers and Social care?**

It would be very useful. As a start, how about Parent Support Advisors coming to our Managers Communications Meeting.

10. **When social care are convening meetings why are either no minutes taken, or if they are why are they not distributed to partners organisations?**

There should always be minutes of the meeting and these should be distributed. I will raise this with managers.

11. **The Social Care approach currently seems to be re-active; are there any plans for earlier intervention and preventative working in the future?**

I think we should be more involved in earlier intervention. We need to work with children and families in crisis and this could be prevented by intervention at an earlier stage. As the locality team approach develops, we need to consider how social care can make better links with these teams.

12. **How are social workers motivated? Often they come across as being uninterested.**

Social workers generally are passionate about and committed to their work. Often they are under a great deal of stress because of the crisis nature of the work. If you feel they are coming across as disinterested, please tell them and if you don't feel this can be talked through to an adequate solution, please talk to their manager.

How our service presents and the quality of the work parents and families experience is very important to us so any feedback is always very welcome.

Questions/comments from the floor:

A) Are children matched to foster carers?

Ans: MB stated that they try to but there is a shortage of foster carers so they don't always. They are trying to change the fostering service into payment for skills, consisting of four bands of expertise and skills.

B) The focus is on 'looked after'. Children talk about a change of social worker. Relationships can't be built if this happens. Is that something being considered?

Ans: We want to be child focused but a change of social worker is not very child focused. There are two problems:

- 1) We have created our own change of social workers – we have services specifically focused on i) looked after children ii) care leavers iii) children with child protection places. This is for us the best way of delivering a quality service rather than having the same social worker throughout. Other local authorities do this differently. This is something we need to look at. We are setting up to make changes.
- 2) The ability to recruit and retain social workers. There is a national shortage of social workers. Plymouth has a rolling programme of recruitment. This means we do have inexperienced workers in some of our services.

C) We have a lot of social workers without local knowledge.

Reply: Yes, the main problem is in Advice and Assessment, it is better in our other services. We still have a lot of work to do, particularly in Advice and Assessment.

D) What financial arrangements are there for grandparents?

Ans: This is a difficult area. We would decide and undertake assessment on a case by case basis. We would do it in terms of the child's needs, giving priority to children who have previously been looked after and who we have a responsibility for. We have limited resources and cannot support every extended family arrangement. There are grandparents caring for children who have asked. We have assessed it but we don't support it because we cannot supplement the benefit agency. There is no definitive answer but we will assess it and look at it.

PJ thanked MB for her presentation.

AOB

Information to schools re swine flu (MC)

- A letter will be going out to schools with up-to-date guidance on either Friday 10/07/09 or Monday 13/07/09.
- Information will be available on TeacherNet on Tuesday 14 July 2009.
- If you have symptoms, stay at home. If children go to school with symptoms they will be sent home.
- Cases are to be reported as the government wants the information.

Actions:

- Forum to contact Plymouth City Council and businesses in Crownhill Village re disability access (see 4b New Requests from Parents).

Date of next Forum:

Thursday 24 September 2009, 9.30 – 12.00, Engage Plymouth.