

**Forum Meeting**  
**Thursday 29 September 2009**  
**Engage Plymouth**  
**9.30 – 11.30pm**

**1. Introductions and Welcome**

EB welcomed parent representatives and welcomed CP who helped to chair the meeting.

**2. New Forum Attendees**

CP welcomed Children Centre Representatives who were attending the Forum for the first time. They introduced themselves and CP asked if there were any other new group representatives attending today. No one came forward.

**3. HCA Helping Children to Achieve**

Louise Brownhill, from HCA:

- thanked the schools that were already involved with HCA
- briefly described what the HCA trial is :
  - HCA is based in Exeter, from the Peninsula Medical School.
  - It is a research project about parenting programmes looking at why parenting programmes work better for some parents than others.
  - It asks questions such as:
    - Do parenting programmes work better for single parent families, for large families and why?
    - At what point do the programmes start working? eg do parents need to complete the whole parenting course, or will there be the same benefits if parents join half way through? Can parents attend a course for a time, then restart later and still benefit from the course?
  - Assessments are taken before and after the parenting course. Parents are paid for these as the assessments are time consuming, transport is also paid for.
  - Groups are held at Plymouth Parent Partnership, Catherine Street.
- LB offered parents a chance to attend groups in November as well as January
- Representatives were asked to take nominations forms, leaflets and to pass information about the project to parents/carers

**4. School Admissions**

Daryl Wallace - Team Leader, School Admissions, Plymouth City Council.  
Gave a presentation about school admissions:

- The Admissions Team does not work with Special Education admissions.
- The team is small, working with Primary/Junior, Secondary and In Year admissions.

- Every admission authority consults with schools, local authorities and parents through a number of community support groups. Once consultation has taken place, information is published on the admissions webpage: [www.plymouth.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/schooladmissions)
- Parents have the right to object if they feel that the admission arrangements are unlawful. Objections are made through the Schools' Adjudicator.
- Trust Schools, Voluntary aided schools and Foundation schools set their own admission criteria but have to abide by the law i.e. the School Admissions Code and the Schools' Appeals Code.
- Admission arrangements for Community Schools and Voluntary Controlled Schools i.e. the majority of schools in Plymouth are set by Plymouth City Council and will come through the School Admission Team.
- Places are allocated on an equal ranking basis:
  - Parents/carers can choose 3 schools for preference and rank these in order of preference.
  - These choices are treated as 3 separate applications by the admissions team.
  - All School applications will be collected together – 1<sup>st</sup> preference at the top.
  - Each school has a total admission number and the places will be filled up to that admission number.
  - There may be places available for everyone.
  - If not, the oversubscription criteria is used: The pile of choices for school preference 1 will be put into admission criteria order with those of the highest ranking put towards the top. If there are 100 places available, the admissions team will take the top 100 applications for that particular school. This is repeated for every school. The lists are then looked at together. If a child appears in several lists, then the ranked order that parents have put schools in will be taken into account. The school allocated will be the eligible school that the parent ranked highest.
  - Everyone gets a school place.
- **Types of admission:-**
  - Normal point of entry (includes children starting school for the first time, those moving from infants to juniors for the first time and from juniors to secondary for the first time).
  - In-Year Admissions (includes those moving into the area or within schools).
  - 6<sup>th</sup> Form (schools will deal with these and will follow admission criteria).
- **Primary 2010:-**
  - The data base is built from children who enrol at pre-schools and also from health data.
  - The admission process is advertised by leaflet sent via pre-schools, posters to GP services and to libraries. Parents on the database will be sent a postcard. A letter containing a unique ID number to use when they apply online is also sent.

- The Schools' Admission booklet is also available on request from schools in September - the webpage is also available from 1 September.
- Closing date is 11 December 2010.
- Places will be notified by 26 March 2010.
- **Junior 2010:-**
  - An information leaflet, booklet and webpage are available.
  - The start date is the beginning of September.
  - Closing date is 9 October 2009.
  - Places are notified by 27 November 2009.
- **Secondary 2010:-**
  - An information leaflet, booklet and webpage are provided, as for primary admissions from 1 September.
  - Closing date is 16 October 2009.
  - Places are notified by 1 March 2010.
  - Secondary schools work closely with the Choice Advisers.
- **Grammar:-**
  - Application process is by equal preference.
  - Admission criteria is set by score attained in the test, places will go to the top examination performers.
  - Equal preference and parent ranking is important. If a parent wants their child to go to a grammar school they need to rank this as their first preference.
  - Plymouth City Council is the admissions authority for the two girls' grammar schools - the boys' grammar school is its own admission authority. Their process will be a little different regarding waiting lists but they still have an examination.
- **How to apply:-**
  - Most parents/carers apply online.
  - Paper applications can be made.
  - Parents/carers can change preference up to the closing date except in exceptional circumstances when this can be extended e.g. if the family move to another area after the closing date.
- **Allocation 2010:-**
  - Parents/carers who have applied online will be notified by email.
  - The content of the email cannot be changed (by the admissions team).
  - A letter will also be sent with details of why they have been allocated a certain place and details of waiting lists for schools, appeal processes and what to do if they are not happy.
- **In Year Admissions:-**
  - These take place throughout the year
  - Equal preference applies
  - The aim is to allocate within five school days, dependent on what information is required regarding a particular child.
  - The admission criteria for in year admissions is different and is explained on the webpage:  
[www.plymouth.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/schooladmissions)
  - Generally, parents applying in year can apply to the local authority or apply direct to the school.

- For this year (2009) there are waiting lists at schools at normal point of entry i.e. Yr 7, Yr 3 and Reception years - this means that applications can't be dealt with directly by a school unless it is its own admissions authority. If the council is the admission authority parents will have to contact the council first because if the school is oversubscribed they will need to be added to a waiting list.
- For In Year, there are very few instances where a school can refuse an application. If the school has a vacancy, it needs to allocate a place. There are incidences where a place has been allocated but a school may not be able to match the options required by the parent/carer e.g. with examination courses (usually affects older age groups).
- **If parents/carers are not happy:-**
  - Contact the admission authority – there are always options.
  - Parents/carers can appeal. This is explained in the letter that is sent out to them.
  - Appeals go to an independent panel, DW will attend this to explain why they did not get the school they want - the parents put their case, the panel makes the decision.
  - Infant class appeals are difficult as the law states that there should be no more than 30 in a class.

- **Changes for 2010:-**

- **Primary schools:-**

- Earlier application date.
    - Priority of siblings in admission criteria
    - Catchment of new schools e.g. Highview, Mayflower will be the catchment of the combined closed schools.

- **Junior schools:-**

- Raising priority of siblings in order to keep families together.

- **Secondary schools:-**

- Catchment areas have changed (see the Admissions webpage).
    - Admissions numbers for John Kitto, Tamarside and Lipson have been reduced due to falling roles.
    - Sibling priority has been raised.
    - John Kitto & Tamarside have applied for Academy status.

- **In-Year:-**

- For 2009:- Waiting lists will be held by the admission authority for normal point of entry until at least December (where the school is full during the autumn term).
    - For 2010:- In-Year admissions will be co-ordinated for all schools, applications will need to be made on a Common Assessment Form. Schools will not be able to accept any applicant direct.
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- **Hints and Tips:-**
  - Read the guidance on the website
  - Visit schools and research schools.
  - Apply online or paper by the closing date
  - Inform admissions team if any details change.
  
- **Contact details for admissions team:**
  - Tel: 01752 307469 (secondary)
  - Tel: 01752 307166 (junior and primary)
  - Tel: 01752 307170 (in year)
  - Email: [secondary.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:secondary.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk)
  - [primary.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:primary.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk)
  - [inyear.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:inyear.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk)

Web page: [www.plymouth.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/schooladmissions)

**Question:**

**Regarding primary catchment areas Shakespeare school do they have the same catchment areas as before?**

Yes, the catchment area is the same as the Old Chaucer and West Park primary schools together.

**Question:**

**Some people do not have access to the internet. There were not enough application booklets. Will this change?**

No, as the majority of applications are online it would be a waste of resources to provide a copy of the booklet for everyone. Libraries have access to the internet and Parent Support Advisers can help parents to apply in schools. For schools who know parents can't manage the internet, they can telephone admissions team for a copy of the booklet. If there is an issue, primary schools need to contact the admissions team.

**Question:**

**I have heard it said that Parent Support Advisers can only log on once. Is there something to help us to apply with parents?**

You can only use the email once because it is attached to the person applying but Hotmail accounts can be set up for parents. If PSAs use their own email address, allocations will go to the PSA's email instead of parents' email. If it is a real issue and parents can't manage, a paper form can be printed off from the webpage.

**Question:**

**Has the ranking changed for Catholic schools?**

It has changed from last year but essentially they will still be giving priority to Catholic children.

There has to be a sibling at the school at the time of admission. Have a look at their admission criteria.

**Question:**

**If a child does not get the first choice of secondary school, does the letter sent out to parents state where they are on the waiting list?**

If someone wants to know where they are on the waiting list they can contact the Admissions team. Waiting lists are fluid and this is why this information is not included on the letter.

**Question:**

**Regarding In Year application, I am not sure that everyone is aware of trials in secondary schools?**

Fair Access protocols are being reviewed at the moment and trials will be one of the areas that will be reviewed. Under the current system a child from one school can be taken on for up to six weeks in another school. Where there is no policy/protocol admissions want to bring in something more formal and open to parents. Managed transfers, which can be monitored, are more formal and are more open for parents, they are preferred to trials.

## **5. Choice Advice**

- LD introduced herself as a new Choice Adviser working with BB for Parent Partnership.
- BB talked about the choice advice role:
  - Confidential and impartial advice set up to provide information to parents
  - The sibling issue has been addressed because of information that parent representatives have passed on to the Admissions Forum.
  - The target group for BB is all parents who are having difficulty.

Please contact BB, LD or School Admissions team if a parent needs help.

The Choice Adviser DVD was shown.

BB reminded the Forum of a Polish Choice Advice event to be held in the Guildhall on 25 September 2009 regarding secondary allocation. An interpreter will be available.

## **6. Member's Interest Forms:-**

- Parent Representatives were asked to complete these.
- There is currently a vacancy for a volunteer for the Standards Advisory Group for Education (SAGE). This is involved with education from early years upwards, meetings are held during the day and the next one is in three weeks' time.

## **7. Ian Morrison - Fair Access, DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families). Gave a presentation on school admissions and an admissions related white paper:-**

- Ian Morrison works in Whitehall. He works with policy, law and advises ministers.
- DCSF has two bases - one in London, one in Darlington.
- Parents and local authorities contact the DCSF mainly by telephone rather than face to face contact. They also work with about 2000 cases per year by correspondence.
- Admissions can be an emotive and fraught stage for parents.
- Systems over the last 10 years have been promoting agenda for choice – choice is a good thing but brings its pressures.
- The School Admissions Code provides a useful national framework, it helps to create a framework of fairness in the system.
- The School Adjudicator - appointed to be independent from the Secretary of State, looks at objections and acts as a regulator of the system. Local Authorities are under a duty to report annually to the Schools Adjudicator about how they see fair access in their area, the Admission Forum feeds into that - the Adjudicator then reports to the Secretary of State.
- The Adjudicator will report on the following topics in November:-
  - The treatment of siblings, multiple births and twins in admission criteria
  - The use of 'random allocation'.
  - Fraudulent applications.

Two mandatory codes have been produced; the current came into force in February. The current code has strengthened the system for parents:

- The Role of Choice Adviser – the requirements of a Local Authority are more strictly stated in the code.
- Admission Authority consultations have to take place between 1 November and 1 March and it has to take place for eight weeks - this allows every parent to know when that consultation period will take place.
- The time taken to object to the Adjudicator has been extended until 31 July.
- The Schools White Paper proposes (all proposals are subject to approval by parliament):-
  1. As part of the application process, parents will sign up to policies defined by the school. The idea is to bring in to the ambit of admissions an acceptance of the school's policies e.g. on behaviour.
  2. As part of the application process, parents will be given the opportunity to comment on what they think of the provision of secondary school places in their area, this is being piloted from next week in the form of a questionnaire. The pilots will then look at what might trigger this process of a Local Authority producing a plan to improve those school places. The local

Adjudicator will hear appeals if the parents in the area do not think the Local Authority's response is good enough.

3. Routeways is piloting a programme with separated parents.

**Question:**

**Regarding Behaviour Policies being sent out with secondary school applications. Will every secondary school's behaviour policy be in the admission pack? This would be quite tedious.**

The management of this would have to be discussed with local authorities. If it gets accepted by parliament, it would not be finalised until at least 2012.

**Question:**

**In answer to a question about priorities:**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> priority has been created in this new code. Children of Service Families must have priority for boarding school policies.

In a local area, some parents may find this (siblings) unfair so the Adjudicator can come in and look at an individual case. It is up to Local Authorities to agree locally within what is allowed in the code. Certain criteria are being recommended e.g. distance, siblings, random allocation if appropriate, social/medical needs.

**Question:**

**Regarding the slide about school agreements and behaviour policies: do parents have to sign up in order to achieve a school place?**

The Code prohibits not allocating a place because a parent hasn't signed on HSA (this will still stand). It will have to be worked through as to how this will work, it is about parental engagement. It is to make parents aware of the consequences - it is contentious.

In answer to a question about the Routeways pilot, BB said their telephone number will be on Parent Partnership website.

## **9. Forum Activities (BB)**

### **9a. School's Out:**

- The School's Out Calendar is now running full time throughout the year. From 1 October an email will go to all agencies asking for events. These can be put on manually.
- Over the summer 15000 people visited the site.
- Due to parents' request, information on the weather will be provided on the site.
- Site details: [www.plymouthschoolsout.org.uk](http://www.plymouthschoolsout.org.uk)

**9b. CHIDS (Children's Integrated Disability Service) Parent Reference Group (JT):**

- The next meeting will be in the evening of Wednesday 30 September 2009.
- As part of the Aiming High for Disabled Children Funding £10,000 has been received from the Parent Participation Grant. To address the problem of helping parents of children with special needs to engage, the Parent Reference Group will be trialling video conferencing from January 2010. If successful, it may be extended to the Plymouth Parent and Family Forum.
- Some of the funding will cover travel and child care and the producing of a leaflet. Some will go to Parents on the Plaza as this year's event will include information for parents/carers of children with disabilities.
- Please contact BB if you know of any parent groups who would be interested in attending Parents on the Plaza.
- On Thurs 1 October, at Virginia House - Friends and Families of Special Children have invited a speaker to give a presentation regarding direct payments at 10.00am.
- The next Forum, on Tuesday 24 November will have a disability focus. Please contact JT, EB or BB if you have any questions.

**9c Children's Trust Board: (EB)**

- The Board met last Friday to receive an update of the work currently being carried out and a discussion of what to do next.
- Plymouth is a centre of excellence for PSAs.
- Plymouth is one of the best at consultation and working with children and young people.
- The Board is focusing on 3 main areas of focus:
  - Dr Alex Kemp has been appointed to the role of Champion of young people on Trust Board.
  - Edith Bayley is now Champion for bullying.
- At the last Forum, the incontinence service was discussed. The contact number for the head of the service is 01752 434759.
- There are two websites where parents of children with special needs may have their say if they have any objections to changes to the Disability Living Assistance (DLA) system. EB recommended that the Green paper re proposed changes to the DLA system is worth reading. The closing date is 13 Nov. Details will be on Plymouth Parent Partnership website. Parent Representatives were encouraged to pass on information to parents. The websites are: [www.politicalcripple.com](http://www.politicalcripple.com) and [www.careandsupport.direct.gov.uk](http://www.careandsupport.direct.gov.uk)
- EB reported that it was acknowledged that Heads of Services sometimes become so focused on the strategies that have to be made that they forget what it is like for people receiving those services. They welcome feedback from people at the receiving end of the services they provide.

9d Health AGM (BB)

- Plymouth NHS AGM have invited all to go for a free health check in the Guildhall, after today's Forum meeting.
- Feedback regarding the NHS AGM will be provided at the next Forum.

## **10. Service Developments:**

10a Actions from last Forum

- Hayley Lee - Parent representative from Mount Tamar, gave an update regarding a problem with parent disability access in Crownhill Village. Businesses in Crownhill Village will be visited next week.

Actions for next Forum:

Ann Honey - Parent representative from St Budeaux Foundation, said concern had been expressed about the cost of uniforms for the new Academies.

BB will feed back at the next Forum.

## **11. Service developments, service providers**

11a The **Parent Know How national database** will be launched on Wednesday 30 September 2009. There will be a link from the Parent Partnership website to the Parent Knowhow website.

### **11b Parents on the Plaza**

PSAs were asked to take 2 A3 and 2 A4 posters to help advertise this event. Posters will also be emailed to PSAs. All services supporting parents will be at the event, together with Pennywell Farm, the Fire Brigade, a climbing wall. The big screen will be in use as a giant Nintendo.

## **12. Next Forum date:**

Tuesday 24 November 2009 at the Guildhall, Plymouth.

- Parent representatives were encouraged to invite parents to this event, especially parents of children with special needs and disabilities.
- EB reminded parent representatives to email or telephone any questions, especially around disabilities that their parents may have.