

**Forum Meeting**  
**Thursday 24 November 2009**  
**Plymouth Guildhall**  
**9.30 – 11.30pm**

**1. Introductions and Welcome**

EB welcomed parent representatives - the focus of this forum is on special needs and disabilities.

**2. Aiming High for Disabled Children Programme**

MC - Assistant Director, Learner & Family Support and Lead for Disabled and Special Needs. Gave an overview together with future plans for this work:-

- The Government's agenda has raised the profile for disabled children and children with special needs.
- The Government is committed to meeting the needs of disabled children and children with special needs by requiring Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts to develop the Aiming High for Disabled Children Core Offer. There are three elements in the core offer:-
  - 1. Access & Empowerment**

Families should have access to information about what is available for children and young people.  
There should be transparency in decision making i.e. decisions made about children and young people should be made in an open way.
  - 2. Comprehensive assessment**

Children, young people and their families should be involved at all levels in services for children with disabilities, from an individual level up to the development of planning of services for children and young people.
  - 3. Responsive services and timely support**

I.e. services that are responsive and flexible to the needs of families and young people so that young people can have a say. Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts are charged with integrating the ways of responding to families, this is a significant challenge.
  - 4. Improving quality and capacity**

Local Authorities have been provided with money to help increase what is available for children and their families e.g. short breaks and childcare provision for children and young people with disabilities.
- Key areas of work to be developed over the next three years are:-
  - **To improve participation of parents.**

- **To improve the provision of short breaks** - A menu of options will be provided so parents and young people have a choice.

- **Transition to Adulthood and transition to Adult Services** - The Local Authority is charged to make the relationship with services for adults more 'joined up' so that families can be supported into transition.

**Accessible child care** - This should be available for children with disabilities.

- MC asked parents to sign up to help. A disability strategy to 2015 is to be written. Input from a wide range of parents of children with disabilities is needed in order to help produce a comprehensive strategy.

JS - Integrated Disabilities Services Manager. Spoke about the work re Aiming High for Disabled Children that is being developed in Plymouth:-  
Re the Aiming High Agenda

- A multi-agency group currently meets monthly (next year will meet three-monthly) to track the progress being made by the different work strands and plan ahead for the future. This group will also be overseeing the Disabled Children's Strategy.

Key work areas:-

- **Short Breaks** - New money has been received and is committed to improve the choice of short breaks between now and 2011.  
Families that have not been able to access short breaks will now have options available to them.  
In 2008- 2009, £40,000 received enabled a focus on improving short breaks. This year an extra £239,000 has been used to increase the number of short breaks, especially over the summer holiday period.  
£250,000 capital has been used to provide an equipment store where parents/carers can borrow equipment. £740,000 will be available next year. Work is being done with families to decide where priorities will be.
- **Transition Support Programme**  
Improving arrangements and integrated working to support transition to adulthood.  
Improving opportunities for parent/carer involvement.

In response to a request to define short breaks JS said that short breaks were traditionally 'respite breaks' but under Aiming High they provide not only a break for the parent/carer but also an opportunity for young people to develop e.g. care in home, an activity out of home, a few hours of someone coming into home.

## Questions:

### ***In response to a question about access to short breaks:***

Under Aiming High, a social worker should not be needed in order to access short breaks, families should have easier access. (See KK's presentation below).

### ***In response to a question of how activities can be accessed for a disabled grandchild*** JS replied:

Information about what has been available has been a most frequently raised point. In order to address this there will now be a newsletter to enable families to know what choices are available for short breaks.

EB - PSA will have access to information of activities that are available for children with disabilities. They will also have access to a website [schoolsout@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsout@plymouth.gov.uk) which has information on what is available during school holidays.

## **3. Parent Participation**

TBL spoke on behalf of PB who was unable to attend the Forum:-

PB spoke about how Parent Participation training had helped her confidence e.g. in speaking up at meetings.

CP spoke about the Parent Participation grant and Parent Reference group -

- The Parent Reference group consists of parent representatives from several support groups across the city.
- Anyone who is a member of a support group who is interested in helping with Parent Reference Group please contact BB.
- Phase 1 from Parent Participation grant (£3300) has been used for training parents, website development and childcare to enable parents to attend various training events.
- Phase 2 grant money (£10,000) has been used for training, childcare and travel, video conferencing (to enable parents unable to attend the meeting to participate in meetings) and to produce a Parent Participation leaflet (available in a few months' time).

## **4. Parent Participation website and participation opportunities (BB)**

- Parent Participation is important in order that parents/carers have their say.
- The Aiming High for Disabled Children Parent Reference Group website [www.parentref.org.uk](http://www.parentref.org.uk) provides information on what is happening nationally and in Plymouth.
- Plymouth School's Out website [www.plymouthschoolsout.org.uk](http://www.plymouthschoolsout.org.uk) is updated daily and provides information about events for children and parents/carers.
- Information about Plymouth Parent and Family Forum can be found on [www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk](http://www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk) .
- Parent Participation - Parent Forum and the Aiming High Reference group will help parents to put their views forward.

- Parent Participation Opportunities:-  
BB asked for volunteers interested in becoming involved with any of the following groups -
  - Aiming High for Disabled Children Parents Reference Group
  - Health Reference Group
  - Early Years Strategic Partnership
  - Standards Advisory Group for Education
  - Parent and Infant Mental Health Steering Group

### Questions/Comments:

#### Question: Can PSAs volunteer?

Yes

#### Question: Will your website provide information for children with special needs to e.g. join a dance class?

Go to 'School's Out' website, put in 'special needs'.

### 5. Coffee Break

#### Re: (Question from parent during the coffee break) why don't department managers phone up the departments to see what parents have to put up with when they are trying to contact services?

JS has agreed to phone 5 departments once a month to ask a question to check what parents have to go through to get someone to talk to them. She will provide feedback.

### 6. Access to Short Breaks and Single Point of Contact (KK - Team Manager for Social Care Services for Children's Disability and Complex Needs)

KK spoke about access to short breaks, Single Point of Contact, the future of services and how they are intended to be delivered:-

- The Aiming High Core Offer talks about improvement of access to services and undergoing the minimum possible assessment to receive services. The aim is to work towards accessing services directly without going through the assessment process.
- At present, short breaks are accessed through Social Care services via Advice & Assessment, being re-referred from there to receive additional assessments from social care e.g. initial assessment, core assessment etc.
- A Lead Professional Service is in the process of being created to deliver services at the point of contact. The aim is that the Common Assessment Framework will be the vehicle for receiving services for most disabled children. For severely disabled children special assessments will still take place but for most of disabled children across the city, the aim is to achieve minimal time delay between contact and receiving services.
- From January 2010 the aim is to deliver a single point of contact for children with disabilities. This is not expected to work immediately but

over time any child with a complex disability will be able to use the single point of contact.

- The single point of contact will be located at the Child Development Centre. The telephone number will be available to families and professionals to receive information and advice and where necessary to contact the appropriate professional network.
- A lead professional is:-
  - The person who is nominated to act as the parent/carers communication centre to services.
  - Ensure that professionals are informed about the current state and wellbeing of the child.
- Social Care Services will be reconstructing itself and over time Lead Professionals will be introduced across the agencies, these will be nominees of the family e.g. Teachers.
- In order to achieve flexibility and speed some of the Lead Professionals will be budget holders. If a service is less than a certain amount of money the Lead Professional and their Line Manager will be able to deliver that service as soon as it is identified. This process will start small and is expected to accelerate and change over the years.
- Social workers will operate with children who need a social work service but in order to achieve consistency with the core offer it is believed that a lot of disabled children can receive services without contacting a social worker but with the practical professional network.

**Question: When the single point of contact is established, will it be available out of hours?**

No, it will be available during normal working hours. The single point of contact is there to co-ordinate services. Emergency services will be available if an immediate response is required.

**Question: What happens if the parent/carer needs someone to talk to (out of hours)?**

KK answered that this has not yet been talked through but will be considered.

**Question: Social Services for disabled children do not exist (for grandson). Help is never there. Is this going to change? E.g. If issues arise with the parents I am told to get on with it or call the police.**

EB suggested putting individual concern onto the post-its that were available, BB suggested speaking to PB from Parents Again.

KK said that disabled children have a right to be supported, therefore do make contact. If the support you need does not warrant social services, we can still look at what support you may require.

**Question: I would like to clarify Lead Professional regarding PSAs.**

Plymouth Parent Partnership position is clear - i.e. no lead professional role for PSAs.

**Question: You say that you will be dealing with complex needs, some children have more than one condition. At the moment, your team says “that condition outweighs the others” - Is that going to change? For example, a child with ADHD, Attachment disorder and Autism may be told that the Attachment disorder outweighs the others so nothing will be done for them.**

KK: I am surprised about the response. The change that is due to happen is that you will be able to access services directly via single point of contact. This is the aim we are trying to achieve by January 2010. We are aware that it has been difficult to access services and in the future this will be made easier.

BB: Re: Are things going to change? Today is an opportunity to write down your concerns in order to obtain a response. If you do not obtain a response let us know.

**Comment:**

Single Point of contact is desperately needed, it is a great idea. There needs to be a service for parents/families - parents/carers do not want to keep phoning, asking, and shouting. There is a need for people who are caring, compassionate, pro-active, productive and supportive to allow parents feel empowered.

**Reply:**

KK: That is our intention. The framework is being set up so that single point of contact will encourage parents/carers to talk. Behind this will be work going on to ensure your message is passed through to the right people and that contact is made with you for the future.

**Question: In response to a question of when contact details will be available.**

KK replied that a newsletter will be issued in January 2010. Contact details will be provided then.

JT: Single Point of Contact was set up in response to parent requests. Consultation with the Parents Reference Group was made when the Integrated Disabilities Service was first set up. Parents were asked what the priority would be and they suggested the single point of contact. It was known that this would not happen immediately. Parents were consulted and can still have a say through the Parents Reference Group, the official point of consultation for the development of services across the city for parents of children with disabilities.

KK: We are seeking to achieve a better response for you and your child's needs in future.

**Question: The process for a core assessment is 35 days. Will the Single Point of Contact speed up this process?**

We intend to achieve a better response to the timescale from referral to service received.

**Comment from an attendee:**

You have the right to change your social worker. Write to the social services manager to say you are not happy with the service and ask for a different social worker. Or phone and ask to be re-assessed. A new social worker will then be sent out.

**7. Information about Short Breaks (SF from the Short Breaks Advisory Service)**

- Aim of short breaks is for the disabled young person to have fun while the parents have time to themselves or with other siblings.
- SF will help parents by:
  - Finding information about activities e.g. scouts, sporting activities, dance classes.
  - Help parents/carers to access activities, whether mainstream or specialised.
  - Put parents/carers in touch with providers.
  - Help with funding if necessary.
  - Help provide information on local events and items of interest.
  - Keep parents/carers informed with development of Aiming High agenda e.g. equipment, development with transitions, PICCs.

This information will be provided via the newsletter. If anyone has difficulty accessing the newsletter, SF will also try to provide information in a format relevant to individual parent/carers.

- SF will work with as many parents and groups as possible. She requested that parents/carers feedback with anything specific to be added to the newsletter.
- SF works with professionals and groups - parent groups who would like to access funding, who would like to register as a charity but do not have the resources or if you would like to provide facilities at your meeting so you can provide services for families and disabled young people - contact SF.
- Newsletter will be available on Plymouth Parent Partnership website. Hard copies can also be provided.
- SF asked to be invited to coffee/staff meetings in order to talk about the information she can provide. Contact details: Tel: 01752 319886 or [sarahflay@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sarahflay@yahoo.co.uk)

**8. Early Support and Team Around the Child (SB)**

SB - Manager of Inclusion Service (a 0-5 service for children with disabilities. Portage Service is part of this). SB introduced Early Support and Team Around the Child service.

- Early Support is a co-ordinated service for 0-5 year olds.
- It aims to achieve a responsive, flexible service.
- Team Around the Child (TAC):-
  - Brings together professionals,
  - Provides better information around the family.

- Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting:-
  - A key worker (one who works most with the child) is nominated after discussion with the parents e.g. Portage worker (the person may change over time).
  - Early support materials are available - let Inclusion Service know if you would like to access these.
  - Parents feel listened to and more in control.
- To access TAC :-
  - There is a new pathway being conducted. One of the discussions is would a TAC help that parent?
  - Currently requests from the Team Around the Child Co-ordinator or through the Plymouth Early Years Forum.
- Future developments:-
  - Single Point of Contact through Children's Integrated Disability Service (ChIDS).
  - The knowledge and expertise of the co-ordinator of the under 5's will be used to roll out early support principles for children over 5.

**Question: Re: the Early Years Forum. How long should it take between referral and service?**

There is a timeline from the Early Years Forum. Parents should have a response within a week to say which service that child has been allocated to.

**9. Transitions to Adulthood (EP)**

EP's old role was the Transition's Co-ordinator. Will shortly move into the new Transitions Team.

- Transitions protocol:-
  - Had been worked on for a year before coming to fruition in December last year.
  - For children between 16–18 to transfer to adult services - it provides a clear timeline of when and by whom. It indicates the responsibilities of who should do what so parents/carers should be able to understand what is happening at any time.
  - Can be downloaded from [www.plymouth.gov.uk](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk) - Go into Children's Services > Children with Additional Needs > Transitions page.
  - It is known that transition from children's to adult services is still not going smoothly at present. EP asked that parents look at the Transitions Protocol and let her know what needs to be changed to make it right for parents.
- A Transitions team based in Douglass House managed by KK, is being developed to bring together children's services and adult services:-
  - Like the team around the child, this will be a team around young people going through transition.
  - The Transitions team will be able to signpost young people.
  - Contact EP at any time.

- A hard copy of useful guide about the transitions process is hoped to be available by January 2010.

**Comment:**

EP was thanked for speaking honestly.

**Question: Why can the professional contact the parent but the parent cannot contact the same professional?**

EP: This is being worked on.

**10. What Next? (JS)**

How are we responding to the important issues you are raising?

Aiming High is pushing us to make changes. It is difficult to make these overnight, there is a lot of work to do e.g. getting organisations to work differently is taking time.

Parent's feedback is very helpful.

We need people to get involved in Save the Children strategy. We need the Parent Reference group to continue their involvement in planning for the Aiming High plans for 2010-2011. If parents would like to be part of that planning the Parents Reference Group is the way to be involved in that.

Please feed back e.g. tell your PSA or Parent Reference Group so concerns can be fed back into services.

We need to know what you want to do next - what support services are still needed? E.g. equipment store – what other equipment will be needed? What information will be needed?

Working on next:

- 2010–2011 Short Breaks Plan.
- Transitions Team (Children and Adults to work together – aim).
- Information e.g. improving website.
- Single point of contact.
- Using your information that you are sharing e.g. from post-its.

**Question: Regarding PSAs and the number of children they work with. Are you taking into consideration the different amounts of children with needs that PSAs are working with?**

PJ - The schools carry the budgets. After consultation with head teachers, we have ensured that all schools have the offer of 20 hours of a PSA, some schools have increased this.

## **11. Contenance Service (EB)**

Some parents have been finding it e.g. difficult to contact Tenor. Helen McLindon - Commissioning Manager - has been informed of this and has asked for an urgent review of the service.

## **12. Next Forum:**

January 2010 - Welcome Hall.

School Catering and 14-19 Strategy will be on the agenda.