

Forum Meeting
Thursday 28 January 2010
Welcome Hall
9.30 – 11.30pm

1. Introductions and Welcome

EB introduced Tina Howlett - Chair of Parents Again Support Group:-

- PASG meets once a month on the first Wednesday of every month.
- If you know of any grandparents caring for grandchildren who might be interested in the group, please contact the facilitator - paul.benting@plymouth.gov.uk

2. Feedback from last Forum

- Over 50 questions have been received from attendees of the last Forum. The answers will be posted on the website, individuals who left contact details have been contacted.
- Trust Board Feedback:-
 - The December 2009 meeting looked at reviewing policies in the city.
 - Young people put forward their questions.
- Re: Questions on nappies. Some children have developed allergies. Please let Tenor or Olive Robinson know (Tel: 01752 434759). An urgent review is being undertaken.
- EB understands that an urgent review has been called regarding direct payments, forum to be kept updated on this.
- JC gave an update on Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC)
Parent Reference Group:-
 - Parents had asked for the times of these meetings to be considered. Therefore two meetings were held: one between 12.00 and 14.00 and the other between 18.00 and 20.00.
 - Parents welcomed the change of times.
 - Penny Whittell, Manager of Single Point of Contact, spoke about the Single Point of Contact.
- **Parent Participation (JC)**
 - Phase Two is almost at the end of its year.
 - JC attended a meeting held in Taunton together with representatives from Devon, Cornwall and Somerset - Plymouth are doing well with participation.
 - Parents are interested in attending Parent Participation training but prefer for it to be held in their school - therefore the next Parent Participation training will be held at Courtlands school on 23 and 30 March 2010.
 - Parent Participation training provides parents with extra confidence to ask for what their children need and want, it shows parents how to attend meetings and how to be positive.
 - (JT) The city has £89,000 to create, develop and improve child care provision for children with disabilities in Plymouth.

- In response to the question 'Is the childcare for Plymouth residents only?' JT will check with Jo Siney to see if this includes parents living in Cornwall, or if Cornwall has its own money for this. JT to keep everyone informed by email and Parent Reference Group meetings.
- **Health Parent Reference Group (BB)**
 - The next meeting will be held on 29 January 2010, Catherine St, 09.45 – 12.00.
 - Helen McLindon - Children's Commissioning Manager for Primary Care Trust - will take parents' questions regarding Mental Health.
 - The group will also look at ideas and consult with parents to help take the Mental Health Strategy forward.
 - Please email any questions to BB.
 - The Health Parent Reference Group was set up as a result of a large number of questions to the Forum regarding health issues. Nine to fifteen parents who had a specific health interest sat on this group.
- **Standards Advisory Group for Education (SAGE)**
 - Meets every 3 months.
 - The group met this week.
 - In Plymouth £250,000 is sat in dormant trust funds or charities. This money was for small prizes to be given to e.g. pupils who have attained well, these schools have now closed.
 - SAGE are looking to form a charity to subsidise one or two children to be subsidised for an 'aspirations fund' e.g. possibly children from Year 6, Year 7 or younger.
 - Representatives are required for SAGE.
 - An allocation will be made once a year to a student.
 - The constitution for the group has yet to be set up.

3. Parents Apart (Sally Hawken)

- This is a new project, one of ten pilots and financed until March 2011.
- Its aim is to support parents who have and are separating.
- Parents Apart helps people access financial and emotional help in order to minimise conflict and minimise negative impact on children, it is helping parents to put their children first.
- Every parent will be able to access advice, information and have access to parenting programmes specific for post separation. Case workers will then conduct a needs assessment for each family. At this point Parents Apart will be targeting those families most in need of economic hardship. Case workers will help plan and help the family to move forward with their identified needs.
- Aims for the project:-
 - To help improve contact with the non-resident parent.
 - To help raise parents' awareness of the options available regarding child maintenance arrangements.

- To try to improve stability of the housing situation.
 - The physical and mental well-being of the parents and children.
 - Reducing conflict in separation.
- See Routeways website www.routeways.org.uk regarding events that will be held.
 - Referrals will be taken from mid February 2010.
 - Contact: 08007 834 259 or email shawken@routeways.org.uk .

Questions for Parents Apart:

Question: Are you going to need both parents to access the service?

It would be good if one parent encouraged the other to engage (with Parent's Apart) but we are conscious that this might not be the case.

Question: Is the legal advice and Relate free, or do parents have to pay?

The project will be able to fund some of that.

Question: Your service may be inundated with requests. What about waiting times?

We do not know at the moment. We have the flexibility to purchase support from other agencies and departments involved e.g. if a large number of people needed debt advice we would be able to offer dedicated time from someone at Citizen's Advice Bureau. Information can also be sent out to people so that people can help themselves. In addition to this caseworkers will be involved with those parents who need additional support.

Question: How can we help the partner whose partner is not accessible e.g. has left the country?

We would look at supporting the members of the family who were remaining. Research has shown that one of the things that impacts on children is a downward dip in mental health for the parent in care, we can try to support that from becoming too negative. We will also try to see if some sort of a link can be maintained with the person who has left e.g. via the internet, sharing a blog.

Question: Would you be able to help with finance?

If there is economic hardship with a case we have taken on, we can help e.g. with bus fare to a family mediation meeting.

Will you have translators available for parents who have English as an additional language (EAL)?

Absolutely - I have already had conversations with the Plymouth Race Equality Council, we have looked at how we would like leaflets translated.

What will the referral process be? Will parents contact you direct, or through agencies?

Both.

If a child has separated from a grandparent whom they used to live with, does this come under your remit?

Yes, I would think so if they have been living with the grandparent.

5. Coffee Break – during this time questionnaires re the Forum were handed out to parent representatives.

6. 14–19 Strategy – Annie Singer - Senior Adviser for Secondary Education and Strategic Lead for 14 -19 gave a presentation about the change agenda in terms of curriculum and how it affects young people nationally and across the city.

- Quite a lot of significant reforms have taken place since 2007. (The key elements only were covered today and the presentation can be found on Plymouth Parent Partnership website).
- The participation age will be raised by 2013. This means that young people will have to participate in education or training (this does not mean staying on at school only).
- The options available to young people will be:-
 - Full time education in school or FE
 - Full time work based training (apprenticeship)
 - Self – employed
 - Employed
 - Volunteer for 20 hours

Young people will have to engage in learning for one day a week, ‘16 year olds going into jobs without training’ will no longer be an option. The aim is to make young people better skilled for a more fulfilling working life.

- The current Year 8 will be the first cohort and will participate until they are 17. By 2015, Year 7 learners will participate until their 18th birthday.
- In 2007 a 14–19 Prospectus was produced, a database of all courses on offer in every training centre can be found on:
www.findacourse4me.co.uk .
- In 2009 the National Apprenticeship Service was introduced to help search for vacancies:
<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Parents/Searching-for-vacancies.aspx>
- From 2009 all post 16 learners had access to 10 diplomas across the city.
- In 2009, the International Baccalaureate was offered in Plymouth at Plymouth High School for Girls, this is available to all learners from all Plymouth schools.
- From September 2010 all KS4 aged learners will have access to 10 diplomas (ten Plymouth secondary schools currently offer this, another

six to follow). Feedback shows that pupils enjoy working with children from other schools.

- In 2011 the Common Application Process will be launched for post 16 learners. In Year 11, an online application form will be used to apply for their next course. Data from this will be useful for the Connexions service to help identify learners who are applying for courses but are getting rejected. Every learner should have a guarantee of a course, collection of this data should enable this to happen more quickly.
- A questionnaire is being produced (LD from PPP is on this working group) to find out how parents would like information provided to them. The questionnaire will be sent out to Parent Support Advisers (PSAs) to send to parents, parents will also be invited to become volunteers to help form a 14-19 parent reference group.
- 2013 will be 'The year of entitlement' i.e. young people will have an entitlement to a broad curriculum -
 - All young people will be entitled to access qualifications from a variety of routes e.g. GCSEs, New Diplomas and 'Foundation learning qualifications (for pupils working at entry level).
 - The range of qualifications on offer will depend on which school they attend but collaboration between schools will mean that pupils may go to another school to study a subject that may not be on offer at their school.
 - Post 16s will have access to 'A' levels, New Diplomas, Foundation learning qualifications and National Apprenticeships. (By 2020 one in five will study these).
- A pupil and parent guarantee document (an 80 page document) will be available on PPP website.

Question: In response to a question re information and presentation:

The information will be on PPP website. Also on a public access website www.gotoourplace.com/plymouth1419 . Follow the links to Document Library and then Diplomas.

Question: What kind of services are available for children with disabilities?

In terms of the 14-19 reform, pupils may have a disability and may be very bright. Annie Singer is meeting with Jo Siney to link in with Aiming High for Disabled Children to discuss 'How can we work with all those involved in pupils with disability so that - a) they are aware of the raising participation age and b) aware of all that is available to them?

For those that are struggling, we need to work on the Foundation learning element. This is currently being piloted at Brook Green Centre for learning and City College Plymouth. The staff help them to develop their numeracy skills. There is collaboration with Brook Green and City College.

Question: How will this impact on the financial situation of families? Do all those options mean that full time education or benefits will continue until pupils are 18?

There has been a concern with benefits e.g. Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). There is a review on EMA at present and concerns have been raised.

Question: My understanding that the criteria to access this is entry level and level one. This means GCSE level and below doesn't it?

Level One qualifications are those below grade C GCSE level.

Question: The Participation age can't be used to accelerate gifted and talented children?

Participation age means that pupils must have access, up to the age of 17, to a broad range of qualifications including A-level, Diplomas, Apprenticeships and also for some pupils to access level 4 qualifications. It is for all learners to make sure there is a suitable offer of learning.

At the moment the concern we have is 'Do we have suitable level one and entry level qualifications?' because most of the learners that do not engage are from very vulnerable groups.

Question: If a child wants one thing and a parent does not agree, who gets the final say if they are never going to agree?

There will be legislation about 'enforcement' - we hope the offer will be so wonderful they will all want to learn. The responsibility will be with the parents to make sure their children are in additional training.

If they want to learn, they have chosen a course and the parents do not agree with the course, what happens then?

It will be decided by whoever has the greatest power in that household.

7. School Catering - Brad Pearce

- Brad Pearce - Education Catering Manager, telephone 30715. Gave a presentation focused on the legal aspects of school catering, based on questions raised at a previous Forum presentation.
- The changes being made in school catering are due to legislation.
- Statutory responsibilities:
 - Under the Education Acts 1996, 1998, 2002, responsibilities for the provision of school meals lie with Local Authorities or directly with schools if they have been given a budget (residential special schools, secondary schools in Plymouth).
 - A free school meal must be provided for all those eligible under set criteria.
 - A paid meal on request.
 - Facilities for packed lunches.
 - Access to fresh drinking water.
- Changes were introduced because:
 - In 2004-5 it was identified that the average spend per school meal was 31-32p per meal.
 - As a result of this, a schools review panel was created.

- In 2005 from a government 'Turning the Tables' report the School Food Trust (an arm's length body under the DCSF) was created to oversee the implementation of standards.
- This led to the Education Inspections Act 2006. This established tough nutritional food and drink standards for all maintained schools (primary, secondary and special schools) to ensure that pupils had access to good quality food and drink.
- In 2006 mandatory food based standards were introduced.
- In 2007 mandatory food based standards other than school lunch was introduced e.g. tuck services, breakfast clubs & after school clubs.
- In 2008 and 2009 mandatory nutrient based standards were introduced to school lunches. 14 main nutrients have to be provided and a maximum calorific value is provided for each meal.
- Working with the School Food Trust, BP has recently carried out a large consultation exercise across the South West locality, with the support of Equal Voices, Routeways and Parent Support Advisers. Comments were expressed about portion sizes, medical/special diets/allergies, menu design, problems with the dining environment, airline trays compared to plates, cutlery, free school meals and meal prices.
 - Re food allergies:- Parent Support Advisers were advised to speak to the kitchen managers at their school. They will be able to provide details of all the ingredients contained in the menus.

Question: Who sets the criteria of free school meals? Will it be revised? What about families who fall just outside the band?

The criteria for free school meals is set by central government. To claim free school meals, you need to be on Income Support, Income based Job Seekers Allowance, Immigration Asylum Act, Child Tax Credit (not Working Tax Credit), Guarantee element of State Pension, Income related Support Allowance or pupils who receive income support in their own right. For Free School meal team, telephone 01752 307410.

Question: What can we do to get the criteria changed?

The government has recognised that there is an issue with school meals. Two pilots are currently running:-

- In Newham and Durham all primary age pupils are currently receiving free school meals for two years from October 2009, the impact of this will then be reviewed to include level of take-up, behaviour, attendance and attainment.
- Wolverhampton is currently testing the eligibility to include Working Tax Credits.

In addition to the above, the pre budget report has announced that the criteria from September 2010 on the Child Tax Credit, will be increased to £16,190. This is anticipated to bring an extra half a million children into eligibility for free school meals. There was also a recommendation in the pre budget report that every English region should be running one of the above pilots by September 2010.

Re: Meal price - the price is £1.80 for Primary and Special, £2.05 for Secondary. The price is set by Cabinet. The real cost of each meal is much higher.

Next steps:

- The review of the consultation exercise will be completed, the findings published and included on PPP website.
- A parent group of some kind to be included every time the menu is changed in order for BP to have some idea of what parents' views are.
- School catering would like to talk to school councils. Parent Representatives are asked to encourage school councils to include school meals on their agenda.
- School nutrition action groups.
- Food for life - a lottery funded group.
- Making lunchtimes fun e.g. by running theme days.
- School supervision training.

Question: Regarding theme days. Do school kitchens have free choice of what foods they can serve or do they have to comply with standards?

On a theme day, kitchen managers can plan ahead and inform their line manager which products they need for the project.

Question: Are proportion size standards the same on a theme day?

Yes, we have to comply with this because have to address the obesity issue.

Question: Re - School councils becoming involved. Ours have asked for tomato sauce. This request seems to have been ignored.

On the menu will be details of how to make tomato sauce. Sachets can be used but there is a cost implication. The kitchen manager could work with the school council to make a tomato sauce that the pupils like.

Question: When kitchen managers are employed, what qualifications do they have to have?

They all hold a certain level of qualifications and details of this will be provided to BB.

Question: Do you ever think about analysing the waste from school meals?

Yes, there is an issue with regard to throwing things away. School councils need to inform us about what they do not like and we can find something else. Meal time assistants are also there to encourage eating and looking at waste.

Question: Regarding portion sizes, when you said that you have to provide 1/3 of the daily intake (of calorific value), my concern is that for some children on free school meals that this is their only meal for the day. Is this going to be looked at?

I will be looking at this and feeding back to the School Food Trust.

Question: Re: Obesity in foundation stage. Are there any plans for tackling the quality of food served in day care and Nursery centres? Also, are you working in partnership with Primary care trust?

Yes, we have started working with early years. There are no mandatory standards that apply to 4 years and below. A booklet has been made available to parents of pre-school children, informing them about the benefits of healthy eating. We are also part of the Obesity Panel working with colleagues in health to look at the wider remit.

Comment: We had a school fair. Your Colleague came out and talked to parents about the food served in schools. Parents gave positive feedback.

Reply: We are happy to do that and have booked one already today.

Question: With regard to Cashless systems, is it the school that decides or do you implement that?

The school.

Email any further questions to Brad Pearce at brad.pearce@plymouth.gov.uk

8. Parents on the Plaza 2010

- In response to feedback from parents, Schools Out will be held on 12 June 2010.
- The Schools Out calendar is currently online - parents can find out what events are happening.
- Events can be placed on the Schools Out calendar by Parent representatives or via Plymouth Parent Partnership, email schoolsout@plymouth.gov.uk
- There were 15,000 hits on the Schools Out site last summer. Website: www.plymouthschoolsout.org.uk
- Parents on the Plaza will be held on 16 October 2010, in the city centre.

9. Date of Next Forum

- Thursday 25 March, Plymstock Community College, 18.30–20.00.
- The focus will be on housing, speaker Matt Garrett, Housing Options Manager. Please send your questions in advance.