

**Aiming High for Disabled Children  
Parent Reference Group**

**24<sup>th</sup> February 2010  
Old Treasury Building  
12pm-2pm**

**Present:** GA, TB-L, EB, PB, BB, JC, RC, DC, AD, EG, SL, KM, CP, JT.

**Apologies:** IB, SB, SD, HL, ML, LJ, FJ, GP.

**1. Welcomes, Introductions and AOB.**

- EB sent out an email asking for information from parents who may be affected by the closure of the Woodlands overnight residence. The emails were also sent out via Plymouth Parent Partnership (PPP) and Parent Support Advisers (PSAs). EB has had 21 replies, many from parents of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD).
- EB will send this out again, the PSA at Woodlands is also going to resend the email as they have had no replies so far from parents of children who attend Woodlands.
- BL (Director of Services for Children and Young People) has assured EB that she will try to take the issue to the government if the issue comes down to money, as long as EB has evidence that parents are missing out.
- **ACTION:** EG and EB to work together.
- Q: Has the media been used to gain parents input? No, at the moment nothing is being promised, just want parent's views.
- The media could help get parent's attention.
- A lot of parents have not replied because they did not think it applied to their children. Could a note be put that views are wanted from parents of children with ADHD and ASD.
- An ASD task and finish group has been set up and is being chaired by MC (Assistant Director, Services for Children and Young People). It is a statutory requirement that all Local Authorities identify children with ASD and make sure that provisions are put into place for them. The Woodlands issue could be taken to this group.
- Q: Is there anything written down that lays out which children are eligible for the respite? A: It is too open to interpretation and parents have found it inconsistent.
- It is an extremely expensive provision and parents cannot use Direct Payments towards the cost.
- **Aiming High-** If anyone has outstanding claim forms please submit them. If the grant money is not spent then the government will take it back.
- If anyone is claiming it is their responsibility to declare it for tax purposes. Parents are paid £7 an hour. Mileage claims however are not taxable.

- **ACTION:** Clarify when people can claim back from.
- Another £10,000 grant has been awarded to Plymouth. Ideas are needed for what to spend it on.

## 2. Inclusion Policy- AD

- The Inclusion Strategy written in 2006 has become outdated; clarity was needed around what the LA considers inclusion to be. It has been written for the Children's Trust.
- It is for all children not just children with SEN or disabilities.
- A strategy is more detailed than a policy and includes the steps that need to be taken. A policy includes a set of principles and a definition. It outlines how something will be approached whilst signposting to high level priorities.
- Q: Does a policy equal accountability? It can do in the sense that it sets everything out in black and white. It is hard to ignore.
- A book of poems has been written *The Art of Inclusion* (2005), which is a collection of poems written by children on the subject.
- The principles have been written to ensure better outcomes for all children in Plymouth.
- Relationships are key, especially with schools, organisations and agencies.
- The *Plymouth 2020 Local Strategic Partnership, Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2020* sets out that Plymouth in 2020 should be a place where 'an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone.' The group felt that this is idealistic, but it is good to aim as high as possible.
- The group made suggestions for improvements.
- Q: Should families be included in the policy? They were originally but you cannot set a policy out for a family. You cannot dictate to parents. AD will have further discussions around including families in the policy.
- The group looked through the policy and gave suggestions.
- AD has been to many schools; mainstream and special, and has consulted children over inclusion and what it means to them.
- Sexuality is an important issue, many young homosexuals do not know who their peer group is.
- Key messages are laid out in the documents for services.
- Families should be included in the document as a partnership.
- Workforce development should include improving training, parents should be involved in training professionals. PPP have parents willing to participate.
- Q: How will the document be enforced? A: Performance Indicators from other strategies are being pulled out to ensure that inclusion is happening in Plymouth.
- Q: How will it be disseminated? It needs to be in a public space, it needs to be marketed.

## 3. Training Opportunity

- Coasts are running a training session around mental health. It was noted that the times (10am-4pm) are not parent friendly. Could they be run over two half day sessions?

**4. AOB**

- Views are welcome on the Parent Participation leaflet.

**5. Next meeting**

- Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March 12-2pm and repeated 6-8pm.