

Forum Meeting
Tuesday 12 July 2011
Welcome Hall
9.30 am – 11.30 am

1. Introductions and Welcome

2. Forum Activities

- **Trust Board** update. (Maggie Carter, Assistant Director, Learner and Family Support, member of Trust Executive group)
 - The Children's and Young People Trust Board consists of representatives of all the key agencies in Plymouth, the voluntary community sector and parents. There is also a shadow Trust Board consisting of young people. The Chair of the Trust Board is the portfolio holder from the city council, currently Councillor Sam Leaves.
 - The Trust Board is looking for two parent representatives. Volunteers are asked to contact BB or CP.

- **Early Years Strategic Partnership** (Lindsey Hele, volunteer parent representative)
 - LH has attended one meeting of the Early Years Strategic Partnership. She will keep Forum members informed about future meetings.

- **The Terraces update** (CP)
 - The Terraces was re-structured last year. Parents were involved with this.
 - More children have been seen from September to Easter than anticipated. The waiting list is short. Children going through at a particular time are of a similar age and disability, in order that children benefit more.
 - Bespoke packages, aimed at siblings of children with ADHD and ASD, are planned to take place during holidays. These will come from GP referrals to the Terraces.

- **Schools Admissions Consultation** (BB)
 - The briefing meeting for new codes and consultation will be on Friday 15 July 2011, from 12.30pm until 2.00pm, Old Treasury Building, Catherine Street. All parent representatives are welcome.
 - Some of the things that require a parent response are:
 - 'It is proposed that the in year allocations, at present carried out by the local authority, will go back to the schools.'
 - It is proposed that 'a higher priority can be given to members of staff over other parents'.
 - It is proposed 'that the time allowed before appeals letters are sent out be extended from two weeks to six weeks'.
 - 'To allow children of multiple birth and twins to go on the exceptional list to take a school over their planned or published admissions number.'
 - There is a proposal for children of Service Families to be added to the exceptional list to take schools over their planned or published admissions number.
 - It is proposed to have a higher planned admissions number for popular schools.

3. Children and Young People's Overview Scrutiny Panel

Kevin Willis, parent representative, gave an update on how the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel works. Topics under discussion have included the following:

- The Hospital School has been reviewed and does not exist anymore. The school and the services it provides have now been incorporated into the complimentary education service as a specialist area of health and welfare. This is now situated in a new building on the Tor Bridge campus.
- School transport for special educational needs children has been discussed at the scrutiny panel. This is being regularly reviewed.
- School libraries – are they being used correctly and for community use, especially new build schools? New build schools are being used for community use; it is difficult for older schools. This is still being discussed.
- Primary school attainment is still a work in progress.
- Work experience will continue to be a focus.
- Fostering has improved. Good reports are being received regarding social work.
- Reports have been received on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Teenage pregnancies have been discussed. The evidence is that the strategies being used are working.

4. Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Alanna Jones, Citizens Advice Bureau, gave a presentation on DLA. (See presentation on the website).

- DLA for children requires almost the same criteria as for adults. The main difference is that a child under 16 must show that his/her needs are substantially in excess of the normal requirements of a child of that age, or that they have substantial needs that would be considered normal for a much younger child, but not for a child of his/her own age.
- If a child has a statement of educational needs or a care plan, this can often be valuable evidence that their needs are higher than normal. Written statements from professionals, who work with the child are also helpful. For example doctors, social workers, health visitors, nursery school staff.
- There is a disability handbook, published by the DWP, used by the decision makers. This contains a table of normal stages of development for children up to the age of six.
- DLA comes in two components, a care component and a mobility component. There are three rates for the care component and two rates for the mobility component.
- DLA will be changing to 'Personal Independence Payments'. For working age people, this will be replaced in 2013, for children at some point later than 2013.
- If a child does get DLA, carers are allowed to apply for Carer's Allowance if the child is awarded with middle rate or higher rate care.

Comment:

If you have a child that has DLA, if you apply for working tax credits you will get a higher premium.

School's out (BB)

A large amount of information has been received regarding activities. Plymouth Parent Partnership does not have the capacity to input the information. However, it is easy for people running events to input. If there are any problems, phone PPP on 258933. If anyone would like to volunteer to input the events, please contact BB.

Starting school (BB)

BB will spend a day in each locality at the beginning of September providing information to parents on starting school. An email with further details will be sent out via the Early Year's Forum. Letters to parents with children starting school in September 2012 will also contain information about these sessions.

Family Fund (CP)

Families of children with disabilities, with an income of under £40,000, can now apply to Family Fund, www.familyfund.org.uk. The criteria will be the level of tax credits people are on.

Family Fund will fund anything that should not be provided by statutory services eg beds, mattresses, washing machines. They will provide up to £500 for a holiday and also funds for days out.

Break into Summer (CP)

This is a brochure produced by Children's Services, detailing all the activities available for children with special needs, particularly ADHD and ASD, but also open for all disabilities. Details are available on PPP website.

6. Money and debt matters

Alanna Jones gave a presentation on what the Citizens Advice Bureau can offer regarding money advice:

- People can call into the CAB on Mayflower Street, Plymouth, or use the phone lines. Telephone lines are now staffed during working hours and one evening a week.
- CAB can offer the Debt Gateway or emergency debt assistance. If the debt is specific to South West Water, CAB can offer the South West Water (SWW) project.
- Following Debt Gateway or SWW project, people may be seen by a debt caseworker.
- Financial Capability projects may also be offered
- The Gateway is an assessment process where questions are asked and the adviser decides on the next best steps for the person.
 - During a Gateway session, the person would be asked how much money they owe altogether and about priority and non-priority debts. Priority debts are council tax, mortgage or rent arrears, gas and electric. Water is not classed as a priority debt as it cannot be cut off.
 - Debt liability will also be asked about. The person is only liable for the debt if it is in their name, either solely or jointly.
 - Emergencies would be discussed eg bailiffs due, court summonses, at risk of eviction.
 - Savings, property and sources of income would be discussed, for income maximisation. The person would be asked if they have any insurance that may cover the debts. They would be asked whether there are any issues of discrimination eg whether they are being unfairly treated because of religion, belief, disability or personal capability.

- Following the Debt Gateway, the adviser will help to work out what the next best step is eg assisted information (providing information or pointing to the right place for information if the person is capable of dealing with the debt but don't know where to go to next eg fact sheets, National Debtline, Pay Plan, Consumer Credit Service, CCS and a budgeting form), emergency debt assistance, social policy work (eg if the person is being discriminated against that would go the the CAB's social policy department. They would then look at the company that is causing the problem, as well as solving the individual problem) or referral to a debt caseworker.
- Emergency debt assistance (a half hour appointment) is also offered, every day from Monday to Friday. People will be seen the same day as long as the queue is not already full. They will look at calling off and negotiating with the bailiffs, council tax reprieve whilst the solution to the problem is being looked at. Also help with issues regarding South West Water.
- Following an emergency debt appointment, referral to a debt caseworker may be made. These offer longer appointments, between an hour and two hours. They will work through the Common Financial Statement (a detailed budget sheet that is signed off by the debt caseworker and is accepted by most creditors). Income maximisation will also be looked at eg are there any other benefits you are eligible for? Debt management options will then be looked at eg debt caseworker may write letters to creditors and will negotiate with them, or you may be given sample letters to write yourself.
- The SWW project is funded by SWW because the south west has the largest water debt in the country, in addition to the most expensive water in the country. SWW have a number of schemes whereby the debt can be fully or partially written off. CAB works in partnership with SWW, an individual is unable to negotiate themselves.
- Financial Capability
Looks at money management:
 - 'Money friends' work with residents of:
 - Plymouth Community Homes (these have a referral process)
 - and residents of Guinness Trust (telephone Laura on 507711 for information, no referral process)
 - Money Friends will help to work out budgets, ways in which a person can save money, choosing products and services eg What is the best way to use your bank? Do you have a bank account at all? How to choose a bank.
 - This is a home visit, done on a one to one basis
 - Money management workshops are also offered.
 - Available to anyone
 - Contact Laura on 507711 to find out when the next sessions are. She runs the Financial Capability project at CAB.
 - At present, sessions run at 5.00pm and run as one and a half hour workshops.
 - If people discover they need further help, they can work with CAB caseworkers.
 - If a group of parents would like a session, contact Laura.

A list of available fact sheets was provided (see presentation). These can be downloaded from 'Advice Guide', the CAB's website www.adviceguide.org.uk/

Questions

1) *I am working with someone with agoraphobia and threatened with eviction. Would you come out or do they have to come in?*

Answer: At the moment we don't do that as a home visit option. Plymouth Access to Housing may be able to help.

2) *Joint debt, cousin has left the home. We have had real difficulty with all sorts of agencies to try to separate the debt so that mum can take on so much rather than the full amount.*

Answer: She is just as liable as he is. It is perfectly, legally OK for one person to pay. Tax credits will split the debt but no one else has any obligation to do that at all. It is worth going in to the CAB and seeing a specialist case worker or check the National Debtline website.

7. Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) Parent Consultation (Sunder Braganza)

BB introduced SB to the Forum. SB is a volunteer who is interested in involving BAME parents in the Forum. He has suggested putting out a consultation to all the BAME groups in Plymouth and ask them to contact their parents to see how they would like to run things. This may possibly become a parent reference group, as a sub-section of the Forum. The BAME consultation is hoped to take place in November 2011.

SB suggested it would be good for parent representatives to encourage BAME parents to engage in parent/teacher associations. This might help the parents if they are actively engaged.

8. Parenting Course update

Strengthening Families

- The next set of Strengthening Families courses will take place in October (see Parenting Page on PPP website).
- Courses will run on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Spaces are currently available on each evening.
- SFP will be run at Hamoaze House on the Monday and Wednesday, Parent Partnership offices on Tuesday and Thursday.
- PB is now the lead coordinator of SFP.
- Parent Representatives were asked to send in any nominations they have, the parents will be able to obtain a place on a course.
- Contact PB at Parent Partnership or Mike Cook at Hamoaze House (566100) if there are any questions.
- PB explained the updated SFP nomination form (see PPP website).
- Parent/carers will now have to make their own way to the venue and PPP are unfortunately unable to reimburse any travel costs incurred by the family. Venues have been chosen for ease of travel.

Question

I am working with a family where the children are in care, the parent will maintain parental responsibility, can they attend the course with foster carer's approval?

Answer: Yes. If it is linked to end of care programme, this will be ideal as it strengthens the one to one bonding between parents and child.

AA updated on Incredible Years:

- It is planned to run five IY groups, starting from the first week in September 2011. There is no longer any funding available to provide transport or childcare. However, three of the venues will be in Children's Centres and these will have crèches.
- If parents have a disability and it is impossible for them to attend a group without transport, then under those circumstances transport will be provided.
- Please continue to send in nominations.

10. Next Forum:

Next Forum: **Tuesday 27 September, Welcome Hall, 9.30 – 12.00.** This is a Forces based forum, at Welcome Hall and will be open up to parents as well as parent representatives.

Future Forums:

- 22 November Special Educational Needs Forum, Guildhall
- 31 Jan 2012 Health, venue to be confirmed.
- 27 March 2012 Effective School Parent Teachers Associations