



# **PLYMOUTH PARENT PARTNERSHIP**

## **Service Description**

**Dr Peter Jones, August 2009**

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Overview</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Understanding the primary client group</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. The aims of the Plymouth Parent Partnership</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. Clarifying 'arm's length' status: anticipating and avoiding potential conflicts in service delivery</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5. Service delivery model</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>6. Ensuring Impartiality</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>7. Parent Participation Strategy</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>8. The PPP Development Group</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>9. PPP Staffing and Structure</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>10. Miscellany</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix A: Impartiality Policy</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix B: Confidentiality Policy</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendix C: Parent Participation Strategy</b>	<b>47</b>

<b>Appendix D: Casework 6 monthly evaluation form</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Appendix E: Parent Partnership Induction Standards supplement to Plymouth City Council Policies</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Appendix F(i): Parent Partnership: Code of Conduct for Staff (including Volunteers)</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Appendix G: Plymouth Community Psychological Services Policies</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Appendix H : Quality Standards reference points</b>	<b>81</b>



## **PLYMOUTH PARENT PARTNERSHIP**

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#### **SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW**

**1.1** The Plymouth Parent Partnership (PPP) provides an information exchange and support service for all parents<sup>1</sup> and service providers in the city. Within that universal service, it also fulfils the statutory duty of the Local Authority to provide information and support for parents of children with SEN (see paragraph 1.4 below). It does so in a context that emphasises their commonalities with other parents and families. It recognises the views some of those parents have expressed for a service that is not seen to marginalise their interests or to in any way attach stigma to being a parent of a child with SEN. The service follows Plymouth City Council policies for equality and diversity, social inclusion, and planning to meet the needs of children and young people as set out in Every Child Matters and the Children Act 2004. The service has been closely involved with the development of the city's Parent & Family Support strategy and has broadened many of its functions in line with that strategy.

**1.2** The service has built upon the broader roles for Parent Partnership services recognised as possibilities in the DfES guidance for core and extension activities. Descriptions of the nature of these kinds of activities can be found in the DfES SEN Code of Practice (2001) and the SEN Toolkit. Plymouth Parent Partnership has added ingredients for working in a range of other ways to develop best practice in an information exchange and support service that is relevant for all parents and families, including families of children with additional needs/disabilities, and all agencies in integrated children's services.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document the word 'parent' is taken to include all those with a direct responsibility for parenting. These might be birth parents, step-parents, grandparents or other members of the family, foster or adoptive parents or other adult caregivers.

It takes seriously the two-way aspects of information exchange and gives practical and strategic respect to the views that parents express. Parents can play a key role to represent the interests and voice of their children and families and can help shape appropriate children's services at every level. The service has developed a Parent Participation strategy for the city that includes the regular meetings of the Plymouth Parent & Family Forum. (See Section Seven)

- 1.3** The service was restructured in 2003 to be a universal service and has followed the guidance for the development of work in the field of Information, Advice, Support, Guidance and Learning for parents. Key documents have included: Removing Barriers to Learning 2003, Support for Parents: the Best Start for Children 2005; Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities 2006; Every Parent Matters, 2006; Reaching Out: Think Family, 2007; Quality Matters: Think Family, 2007; the Children's Plan, 2007; Aiming High for Disabled Children: better support for families, May 2007. PPP now manages many projects delivering support to parents and impacting upon all areas of the city – these are detailed later in this document.
- 1.4** All Local Authorities (LAs) in England have a statutory duty to ensure that a Parent Partnership Service (PPS) is provided for parents. The DfES set out in the 2001 Code of Practice for SEN (Special Educational Needs) its expectations for the minimum standards to be met in such a service. Parent Partnership Services may be provided directly as an in-house service by the LA, contracted to an independent voluntary organisation, or achieved by some combination of the two. To ensure parental confidence, the DfES guidance stated that LAs should ensure that in-house services are run at 'arm's length' so that information and advice given to parents is demonstrably impartial and neutral.
- 1.5** In 2007, the DCSF published exemplifications of the minimum standards for Parent Partnership Services and Local Authorities as laid out in the SEN Code of Practice. This exemplifications document sets out guidance about the key features necessary for Parent Partnership Services ('Parent Partnership Services – increasing parental confidence: Exemplification of minimum standards for PPS and Local Authorities, DCSF, 2007'). Plymouth's Parent Partnership has matched or gone beyond the levels indicated in the exemplars for meeting the indicated standards. 2007 also saw the publication of the revised 'Guidance on monitoring service delivery and assessing the impact of Parent Partnership Services', by the National Parent Partnership Network, National Association of Parent Partnership Staff, and The Regional Partnerships.

PPP has monitoring arrangements in place that have anticipated this guidance and approaches to evaluating the impact of the service.

- 1.6** The interpretation of 'arm's length' is important and parents should be reassured that the management and function of a Parent Partnership Service can remain independent from, and impartial to, the agendas of any interested party, be they Local Authority, agencies in any sector, parent pressure group or individual parents, for the information that is given to parents or others. This issue is expanded in Section Four of this service description.
  
- 1.7** The impartiality policy of PPP is set out as Appendix A to this document. It is supported by the description of service structure and function in this document.
  
- 1.8** The Plymouth Parent Partnership (PPP) is managed as an in-house but 'arm's length' service of the LA. The service is structured to maximise its independence and its ability to offer impartial and neutral information, advice and support to parents. The LA seeks best practice in its relationship to the PPP to ensure it is sufficiently independent of the LA to be impartial but has a close enough relationship to contribute to the development of LA policy and practice.
  
- 1.9** The PPP follows national guidance and peer review via the South West Regional Parent Partnership Network and the National Parent Partnership Network. It demonstrates best practice in conveying its 'arm's length' status by: being located separately from Local Authority offices at Windsor House; ensuring a separate identity is maintained in all published information materials in paper form or on its web-site; specifying the need for impartiality in all job descriptions used for paid and voluntary staff; and in being monitored by a multi-sectorial Development Group whose terms of reference specifically call for 'arm's length' status to be continually reviewed as set out later in this document (see Section 8).
  
- 1.10** Plymouth's Department for Services to Children and Young People line manages the PPP within its Learner and Family Support branch, and via its Community Psychology Services. Integral to its development as a universal service, PPP must fulfil the Authority's duty to ensure that the PPP meets the statutory minimum standards of quality and any additional voluntary quality standards agreed by the Authority. Importantly, these standards now include the South West Regional Parent Partnership Network (SWRPPN) Standards (revised 2007) that Plymouth City Council has agreed to follow since 2004. These include and expand upon the DCSF minimum standards. The service also fulfils the standards set in the 2007 DCSF Exemplifications for Parent Partnerships.

The service has provided annual information to the national benchmarking programme for Parent Partnerships that includes comparative data for the exemplifications. The service also:

- follows the 14 principles for quality in services to parents that are set out in Plymouth's Parent and Family Support Strategy (2007);
- coordinates the delivery of evidence based parenting programmes which are delivered by multi-agency experienced teams who have accredited evidenced based parental training qualifications to ensure programme fidelity;
- manages the Parent Support Adviser project for the city and has contributed to the development of national standards of practice illustrated in the PSA resource kits and the functional mapping for the PSA role.

Reference points for each of these standards can be found in Appendix J.

**1.11** The PPP is managed by a Senior Educational Psychologist within the Plymouth Community Psychology Services. This is a full-time post allocated to PPP. For the majority of the time since 1994 there has been an educational psychologist with some time allocated to act as LA support leader to the PPP, both when it was managed in its pilot phase by the LEA and later, until 2003, by a voluntary sector organisation. The PPP from 2003 was intentionally not managed by the Special Services section of the LEA to avoid conflict of interests arising for LA officers regarding provision for special needs / disabilities, and also to recognise PPP's universality for all parents. The professional identity and code of practice for an educational psychologist is felt to offer resilience in maintaining neutrality across stakeholder demands. It also offers an understanding of the needs of parents, experience of multi-agency agendas and mediating between them, and a thorough knowledge of relevant legislation, policies and practice around special and additional needs in meeting the statutory element of the service contracted.

**1.12** In Plymouth, the Senior Educational Psychologist managing the PPP is also the Local Authority Officer with responsibility for ensuring its involvement in strategic development of services to schools, parents, children and families, its performance, its fulfilment of national and regional standards of quality in service delivery, and the maintenance of its arms' length status and its impartiality. This arrangement indicates the Local Authority's genuine support for its Parent Partnership service and the Authority's collaborative approach to change and development in services to children and families, including schools and other agencies. It ensures that PPP is maintained as the practical and impartial vehicle for parents' views to be heard at every level.

## **SECTION TWO: UNDERSTANDING THE PRIMARY CLIENT GROUP**

**2.1** Plymouth Parent Partnership is an adult focussed service with the best interests of children at its heart. The service is premised on two key themes: information, explanation, support, guidance and learning opportunities for parents, and parent participation. Both of these are integral to national policies setting out the importance of support for parents and parenting, particularly in Every Child Matters (2004), Support for Parents: Best Start for Children (2005) and Aiming High for Disabled Children (May 2007). Every Child Matters called for all parents, carers and families to:

- Promote healthy choices
- Promote safe homes and stability
- Support learning
- Promote positive behaviour
- Be supported to be economically active

**2.2** Plymouth Parent Partnership has been developed on the basis that if those expectations are to be fulfilled, then all parents / carers and families might reasonably expect in turn to be given information and support to know more about:

- Services available to support them
- How they can access such services
- How they can convey the voice of their children as service customers
- How they might influence service developments and delivery
- Quality standards for services

**2.3** There are many services, from universal services through to specialised that focus specifically or especially on children and work directly with them. Work with parents and wider family membership may be an integral or peripheral part of that work. Usually, Parent Partnership does not work with children and young people directly. Work in some of the projects the service manages may directly involve children and young people but only alongside their parents, or occasionally to talk to or work with a child or young person at the specific request of the parent.

**2.4** The service recognises the need to be aware of the balance to be achieved in supporting parents in the best interests of children. Two articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) capture the issues to be balanced:

### Article 3

*In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration*

### Article 5

*States parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable the members of the extended family or community as provided for by the local authority, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognised in the present Convention.*

- 2.5** Parent Partnership works to ensure that respect for the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents is evidenced in its delivery of services. This includes its strategic work for policy development in regard to services to parents and families. Also, the service is clear that other agencies will determine value judgements and assessments of the quality of parenting in particular contexts and the effects of that parenting upon the children. Parent Partnership will provide impartial and accurate information, explanation and support to all parents whether there is other agency involvement or not. It will work to enable effective information exchange, to ensure that parents' views are understood by all parties involved and that parents understand the views being expressed to them.
- 2.6** The service policies for impartiality and for parent participation are set out later in this document.
- 2.7** A great deal of the work of Parent Partnership is in or associated with schools. The service recognises the need to be sensitive to who may be fulfilling the parenting role for an individual child and who must be involved in issues about a child's education and school matters. The DfEE guidance 'Schools, "Parents" and "Parental Responsibility"' (June 2000) sets out guidance about who is a parent, and ways in which court orders can settle areas of dispute and can limit individual parental responsibility. There is a need to understand that all parents must be treated equally by schools and the Local Authority unless a court order limits an individual's parental responsibility. This includes parents not living with the child. Those who have parental responsibility for, or care of, a child have the same rights as birth parents to receive information from the school, to participate in activities, to be asked to give consent and to be told about meetings involving the child. Parent Partnership offers information and support to all parents and carers, whether or not they currently hold full parental responsibility.

## **SECTION THREE: THE AIMS OF PLYMOUTH PARENT PARTNERSHIP**

### **THE AIMS OF THE SERVICE ARE:**

- 3.1** To provide an information exchange service for all parents, including parents of children with additional needs/disability and service providers in Plymouth and to ensure best practice in regard to equality and diversity, social inclusion, and planning to meet the need of children and young people as set out in Every Child Matters, the Children Act 2004, the Children's Plan 2007 and Aiming High for Disabled Children 2007.
- 3.2** To promote and enable a comprehensive parent participation strategy for Plymouth that recognises the diverse and specific needs of constituencies of parent interest and location in varied communities.
- 3.3** To publish and provide a range of publicity and information materials, directories and resources to parents and professionals regarding services available to parents and families.
- 3.4** To ensure that parents can access impartial and accurate information and support via telephone helpline, paper and e-information materials, and personal contact with support groups, Parent Support Advisers in schools, volunteer Independent Parental Supporters, and Parent Partnership staff.
- 3.5** To meet the statutory minimum standards of quality for Parent Partnership Services as set out in the DCSF Code of Practice for SEN, the additional voluntary standards set by the South West Regional Parent Partnership Network, and the DCSF Exemplifications 2007. Further to meet the fourteen principles for quality in services to parents and families as set out in the Plymouth Parent & Family Support Strategy 2008 (see Appendix G)
- 3.6** To ensure a service that demonstrates independence, impartiality and neutrality in the information, explanation, advice and support it gives to parents and others.
- 3.7** To actively seek contracts and funding to develop services to parents across the city where such contracts do not place at risk the integrity of the service as set out in its policies and in this service description document.
- 3.8** To enable parents of children with additional needs/disabilities in Plymouth to raise and consider their issues and concerns, particularly in regard to all issues as set out in the DCSF Code of Practice for SEN, the additional voluntary standards set by the South West Regional Parent Partnership Network, and the DCSF Exemplifications 2007 and Aiming High for Disabled Children 2007.

- 3.9** To maximise parental involvement with, and understanding of, all services for children and families, particularly via work with schools, within the Plymouth Parent & Family Support Strategy, Plymouth's Children & Young People's Plan, within the Extended Schools Programme and with Locality Developments.
- 3.10** To work with staff and governing bodies in schools and a range of other settings to develop parent friendly policies and partnership working with parents.
- 3.11** To provide training courses for parents / carers and for professionals from many agencies regarding best practice in information exchange, with particular reference to Transitions and the role of Connexions, the Common Assessment Framework, admissions to and exclusions from schools, and provisions made for children with additional needs or disabilities.
- 3.12** To use understandings from applied psychology to inform high quality information exchange between parents / carers and all service sectors.
- 3.13** To use understandings from applied psychology to inform best practice in the delivery of training programmes and learning opportunities for parents.
- 3.14** To inform policy and practice in working with parents / carers at school, neighbourhood, locality and city-wide levels and to work strategically to enable the voice of parents / carers to be represented at multi-agency forums to inform the development and monitoring of services to children and families. To ensure that such developments can inform and complement key Plymouth strategies such as the Extended Schools programme, the Parent & Family Support Strategy and the Inclusion Strategy.
- 3.15** To use non-adversarial approaches to reduce conflict and help resolve disagreements, and where appropriate to enable parents of children with statements of SEN to access the Disagreement Resolution Service contracted by the Local Authority.
- 3.16** To work with its Development Group and others to ensure that rigorous monitoring of its independent viewpoint as an 'arm's length' service of the LA is in place and that its independence and impartiality is seen to be credible by service users.
- 3.17** To agree priorities for annual development with its Development Group.

## **SECTION FOUR: CLARIFYING 'ARM'S LENGTH' STATUS - ANTICIPATING AND AVOIDING POTENTIAL CONFLICTS IN SERVICE DELIVERY**

- 4.1** The decision for Local Authority management and support to be via the Community Psychology Services, helps avoid conflict of interests for Local Authority officers who are making decisions about provision for pupils with SEN / Disabilities. In reference to the statutory role of PPP, there are areas of potential conflict that it is helpful to identify in advance and work to avoid. Each of the following paragraphs in this section addresses these areas.
- 4.2** The PPP must operate a confidentiality policy with its client group which assures parents that information they disclose, other than that which raises child protection issues, will not be passed to schools, the Local Authority or any other person without the parent's permission. The Local Authority sees ownership of all information and records concerning parents contacting the service to lie with the PPP. Current siting of the PPP database within the CSS module of Capita One on the Plymouth City Council server is agreed as data confidential to PPP. Access is restricted to PPP staff and double security password protected. All parents asking for individual casework support from PPP have this explained to them, and they are asked for their informed consent for records to be kept on this database (see Appendix H). If a parent does not consent to this method of recording, then any paper based records taken are kept equally confidential. Anonymised statistical data may be used to monitor and audit service use.
- 4.3** There are some Local Authority policies which individual parents may not agree with, for example, inclusion, the role of special schools, provision for pupils with dyslexia, or schools admissions and exclusions. The PPP will give accurate and neutral information, explanation and support to parents about their entitlements and will also explain Local Authority policies fully.
- 4.4** It is important that parents' perception of the PPP is of a service giving information and support independently from the Local Authority position as described in Section One. Similarly, parents may not be convinced that the service they receive can avoid the influence of a power relationship they may think exists between the Local Authority and the PPP. It is essential that PPP gives parents contact information for national independent organisations such as ACE, Network 81 or a local organisation to enable them to check on the independence of the advice they are being given, if, for any reason, a service user raises a question as to the impartiality and independence of information given.

**4.5** It is equally important that impartiality is extended to working to avoid conflictual models of practice and to actively promote parent-school-Local Authority cultures of partnership with parents, and for the PPP to avoid simply acting as parent advocates. Approaches to disagreement resolution can be based around reconciling interests rather than resolution based on upholding rights or on the basis of power. Such partnership cultures may help parents, schools and the Local Authority to avoid the need for conflictual litigation.

**4.6** If attending meetings with parents, PPP core staff, PSAs and volunteer Parent Partners (also referred to as IPSs or Independent Parental Supporters) will:

- ◆ support parents to ensure they have opportunity to make all the points they wish to make
- ◆ ensure parents understand points being made and decisions reached
- ◆ clarify what the parents have said if others have not understood but not argue or speak on behalf of the parent
- ◆ offer to take notes for the parent but not to take formal minutes for the meeting
- ◆ if the parent is distressed and feels unable to continue, and at the parent's expressed request, consider speaking for the parent, but to demonstrably and constantly check with the parent that they are accurately conveying the parent's opinion.
- ◆ maintain an impartial position and ensure that the parent is informed but not influenced by PPP support in any decisions they take.

**4.7** PPP staff may be asked to support parents to prepare for and to attend an Independent Appeals Panel (IAP) or Tribunals Service - SEN and Disability (SEND). It is unreasonable to expect an IPS to take on such a demanding task. If PPP staff attend an IAP or SEND to support parents they do so subject to the following conditions:

- ◆ all parties recognise that the PPP worker's role is to give independent and impartial information and support to the parent
- ◆ the PPP worker's role is not to represent or to be witness for the parents
- ◆ the PPP worker's role is not to represent the Local Authority or to interpret its position
- ◆ the PPP worker's role is to provide best impartial information to help parents in decisions they choose to take but not seeking to influence the direction of that choice
- ◆ the PPP worker's involvement is made with a full declaration of the PPP as an in-house but 'arms length' service of the Local Authority.

**4.8** The involvement of PPP can help positively to reduce conflictual and adversarial positioning in IAP and SEND settings. This may be seen as desirable by all concerned. It is essential, however, that parents seeking support are made fully aware of the theoretical conflict of interests position that PPP staff as employees of the Local Authority could be in. Parents may wish to seek support from another source that is entirely detached from and independent of the Local Authority.

## **SECTION FIVE: SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL**

**5.1** The service to be delivered by the PPP is structured to incorporate all of the DCSF minimum standards, the SWRPPN standards, to clarify links with the Plymouth Community Psychology Service, and to follow Plymouth City Council policies but as an arm's length service. The model of delivery is for a universal service to all parents, including parents of children with additional needs/disability, that can incorporate multiple project management of a range of services to parents that complement each other and lead to improvement of access, engagement and locality based opportunities for support to parents.

**5.2** The service includes the statutory role of Parent Partnership in providing information and support to parents of children with additional needs / disabilities and involving parents in the Integrated Disability Service development. It also includes the management and implementation of a wide range of other work. The largest of these is the Parent Support Adviser project within the Extended Schools programme. Plymouth was one of the 20 Local Authorities that took part in the national pilot phase for the PSA role. The PSA role in Plymouth has been developed differently than in most other parts of the country, as a universal service that incorporates principles of impartiality, confidentiality and non-referral. The consolidation and expansion phase of the PSA project during 2008/11 offers a PSA based in all schools in the city<sup>1</sup>, funded by the Local Authority for 20 hours each week during school terms. PSAs are subject to clear Service Level Agreements between schools and the Local Authority via Parent Partnership, with shared governance arrangements. The expansion of the PSA project has paralleled the development of Localities focus within the Children and Young People's Trust. PSA Coordinators (PSACOs) work to develop individual schools' PSA practice to reflect locality needs and multi-agency links. This is a major piece of work for the service, which is changing the role and influence of Parent Partnership, and the ways in which it develops partnership working between service providers, commissioners, and parents and families. The evaluation of the Plymouth PSA pilot and its planned consolidation and expansion 2008-11 is available as a separate document<sup>2</sup> (Hogarth & Williamson, 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> In 2009 one Trust school decided it did not want to pursue this offer.

<sup>2</sup> Hogarth, H. & Williamson, S. (2008) *Identity through uncertainty: Plymouth's Parent Support Adviser Project*. Plymouth Parent Partnership.

- 5.3** The development of the PSA project has been strategically planned to ensure that this part of the Extended School Services reflects the PCC Parent & Family Support Strategy. Parent Partnership has been integrally involved with the writing and development of the latter, and works closely with Extended School Cluster planning and with other strands in the development of integrated services to parent and families. Linked to this, Parent Partnership piloted the Starting School Project (Transition Information Sessions for Parents) as another strand of the Extended Schools Programme. This is now an integral part of the work of PSAs. Parent Partnership has also developed web and paper based directories of information, including the dissemination of events and activities information for each of the localities as facilitated by the Extended School Cluster Coordinators. This area of work is contributing to the 2009 DCSF directives for the 'Parent Know How' directories of information and advice. The development of the PSA project, and links with Plymouth's Excellence Cluster, and collaborative thinking about support to parents and families, has enabled the development of two information and resource bases for parents, at John Kitto Community College campus in the West of the City, and at Longcause Community Special School campus in the East. These offer books, DVDs, games and other materials that parents and others can borrow on a library basis.
- 5.4** Parent Partnership is also coordinating the delivery of evidence-based parenting programmes for the city. This includes the development of multi-agency team training for the Strengthening Families Programme (SFP), and the Incredible Years Programme (IY), and the Helping Children Achieve (HCA) research trial into combinations of IY and SPOKES (Supporting Parents on Kids Education). During 2009 this is also moving to meet the DCSF Parenting Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) which will see a large increase in the delivery of SFP courses. All these are being developed with a view to their position and function in a continuum of services to support parents needing access to universal through to specialist services. This area of work has seen some nationally recognised best practice in the development of multi-agency collaboration and partnerships, with close working relationships with some key third sector organisations.
- 5.5** Parent Partnership also manages the facilitation of the Plymouth Parent & Family Forum, a key component in the city's parent participation strategy (see Section 7), and integral to the Parent & Family Support Strategy. The development of the role of PSAs and of the volunteer Parent Partners (IPs) in Plymouth has included their need to gather the views of parents in their school catchments, bring those views to the Forum, and disseminate information back to parents. The PSA role in Plymouth has been piloted to fit with these many strategic themes.

**5.6** Parent Partnership has worked in conjunction with the Lifelong Learning branch of Services to Children and Young People to implement the role of 'Parent Champion' when it became necessary under the revised legal provisions relating to schools causing concern in England, contained within the Education Act 2006, which came into effect on April 2007. This role is called for when Ofsted (Office for standards in education) judges a school to be failing to provide a satisfactory education for its pupils. The government guidance sets out the key aspects of the person who can take on this role as impartiality, brokerage skills for working with parents, schools and the Local Authority, and good communication skills. The Parent Champion is defined as:

'...a person appointed to ensure good communication with parents and carers and ensure they are able to influence decisions about the future of the school'

In Plymouth, PSAs are able to take on this role, with the shared governance guarantee of impartial practice from Parent Partnership as an arm's length service of the Authority. Following the piloting of this work in two schools, the service has published an information booklet for parents that sets out how PSAs can work as Parent Champions if and when the need arises ('After the Ofsted inspection: involving parents in school improvement', April 2009).

**5.7** The service provides open dissemination of information materials in paper versions and also on its website. These are available to all parents and other service users. A Directory e-database for services to parents and families in Plymouth is maintained.

**5.8** The service also provides information, explanation and support in casework as response to queries from individual parents. This individual casework is provided by telephone, email, letter or in face-to-face contact. The service records queries into two categories:

**Level 1 :**

- Response to request for factual, generic information – this may include giving details of other services, sending out applicable information and materials, SEN Code of Practice procedures
- Any non-personalised advice on process and procedures
- Signposting to another agency that may be better placed to deal with the enquiry

Level 1 queries are recorded anonymously and simply indicate the category of the query (e.g. domestic abuse, homelessness, disability etc.), which services were signposted, whether the query was mainly about a child or a parent and so on. This information is used to help build a picture of patterns of question and numbers of parents the service is helping.

## **Level 2 :**

This can involve Level 1 support as above, plus many other types of casework support, including:

- Tailoring an information package to address an individual query / situation arising.
- Gathering personal information from enquirer including relevant history
- Helping enquirer to clarify their issues
- Helping to identify relevant support and navigate through agency procedures
- Enabling independent parent action
- Contacting other agencies / services on the parent's behalf
- Preparation for meetings
- Support at meetings at parent's request
- Help with paperwork
- Attendance at monthly statutory assessment workshops
- Preparation for and support at exclusion appeals, admission appeals and SEND tribunals.
- Preparation for and support at disagreement resolution
- Help with parent's written contributions, including to the statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs
- Preparation for and support at Annual Review meetings, TARs, CAF (Common Assessment Framework) meetings
- Advice / support / guidance regarding exclusions from school
- Advice / support / guidance regarding Anti Social Behaviour Orders
- Advice / support / guidance to parents whose children are out of school
- Support with emotional distress, either face to face or by telephone
- Home visits

Level 2 casework is recorded, only with the permission of the parent, on a secured area of the CSS (Children's Services) module of the PCC Capita One information system, as already explained in Section 4, paragraph 4.2 above.

**5.9** The service supports the role of its volunteer Parent Partners (IPs) working directly with parents, and provides training, supervision and evaluation of practice to ensure that information and advice given to parents is impartial.

**5.10** In early 2009 a voluntary sector organisation, the Plymouth Family Support Service, closed. It had provided the Parent Advocacy Service for parents of children facing child protection meetings. This is not a statutory requirement but is seen as good practice by Social Care. Parent Partnership agreed to provide this service to enable continuity for parents with such needs. The name has been maintained to indicate the continuity, but the work delivered fits with our approach to information, explanation and support to parents, not with our understanding of 'advocacy'.

The name, and our interpretation of 'advocacy' will be reviewed at a later date. There were volunteers working for Plymouth Family Support Service as Parent Advocates. We are currently looking at how their role can be supported within our volunteer arrangements.

**5.11** The service supports the roles of Parent Support Advisers working directly with parents from their schools, and provides training, supervision and evaluation of practice to ensure that information and advice given to parents is impartial. This is built in to the shared governance arrangements that Parent Partnership holds with schools for the development of this new role in the workforce. The service provides eight and a half days initial training covering role specific and generic training for PSAs, including opportunities to begin familiarisation with a range of service providers and lead figures in Services to Children and Young People. The training includes a focus on information sharing, confidentiality and impartiality, data recording and protection, and ways of engaging with parents. PSAs are then supported by the service with approximately six-weekly Practice Development sessions in Locality groupings, access to individual supervision and professional development sessions, and an opportunity to take the SWiS (Parent Support) Level 3 qualification. Locality-focussed PSA Coordinators (PSACOs) implement this level of ongoing support and supervision, and act as Assessors for the qualification. PSACOs also meet with Head teachers and PSAs to monitor developments in each unique school practice while maintaining the city wide identity for the PSA role. The work of all PSAs in Plymouth is informed by Parent Partnership's policies on Impartiality, Confidentiality and Parent Participation.

**5.12** The service team meet regularly to plan, monitor and evaluate the work of the service. Regular surveys of parents, schools and other stakeholders are conducted. Prioritisation of work to be developed is determined by ongoing audit of available data and in consultation with the Development Group.

The service is currently developing a number of key performance indicators in conjunction with the performance team order to measure its efficiency and effectiveness. Draft indicators include:

1. The number of Department for Children, Schools and Families National Exemplification Standards for Parent Partnership Services achieved by Parent Partnership in the best practice category.
2. The number of individual parent queries by phone or face to face to our central base that are addressed by Parent Partnership central staff or volunteer Parent Partners.
3. The number of recorded hits for the Parent Partnership web-site and on-line directory of services to parents and families.

4. The number of parents participating in any of our group learning opportunities, including those attending the multi-agency parenting programmes that Parent Partnership facilitate.
5. The number of parents approaching Parent Support Advisers in schools, for whom Parent Partnership have shared governance and provide training, support and practice supervision.
6. The number of parents who are in contact with Parent Partnership via the Parent Participation Strategy, attending the Plymouth Parent and Family Forum, or acting as parent representatives on any of our parent reference groups or other bodies where Parent Partnership facilitate and support parent representation.
7. The numbers of parents whose views have been obtained to help in school improvement during the 12 months following an Ofsted inspection that indicates a category of concern.
8. The number of positive written messages / emails / cards of thanks for the service provided.

The service will also be looking at how some elements of NI54 for disabled children's services (National Indicator 54) may be linked with the development of our draft indicators. All Performance Indicators will be reported to PCC Department for Services to Children and Young People

## **SECTION SIX: ENSURING IMPARTIALITY**

**6.1** Throughout its development as an 'arm's length' service of the City Council PPP has engaged constructively with all stakeholder groups to promote, explore and implement impartiality in its practice. The service sees impartiality as a constructive and essential part of its identity, and one that enables sound partnership working with parents, with the Local Authority, schools, and other agencies. The development of all parts of the service is made with constant consideration of issues in impartiality. Impartiality is not always easy to define or determine with prescribed definitions. We believe it is important that impartiality is safeguarded by the ethos and attitude of working practice as well as such definitions.

**6.2** PPP starting points for ensuring impartiality are in:

- Attempting definitions of the word
- Understandings of factors that influence partiality and impartiality
- Raising awareness of key themes in Parent Partnership practice
- Creating or supporting structures and organisational arrangements to evidence that aims for achieving impartiality are being met or addressed.

Each of the above are set out in our impartiality policy which is appended to this service description as Appendix A.

- 6.3** The job descriptions / role profiles for all posts within Plymouth Parent Partnership include reference to the need to ensure independence / impartiality in all information, support and advice given to service users.
- 6.4** All PPP paid and voluntary staff are given regular opportunities to reflect on how they demonstrate impartiality in their working practice. This is a planned component of individual supervision sessions and when necessary will be introduced into annual Individual Performance Appraisal interviews.
- 6.5** All PPP staff are encouraged to develop an understanding of the many and varied agencies they come into contact with. Staff routinely consider carefully the agendas held by any other agency and what that agency is seeking to achieve as outcomes of their practice. Staff routinely consider the interpretation of impartiality that might be held by other agencies and how that interpretation may affect the service users of PPP.
- 6.6** PPP seeks feed back from service users via a six monthly evaluation letter sent out to service users who have requested support; guidance or advice from PPP. This includes a question to evaluate the impartiality of the information and support given. Staff regularly seek feedback from all stakeholders on a regular basis while engaged with them to check whether the service is being perceived as impartial.

## **SECTION SEVEN: PARENT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY**

- 7.1** The service is committed to parent participation at every level in the planning, development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services to parents and families, including services to families of children with additional needs/disabilities. Participation is about ensuring that people are making input to and influencing decisions that will affect their lives. Importantly, for parents, it is also about influencing decisions that will affect the lives of their children.
- 7.2** Each of the developments of service since 2003 has sought to improve parent participation in Plymouth at many levels. The service has established several structures, including the Parent & Family Forum, to enable effective parent participation. With regard to Parent Partnership's statutory responsibility to parents of children with additional needs / disabilities, 'Aiming high for disabled children: better support for families' (2007) has set out a national core offer with five key elements, one of which is participation and feedback. The participation strategy implemented by the service is set out in detail as Appendix C to this document.

**7.3** Within the service the Practice Manager leads the service's work on parent participation and ensures that all practice developed, training programmes, support and supervision arrangements, include reference to parent participation. There is dedicated time within other staff roles for the development and delivery of the Parent & Family Forum, parent representation, parent reference groups, and maintenance of a register of parents interested in representing parent perspectives about particular themes.

**7.4** Work is beginning on providing training programmes for parents about participation, including such things as note-taking, interview procedures, listening and questioning skills, and understanding representation. This is expanded in Appendix C.

## **SECTION EIGHT: THE PPP DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

### **Role of the Development Group**

**8.1** The PPP Development Group has an essential role in ensuring the 'arms length' status of this Local Authority service is genuine and demonstrable in all aspects of service development and delivery (as called for in DCSF Exemplification of minimum standards for Parent Partnership Services and Local Authorities – best practice). Its members work together to ensure that the PPP does not simply reflect the policies or wishes of the Local Authority or its schools, or seek to 'smooth out' issues raised by parents, but maintains an independent viewpoint. They work to ensure that the PPP maintains an independent, impartial and neutral position in the information, advice and support it gives to parents. They also work to ensure that PPP maintains an independent, impartial and neutral position when enabling parent participation and conveying the views of individual parents, issue-based groups of parents, or more formally constituted parents' organisations in the third sector to public sector service commissioners or service providers. This will of necessity also mean that the interests and agendas of any particular agency or interest group represented in the Development Group cannot be allowed to place that impartiality and neutrality at risk.

**8.2** The Development Group also monitors the relationship between Parent Partnership and schools, the Local Authority and all agencies with regard to transfer of information about individual parents and families and ensure that the confidentiality policy reflects best understandings and interpretations for data protection and information sharing.

**8.3** The membership is chosen to represent key stakeholder groups with the expectation that if a member represents an agency or constituency set of interests then they will:

- give feedback to the PPP on issues being raised in their own settings
- raise issues for PPP in their own decision making bodies.

**8.4** Parent members are asked to represent their own views and to represent the views of groups of parents they have contact with or who they directly represent. Parent members are expected to make contact with the Parent & Family Forum steering group to identify any issues that parents wish to have raised in the Development Group meetings. The participation mechanisms available to the Forum should be used to alert parents across the city to the existence of the Development Group, give advance warning of its meeting dates and the process by which parents can raise issues about PPP service developments and delivery via the Group's parent representatives.

**8.5** Members will be chosen on their ability to make an effective contribution, the stakeholder group they can represent, and their willingness to be active in promoting the function of the PPP and the range of work it undertakes. The Plymouth Parent & Family Forum is asked to nominate appropriate parent representatives to ensure a balance of stakeholder interests.

**8.6** The written terms of reference for the Development Group, as set out later in this section, informs the work of the group in its regular meetings.

**8.7** The PPP Development group holds an annual meeting to review its terms of reference, its membership, the Local Authority management of the service and the priorities for service development

### **Membership of the Development Group**

**8.8** The choice of members for this group seeks:

- ♦ representation from stakeholder constituencies for the main themes of work
- ♦ a balance between parents and professionals
- ♦ a small enough total number to enable group discussion
- ♦ to safeguard the impartiality of the service

**8.9** It is not easy to achieve all four of these aims together. The choice and number of members is reviewed regularly. The targeted membership (16 people) is:

*Parent as chairperson*

*Five other parents, some of whom may be IPSs or PSAs but will include parents of children with SEN/disabilities*

*Voluntary Sector representative*

*PAPH (Plymouth Association of Primary Heads) representative*

*PASH (Plymouth Association of Secondary Heads) representative*

*SHAP (Special Heads Association Plymouth) representative*

*Early Years representative*

*Health Services for Children & Families representative*

*Social Care representative*

*Connexions representative*

*EWS representative*

*Excellence Cluster representative*

*Local Authority Special Services representative*

*PSACO representative*

*PPP Service manager*

*PPP Practice Manager*

**8.10** Parent members will wherever possible be chosen to represent parent support groups, parent networks or other forums where the interests of parents in Plymouth are discussed. Decision taking procedures, described later in this section, are structured to reflect the 'arm's length' status of the service from the Local Authority and to maximise opportunities for parents to influence developments.

**8.11** New members will be given written information about the service in general and details of how the Development Group operates. The chair of the group will offer an opportunity to meet and discuss the role of the group prior to the first meeting attended. This may be a meeting with the chair, with the Practice Manager, another member of the group or a combination of these that the new member feels would be most helpful.

**8.12** Any member not attending, and not giving apologies in advance, for three consecutive meetings will be assumed to wish no longer to be member.

## **Structure and format of PPP Development Group meetings**

- 8.13** This group tries to get the balance right between an informal atmosphere that welcomes the contributions of all its members and an effective use of time to get through the business arising. Wherever possible, an agenda and any written reports for the meeting will be circulated two weeks in advance by the Practice Manager. Informal networking will be encouraged and support given to help explain any of the items to any members in preparation for a meeting should they wish.
- 8.14** Meetings will take place at least once each school term. Timings may vary but meetings usually will be held towards the middle of the day in consideration of the needs of parents attending who may have to deliver or collect children at the start or end of a day. There is always a lot to get through so it helps if everyone is punctual.
- 8.15** The meetings will be chaired by a parent or a Parent Partner (IPS). Minutes will be taken by PPP staff and circulated within two weeks of the meeting.
- 8.16** The Service Manager and the Practice Manager will attend each meeting to report on the work of the PPP and answer any questions arising.
- 8.17** Decisions taken by the meeting will, whenever possible, be reached by consensual agreement. If this is not possible the chair will deem a majority decision to be carried. Paid PPP staff, including the Service Manager, cannot vote in such circumstances. Similarly, and because the statutory element of Parent Partnership relates to parents' confidence around impartiality for SEN / Disability issues the Local Authority Special Services representative cannot vote in such circumstances. This means that 15 people have voting rights. Each parent member has two votes (ten parent votes max). Each of the other members with voting rights has one vote (ten non-parent votes max). The chair can choose to vote only if there is an equal balance in the members' votes.
- 8.18** Meetings will be deemed quorate only if at least 8 of those eligible to vote are present, not including the chair. This must include at least 3 parent representative members and at least 5 non-parent representative members. This will apply equally to decisions arrived at by consensual agreement or by majority vote.

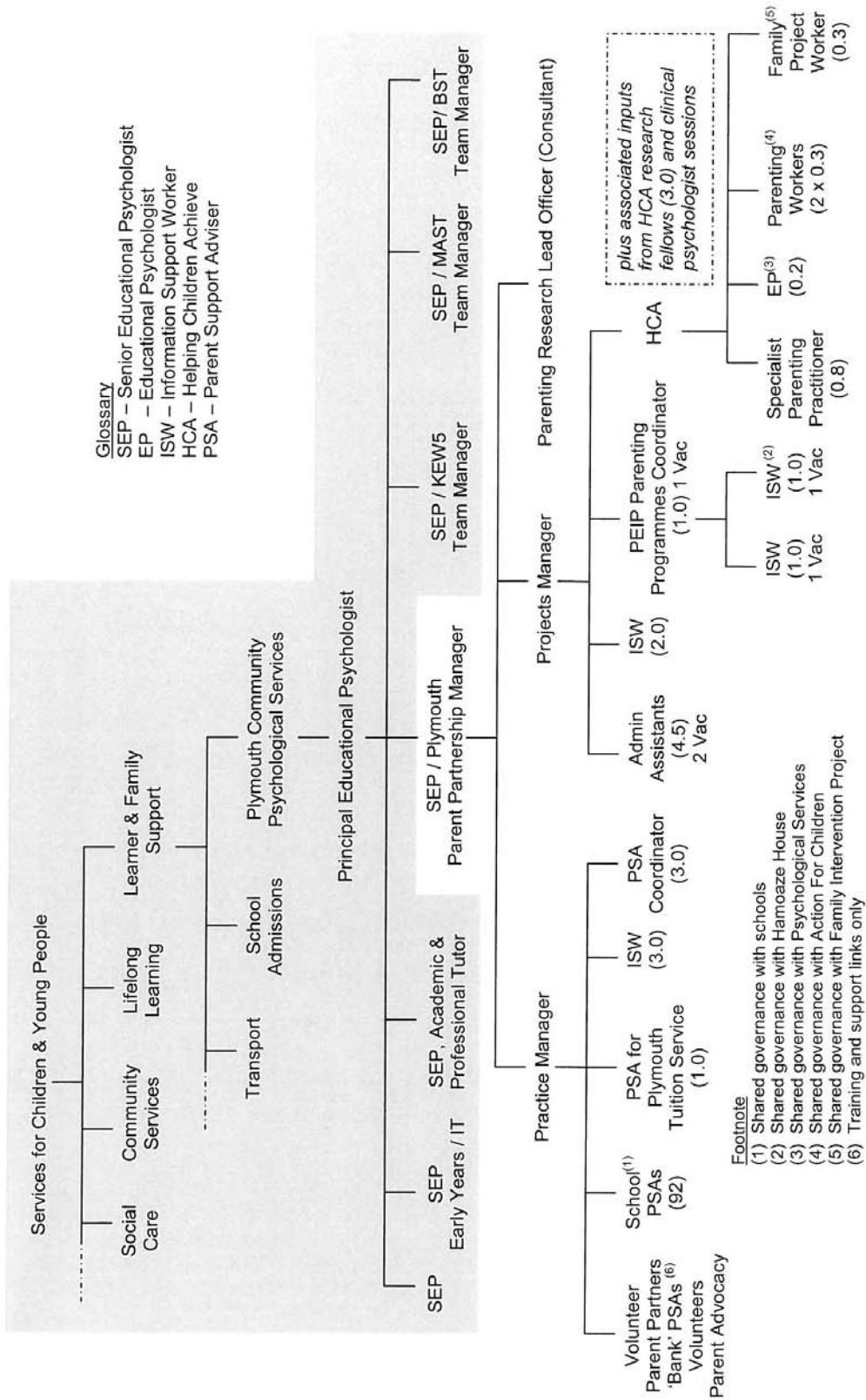
## **Terms of reference for the Development Group**

- 8.19** Monitor and review whether the aims of the PPP are being realised in practice.
- 8.20** Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the PPP with reference to the performance indicators being developed for the service.
- 8.21** Discuss and prioritise PPP initiatives to be developed.
- 8.22** Attend an Annual General Meeting to discuss and agree priorities for service development for the following year with the PPP manager. Review this Service description and the terms of reference for the Development Group.
- 8.23** Check carefully and with rigour that the PPP provides neutral and impartial information and advice to parents and when doing so differentiates Local Authority policies from existing legislation, available government guidance or independent advisory organisation guidance.
- 8.24** Ensure the impartiality of advice given to parents by PSAs and the voluntary Parent Partners (IPSSs). Such advice needs to be independent of the policies and positioning of the Local Authority or its schools, of other statutory or voluntary agencies, and to be given with full declaration of any conflict of interests known to any individual members of paid or voluntary staff, and those for whom the service holds shared governance arrangements.
- 8.25** Ensure that the PPP is giving parents information about local and national independent organisations to further check the impartiality of advice given.
- 8.26** Contribute perspectives from your host agency or organisation, or as a parent, that inform the best development of PPP to understand and address multi-agency agendas for action.
- 8.27** Ensure PPP is accessible to all sections of the community in Plymouth.
- 8.28** Take an active role in promoting the work of the PPP.
- 8.29** Promote the continual raising of standards in the work of the service through training and effective management and support.

## **SECTION 9: PPP STAFFING AND STRUCTURE**

Plymouth Parent Partnership is one of the Plymouth Community Psychology Services. As with other of those service teams, Parent Partnership is managed by a Senior Educational Psychologist who is responsible to the Principal Educational Psychologist. Parent Partnership has some quite unique features in its staffing and structure as an arm's length service of the City Council. This includes a mix of paid and voluntary staff, and shared governance arrangements for around 92 staff working in the PSA project in schools. Staffing within the service changes with the different pieces of work that are commissioned and developed, but the current position is set out in the structure chart on page 24 and sets out the overall line management relationships.

## Parent Partnership Structure Chart June 2009



**Glossary**  
 SEP – Senior Educational Psychologist  
 EP – Educational Psychologist  
 ISW – Information Support Worker  
 HCA – Helping Children Achieve  
 PSA – Parent Support Adviser

Key features of the main roles within the service are:

*Service Manager – Senior Educational Psychologist*

The Service Manager holds responsibility for overall leadership and management of the service, as well as setting the agenda for strategic development of the service. This role is responsible for ensuring:

- the 'arm's length' status of the service with regard to the provision of an impartial, accurate, and confidential information, explanation and support service to parents
- the service complies with PCC policies and procedures
- the service enables PCC to fulfil the DCSF requirements for the provision of a Parent Partnership
- the development and maintenance of a service culture that embraces integrated working and acts in the best interests of parents, children and families

*Practice Manager*

The Practice Manager holds joint responsibility with the Projects Manager for operational management of the service, including line management of specified staff.

This role leads on:

- development of best practice in working with parents, for all staff, volunteers and other professionals, including accreditation and qualifications for practice.
- development of training and accreditation for PSAs and the Locality Coordination of PSA practice
- the implementation of the parent participation strategy;
- ensuring the service delivers the statutory elements of information and support to parents of children and young people with SEN / disabilities.

*Projects Manager*

Holds joint responsibility with the Practice Manager for operational management of the service, including line management of specified staff.

This role leads on:

- implementation and monitoring of formal project management structures including budget management, evaluations of service impact, and finance and HR procedures.
- research and implementation of evidence based parenting programmes for multi-agency team delivery across all sectors.

### *Parenting Research Lead Officer*

Acts as consultant to the development of research for evidence based parenting programmes, for the Parent Champion role for schools facing an Ofsted category of concern, and is developing and monitoring performance indicators and quality standards for policies and procedures used within the service. This also a key role for the ongoing evaluation of the PSA project

### *Parenting Programmes Coordinator*

This role has key responsibility for the implementation of the Parenting Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) and multi-agency team delivery of evidence - based parenting programmes. The role involves liaison across many agency management and front line staff structures, organising team compositions and balance of skills and experience, and leading the delivery of identified programmes such as 'Strengthening Families' and 'Incredible Years'.

### *Specialist Parenting Practitioner*

This role is to train and support facilitators for evidence based parenting programmes, particularly the different versions of 'Incredible Years' (IY). This specialist role involves having an internationally recognised qualification for mentoring and training those who can deliver the IY programmes. The main thrust of this work is currently the implementation of the 'Helping Children Achieve' national research for which Plymouth is one of two sites. This includes the delivery of the SPOKES (Supporting Parents On Kids Education) programme.

### *Parenting Programme Facilitators*

Parent Partnership funds a mix of roles to help with the delivery of evidence based parenting programmes; these include an Educational Psychologist, Trainee Educational Psychologists, Family Project Worker from the Family Intervention Project and Parenting Workers from Action for Children. The service also works alongside many other roles from other agencies in delivering multi-agency parenting programmes.

### *Information Support Worker (ISW)*

ISWs support best exchange of information, through a wide range of approaches, between parents and service providers and commissioners, and across professional practice, including the PSA project. ISW roles vary across differing aspects of the work of the service. They can provide direct support, advice and guidance to parents/carers; develop and deliver different training programmes and materials for parents and for professionals; deliver the Choice Advice programme; support parent participation in identified localities of the city; develop the website and directories of information; develop promotional materials including DVDs; and work with PSACOs to support training and casework advice for PSAs. ISWs are responsible for training and supporting volunteer Parents Partners and for helping to deliver the statutory Parent Advisory Service.

### *Parent Support Adviser (Plymouth Tuition Services - PTS)*

This is a PSA role employed within Parent Partnership that is focussed on parents and families of children and young people attending any part of the Plymouth Tuition Services 3-8, PTS 9-11, the Young Parents' Centre, or those in 'Not school' arrangements. The PSA works through locality based drop-ins and through a grandparents' support group to help overcome some of the barriers to engagement that parents face when their child attends for an often temporary period of time at a PTS provision. This PSA role also supports parents through transitions into and away from PTS provisions and mainstream and special school settings.

### *Parent Support Adviser Coordinator (PSACO)*

PSACOs are locality focussed to provide one-to-one support and group practice development to PSAs working in schools and advise Head teachers about the development of PSA practice. They are responsible for developing and maintaining links between the PSA Project and Children's Centres, Extended Schools Coordinators, Education Welfare Service and other professionals working in Locality Teams. PSACOs represent PPP at the Locality Commissioning Boards as they are evolving for each of the six localities for the city. Each of three PSACOs also take responsibility for particular themes of work identified as priorities in the Plymouth Parent & Family Support Strategy and organise specialist training for PSAs in each of these in collaboration with key support agencies relevant to each. PSACOs also act as Assessors (and one as Internal Verifier) to PSAs taking the SWiS (Parent Support) qualification.

### *Administration Assistant*

Provide administrative support to all service staff, including secretarial support to the leadership and management team. Administration Assistant roles vary across differing aspects of the work of the service and includes some specialised roles for supporting the implementation of parenting programmes; preparation of training materials for PSAs and other professional groups; maintaining databases and website information systems including directories of services and activities to parents and families; and supporting research activities for the service.

### *Parent Support Adviser (PSA) – [Shared governance]*

Parent Support Advisers (PSAs) are based within individual schools and can offer information, explanation, advice and support to all parents on any aspect of their life. PSAs also work with parents to gain their views on services available to families in the City and to ensure that these views are represented to help shape service developments. This participation theme in PSA work is also developed further when PSAs take on the role of 'Parent Champion' for schools seen by Ofsted to be in a category of concern, as set out in the DCSF guidance.

Although the PSAs are based in schools the work they carry out is parent led and the service they offer is impartial and confidential. PSAs are managed within schools under Service Level Agreements with the Local Authority via Parent Partnership. Parent Partnership maintains shared governance arrangements with schools and provides initial and in-service training, practice development and supervision, and ongoing support to PSAs, including close liaison and support to their line managers in schools.

The Parent Support Adviser (PSA) project was piloted in Plymouth between 2006 and 2008. The project has been consolidated and expanded between August 2008 and May 2009 to make the offer of a PSA to be funded for 20 hours each week during term times to every school in the city. There are currently (July 2009) 92 PSAs in 95 schools across Plymouth (some schools are in the process of amalgamating, some infant and junior pairs of schools share a PSA).

## *Volunteers*

Some volunteers working as 'Parent Partners' provide a direct casework support role for parents – this meets the requirement for Independent Parental Supporters (IPSs) set out in the guidance for the statutory element of the service to provide information, explanation and support to parents of children and young people with SEN / Disabilities. Some of them work on a city-wide basis and some are based in particular schools.

We have just taken on the contract for the provision of a Parent Advocacy service to birth parents who are facing meetings concerning child protection issues and we are in discussion with volunteers who were involved in this work for a previously commissioned service provider<sup>1</sup>.

We have also provided initial training for the role of PSA to a small number of staff working in schools part time in other roles to start a 'bank' of people who might provide cover for PSAs going on maternity leave, experiencing long term sick leave etc.

### **Induction Programme:**

The service provides a comprehensive, six-month induction for all in-house staff based on the Plymouth City Council corporate induction standards; this has been further developed by the service to include the seven core standards from CWDC generic training and locally developed standards arising from the 'arms length' status of the service. These are outlined in the Induction Standards Supplement produced by Plymouth Parent Partnership see Appendix E.

The focus of in service induction for all new staff is based around individual role specific tasks, which encourages them to develop an understanding of their role within PPP.

Alongside the PCC corporate standard induction, new members of staff are assigned a two-week research task around their area of specialism. The results are presented to the leadership and management team. Structured induction ensures that all staff within PPP have comprehensive understandings of:

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<sup>1</sup> In early 2009 a voluntary sector organisation, the Plymouth Family Support Service, closed. It had provided the Parent Advocacy Service for parents of children facing child protection meetings. Parent Partnership agreed to provide this service to enable continuity for parents with such needs. The name has been maintained to indicate the continuity, but the work delivered fits with our approach to information, explanation and support to parents, not with our understanding of 'advocacy'. The name, and our interpretation of 'advocacy' will reviewed at a later date.

- The development of PPP (both national and local context)
- Current understandings for parenting education and support
- Best practice in working with parents
- Service expectations for performance
- The different roles in the service
- Their own specialist area

The PCC corporate standard induction includes attendance at the Corporate Induction Session 'Welcome to Plymouth City Council' and the 'Health and Safety Induction Course'. All Parent Partnership staff who have direct contact with vulnerable parents, or children and young people, will also attend Safeguarding training.

All staff will also attend the 5 modules of the CWDC generic training as soon as it is practicable to arrange. This may be via the multi-agency training for this delivered by PCC Workforce Development or via joining PSA / Learning Mentor training.

### **Ongoing Training and Support**

Staff receive a range of opportunities for ongoing training, supervision and continuing professional development. These include:

- For new staff, PCC probationary reviews with line managers take place at 2, 4 and 6 months stage following start date
- First PCC individual appraisal is carried out 6 months after end of probationary period. This will be followed by an annual appraisal and six monthly reviews.
- Monthly whole team meetings that are led by the service manager
- Monthly admin team practice development meetings that are led by Projects Manager
- Monthly ISW team practice development meetings that are led by the Service Manager
- Monthly PSACO team practice development meetings that are led by the Service Manager
- Attendance at termly whole service meetings for all Plymouth Community Psychological Services.
- Access to distributed supervision. Line managers are available to discuss issues with staff as and when they arise. Line managers will ensure that if this does not happen as part of normal work process, then an approximately monthly check for individual staff supervision needs is made.
- More intensive supervision and support will be made to staff who are experiencing complex work related issues.
- Attendance at internal staff training and development sessions

All staff also have opportunities to attend external training, conferences and meetings upon request to their line manager, if these are seen as appropriate to service and individual needs and if there is sufficient budget available.

### **Professional conduct**

Parent Partnership has several levels of focus on professional conduct and behaviour that have been agreed with its staff. These are open to planned review, but all staff should follow the policies and procedures we have established.

The first level provides principles for conduct in the general delivery of services and in interactions with all service users. It also provides a general statement of the professional standards expected of all staff. This is set out in Appendix F(i).

Staff also meet to agree and review specific workplace policies and protocols for everyday team working.

### **Exit arrangements**

Staff leaving the service should follow all PCC policies appropriate to their post with regard to notice, annual leave entitlements, pensions and all HR guidance.

Access to the PCC email and internet systems, database access, use of PCC mobile phones etc. will be terminated at the end of the date of leaving the service.

## **SECTION 10: MISCELLANY**

### **Comments & Complaints**

The procedure for comments and complaints from service users of Parent Partnership is as follows.

*We always appreciate any positive comments about our service or suggestions for ways that we might improve it.*

*If you feel...*

- *unhappy about any aspect of the work of our service or*
- *we've failed to do something or*
- *we've done something wrong*

*you can contact the service by phone or in writing.*

*The Manager of Parent Partnership Service is:*

*Dr. Peter Jones  
Plymouth Parent Partnership  
Martins Gate  
Bretonside  
Plymouth  
PL4 0AT*

*We will respond to any complaints quickly and sensitively. All your comments will be dealt with in confidence, with fairness and respect. You will receive a written response to your concerns within 5 working days.*

*If you still feel dissatisfied, the matter will be passed to the Head of the Learner and Family Support Branch of the Department for Services to Children and Young People.*

This is set out on our website and on the basic information trifold leaflet about the service.

### **Casework 6 monthly evaluations**

Parents who receive individual casework support are contacted six months after their first contact and asked to complete and return an evaluation form for the service they have received. If they have further contact with the service after the date of that evaluation form being sent, then they will be asked again 6 months after that next contact date. The evaluation asks their views on what went well, how impartial the service was, and what could be improved. A copy of the evaluation form can be seen in Appendix D to this service description.

## **Plymouth Community Psychological Services policies**

As one of the Psychological Services, Parent Partnership has regard for the overall policies. There are also agreed differentiations of policy and a protocol for pursuing impartiality in relationship to the practice of individual Educational Psychologists. These are set out in Appendix G to this service description.

## APPENDIX A

### Plymouth Parent Partnership Impartiality Policy

In order to increase parents' confidence in Parent Partnership Services the Government set out clear expectations for Parent Partnership Services in every area of practice by way of exemplification of the minimum standards in the SEN Code of Practice. The standards set out in the exemplifications aim to strengthen the 'arm's length' nature of Parent Partnership Services. In delivering effective Parent Partnership Services, Local Authorities are expected to ensure there is a published policy on how the Parent Partnership Service acts in an impartial way and provides a comprehensive and balanced range of information for parents.

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In all our work we will seek to ensure that information and support given to parents<sup>1</sup>, carers, and to professional workers is impartial. Understanding impartiality and how it is evidenced in practice has been, and remains, a core theme in the development of our service. This is so for all areas of our work, including:

- our core team response to parents and professionals as service users
- the work of PSAs (Parent Support Advisers) in schools
- the approach to parents that we promote in the multi-agency delivery of parenting programmes coordinated by Parent Partnership.

This policy document sets out our thinking and practice with regard to impartiality. PPP starting points for ensuring impartiality are:

- Attempting definitions of the word
- Understandings of factors that influence partiality and impartiality
- Examining how impartiality fits with targeted work
- Raising awareness of key themes in parent partnership practice
- Achieving structures and organisational arrangements that reassure parents that the service is impartial

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document the word 'parent' is taken to include all those with a direct responsibility for parenting. These might be birth parents, step-parents, grandparents or other members of the family, foster or adoptive parents or other adult caregivers.

## Definitions:

Dictionary definitions include 'not partial, unprejudiced, fair' (OED); 'not favouring one person, etc., more than another; fair and unbiased' (Chambers); showing lack of favouritism; *the cold neutrality of an impartial judge* (Webster's); 'free from undue bias or preconceived opinions; *an unprejudiced appraisal of the pros and cons, the impartial eye of a scientist*' (Webster's). Such definitions are helpful but one person's ideas of fairness, neutrality, or perception of the role of judge or scientist, may be another person's perceptions of demonstration of vested power, lack of understanding, or adherence to political beliefs or faith interests. The well - known saying '*Having no axe to grind*', essentially of not preparing either side for battle is pertinent here. Similarly, '*You can talk to me because I've got nothing to win and nothing to lose*'.

It may be productive to equally consider a definition of partiality, the absence of which seems essential to evidencing impartiality. The OED offers 'inclined antecedently to favour one party in a cause, or one side of the question more than the other', 'prejudiced or biased in someone's favour', and 'pertaining to or involving a part only'. We also like the OED's 'Partialism: a partial theory or view which does not take into account all the facts. From these varied emphases, we currently synthesise a definition of impartiality as:

***'Not taking sides, not favouring one point of view over another because of preconceived ideas or beliefs, and ensuring that all available facts, truths, opinions and perceptions are being shared openly.'***

## Factors that influence partiality and impartiality

Achieving impartiality in service delivery calls for professional awareness of many factors that may influence us (or any of the wide range of our service users) towards partial understanding of events or information. These might include:

1. Recognising the factors that can lead to people constructing different understandings of the same event. Examples could be:
  - *Previous experience of similar situations*
  - *Misunderstandings of the purpose of the event, differing agendas*
  - *Difficulties with language or other communications used during the event*
  - *Power differentials across participants*
  - *Lack of information*
  - *Interpreting requests for clarification or justification as confrontational or conflictual*
  - *Differing interpretation of meaning behind words*
  - *Stereotypical held views – deficit models of others*
  - *Limited time for an effective explanation to have been given by participants*
  - *Information overload and not being able to remember all that took place*

2. Recognising that differing perceptions of the same event are very real to each person concerned.
3. Understanding and being able to explain the difficulties that can arise from partial views of any given situation.
4. Recognising the links between honesty, impartiality and confidentiality.
5. Understanding that impartiality or partiality is demonstrated not only in the content of words used, but in body language, references to others that suggest affiliation or collusion, and communications that patronise the views of others.
6. Recognising that people pass through a series of stages in changing their attitudes, perceptions and willingness to contemplate alternative ways of understanding events and choices for the future. Sometimes there may be a need for high quality and impartial support for lengthy periods.
7. Acknowledging that a service or an organisation may convey partiality in its agenda via the ways that it seeks to engage with service users, to target potential service users, or by being in a position where service users are directed to attend the service or such attendance is legally enforced.

### **Impartiality and targeted work**

The last points in the previous section lead to consideration of how to ensure that the process of support offered by Parent Partnership can be impartial, not just the information provided. We believe it is essential that we are seen to provide a service that does not seek to persuade, direct, or pursue individual parents to a particular course of action. Our service is to help parents to make informed choices, to give informed consent, and to participate fully in decisions and developments that affect them as parents, their children and their families. Our services to parents are provided only at the request of parents and with their permission.

Parent Partnership works with many other agencies in the planning and delivery of a wide range of direct services to parents across Plymouth. This collaborative partnership working needs to be premised on and informed by an understanding of Parent Partnership's service ethos of impartiality. This may lead to some difficulties in developing shared understanding of approaches to be used with parents. This may be so when a school or other agency feels that those whom they might refer to as 'hard to reach' parents would respond to unsolicited contact from a PSA, from Parent Partnership with regard to attending a parenting programme or to be offered advice by an Information Support Worker about options that that school or agency wants the parent to consider.

If it is to be seen by its service users to 'not take sides' and , 'not favour one point of view over another...' then it is important that parents do not feel Parent Partnership is accepting another agency's agenda for intervention to the exclusion of parents' views or choice about that intervention. This is not possible where issues of child protection or civil safety are involved and there has to be some partiality in practice, unless one is to adopt a form of neutrality based in moral or social indifference. We believe that being sensitive to parents' views and maintaining the best levels of impartiality in information, explanation and support to them enables sustainable engagement – including for many categories of vulnerable parents. We seek to reduce barriers to engagement. These can include:

- simply not knowing the service exists;
- not knowing how to engage with a service;
- anxiety or fear about a school or other agency;
- language, gender, cultural or financial barriers.

Although we seek to maintain impartiality we do accept that we target some groups of parents and with selective dissemination of information and promotion of services seek to reduce barriers to particular groups of parents engaging with our service, with schools and other services to children and families. The statutory duty of Parent Partnerships is as a targeted service to parents of children with additional needs / disabilities. Plymouth's Parent Partnership includes this targeted work among many others. In Plymouth there are priority themes in the Parent and Family Support Strategy that we seek to address and these include targeted improvement of information and support that we provide to groups of parents such as fathers, parents of families with black and minority ethnic backgrounds, parents misusing substances and so on. In our work for the Choice Advice programme, there is targeted work with parents who have not completed admissions application to express preference for choice of secondary school for their child. In the coordination and delivery of evidence based parenting programmes there may be target groups of vulnerable parents that particular strands of central or local government policy seek to engage. In the work of PSAs in schools there may be some parents that schools target for improved engagement and who are asked by the school if they would like support from a PSA.

In all our direct work with parents, and in any work for which we hold shared governance of practice, we will ensure that engagement with targeted groups of parents is based on gaining parents permission for that engagement. We are convinced, for example, that in the work of PSAs across the city this has been a key theme for successful engagement. Plymouth's PSAs work with parents from every background including many from families who face cycles of disadvantage, who experience critical incidents, or who are in difficult circumstances. PSAs have established relationships of trust with many parents who have previously not felt able to engage with schools and support services.

A factor that we have seen to underpin that trust is that PSAs do not cold call on any individual parents or target individual parents and approach them without the parent's prior agreement. Our position is that any member of school staff, or indeed any staff from other agencies, friends, neighbours, can always ask any parent if they would like to talk with a PSA, and with the parent's permission the contact can then be arranged or the parent can approach the PSA directly.

### **Key themes in parent partnership practice**

Being able to achieve impartiality in service delivery also calls for awareness of frequent themes in Parent Partnership practice and in supporting parents in diverse family and community settings, at differing stages of parenting, and in varied relationships with schools, Local Authority and other services. These might include:

1. To seek to resolve any conflict between the views of the school, the Local Authority or the parent, rather than to promote any of them.
2. To understand that a series of unplanned and unintended events (examples could be school / other agency staff absence, failure in telephone / email systems / postal delays, need for urgent prioritisation of other things, etc.) can conspire to convince a parent that the 'system' is against them.
3. To support parents, individually or collectively, to convey their views to schools, the Local Authority and other agencies.
4. To differentiate between advocacy, representation and information exchange. We interpret advocacy to be promoting / defending a particular point of view relative to others being expressed. PPP advocates only for parent participation in general and promotes and supports structures that enable representatives to convey collective views from parents. It does not act as advocate for any individual parent or act to represent an individual parent's views.<sup>1</sup>
5. To support best practice in information exchange and supporting individual parents to ensure their views are understood by others and vice versa. This kind of support can include conveying the views of an individual parent / carer, at their request, with their permission and with content agreed beforehand, should they feel unable to speak in a meeting they are attending where we are supporting them. We would however always encourage parents to voice their own views.

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<sup>1</sup> In early 2009 a voluntary sector organisation, the Plymouth Family Support Service, closed. It had provided the Parent Advocacy Service for parents of children facing child protection meetings. Parent Partnership agreed to provide this service to enable continuity for parents with such needs. The name has been maintained to indicate the continuity, but the work delivered fits with our approach to information, explanation and support to parents, not with our understanding of 'advocacy'. The name, and our interpretation of 'advocacy' will be reviewed at a later date.

In cases where our staff voiced the views of a parent / carer we would overtly check immediately afterward that we had captured what they wished us to convey.

6. To recognise that confidentiality is a permissive phenomenon and that proactive, impartial exploration with a parent about which information can be shared can be constructive and effective in achieving solutions.
7. To both support parents and, as part of that process, to offer constructive challenge to perceptions of some events.
8. To understand that separating or separated parents may hold very partial views of events compared to each other.
9. To recognise that parents facing court proceedings, stressful procedures or meetings may present extremely partial perceptions.
10. To be authentic and honest in working with parents, not only listening and agreeing, but maintaining a well-informed reality frame from which to inform parents' choice and planning.
11. To avoid over-identification between a parent's situation or dilemmas and one's own personal experience.

### **Structures and organisational arrangements to evidence impartiality**

Lastly, PPP must examine the structures, procedures and organisational arrangements it offers that evidence its impartiality in its delivery of service. These include:

1. Training and supervision of staff, including observed practice, that explores all of the points in this section and includes looking at many examples of practice where impartiality has informed or underpinned the impact achieved.
2. Transparency about the relationship of the PPP and the Local Authority, as set out in Section One of the PPP Service Description. Since 2003, when the PPP was restructured to be a within-house arm's length service of the Local Authority, there has been agreement about anticipating and avoiding conflict between the Authority and PPP in its delivery of service. Section Three of the PPP Service Description has remained substantively the same since that date, with only minor amendments to reflect the changed landscape for integrated Children's Services and changing terminology.

3. The PPP is located to avoid any adverse perceptions of its impartiality. It is away from the Authority's main base at Windsor House and is based on two sites. The main base, with its own separate accommodation, is at Martinsgate (predominantly Adult & Community Learning and Further Education building with city centre open access). The second, is at the Treasury Building in Catherine Street and is currently the only service in that building. Longcause Oasis Centre and John Kitto Community College, also host the PPP's two resource bases for parents where books, DVDs and other information materials are available for loan to parents or those working with parents.
4. PPP has its clear service identity, its own logo, its own direct URL web-site, and provides a comprehensive range of publications to inform parents, including a directory of services for parents and families.
5. PPP has created a range of strategic vehicles to enable parents' views to influence the development of service to families, and leads the city's strategic approach to parent participation. It is responsible for the Plymouth Parent & Family Forum that meets bi-monthly and at which a wide range of parent representatives meet with service providers and commissioners. PPP ensures that the full range of parents views is heard through the Forum, through Parent Reference groups that inform the City's Parent & Family Support Strategy and the Integrated Disability Service, through support to parent members of working groups, interview panels and other channels (see Sections 7 and 8 of the PPP Service Description).
6. PPP is accountable to its multi-sectorial Development Group for its development of service performance, direction and assessment of performance. This is not a management group, but has an essential role in ensuring the arms-length status of the service (see Section 8 of the PPP Service Description). From its inception in 2003 its terms of reference have focussed on monitoring the impartiality of the service, including parents' perceptions of the identity of the service in all its interactions with parents, schools, other agencies and the Local Authority. It is chaired by a parent. Membership and decision-taking arrangements ensure a balance between parent and professional views.
7. As explained in section 10 of the service description, the evaluation form that is sent to parents contacting the core team includes a question about the level of impartiality perceived by the parent in the service they receive.

*Dr. Peter Jones, revised July 2009*

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Plymouth Parent Partnership**

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

1. Parents<sup>1</sup> and carers seeking information and support from Plymouth Parent Partnership (PPP) will be given the assurance that their enquiry will be treated in confidence.
2. Any information that a parent / carer may disclose, other than that which raise child protection issues or civil safety issues, will not be passed to schools, Plymouth City Council or any other person without prior consent of the parent. This policy will apply to all contact with parents whether it is individual or group work involving disclosure of personal information.
3. Parents / carers should be encouraged to share relevant information with school staff, other services or individuals when it is in the best interests of the parent / carers or of their child to do so. Confidentiality should be interpreted as a facilitative structure to ensure parent / carers do not feel disempowered in discussing issues for which they want support, not as an assumption that information given is best kept secret.
4. It is also considered good practice to ensure that maintaining confidentiality is not interpreted by service users to indicate or imply agreement or collusion with the service user's beliefs or positioning. Good practice might involve setting boundaries for the views being shared by the service user, making it clear, for example that subjective or unsubstantiated serious allegations against named staff in schools, PCC departments, other agencies, or other individuals, may need to be addressed in meetings with those concerned. Staff should be clear in the face of such allegations that they may feel uncomfortable to accept the information without needing to arrange to discuss the issues with those named and with the parent / carer. It is sometimes necessary to ask the parent / carer to refrain from expressing further such views until such a meeting can be arranged (and it may be advisable to have notes taken at that meeting that are available to the parents and others attending).

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document the word 'parent' is taken to include all those with a direct responsibility for parenting. These might be birth parents, step-parents, grandparents or other members of the family, foster or adoptive parents or other adult caregivers.

### **Recording and Sharing Information:**

5. Plymouth City Council's Services for Children and Young people sees the ownership of all information and records concerning parents making contact with PPP to lie with the PPP. Personal details of parents or their child (names, addresses etc.) will not be included in any data that may be requested to monitor and audit service use, except with their informed consent. Anonymised data will be used to inform such audits.
6. Paid and voluntary staff may be asked to take notes when supporting a parent at a meeting or may make notes while supporting an individual parent. All written information relating to the service's work with parents is the property of the Plymouth Parent Partnership. Such notes will be offered to parents / carers as a record of the meeting, capturing key points relevant to parent / carer needs. They should not be used as, or be seen to have the status of, formal minutes of a meeting. If the chair of a meeting requests that such notes may be used as minutes of the meeting, then PPP staff must make clear that this is only possible with the permission of the parent and with an acceptance that their primary purpose is as given in the underlined sentence in this paragraph. This does not preclude the need for more general notes / minutes to be taken that are made available to all attendees, and, if the parent does not consent to PPP staff notes being broadened to fulfil that role, then another person may also need to take separate notes.

### **Confidentiality boundaries**

7. In most instances, paid and voluntary staff must regard all contacts with parents as confidential. This means that nothing a parent says may be passed on to another person outside of the organisation without prior consent of the parent. It is important to be aware of respecting the needs of all people we are in contact with.
8. Information must be made available within PPP, if it is relevant to the work of the organisation. There are times when a volunteer or member of staff may need to discuss parent's confidences with particular individuals within the service. This will be quite appropriate when, for example, seeking internal information or advice. When seeking advice or information from outside the service on behalf of the parent, the parent's permission must be sought and given. Paid and voluntary staff should explain, on initial contact with parents, that any information apart from that which may raise child protection issues or civil safety issues, will remain within the organisation.
9. Only in exceptional circumstances would it be necessary to pass on confidences outside the service. The law requires that in matters of considerable risk to children, the above rules be waived i.e. Child Protection Issues.

10. If a volunteer or member of staff is told of actual abuse of a child, or they are told of suspected child abuse by a third party, or they themselves suspect it, they should:

- Thank the individual for telling them, stating that they did the right thing by passing on their concern;
- Explain that they themselves are now required to share this information with a senior member of the service and in certain circumstances the concern might then be passed on to the local Social Care staff for investigation.
- Immediately inform the senior member of staff (currently either the Practice Manager or Projects Manager) of the alleged concern / suspicion and take advice as to what should be the next steps.

11. It is possible that a parent, themselves aged 18 or over, may disclose information about being abused themselves as a child. This may or may not have been addressed by agencies involved in the past. Such disclosure may be accompanied by distress and it is important not to put pressure on the parent for any specific immediate course of action. If the abuse in the past has not been disclosed previously, and if no action has previously been taken to address the abuse, staff should establish the parent's wishes for any help with retrospective reporting.

**Civil safety / illegal activity:**

12. The service has a responsibility to provide, as far as possible, a safe environment to staff, volunteers and service users and confidentiality may need to be broken when illegal activity threatens that safety. This may include persons making active threats to harm, physically or mentally, another person using our service or any other service associated with it and who is not willing to moderate their behaviour. It would certainly be justified if acts of a sexually abusive or violent nature have occurred or where the threat of such occurring is believed to be a serious one.

### **Shared database protocols: EMS, Contact Point, CEDAR (PSA project)**

13. The same overall principles, as set out above, applies. No personal information will be made available to any other persons or agencies without the informed consent of the parent / carer. PPP uses the CSS (Children's Support Services) module of the PCC Capita One information system. There is an agreed protocol with PCC Department for Services to Children and Young People data managers that notification of a parent or carer having been in contact with PPP will not be made on the shared database unless the parent has specifically given their informed consent that this can happen or where there are child protection issues identified. All paid and voluntary staff making contact with parents about individual casework will explain this protocol.

### **Shared governance arrangements with schools for Parent Support Advisers (PSAs)**

14. The recording, storage and sharing of confidential information by PSAs in the Plymouth's PSA pilot project during 2006-2008 has helped increase our understanding for this aspect of PSA work. The following paragraphs reflect that experience and our consultations with PSAs and representatives from Head teachers associations.

15. Service Level Agreements with schools specify that this PPP confidentiality policy applies to PSAs' work with individual parents / carers. Again, it is important to state that parents / carers should be encouraged to share their information with school staff, other services or individuals when it is in the best interests of the parent / carers or of their child to do so. There are many kinds of personal information where it is not necessary or appropriate to encourage such sharing – this will call for professional decision by the PSA. It is also important that PSAs are aware of, and sensitive to, any confidentiality policy that the school already has in place and discuss with their line manager any anticipated areas of difficulty. The practice guidance in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of this policy should be followed by PSAs.

16. Understanding confidentiality and holding information can sometimes place PSAs in situations where they might experience conflicts of loyalty, uncertainty about appropriate sharing, and on occasion facing pressure to share information. It is important that other school staff are given a clear explanation of the PSA role and the policy on confidentiality in their working practice. It is important also that PSAs recognise that in professional supervision sessions it can be helpful to seek guidance on information they are holding when the supervision session itself is bound by confidentiality. There is clear guidance for the Children's Services workforce in the document *Information Sharing: Practitioners Guide, Integrated working to improve outcomes for children and young people, Every Child Matters Change for Children, 2006, DCSF.*

17. The breaking of confidentiality where child protection and safety issues are involved, as set out in paragraphs 9 -12 above, calls for PSAs to report to their school's Child Protection Coordinator. If a PSA is told of actual abuse of a child, or they are told of suspected child abuse by a third party, or they themselves suspect it, they should:

- Thank the individual for telling them, stating that they did the right thing by passing on their concern;
- Explain that they themselves are now required to share this information with the school's Child Protection Coordinator
- Immediately inform the school's Child Protection Coordinator of the alleged concern / suspicion and take advice as to what should be the next steps.

Paragraph 11, as above, holds for disclosures from parents.

18. There is a need to establish clearly protocols in individual schools for what access the PSA will have to other confidential records about children and families that the school holds. Many, but not all, PSAs may have full access to paper and electronic information held by schools about pupils. Again, it is important that school staff are aware of the PSA role and that they may not be in a position to share with other school staff information they have been given by parents.

19. This confidentiality policy relates to the content of information given to PSAs by parents and, as set out in paragraph 13, to the identification by name of parents as service users. The latter is not always easily achievable in school settings and experience in the pilot indicates that the majority of head teachers and PSAs operate on a basis of mutual trust and respect for 'need to know' principles. It is essential however to understand that this policy is not intended to act as a barrier to PSAs keeping their line managers fully informed of the type of activities they are carrying out in their work. It is good practice for a PSA to keep accurate records of their work by category, with individual or group casework being anonymised to avoid identifying service users by name. Similarly, it is reasonable for line managers to expect a PSA to forward plan their distribution of future work by category to include casework, group support and training, meetings, promotions, school / agency liaison, own training and development etc. This kind of differentiation of information, maintaining confidentiality for individual parents while providing information about the activities and tasks undertaken by the PSA is necessary to enable Head teachers to monitor and manage the work of the PSA.

20. It is essential that PSAs have secure storage arrangements for confidential information. This includes a lockable filing cabinet or similar for paper information for which the PSA is the keyholder and a password protected laptop or desktop computer for which only the PSA holds the password. Information that parents have given permission to be shared with school staff should be copied for inclusion in the school's child records, unless it is to be restricted to only specifically named staff members. Some PSAs in the pilot have identified difficulties with confidentiality with emails via the school email address. This is not always an easy issue to overcome and we can only advise confidential messages being sent as attachments rather than first text, with a 'confidential' warning in the subject heading.
21. Confidential information shared with a PSA is shared with that professional role rather than with the individual person. When a named PSA leaves their post the information should be available to the next PSA as postholder to enable continuity of working with individual parents. It is good practice to explain this to parents and, if at all possible, for there to be a handover period between PSAs to enable the new PSA to be introduced to parents involved with current casework.
22. Under the Data Protection Act 1998 parents can ask to have access to information that the PSA has recorded. It is important that PSAs record only factual information that is given to them and understand that records of their own interpretations, assessments or value judgements may be read by parents. Records need to be accurate and kept up to date for ongoing casework. PSAs should be aware of data protection issues and in particular should seek and follow advice from line managers about the school's data retention schedule.
23. The majority of PSAs in the pilot project fed back that it would be helpful to have a standardised simple consent form for sharing information that parents would sign. This could be held on file, would be in line with developing practice around information sharing (for example as with the Common Assessment Framework), and would avoid any misunderstandings of PSAs acting with permission. Parent Partnership now provides this consent form. There may still be a need to use additional consent forms for access to other services or procedures.
24. Training and support about confidentiality, record keeping, and how to anonymise data when necessary are to be included in initial PSA training, through in-service training, and in the support offered by PSA Locality Coordinators (PSACOs).

*Dr. Peter Jones, revised September 2008*

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Plymouth Parent Partnership**

#### **Parent Participation Strategy, April 2009**

##### **Introduction**

Plymouth Parent Partnership is committed to parent<sup>1</sup> participation at every level in the planning, development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services to parents and families. There are clear directives in the increasing guidance from government on the need for strategic approaches to parent participation at many levels (Support For Parents: Best Start for Children, 2005; Every Parent Matters, 2007; The Children's Plan, 2007). In the area of Parent Partnership's statutory responsibility, 'Aiming High for Disabled Children: Better Support for Families' (2007) has set out a national core offer with five key elements, one of which is participation and feedback.<sup>2</sup>

The role of Parent Partnership to ensure parent participation is set out in the Plymouth Parent & Family Support Strategy, 2008. The use of Parent Partnership's Plymouth Parent & Family Forum as the vehicle for consultation with and involvement of parents in service developments was agreed by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (now Children and Young People's Trust) in June 2006.

Participation is about ensuring that people are making input to and influencing decisions that will affect their lives. Importantly, for parents, it is also about influencing decisions that will affect the lives of their children. Parent participation can shape the range of support services to parents themselves, and to their children and families.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document the word 'parent' is taken to include all those with a direct responsibility for parenting. These might be birth parents, step-parents, grandparents or other members of the family, foster or adoptive parents or other adult caregivers.

<sup>2</sup> Aiming High for Disabled Children National Core Offer is a statement of standards that families with disabled children can expect from local services. Participation and feedback is one of the elements identified. This says that disabled children, young people and their families will be routinely involved and supported in making informed decisions about their treatment, care and support, and in shaping services (capturing the markers of good practice set out in the National Service Framework for Children young People and Maternity Services: Disabled Children and Young People and those with Complex Health Needs: Standard 8).

The National Core Offer sets out clear expectations for parent participation. This includes making arrangements for parents of disabled children so that they can fully participate in shaping local universal and specialist services at both strategic and operational levels through parent forums or Local Involvement Networks.

Participation offers all parents opportunities to share ideas, make and listen to suggestions, help influence new service developments and be involved with evaluating existing services. Involving parents and ensuring they feel able to participate in ways that feel comfortable and appropriate to them has been a long standing part of the work of Plymouth Parent Partnership (see *Involving Parents in Strategic Developments*, (Jones, 2005). Some of the text in this participation strategy is taken from that document).

It is important to recognise that participation is more than consultation exercises carried out by service providers and commissioners who need to show that service developments have followed a process of consultation with parents and / or their children. For many years we had some parents saying to us *'we have been consulted and consulted and consulted – but nothing ever happens, and nobody bothers to tell us why it hasn't happened!'* We want to encourage the important further steps of actively engaging parents in the planning, monitoring and review cycles of policy and practice. We believe there are many benefits to be gained by individual professionals and to organisations that engage with parents in this way. Service managers may become aware of ways of delivering services that will be seen by parents and families as more accessible, practical, and meaningful. Often, small changes in service delivery can lead to increased engagement and family support for services to children. The insights offered by parents about their children's response to services offered can also help agencies and professional disciplines to reflect on the effectiveness of approaches they are taking.

The Children Act 2004 called for greater recognition of the role of parents and of ways of involving them in service planning and review. *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (2004) called for careful needs analysis and planning that includes the views of the families and local communities in which children and young people are living. Similarly, the DoH *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* (2004) referred to the importance of involving the parents and families as well as their children in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services (particularly Standards 3 and 11). As Professor Al Aynsley-Green said in his foreword to the Executive Summary for the National Service Framework *'Nothing will change for the better without local understanding of, support for and ownership of the policy agenda, coupled with involvement, action and pressure for change'*. Involving parents in planning for service change and monitoring the impact of such changes will be a key component in achieving that local understanding, support and ownership.

The publication of *Every Parent Matters* (2007) and *The Children's Plan*, (2007) has consolidated expectations that parents should be involved with service development. Plymouth's Parent & Family Support Strategy has emphasised this for local practice.

The pilot of the PSA (Parent Support Adviser) project in Plymouth, as one of the 20 Local authorities involved, has seen parent participation as a specified theme with links to the Plymouth Parent & Family Forum. With the consolidation and expansion of the PSA project to be able to offer a PSA in every school across the city, parent participation is set out as a component of the PSA role – reaching every neighbourhood of the City.

## **Principles for Parent Participation**

The key principles for parent participation that we promote are:

- A central focus upon valuing parents views and contributions
- Clear definition of the purpose and time scale of their involvement
- A stated aim of avoiding disempowerment of any participant
- Being honest with parents about the likelihood of change occurring as a result of their involvement
- Explaining plans and process, and providing information in parent friendly language
- A consult – review – consult cycle of interaction
- Awareness of equality and access issues for parents, including childcare needs, cultural constraints, any needs for interpreters, and whether travel and other costs will be offered
- Seeking representative parent views, not just the views of individuals
- Developing organisational structures for participation that respect parents' needs
- Welcoming parents in sharing decision taking and scrutiny procedures with service commissioners and providers whenever possible
- That the process of participation itself improves parental confidence in services and widens the numbers of parents involved.

We believe strongly that the all-important ingredients are open attitudes and a commitment to collaboration by all the agency workers and parents involved. The real world is bounded by needs to manage and to balance budgets across changing single and multi-agency priorities. Involving parents in strategic planning must recognise those realities.

We recognise that parents are not just giving their time. They are sharing their hopes and aspirations for a better future for their children. They may be acting to reduce their frustrations and distrust for public service agencies. We have a responsibility to ensure that false hopes are not raised.

We have already given a definition of 'parent' for this document - to include all those with a direct responsibility for parenting. These might be birth parents, step-parents, grandparents or other members of the family, foster or adoptive parents or other adult caregivers, or corporate parents for looked after children. Enabling parents to participate in processes to shape decisions about services, facilities, and the social and built environments in which they live and work, is also to offer them the opportunity to convey the voice of their children, especially for a child at an age or developmental stage when they may not find it easy to contribute directly themselves.

This is not in any way to suggest that systems should not be in place to offer opportunities for children and young people to give their own views directly, or with the help of someone outside their family. Plymouth's Children and Young People's Participation Strategy (2006) sets out the framework for developing such systems and we would want to see the participation strategy for parents to complement this. We support the approaches set out in that strategy, including understandings from Treseder (1997) regarding definitions of participation for children and young people, and Hart (1992) regarding the graduated ladder of children and young people's participation from manipulation by adults through to shared decision with adults. Many of the underpinning principles for participation apply to all participant interest groups.

Participation is not just about partnership working with parents to make joint decisions about individual delivery of service to themselves, their child or family. It is enabling a dialogue that influences change and shapes service for all parents and families. Participation is the responsibility of all those working with parents and families and should be an integral part of reflective practice at all levels. We believe it is an essential mechanism for ensuring that services are understood by service users, well-used by them, are fit for purpose and can achieve improved outcomes.

### **Barriers to participation**

What barriers might there be to effective parent participation? We need to consider the following questions:

- Are we reaching a full range of parent perspectives and sampling their views?
- Do the ways we communicate with parents, and make reference to their views, encourage and enable participation?
- How realistic are our expectations on parents regarding the time they can commit, the roles they are asked to take on, and the levels of support they might need to remain involved?
- To what extent do service commissioners and providers really want to engage with parents and support their participation?

To enable parent participation there is a need to ensure that all relevant parent constituencies are considered. This includes considering who might be providing main, secondary or supplementary parenting roles to the children. Depending upon the issue and policy levels, the location, and neighbourhood or community culture, it may be important to seek the views of:

- The parent(s) with whom the child lives
- Parents not living in the child's home
- Separated parents
- Step-parents or adult partners in reconstituted families
- Social and care workers for looked after children
- Grandparents who are kinship carers
- Foster carers
- Family friends
- Childminders
- Siblings / young carers acting with parenting responsibilities

Similarly, relevant parent constituencies for particular issues will need to be identified to reflect communities of location (for example where parents live, work, or travel, or where their children attend schools or other service settings) or communities of interest, for example:

- parents with black or ethnic minority backgrounds
- lone parents
- fathers
- gay, lesbian and bisexual parents
- parents with faith affiliations
- parents in prison
- parents with learning disabilities
- parents using substances
- grandparents
- parents in armed forces
- parents in travellers community
- young parents
- parent governors

The ways that we communicate with parents to encourage and enable parents to participate need to consider not only accessibility of verbal or written language that we use, but some of the underlying reasons for reluctance that individuals may feel. We have borrowed some of the factors that are listed in the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy, because we feel they are entirely relevant for adults as well:

- Anxiety about what will happen – *'I don't want to get involved, I won't know how to do it'*
- Feeling they wouldn't be effective in any programme anyway – *'I won't be able to make a difference'*
- Not wanting to fuss – *'I don't want to make waves by getting them to change'*
- Experience of failure – *'It never worked in the past so why should it now'*
- Low self-esteem – *'I can't get involved in that'*

Good practice in consultation meetings between professional agency staff and parents gives time and attention to process issues and the ways meetings are managed. Parents can easily feel disempowered in such meetings. We think it important to:

- Recognise that parents have personal and not agency agendas
- Ensure agency participants value and support parents to give their views
- Foster procedures that demystify 'expert' knowledge
- Avoid jargon and assumed understandings
- Ensure that individual parents are well-supported
- Acknowledge and draw on parental knowledge and expertise

In the past, consultations with parents sometimes saw them asked along to a meeting with representatives from service providers, to have a few ideas run past them. Their agreement was sought and hopes were raised that funding lines would appear to match the proposals made. Fortunately, most service providers now want to avoid that scenario. Realistically, there may still be some reservations on the part of service providers to find time to involve parents, or beliefs that parents as service users will not have appropriate knowledge or skills to make a difference to service planning and delivery. We would hope that in implementing this strategy, the practical methods and support structures we are developing will help to overcome any such reservations.

Being clear about the issues for service improvement, and the level of policy making to be considered, helps us to be clear about what involvement from parents is being sought. It will inform the style of consultation or partnership working chosen and enable parents to know the expectations being made of them. The following sections set out some of the structures that are now in place and gives examples of how this strategy is being developed in practice.

### **The Plymouth Parent & Family Forum**

In July 2005, as part of Plymouth's development of an information strategy for Children, Young People and Families, Parent Partnership held a conference to propose a Parent & Family Forum for the city. This conference "Towards a Parent & Family Forum" saw service providers and commissioners, parent and carer representation, Head teacher's associations and City Council representation, agreeing the need for the implementation of a forum for structured exchange of information and views between parents / carers and service providers / commissioners.

"Towards a Parent & Family Forum" built on the work of the Health Action Zone Parenting Project (HAZPP) that identified such a need in 2001-2 after extensive consultation with large numbers of parents and professionals. The HAZPP also established the initial 12 principles for quality in services to parents that, with some additions, now inform the current Parent & Family Support Strategy, and underpin the current Parent & Family Forum.

Plymouth's Parent & Family Forum was launched in November 2005. The Parent Partnership role has been to establish and support the development of the Forum by facilitating meetings, taking and distributing notes, managing the administration, gathering further information at the request of the Forum and generally enabling and supporting effective parent representation. There is dedicated staff time to ensure the operation of the Forum. The Forum meets approximately every two months in a variety of venues. The Health Services to Children and Families' funds refreshments and some of the venue costs. The Children and Young People's Trust has contributed to the development costs of the Forum as part of its information strategy.

The meetings are chaired by a parent nominated and elected by the Forum. The working structure and process of the Forum, and agendas for the next meetings are being determined by all participants at each meeting and by a working group of parents meeting more frequently between those meetings. Parent Partnership Service is facilitating and supporting this group. This is not a parent-led or agency-led Forum, but a collaborative partnership approach to achieving best services for children, parents and families.

The Forum usually has service provider attendance from second and third tier officers and Local Authority Service to Children and Young People and Health Services to Children and Families' commissioners. Invitations to other service managers / practitioners are made to discuss specific themes identified at Forum meetings. Representation of constituencies of parents, for communities of location and of interest as set out above has grown during the two and a half years the Forum has been in existence. Representatives from Children's Centre's Parent Forums, from community initiative groups, and from schools' parent communities via Parent Support Advisers or voluntary Parent Partners attend regularly. Clearly, the Forum depends upon such links and ongoing commitments from such groups. The way the Forum has developed suggests that it is becoming a very effective practical vehicle for enabling the full range of parent views to be heard – but it is continually seeking to improve the ways that parents can participate.

The Forum acts as a central opportunity for information exchange between service providers / commissioners and service users. On 26th May 2006 the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership (now Children and Young People's Trust) gave its support to the Forum as the key vehicle for such exchange in Plymouth. Similarly, the City's Parent & Family Support Strategy for 2008-11, approved by the Children and Young People's Trust Executive, includes Parent Partnership's Parent and Family Forum as central to parent participation.

The Forum has enabled many themes for the development of services to be shared. This has included consultation about Plymouth NHS Trust becoming an NHS Foundation Trust, the delivery of parent training programmes, the Parent Support Adviser Project, and, acting at request of foster carer representatives, for Parent Partnership to carry out a survey of all foster and family carers across the city. The Forum, through its working group, organised a large service fayre 'Parents on the Plaza' in the City Centre at the beginning of national Parent week in October 2007. This was well attended and also enabled 170 interviews with parents about service developments.

The Forum maintains a register of parents with particular areas of interest who are willing to act as parent representatives of the Forum for consultations and working groups, on interview and access panels, and to contribute parents' views on specific service developments.

Parent Partnership has developed 'Parent Reference Groups' linked to the Forum as participation structures that seek to minimise the disempowerment of parents when needing to make sense of complex and professionalised agendas (see next section). These currently act as parent reference points for the development of Plymouth's Parent & Family Support Strategy and for its Children and Young People's Integrated Disability Service. It is hoped that these will be further developed to address other strategic themes.

Plymouth's Parent & Family Forum is now in a position to be the hub of many strands of parent participation for the City. The consolidation and expansion of the Parent Support Adviser (PSA) project during 2008/9 has offered a PSA in every school across the City. Built into their role is the expectation that they will audit the views of parents in their schools and provide a channel for two-way exchange of information to and from the Forum.

### **Parent Reference Groups**

The principle of seeking a parent / carer to sit on each of many working groups for service development appears sound from a professional perspective. From a parent / carer's perspective it can feel intimidating in fulfilling the demands of meetings of professionals, making a time commitment to match paid professional time and work agendas, and meeting the requirement of getting up to speed in areas of specialist knowledge or organisational process and procedures. These demands can feel unrealistic to a parent / carer who still would like to be involved and make a difference to the ways that services are developed.

An alternative is to create a parent / carer reference group that several linked working groups report to in order to gain a parent / carer's perspective on each piece of work being developed. Such reports would need to be presented in jargon-free language, set out summarised reasons for decisions and specify proposed action plans and justified links to other pieces of work being undertaken in working groups. This model for parent / carer participation offers the following advantages:

- It avoids individual parents having to develop, at speed, some familiarity with and understanding of the agency agendas, jargon, and professional knowledge for the theme being discussed in a particular Task Group.
- It enables a group of interested and representative parents / carers to have both mutual support within the group, and to access external support and explanation from Parent Partnership Service.
- It avoids the disempowerment of parent / carer voice that can be experienced by parents involved with a group of professionals.
- It respects parent / carers needs for effective use of their time, which they are giving on a voluntary basis, and respects their needs for minimum number of meetings to achieve effective involvement of their views.
- It places expectations on professional groups to report ideas to parent / carers in parent friendly language and to convey professional thinking and planning in ways that are accessible to parents / carers.

- It enables the Parent Reference Group to have a wide network of contacts with other parents / carers via the Parent & Family Forum procedures. This ensures a more comprehensive two way exchange of information between Task Groups (and others developing the Strategy) and parents / carers across the City.

Parent reference groups can be facilitated by Parent Partnership, providing organisational and administrative support, links to the Forum, links to strategic themes for participation, and training and support around participation and representation.

Parent / carer reference groups will meet at times that are sensitive to the needs of its membership for child care arrangements, work commitments, and family needs. This may mean a variable pattern of day and evening times for meetings.

It is essential that a parent / carer reference group has prescribed authority to challenge reports and proposals that are brought to it by working group representatives or service developers. If partnership working with parents / carers is to be a sustainable reality, then the views of this group need to be seen as an integral part of service developments and not an optional input that can be disregarded.

Parent Partnership plans to provide structured training and support to the members of a parent reference group to enable them to fulfil their role effectively and to enable adequate feedback to the service or strategic theme inviting parent participation. We anticipate that this will take the form of a minimum of three separate training days across each year, induction and support arrangements for new members, ongoing telephone and face-to-face support for individual members, and access to directories of information about available services. Currently this is subject to sufficient funding being achieved to implement, but some parents have received training opportunities.

Core training and support is planned to include:

- Listening and discussion skills for working in a group
- Questioning skills
- Understanding reporting formats
- Awareness of legislative and guidance frameworks around relevant themes
- Understanding the Parent & Family Forum
- Methods for gaining views of parents / carers across the city
- Representing views of others in a balanced and non-judgemental way
- Ways of encouraging parents / carers to convey the voice of their children to inform developments of service
- Understanding the commonalities in experience and identity of all parents
- Gaining mutual support from other parents / carers within reference group

So, for example, for the Children's Integrated Disability Service the parent reference group has an attendance of around 8 -12 parents / carers. This group was initially established as a means of consulting with a representative group of parents of children with a range of additional needs/disabilities about the planning and development of the Children's Integrated Disability Service. The ChIDS Project Board and the work stream leads brought to the reference group proposals for their consideration and were proactive in responding to the recommendations of the group. Members of the group report back to the Parent & Family Forum and can seek wider consultation through the Forum to ensure they are representing a wide range of views within the constituency of parent / carers of children and young people with a disability.

The ChIDS Project Board reformed to reflect the need to respond to the demands of the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme. It was felt that the reference group needed to expand to ensure that all parents of children with additional needs / disabilities had every opportunity to participate in the planning and development of services particularly around the use of the Aiming High grant funding. The group has established terms of reference and a protocol for consultation. We encourage parent representatives who themselves had children with disabilities / additional needs, of varying ages. The spread we would hope to capture over time might include:

- Learning difficulties with severe impact upon age appropriate independence
- Autism and pervasive communication / social interaction disorders
- Profound and multiple learning difficulties
- Physical movement and mobility disabilities
- Sensory impairment and severe perceptual difficulties
- Chronic illness with associated disabilities and palliative care needs
- Down's Syndrome
- Visual disfigurement and associated disabilities

This group meets monthly, early evening / daytime alternately, at the Parent Partnership base at Martinsgate or Catherine St.

The training and support planned for this group, building on the core list above, should additionally include:

- Awareness of legislative and guidance frameworks around disabilities, additional and special educational needs, and the development of Services for Children and Young People
- Awareness of Key worker, Lead Professional and other bridging roles
- Awareness of specialist provision across the city

- Understanding the commonalities in experience and identity of all parents, and differences for parents / carers of children with disabilities
- Developing a parents' ChIDS page on the Parent Partnership web site
- Awareness of Aiming High for Disabled Children core offer
- Access to parent participation training through AHDC grant funding.

Some members of this group have now received parent participation training.

Similarly, for the Parent & Family Support Strategy, we established a parent reference group with nine members, who were selected because of their interest in each of the priority themes identified in that strategy for the development of services. These are themes for parent and family support in the following areas:

- Black and Ethnic Minorities
- Substance misuse
- Families at risk
- Fathers and male carers
- Children with disabilities
- Teenage pregnancy
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans-gendered
- Homelessness
- Domestic abuse

The group has met on many occasions, often at short notice, and considered verbal and written reports from the Leads of Task Groups of professionals who were working on each theme. Task Group leads book a slot in advance to come and talk with the group, and have been asked to send in advance a brief written report, perhaps structured around a bullet pointed list, and any other relevant paperwork they wanted to refer to. These have been opportunities for Task Group Leads to share progress and discuss issues arising, and suggestions for development, with the parents / carers in a relatively informal way. The response from parents / carers on the Reference Group has been included in Task Group interim and final reports. There is still some way to go in developing the procedural framework for this process, and the time pressures for the planning and reporting of the Parent & Family Support Strategy have been intense for everyone involved.

Parent Partnership is currently working to establish and develop a Parent Reference Group for Health Services issues. This has been a growth area during the past year for consultations needing parents to participate in thinking and planning for services to children and families. Membership is yet to be determined.

## **Schools' Governing bodies**

Governor Development in Services for Children and Young People is keen for the voice of parents to play a bigger part in governing body approaches to school improvement. Parent Governors are sometimes not in a position to effectively gather the views of a wide range of parents. Similarly, in looking to set up parent councils in schools, Parent Governors may not often be in a position to give as much time as they would like to do this. Parent Partnership has discussed with Governor Development the role that PSAs can play in enabling parent participation in development of schools and extended services. Again, the consolidation and expansion of the Parent Support Adviser (PSA) project during August 2008 to Spring 2009 has seen a PSA in every school across the City. Built into their role is the expectation that they become Associate Members of Governing Bodies (and thus able to maintain the impartiality specified for their role) and able to act as a channel for gathering the views of parents and enabling two-way exchange of information between parents and governing bodies. This complements their role with the Parent & Family Forum. It is hoped that PSAs will also be in a position to facilitate pilots of Parent Council arrangements for some schools

## **Parent Champions**

The revised legal provisions relating to schools causing concern in England, contained within the Education Act 2006 (Schedule 7), came into effect on April 2007. Every local authority is required to set out how it supports and challenges schools which are causing concern in order that they improve. Plymouth set this out in a draft consultation document in September 2007. This includes guiding principles and values, criteria and processes for categorisation of schools and procedures for monitoring and support. Where Ofsted inspection indicates that a school's effectiveness is inadequate, the local authority must make a statement of action to address the situation, plan support to the school, and set out a path to improvement.

Under the revised statutory guidance, the local authority is now required to include in its statement of action how it will inform parents about the actions planned for the school, how it will gather their views on these actions and how their views will be taken into account by the local authority. This includes the appointment of a 'Parent Champion' when oral feedback from inspectors indicates that Significant Improvement or Special Measures is required; when the local authority is considering issuing a warning notice to a school; and particularly where radical change to the school is being considered.

The role of Parent Champion is defined in the statutory guidance as ‘*a person appointed to ensure good communication with parents and carers and ensure that they are able to influence decisions about the future of the school.*’ The guidance sets out parameters for the role of Parent Champion regarding their background, skills, knowledge, and some suggestions as to their operational performance. Additional information, including job description, case studies and supporting resources, was envisaged when the guidance was drafted but has still not been finalised.

Key indicated aspects of the role of Parent Champion are impartiality; brokerage skills for work with parents, schools and the local authority; and good communication skills. The guidance states that the Parent Champion is a demanding role and that authorities should appoint able people with appropriate skills and experience. To avoid conflict of interests, the guidance says that schools must not be involved in the appointment of its Parent Champion, that the Parent Champion should not normally be employed by the school or the local authority, and suggests they should not be a parent of a child attending that school, nor act as a governor to that school. There is a need for Parent Champions to be readily available so that they can be involved promptly when needed.

In Plymouth, we have developed the role of Parent Support Advisers to be able to take on the demands for the Parent Champion role. Parent Support Advisers work within schools with a clear specification of impartiality in their role, and with shared governance arrangements between the City’s Parent Partnership Service and schools to ensure impartiality and effective support for them. We believe conflict of interests can be safeguarded against. Parent Partnership ensures PSA training and support with inputs from the Governor Services Manager and the Senior Adviser for Collaboration, Networks and Partnerships. This raises PSAs’ awareness of the role and function of Parent Champion should it be required in any of their schools. Should that need arise, Parent Partnership provides intensive support develop that function and any need to involve other PSAs from that locality in the City to help cover increased demand.

The guidance gives some indicators of how Parent Champions will carry out their role; time allocation to schools; length of involvement with a school (which may be 18 months to two years for schools moving out of special measures); and their training and support needs. However, much will depend upon the individual circumstances of a particular school and this new role is open to interpretation and exploration of best practice development. The role of Parent Champion will be agreed in an early discussion between the Parent Champion, his / her manager, Parent Partnership, the LA or proprietor, the governing body or Interim Executive Board, and the school. However, core characteristics for the working practice of the Parent Champion will be to:

1. Understand and demonstrate impartiality in their professional role.
2. Understand and use a wide range of communication skills appropriate to the needs of differing communities of parents, and to the needs of differing professional staff in schools, Services for Children and Young People and other agencies.
3. Maintain an understanding of the education system, school's improvement process, and the local authority's strategies for standards and improvement.
4. Identify, collate and represent the views of parents to school's leadership, the local authority and others as necessary, and provide a brokerage role across their interests.
5. Maintain effective and accessible records. These might include:
  - Type of opportunity: formal / informal meetings, letters, posters, email, telephone, with number of parents attending / responding.
  - Key points raised by parents.
  - How and when points are conveyed to school / Local Authority.
  - How and when responses from school / Local Authority are relayed to parents.
6. Maintain effective links with local authority officers with responsibility for the Support, Monitoring and Intervention Strategy for Schools
7. Following experience during late 2008 and early 2009 with two primary schools falling into a category of concern, Parent Partnership has published a booklet for parents titled *'After the Ofsted inspection: involving parents in school improvement'* that sets out how practical process is implemented. This will be revised with further experience of providing this service.

A Parent Champion is one of an increasing range of professional roles offering information, support, guidance, and participation opportunities to parents. The development of the role needs to be considered to reflect Plymouth's Parent & Family Support Strategy and its approach to parent participation. Parent Partnership Service will ensure that information about the role, links between Parent Champions and other school and locality-based staff working with parents, are shared with the Plymouth Parent & Family Forum and other agency and community networks that engage with parents.

## **Strategic aims**

Parent Partnership is in a position to influence awareness of service providers, service commissioners, and individuals across the workforce for parents and families of the value of effective participation structures and effective partnerships with parents. This is being realised in the training and practice development for voluntary Parent Partners, for PSAs and in training inputs to staff in a variety of settings. Plymouth Parent Partnership will seek to improve its delivery of information and training to its multi-disciplinary, multi-agency and multi-sectorial service users to further promote the importance of parent participation.

## **A parent's eye view of change and development?**

Parents are often well aware of the balance between their children's needs and the realities of children's service provisions. If they are being asked to give up their time to be involved in the strategic planning and development of services, there is a need to ensure that they can achieve outcomes that are positive and constructive for them. This goes beyond issues of expenses or remuneration. From our experience of working with parents in this way we suggest positive outcomes for parents can include:

- Increased opportunities for their own children
- Improved services for their own and for other children
- Being valued for their experience of parenting
- Being respected as an important contributor to improving services
- Being valued as an important contributor to a group process
- Helping others to understand the needs of their community
- Being able to represent a group interest

It is important that everybody involved with parent participation ensures that such outcomes are realised for the parents involved.

## **Inviting parent participation: Procedures, practical arrangements and development of policy**

This strategy is realised in the many practical actions that Parent Partnership carries out to facilitate and support parent participation. The service is able to advise on parental participation for any development of services to parents and families. For an informal discussion contact Plymouth Parent Partnership 01752 258933 or email [parent.forum@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:parent.forum@plymouth.gov.uk) . The following list outlines some of the practical arrangements in place, or being targeted for development by the service:

### ***Gaining parents' views about a particular issue***

You can ask to attend the Parent & Family Forum and can put questions in the "What do service providers / commissioners want to know " section of the Forum meeting. To allow a quick response it is always best to email questions in advance. Often, people ask to give a presentation to the Forum and then for Parent Partnership to collate and feedback responses to questions raised. The Forum timetable is often very busy and it is advisable to book a presentation slot well in advance. You can also ask Parent Partnership to carry out telephone, postal, or interview based surveys of views, or to explore and feedback the views of parent interest and support groups. Written reports of parents' views can be provided.\*

### ***Parent groups wishing to be represented at the Parent & Family Forum***

Representatives from parent groups, community groups and interest groups with a focus on parents and family life can join the Forum. A Forum steering group meets on a regular basis and considers all requests for membership to ensure that a diverse range of parents' views are represented. Parent Partnership has a designated member of staff who has time allocated to facilitate the Forum's operation.

### ***Getting information out to parents across the city or questions to particular parent interest groups***

Information about any ongoing service to parents can be included in our directory of services. This is published in a paper version and also available as a searchable e-version on our website [www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk](http://www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk) .

The website also gives details of events of interest to parents and families in the different localities of the city. Messages for the interest of parents can be posted on the news section. Note that messages posted on the website will not appear until they have been viewed by the website moderator.

Information can also be given out at the Parent & Family Forum, through the network of school-based Parent Support Advisors and volunteer Parent Partners, and when appropriate through targeted mail shots.\*

The service publishes a range of information leaflets for parents. It may be able to add to these in response to requests for specific topics. All information leaflets can be downloaded from the Parent Partnership website.\*

### ***Identifying parent representatives to join a working party, an interview panel, or setting up a focus group***

There is a register of parents with particular interests maintained by the Parent & Family Forum. If you would like a parent representative who can link back via the Forum to wider constituencies of parents, contact the service and discuss your needs. Similarly, the service can call together a focus group of parents to discuss any theme in the development of services to parents, children and families. Service planners and those carrying out research have found such focus groups helpful for an initial sampling of views. The views of parents can be useful starting points for thinking about how best to gain the views of children and young people, for example the service has enabled contact with a focus group for this purpose for a consultant to the Integrated Disability Service.

### ***Structured surveys of individual parent views***

The service does carry out postal, telephone and interview-based surveys of parents views\*. Examples have included research into the views of foster and home carers, into views of the development of the PSA project, into the development of neighbourhood information services, and general interviews in the city centre about what services parents want.

*\* Please note that there may have to be a charge for large pieces of work*

### ***Policy – changing the ways that services / professionals think***

The service is committed to increasing awareness by professionals in all agency settings of the advantages of parent participation. We plan to promote such awareness by:

- Publishing a brief guide for schools and other agencies in Plymouth to suggest ideas for best practice in involving parents at various levels
- Offering training sessions for professionals on good practice in working in partnership with parents and enabling parent participation
- Encouraging the development of recruitment policies for staff in all services to adults, children and families that call for awareness of the value of parent participation

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*Dr. Peter Jones, revised April 2009*

# APPENDIX D

## Casework 6 Monthly evaluation form



Plymouth Parent Partnership  
Martins Gate  
Breton Side  
Plymouth  
PL4 0AT  
Tel No: 01752 258933  
Email: parent.partnership@plymouth.gov.uk  
www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk

Dear

Hello, you have used the Parent Partnership during the last 6 months. This is just to ask you to tell us about the service you received from us: -

What did we do well? *(Please tick one or more boxes)*



Listening



Understanding



Talking things through



Finding ways forward

How useful was the information we gave you? *(Please circle)*

Not very useful



Useful



Very useful



Excellent



Do you feel we were \*impartial? *(Please circle)*

No



Yes



Very



Always



\*Impartial as in not taking sides, keeping a balanced view and making sure each viewpoint was heard and understood.

*Please turn over*

What could we have done better?

Would you like to add any other comments at all? We are always looking at ways to improve our service.

It helps us if we can contact some of our service users to talk about ways we might change how we deliver our service. If you are willing for us to contact you, please provide your details below.

Name .....

Phone number .....

Email .....

There is a stamped addressed envelope enclosed for your reply.

Thank you for your help.



Manager, Plymouth Parent Partnership



## **APPENDIX E**

### **Supplement to Plymouth City Council induction policy**

# Induction standards supplement

## **Plymouth Parent Partnership**

Revised December 2008



## Induction Standards Supplement: Plymouth Parent Partnership (PPP)

Allocated line managers hold responsibility for completion of the induction programme for new employees, but may delegate particular areas to other team members.

<b>Induction Checklist</b>	Inductee sign	Manager sign	Date Complete
<p>In addition to the information provided in the Induction Standards Booklet – ‘Our people making the difference’, the following elements need to be included in the induction programme for new employees to Plymouth Parent Partnership (PPP).</p> <p><b>Day 1</b></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline PPP Vision, Service Description and staffing structure and provide copies.</li> <li>• Outline role and expectations of new employee including reference to PPP Code of Conduct and Dress Code.</li> <li>• Outline the seven units of the Children’s Workforce Development Council Social Care Induction Standards.</li> <li>• Show location of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Psychology Service Policies, Procedures and Handbook.</li> <li>2. PPP Policies, Procedures and Service Handbook.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Provide awareness of S Drive, EMS, recording systems and document administration protocol.</li> <li>• Provide awareness of PPP website and Information materials.</li> <li>• Provide information on the working pattern operated within PPP, Time off in Lieu (TOIL) and local flexible working arrangements.</li> <li>• Provide information on absence reporting and procedures.</li> <li>• Check business insurance for drivers and provide information on car parking arrangements and claiming travel expenses.</li> <li>• Provide a copy of the PPP Policy for team working.</li> <li>• Provide a copy of PPP Work Place protocol.</li> </ul>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline PPP Health and Safety, Fire and Risk Assessment Policies and Procedures.</li> <li>• Outline key contacts (Who's Who) and people/places that the new employee should meet/visit over the next month.</li> <li>• Provide an essential reading list.</li> <li>• Set an Induction task relevant to the new employee's role.</li> <li>• Set a date to meet with new employee in the following week to review the induction task set above.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>First Fortnight</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange first 1-1 session and provide details of the 1-1 process, appraisal and personal development plans.</li> <li>• Arrange shadowing opportunities to develop awareness of roles and responsibilities of other PPP team members.</li> <li>• Introduce new employees as to how to respond to level 1 parent/carer enquiries and provide an overview of the process and forms uses in response to level 2 and 3 queries.</li> <li>• Provide awareness session and key materials for strategies, plans, policies and procedures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plymouth Parent and Family Support Strategy.</li> <li>2. Parent Participation Strategy.</li> <li>3. PPP Development Plan.</li> <li>4. Impartiality Policy.</li> <li>5. Confidentiality Policy</li> <li>6. PPP's 'Arm's Length' Status.</li> <li>7. PSA Project.</li> <li>8. List of schools</li> <li>9. SEN/Statutory role overview.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Arrange a session to check out understanding of policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Conduct learning needs analysis and develop a strategy and opportunities to meet new employee's needs (including reference to the Children's Workforce Development Induction Standards where appropriate).</li> <li>• Ask the new employee to evaluate their induction using the PPP Induction Evaluation Form.</li> </ul>			

## **Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Induction Standards**

The Standards were introduced in September 2006 to provide a benchmark for the induction of all children's social care workers. They are closely linked to those in adult services from Skills for Care.

There are seven elements in the CWDC Induction Standards:

1. understand the principles and values essential for working with children and young people;
2. understand your role as a worker;
3. understand health and safety requirements;
4. know how to communicate effectively;
5. understand the development of children and young people;
6. safeguard children (keep them safe from harm);
7. develop yourself.

Effective induction of employees is recognised as a vital component of providing safe care and of establishing a competent workforce.

Your line manager will discuss the Induction Standards with you as part of your Induction programme and provide you with the necessary documentation.

## **Performance Management**

Performance management is part of our everyday business in Plymouth Parent Partnership and is a way of ensuring that every member of staff in the service is doing a good job.

Performance management involves:

- Monitoring performance against standards, indicators and targets
- Identifying opportunities for improvement
- Delivering change

Performance management asks questions like:

- How good are outcomes for parents and carers?
- Are we as a service on track with our plans?
- Are individual workers fulfilling their duties?
- Do we learn from good and bad performance?

### **How does Plymouth Parent Partnership manage performance?**

The service to be delivered by Plymouth Parent Partnership will be determined by a portfolio of planned targets and standards that reflect the work commissioned from the service in any particular year. This will incorporate all of the DCSF minimum standards of quality for Parent Partnership Services and the voluntary South West Regional Parent Partnership Network (SWRPPN) standards. These will also incorporate the DCSF exemplification guidance for best practice. Individual contracted work will carry its own expectations and targets as set out in contracts for service.

The Plymouth Parent Partnership Management Team meets regularly to plan, monitor and evaluate the work of the service. They monitor quality through audit of available data and via regular surveys of parents, schools and other stakeholders. Both tools are extremely useful for discussing performance issues in team meetings or in 1-1 sessions and helps maintain quality standards of practice.



## Appendix F ( i )

### **Plymouth Parent Partnership: Code of Conduct for Staff (including Volunteers)**

**December 2008**

Plymouth Parent Partnership has developed the following Code of Conduct for Staff (and Volunteers). The code is intended to assure parents and members of the public that Plymouth Parent Partnership strives to achieve high standards in the service they provide.

Plymouth Parent Partnership **will**:

- Protect the rights and promote the interests of parents and carers at every opportunity in all the work we do.
- Strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of parents and carers by adhering to the highest professional standards.
- Provide an information, advice and support service to parents and carers that demonstrates independence, impartiality and neutrality.
- Give parents and carers all the information and support they need to make informed decisions and act as 'self-advocates' where possible.
- Seek to provide information and support by means that parents and carers can access, for example, in alternative forms and languages.
- Promote a culture of partnership with parents, carers, schools and the Local Authority and other agencies within the Plymouth Children and Young People's Trust, while maintaining our role as an 'arms length' service of the City Council.
- Be accountable for what we do and take responsibility for maintaining and improving our knowledge and skills at all times.
- Recognise the recommendations for best practice set out in the Services for Children and Young People's 'Working Towards Investors in People' documentation.

Plymouth Parent Partnership **will not**:

- Make decisions for parents and carers.
- Disclose our records to, or discuss the case with, a third party outside Plymouth Parent Partnership without the consent of the parent or carer, except where a child is at risk or there is a risk to public safety.
- Disclose sensitive information regarding the service e.g. funding or anything deemed 'confidential'.

### **Plymouth Parent Partnership Professional Standards**

Every member of Plymouth Parent Partnership has a vital part to play in the consistent delivery of quality, cost effective and customer focused services.

Managers **will**:

- Respond appropriately to workers who seek assistance because they do not feel able or adequately prepared to carry out aspects of their work

Staff **will**:

- Follow the policies, procedures and protocols in operation within the service.
- Work positively and flexibly with others, avoiding conflictual models of practice to accomplish the goals of the service.
- Effectively plan and manage their time and workload.
- Effectively communicate in all written and verbal communications.
- Routinely deliver quality work within agreed timelines.
- Provide excellent Customer Service which treats parents and carers as a top priority.
- Positively embrace changes to practice resulting from new legislation and initiatives
- Adapt their practice to ensure Key Performance Indicator targets are focussed upon and achieved where possible.
- Act at all times as an ambassador for Plymouth Parent Partnership and the Local Authority.

## APPENDIX G

### Plymouth Parent Partnership

#### Plymouth Community Psychological Services Policies

Parent Partnership is one of the Plymouth Community Psychological Services within the Department of Services for Children and Young People of Plymouth City Council. Others are the Plymouth Psychology Service Educational Psychologists, the Plymouth Inclusive Education Transition Team, the Behaviour Support Team and the Multi-Agency Support Team for the Excellence Cluster.

The overall aims of the Community Psychological Services are:

- to apply psychology to promote the well being, development and learning of all children and young people and to support their families, schools and other settings
- to use psychology to promote an understanding of equal opportunities enabling all children and young people to actively participate in plans and decision making which directly affect their lives
- to apply psychology to organisations in order to develop optimal services and provision for children and young people
- to use a research oriented approach to all practice

Plymouth Parent Partnership, managed by a Senior Educational Psychologist pursues these aims, particularly the first of them.

The Psychology Service maintains a Service Policy Handbook that includes the following policies with specific reference to educational Psychologists:

- Anti Discriminatory Practice, Equal Opportunities and Anti-Oppressive Practice – The policy sets out how the Psychology Service follows current legislation relating to anti discriminatory, anti oppressive practice and equal opportunities.
- Appeals to the Special Educational Needs Disability Tribunal: SENDIST – The policy describes the process of special educational needs disability tribunal. The role of the Educational Psychologist will remain as a witness for the Local Authority.
- Assessment – The policy sets out an ethos for assessment that aims to create a positive change for the child/young person by linking it with interventions. It outlines what information could be included within the assessment.

- Critical Incidents – The policy defines the term ‘critical incident’ and gives practice guidelines. The policy states that the service will provide rapid response to the needs of the children, young people and adults in schools.
- Inclusion of children in their chronological year groups – The policy refers to research regarding children within their chronological year as well as effective interventions.
- Induction for Educational Psychologists – The policy describes the induction programme for EPs including the role of the new EP, the role of the team, and the role of the induction programme supervisor.
- Planning meetings – The policy describes the process of a planning meeting, with reference to who should attend, the purpose and the agenda.
- Professional Safety, home visiting, working with children in schools – The policy considers personal safety, in a variety of working environments / settings including home visits.
- Role of Educational Psychologist in independent schools and early year settings – The policy gives guidelines about when the Plymouth Psychology Service will provide a service to independent schools and how to carry out statutory assessments.
- Shadowing – Providing the opportunity to observe other colleagues as a form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- Statutory Assessments review and associated statutory work - The policy refers to the Educational Psychologists involvement with statutory assessments and annual reviews (1996 Education Act).
- Supervision – The policy refers to professionals reflecting upon their practice and identifying solutions or possible improvements to professional issues. The policy states that formal supervision should be regular and recorded.

Those working in Parent Partnership will have due regard to these policies, but, if not employed as Educational Psychologists are not necessarily required to follow policy guidance specific to that role. The Principal Educational Psychologist for the Plymouth Community Psychological Services recognises the status of Parent Partnership as an arm’s length service of the City Council and respects its need to have separate policies, particularly in areas such as impartiality and confidentiality.

## **Parent queries to Parent Partnership regarding understanding advice from an Educational Psychologist**

It is possible that practitioners in Parent Partnership will be contacted by parents<sup>1</sup> / carers who might feel uncertain about the content, quality, or outcomes of their contact with an Educational Psychologist in the Community Psychological Services. The following protocol has been agreed with the Principal Educational Psychologist for Parent Partnership staff to follow:

The points are sequential but all steps may not be necessary:

1. Read through any documentation from the Educational Psychologist with the parent and ensure there are no barriers to understanding arising from any difficulties with literacy the parent may experience.
2. Encourage the parent to contact their child's school or other setting and to ask the SENCO or senior member of staff to explain any Educational Psychologist's documentation or meetings that have been held with the Educational Psychologist in the school, and their understanding of any implications for work with the child.
3. Encourage the parent to contact the Educational Psychologist directly and ask for a meeting to clarify understanding of what he / she is communicating.
4. If the parent does not feel confident to make direct contact, to offer to contact the Mannamead Centre or other location on their behalf and, with the parent's permission, to ask the Educational Psychologist to contact the parent.
5. If the parent requests it, to consider a member of Parent Partnership staff, or a PSA, or a Parent Partner (IPS) to support the parent at the meeting with an Educational Psychologist.
6. If the Educational Psychologist is not able to talk with the parent by telephone, or to arrange a meeting within a reasonable time period of say three weeks, then for Parent Partnership to offer the parent a brief meeting with the Senior Educational Psychologist who manages Parent Partnership to explain what the reports / documentation from the Educational Psychologist means. Before meeting the parent the Senior Educational Psychologist would talk briefly with the Educational Psychologist involved.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document the word 'parent' is taken to include all those with a direct responsibility for parenting. These might be birth parents, step-parents, grandparents or other members of the family, foster or adoptive parents or other adult caregivers.

7. The Senior Educational Psychologist for Parent Partnership would feed back to the Educational Psychologist their understanding of any barriers to understanding raised by the parent, for example in written formats or aspects of discussions that parents had not understood or felt comfortable with, to help build our awareness of helpful practice in communications with parents.
8. Where a difference or difficulty is not resolved the Senior Educational Psychologist for Parent Partnership would advise the Principal Educational Psychologist in order to identify a structured way forward.

## **Reference**

Plymouth City Council. (n.d.). *Psychological help to promote the development of young people*. Retrieved June 28th, 2008, from: <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/psychology>

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Plymouth Parent Partnership**

#### **Quality Standards**

More information about the standards referred to in this service description can be found as follows:-

##### **DCSF exemplifications**

'Parent Partnership Services – increasing parental confidence: Exemplification of minimum standards for PPS and Local Authorities, DCSF, 2007.

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications) - search using ref.00959-2007DOM-EN

##### **SWRPPN revised regional standards 2007**

[www.sw-special.co.uk](http://www.sw-special.co.uk) - look on documents page, parent partnerships.

##### **National benchmarking**

[www.parentpartnership.org.uk/useful\\_documents.aspx](http://www.parentpartnership.org.uk/useful_documents.aspx)

This site also holds the Code of Practice 2001 (from which the minimum standards originate) and several other related documents.

##### **Evidence-based parenting programmes**

Current programmes being coordinated include 'The Incredible Years (IY)', the 'Strengthening Families Programme (SFP)', and 'Supporting Parents on Kids Education (SPOKES)'

Minimum acceptable standards for delivery of IY programmes can be found at:

[http://www.incredibleyears.com/IA/iy\\_training-dessemination-model.pdf](http://www.incredibleyears.com/IA/iy_training-dessemination-model.pdf)

See also the following sections in the Leaders Guide of "The Incredible Years: Parents and Children Series, Pre-school Version of BASIC", 2008 edition:

pp. 22-23, 37-40, 43-48

For further details on SFP 10-14 UK programme see

<http://www.mystrongfamily.org>

SPOKES is part of research trial and as yet has no established accreditation and delivery standards.

### **Parent Support Advisers**

*Parent Support adviser Project, Resource Kit 1, TDA, 2007*

*Parent Support adviser Project, Resource Kit 2, TDA, 2008*

*Parent Support advisers: Practice and impact –TDA, spring 2009*

These documents can be found at

[www.tda.gov.uk/about/publicationslisting/list.aspx](http://www.tda.gov.uk/about/publicationslisting/list.aspx)

### **Plymouth's Parent and family Support Strategy**

Plymouth Parent Partnership has contributed to and maintains commitment to the underlying principles for this strategy. The full principles are set out below:

#### **Plymouth Parent and Family Support Strategy 2007: Underlying Principles**

**We believe there are some principles which all services for parents and families in Plymouth should adopt. They provide a minimum standard of quality to be expected. These are:**

1. The importance of parenting in shaping children's lives needs to be openly and clearly valued and promoted. Information, advice, education and support for parenting should reflect and promote the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These can be found at <http://www.unicef.org/crc>
2. Parents need to be openly and clearly valued and respected. Their experiences and knowledge should be taken seriously.

3. Services should recognise and respect a diversity of cultural traditions and styles of parenting whilst clearly prioritising children's welfare. Programme content and style of delivery should actively challenge stereotypes of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, (dis)ability, cultural and religious belief.
4. There is no blueprint for what constitutes best parenting, or the best ways of helping parents make sense of it. Those providing information, education and support to parents should acknowledge this openly in their work and state:
  - Their own underlying values;
  - Why they are doing what they do;
  - Their expectations on the roles of service users;
  - What they hope will be the outcomes;
  - To whom they are accountable;
  - What will be evaluated in their work;
  - Their confidentiality policy
5. Parenting is influenced by factors such as income, housing, shops, other facilities, and accessible support services etc. These factors need to be openly recognised when working with parents and, where appropriate, support given to parents and others to initiate positive change. Strategic thinking about the development of services should recognise the impact of the city's built and natural environments upon parent and family life and integrate planning with ecological awareness and approaches to regeneration.
6. Services should be developed to reflect the needs that parents, children and families identify. There should be carefully structured and supportive participation opportunities offered to all parents, especially those whose voices are seldom heard. The Plymouth Parent and Family forum can act to enable two way exchange of information between parent representatives, service commissioners and services providers, and to enable the voice of parents to inform the planning, development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services at locality and city-wide levels.
7. Parenting by definition includes parents and children. Services should be planned and developed to be accessible, affordable, welcoming and non-stigmatising to all family members. This includes:
  - recognition of the particular needs of any target user group;
  - service locations which recognize parents' likely means of transport to them;
  - settings which recognize and seek to address any physical, sensory and learning difficulties faced by parents and children;
  - styles of communication and service delivery which are clear, friendly, and easy to understand by parents;
  - the use of translation, interpretation or additional aids to communication;

- facilities for children and childcare options;
  - recognition of the support needs of fathers; coherent linking, co-operation and continuity between services as seen from a parent's point of view;
  - open and effective signposting to other services;
  - recognition of the value of other services or professional disciplines.
8. The behaviour and attitude of some parents may at times have adverse effects upon others taking part. Wherever possible this should be addressed in ways that maximise opportunities for continued inclusion, reintroduction with support, or help with routes to an alternative service.
  9. Parents should be empowered to make choices, take decision, and maintain control of their lives and their parenting. Only in extreme situations where there are statutory interventions concerning the welfare of children, or young people should such control be negotiable. All reasonable efforts should be made to help parents to regain that control as soon as is possible unless it is clearly against the best interests of the child.
  10. Parents may wish to explore further opportunities for their own learning, personal development, or vocational training. Effective parenting services should provide guidance and support towards the wide range of local and national opportunities.
  11. Those providing information, advice, education and support to parents should be recruited for their positive attitudes towards parents and families and their skills for working with them. Where necessary, qualifications should meet the requirements of any national occupational standards, membership of professional bodies and local agreements. Such qualifications should be available to service users upon request. In line with the Every Child Matters agenda for workforce reform we will work to raise the status of those working with children, parents, and families.
  12. The commissioning of services will have a clear rationale and seek accountability from service providers. The use of parenting programmes will be expected to be underpinned by a significant evidence base for known impact and/or supported by meaningful evaluation research. There will be scope for innovative and creative parenting support projects.
  13. Services will be effectively managed and use sound information systems that accurately record and monitor activity and outcomes.
  14. Adult focused services in all sectors, particularly employment, housing, retailing, and public support services, should recognise that many adults are parents and adopt parent-friendly policies, which actively help parenting in Plymouth.

*These principles reflect the starting points identified in the HAZ principles for parent and family services in 2001 and in subsequent consultations through to 2007 (after the Plymouth HAZ principles 2001).*