

## **Notes from the meeting of The Plymouth Parent & Family Forum**

### **At Plym View Primary School**

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2005**

**5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

Peter Jones opened the meeting and referred to the conference held in July "Towards a Parent & Family Forum" and the background to the inspiration of the development of a forum. Parents, Parent Partnership volunteers and staff and service providers were invited to give a brief outline of their role and responsibilities and their hopes and aspirations for the future of the Forum. Peter emphasised that the structure / function of the Forum has not been decided. It would need to be decided by the Forum itself. The Parent Partnership Service role would be to offer to support the process by facilitating meetings, take and distribute notes, manage the administration and gather further information at the request of the Forum.

#### **Edith Bayley – Parent Partner – Volunteer for The Parent Partnership Service**

Has worked as a City wide Parent Partner volunteer for several years and has two children with very differing needs.

Hopes and aspirations for the future of the forum:

- Parents are in a good position to help inform service providers about what services are needed / used and what services are not needed
- Help providers understand the differences in need, to enable service users to make informed choices about appropriate service provision
- People working in services move on and there are staff changes but parents remain the same. The experience and knowledge that parents have about service provision can be a positive link and provide continuity for information exchanging
- Recognise that there are finite resources and work with service providers to spend money more effectively
- Avoid duplication of services and provide what is needed
- Emphasised positive benefits of working together

#### **Maggie Carter - Head of Learner Support Service**

Management responsibility for a range of services within the Learner Support branch of the Department for Lifelong Learning which provides services to the more vulnerable groups and includes transport, Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, Early Years, Special Educational Needs, Educational Psychology,

Sensory Impairment team, Education Other Than at School Service and Looked after Children. This does not include responsibility for schools, as they are responsible for themselves via their governing bodies.

Hopes and aspirations for the future of the Forum:

- To find ways of ensuring the voice of parents are heard with regard to the development of Children's Services
- To establish mechanisms for planning services as a whole and not just specific areas of need
- The Forum will be a representative voice for all parents with differing needs across the City
- To provide a broad view – not a token representation
- To provide a genuine group for all parents

### **Paul O'Sullivan - Director of Health Services for Children & Families**

Responsible for Health Visiting, Nursing, Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service and Specialist services, amongst others.

Hopes and aspirations for the future of the Forum:

- To provide services for children young people and parents to enable them to make the choices about their own care package
- To establish ways of using the experiences of previous service users to inform services in the future
- To further develop services that already exist e.g. speech & language within the existing resources
- To provide opportunities for clinical managers to be involved in dialogue with those who have used the service
- Health working in conjunction with education
- Important not to forget service users past experiences

### **Carol Henwood -Extended Schools Coordinator**

Main responsibility for coordinating the extended schools agenda to provide a whole menu of different opportunities and activities throughout the day, including: increased family learning support, extra curricular activities, quick and easy referral to specialist services and childcare. Not all schools will be involved and with some families it is more appropriate to access a service away from the school. The Co-ordinator will be working with colleagues in each neighbourhood to identify what services are needed.

Hopes and aspirations for the future of the Forum:

- To give parents the opportunity to have a say about what they want for their children in the way of services in their neighbourhoods
- To have the opportunity to say what services already exist that work well

- Workshops are being held in some neighbourhoods across the City and people are invited to attend

**Richenda Broad – Development Officer for Children & Young People’s Strategic Partnership**

Not a direct service provider but working with the strategic partnership to build links to integrated children’s services with parent participation.

Hopes and aspirations for the future of the Forum:

- This is a start for parents as participators in the process of thinking how services are planned and delivered
- That service providers are guided by parent’s views
- The Forum will provide an opportunity for a two way process

**Fiona Fleming – Joint Commissioning Officer for Local Authority Children’s Services**

Responsible for purchasing services, for example from the voluntary sector, using public money.

Money should be spent on services that people want at a good price – ensuring value for money.

Hopes and aspirations for the future of the Forum:

- Services are tailored to meet the personal perspective e.g. fostering, family support services and respite
- Parent’s views are considered in the tendering for services process
- Vital that parents views are heard to enable purchasers to buy in appropriate services

**Bob Burton –School based Parent Partner**

Parents may have difficulty attending the forum meetings. Funding should be available to reimburse / pay parents.

**Jo Bussell – School based Parent Partner**

The Forum is truly an opportunity to help parents feel listened to and responded to, excited about the new beginning.

**Edith Bayley – City wide Parent Partner**

There may be different people attending forum meetings and it is important that parents consult and bring to the Forum the views of those parents that they represent.

**Denise Fitzpatrick – Chair Parent Partnership Development Group**

There is a need for developing services and a forum for young carers.

## **Discussion Groups**

The following notes are the combined feedback from all three groups.

### **Timing of meetings**

- Later in the evening 6 p.m.-8 p.m. or 7p.m.-9 p.m.
- Possibly 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.-need time to pick up children from after school club
- 5.30 p.m. -7.30 p.m. - priority to feed children before bedtime
- Needs flexibility to meet needs of all parents-perhaps two sessions, one in day and one in evening.
- Stagger times
- During the school day so that parents would not have child-care issues and could coincide with either dropping off or picking up time.
- A slot later in the evening would allow parents who work to come
- Times could be alternated

### **Frequency of meetings**

- Termly - with discussion / focus groups / sub groups in between.
- Bi-monthly but exclude August
- Every three months
- Meet more often in development stages – 3 months
- May be a problem if too frequent
- Meeting everyone's needs is difficult but this is the challenge - to think differently in the changes with services such as extended schools.
- Depends on how the Forum evolves and what is brought to it
- Subgroup to meet more frequently to come up with a structure for the Forum.

### **Venue for meetings**

- Offer of Building One Derriford Business Park– free parking
- Ask about rooms at University of Plymouth or Plymouth College of Art & Design
- Other schools / different localities / within academic councils
- Identify and confirm use of possible venues and provide a list.
- Need to give careful consideration to transport and access to bus routes
- Rolling venue
- Keep venues on bus routes
- Make the Forum mobile and take it to places where parents already meet, e.g. a parent group that is already running for parents at a community centre.

### **Costs / budget for Forum**

- Suggestion that the Forum may be able to attract sponsorship funding from industry or commercial businesses.
- Going for charitable status may give access to more funding avenues.
- Identifying high profile Patrons for the Forum may attract funding
- Help with transport costs
- Help with childcare

- Car share -put names on website of those willing to give lifts
- Parents should be reimbursed for 'out of pocket' expenses.
- Incentives such as cheese and wine, bingo, etc. may encourage parents to attend.

### **Key issues suggested for discussion at next meeting**

- Post 16 provision / leisure / neighbourhood activities
- Engagement of parents / carers from black and ethnic minority groups particularly in strategic planning
- Raising awareness of post-natal depression – dispel fears – how do parents / families access support?
- Speech and language provision and restructuring of service provision
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service strategy - for future discussion
- Pre-information sharing
- Knowledge of access to services-referral routes / times etc
- Young carers
- What is available now? What is used / helpful / what is not so?
- Produce newsletter & publish on website
- How to get other parents involved.
- Outlining a structure for how the Forum is run
- Family tree of service provision in relation to Children's Services

### **Other comments**

- Forum should be Chaired by a parent-rotating chair
- PPS to facilitate - ensure everyone is involved
- Networking / exchanging information
- Issues raised must be relevant to parents
- Raising the profile of the Forum is essential if it is to give voice to parents across the City.
- Important that 'hard to reach' parents have access to Forum so their voice gets heard
- Surgery type sessions of Forum so that parents could ask professionals questions on key issues.
- Invite local Councillors to participate (some parents may find this intimidating)
- Parents / carers involved as partners.
- How can we ensure participation of parents, know they are going to be heard and their views acted upon?
- Important there is a representation of broader views, sharing information and bringing it back.
- Reassuring parents - government agenda and part of inspection for Children's Services will be about how services are listening and responding to the views of children, young people and parents.
- How do parent representatives on the Forum find out the views of other parents?

**Agreement following feedback from groups:**

**Frequency of meetings – 2 monthly**

**Date of next meeting – Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2006**

**Time of next meeting: 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

**Suggested venues - Building One, Derriford Business Park  
Chaucer Primary**