

SOCIAL & CARING SERVICES, EDUCATION & THE ARTS AND THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

PARENT CARERS PLANNING GROUP

Notes of meeting held on Wednesday 14th July 2004, 10.30am at Pulborough Village Hall

Present:

Sue Aldred	The Camelia Botnar Children's Centre
Julie Beckley	Parent
Anna Cowie	Parent
Beverley Crowter	Occupational Therapist, Wheelchair Service
Bernadette Daly	MENCAP
Barbara Dolan	Parent
Annabel Forbes	Community Fieldworker, SCOPE
Lindsay Haines	Parent Partnership Officer, Education
Lynette Humphry	Parent
Ruth Marsden	Occupational Therapist, Child Disability Team (S)
Kate Mulligan	Parent
Debbie Newson	Wellspring West Sussex
Jon Philpot (Chair)	Assistant Group Manager, Child Disability, S & CS
Nigel Scott-Dickeson	Springboard Project
Glenys Storr	Occupational Therapist, Child Disability Team (N)
Hilary Vaughan	Educational Inclusion Manager, Education
Shelley Woodage	Parent

Apologies:

Louise Williamson	VSLDO, S & CS
Margo McIntosh	Group Manager, Specialist Services (Children), S & CS
Cathy Caine	Service manager, Child Disability, S & CS
Rosemary Diggins	Worthing, Adur and Arun PCT

Jon Philpot explained that Pat Arculus, County Councillor had become West Sussex County Council Cabinet Member for Education and the Arts. This change of role meant she would be unable to attend future meetings of the Parent Carer Planning Group and was actively seeking a replacement elected member. In Pat Arculus' absence Jon Philpot agreed to chair the meeting and welcomed existing and new members.

1. Minutes and Matters Arising from the meeting held on 28.04.04

Learning & Skills Council & Transition

page 1, para 1

It was clarified that LEA funding of a placement for a young person to remain in a special school with a statement comes via the LSC.

page 1, para 5

Whilst up to £19,000 is available per young person from the LSC to support their needs in an FE College, additional money is available but the increased expenditure would need to be rationalised.

page 2, para 3

JP was pleased to report a parent representative had been identified. JP to check whether a Carers Liaison representative has been identified to join PCPG.

LH brought to the group's attention newsletter articles from the LEA's Learning Support Team about the work being undertaken around transition and at other key times in a child's life, i.e. entry into school and changes of school, particularly at secondary age level.

2. Daring Dozen

Tribunals and Mediation

NSD strongly supported the role of mediation being promoted in resolving disagreements and disputes.

LH stated that mediation has to be a voluntary process which both parties enter in to willingly. The SEN team were taking positive steps to link more pro-actively with parents of children undergoing statutory assessment to promote dialogue and identify possible misunderstandings or disagreements at the earliest opportunity. LH confirmed that parents views are sought and recorded on the completion of a statutory assessment to see what further improvements in the process can be made. It was agreed that liaison and discussion with schools was also crucial.

Mediation is available to parents and schools who are in disagreement over an SEN issue and it was felt that it would be helpful for this to be promoted, possibly through schools complaint procedures or in SEN policy. LH undertook to consult with colleagues in education about how mediation can best be promoted within schools.

LH further explained that alongside the leaflet produced by Global Mediation the guidance notes and letters produced by the LEA for children undergoing statutory assessment also explained the right to mediation. The guidance pack was currently being reviewed (N.B. minor amendments, only to the guidance required and the pack would not be the subject of consultation).

Playschemes

There was unanimous support from the parents at the meeting for an increase in playschemes and respite opportunities. The impression gained is that a family has to be in crisis to obtain respite. However a family with a disabled child need early support to prevent crisis. The Camelia Botnar Centre had been approached by parents of pre-school children specifically seeking provision for their children during the summer holidays. It was felt that the issue needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The view was expressed that provision offered through the Special School sector should not follow the normal school terms, but that the facilities within the school should be available for longer periods of time. Also, it was felt that more money should be directed into respite provision.

JP said that, locally, a report was currently being prepared for consideration by the County Council but that this was also a national issue.

The WSCC child disability strategy can be found on the Wellspring website www.wellspringwestsussex.org.uk

Respite was identified as the main item for discussion at the next meeting of the PCPG in October.

3. Access and Educational Inclusion – Hilary Vaughan, Educational Inclusion Manager

Hilary explained that the SEN and Disability Act 2001 placed a duty on schools and LEAs to respond to the new legal requirements for improved access to education for learners with disabilities. These duties came into force in September 2002.

The LEA has a responsibility towards improving accessibility to schools and the curriculum and has produced a 3 year Accessibility Strategy which covers access to buildings, curriculum and written information.

Every school is also required to have an accessibility plan and to make year on year steps towards improvements in making schools more accessible to learners with disabilities.

All new schools will be built with an accessibility brief in mind and the LEA has some funding to improve accessibility in current schools. The funding is enabling 13 schools within the County to be specifically modified for physical accessibility. The 13 schools are a mixture of primary and secondary schools in the same areas to allow continuity of education.

In response to a question about the importance of staff attitude, HV explained that the LEA is working with schools to promote educational inclusion. This could mean that staff may need to undertake training and duties possibly not previously seen as their role in order to enable pupils to be included within the school community. It was felt that parents' confidence in local provision can often be influenced by the response received from the school. It was recognised that staff need training before a pupil arrives. HV explained that future Ofsted inspections will be looking at inclusion.

Concern was expressed at the shortfall in speech and language therapy provision. HV explained that, although a health service provision, the LEA do also support specific SaLT provision financially.

Money is available to schools to work collaboratively and HV explained that some groups were using this money to buy in SaLT to train up school staff.

HV confirmed that changes to delegation of SEN funding to schools should not affect the way in which a child is supported.

Equipment – Glenys Storr, Ruth Marsden and Beverley Crowter, Occupational Therapists

GS explained the role of the OT's in the Child Disability Teams, North and South was to undertake needs led assessment and to promote maximum independence. OT's can assist in the home with advice on equipment and adaptations and safety and access.

Equipment that could be arranged could include for example, specialist seating and bathing aids.

Funding adaptations to the home come through Disabled Facilities Grants via the District or Borough Councils. This could include access to rooms, provision of a room and/or bathroom facilities, stairlifts etc.

The maximum grant available was £25,000, but this was subject to means testing.

The OT's will make recommendations to the Councils and will also assist families in finding additional sources of funding. The Family Fund, for example, can be approached to pay the parent's assessed contribution. It was noted that timescales to achieve adaptations vary. An assessed change of need can lead to a new DFG application.

Young people who are assessed for Incapacity Benefit will be eligible for assessment for DFG in their own right.

Moving house can, at times, be a cheaper option and local authorities can then pay for removal costs. As yet no local authority in West Sussex has agreed to this.

A new community equipment service was being established. The wheelchair service was working to establish better links with Paediatric OT's and Physiotherapists.

The wheelchair service is keen to develop opportunities to see children in schools rather than in clinic settings. The service operates a voucher scheme to enable people to purchase equipment which may cost more than that which can be provided through the wheelchair service.

4. A.O.B

It was agreed that SEN transport would be a topic for discussion at a future meeting. LH advised the group that guidance was expected from the DfES on this matter in September.

4. Date of next meeting

13th October 2004 10.30 – 12.30 Pulborough Village Hall