

**PARENT CONSULTATIVE GROUP**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
held on  
**3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009 10.00am - 12.00pm**  
**Booker Park Community Special School**

**ITEM 1** - The new chair, Penni Thorne was introduced to the Parent Consultative Group (PCG).

**ITEM 2** -

Attendees:

Penni Thorne Chair and Parent Rep  
Zana Bayley Parent Participation Worker  
Ruth Mcgoldrick Parent Rep  
Leigh Smith Parent Rep  
Georgina Fielding Parent Rep  
Sue Imbriano Director of Children's Services  
Christine Matthews Commissioner for PCT  
Jo Keattch Team Manager Children with Disabilities Team  
Gail Walshe Parent Rep  
Kathy Forbes Operations Manager in Safeguarding  
Ruth Goodman Parent Rep  
Marie Ostercamp Parent Rep  
Glynis Haines Speech and Language  
Helga Pinion School-age Lead for OT  
Peter Whittaker Educational Psychology Service  
Jane Turner Educational Psychology Service  
Helen Davies Parent Rep  
Mark Smith Special Educational Needs Service  
Sarah Jane Taylor Parent Rep  
Sarah Shaw Parent Rep  
Carol Watkinson Head of Business Development, Community Health Buckinghamshire

Apologies were received from:

Lynn Hazel  
Simon Brown  
Marion Clayton  
Peter Memory  
Norma Wallace  
Annie Dale  
Lucy Falconer  
Penny Chadwick

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**ITEM 3** - There were no matters arising from minutes, so they were signed off as accurate account of the last meeting. The group was advised that the date of the Spring meeting is no longer correct. Zana Bayley will circulate new date as soon as it is confirmed. There were no other matters arising which were not on the agenda

**ITEM 4** - Glynis Haines gave an update on the Speech and Language Therapy Service, and this can be seen in the attachment which is at the end of these minutes in appendix 1.

**ITEM 5** - Jane Turner from the Educational Psychology Service gave an update on behalf of Jenny Pearce.

'We are fully staffed and have welcomed 2 newly qualified EPs to the service who have now completed their doctorate level training with us. We have recruited 2 EPs currently completing their training to join us in September 2010. We have 2 trainees in Year 3 from UCL and Institute of Education and 1 in Year 2 from Bristol University and eight Psychology Assistants who are supporting and working alongside EPs to deliver interventions, and also contribute to projects and evaluations such as Pyramid and Holding Hands. We have been fortunate to engage Michelle Whale and David Jones on casual contracts to help us out with cover for short-term projects and service delivery. Michelle will start in November.

We launched our new model of service delivery in September to provide and open access consultation service and to focus on children's needs in line with the Every Child Matters agenda rather than an allocation to schools. We would encourage parent and other professionals to discuss our involvement to ensure it is appropriate before completing the request for involvement forms. Information about the service is available on the website. ([www.buckscc.gov.uk/schools/eps](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/schools/eps)) Each Local Delivery area has a named Senior EP and an allocation of EP resource based on factors including the number of schools and Index of Multiple Deprivation. We are hoping to be able to deliver increased specialist and therapeutic support by ensuring that our involvement is meeting priorities under the Children and Young People's Plan and that we are effective in our use of time. Formal written reports will not normally be written unless required by the Authority and our involvement will be recorded through consultation records. We are beginning to receive requests directly from colleagues in the Education Welfare Service and from parents. We will be monitoring the sources of requests.

We continue to be involved in the development of a number of initiatives to support children's emotional and developmental needs. For example, the development of Nurture Groups in primary and now secondary schools, specialist support to develop a programme to support behaviour management, a home visiting programme (Holding Hands) to support parents whose children are considered to be at risk of developing behaviour problems. Members of the service also support the Authority on a number of decision making panels and projects.'

**ITEM 6** - Mark Smith gave an update on the Special Educational Needs Service

Sarah Holding has been appointed as Janet Sparrows replacement as Access and Inclusion manager, however she will not be taking on the role until January, but will attend the next PCG meeting in Spring 2010. Mark Smith has been doing more of the SEN work, supported by Jenny Pearce from the Educational Psychology service.

The first phase of the reprovision (reviewing) of special schools is completed – this first stage was things which could be done quickly and effectively to make a difference straight away such as changing the specialism of Stony Dean Special School.

Phase two will be going out to consultation by Easter 2010. This will be concerned with bigger projects, and hard decisions will have to be made about school designations etc, in particular Bucks County Council are concerned there are over 200 children currently being educated out of the county, and they want to ensure in the future there is provision within Bucks to prevent this costly expense.

The contracts for Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) have to go to tender because they are worth over £50,000. This will happen next July for SALT, and OT will follow later – no date has been set yet.

The authority is benchmarked against two national indicators and so the SEN department have been setting their own targets to try and reach those standards. For example the number of statements completed within 26 weeks – there is no national standard but Bucks CC have set themselves a target of 78% and are currently reaching 80%. This does not include exceptions which could be delays due to family request, absences and other reasons where it has been requested to delay the statement. Mark Smith said he could let the PCG know what those exceptions are. Including exceptions the SEN team target is 70% and they are reaching 68%. Within the Eastern region there is a huge variation between authorities from 40% - 100%. This is because some are smaller unitary authorities with fewer cases, than larger shires with more cases.

Mark Smith mentioned the Lamb Inquiry and realises this will help to inform and influence practice in Bucks as it is concerned with raising parental confidence in SEN, and is looking forward to the final report recommendations.

**ITEM 7** – Penny Chadwick was unable to attend the meeting, but sent in a report which was circulated around the group, and is available as an attachment to these minutes

**ITEM 8** - Penni Thorne apologised for not having a written report for the PCG, citing personal reasons for this. There was a presentation on involvement of parents in Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC) delivered by Penni Thorne and Penny Chadwick at the last meeting, and the next meeting was due the week after the PCG, so Penni Thorne will report back on those at the Spring 2010 meeting.

**ITEM 9** - Question “As agreed at the Participate 08 event, can it be clarified how parent reps can be admitted on CYP Trust Board, and whether parent reps will be admitted onto other Council Boards in the future?”

This question had two halves – Parent reps on the Trust Board and on other boards, and Sue Imbriano answered by explaining that since the Participate 08 event there have been changes to Trusts. There is a commitment to make sure parents views are heard at the Trust Board, and there was a report from the Audit Commission about how effective Trust Boards are which showed a real variance. However agencies do have a duty to cooperate and must be represented i.e. councils, health, police etc.

Our Trust Board has recently been expanded to include schools and GPs. In two years the Trust Board will become more of a legal statutory requirement, and there is a shift in legislation from the Council having responsibility to there being a more shared involvement.

Sue Imbriano discussed the structure of the Trust Board and which groups feed into this, and there is a diagram attached at the end of the minutes to illustrate this.

Parents can be involved in the standing partnership groups which will include voluntary sector, 14-19 education etc and there may be the possibility that the PCG parent group could sit as a standing group in itself.

There will also be three local delivery partnership boards which will be in different regions of the county to get more engagement between the strategic work of the trust and work on the ground. This will enable the members of the Trust Board to ensure things are happening that have been agreed, and that information can be fed back up to the Board about the needs of the local communities. Parents of course could be involved in those regional boards too.

Sue Imbriano realises it is very difficult to get that structure working, but hopes we can improve. Parents are on boards in other children and young people's teams for example Penni Thorne is the parent representative on the SEN Consultative Board. There is a realisation that when new boards are set up parents should be considered. There is a network set up for parental participation but this needs to link them all together for example when consulting on priorities for children and young people's plans it is vital to get parental views too. The PCG would be a good group to use to ensure parents are consulted.

Sarah-Jayne Taylor was pleased to hear about the consultations moving forward, and feels parents should be involved in each of the boards. Sue Imbriano agreed with this and suggested need for both representatives from groups and also parents as individuals.

Helga Pinion asked if there would be feeding back to the commissioners from the Children and Young People Trust Board. Sue Imbriano confirmed that information would flow both ways between all the groups.

Penni Thorne voiced her support and Gail Walshe mentioned Cambridgeshire as having a good model which represents and consults with all parents including those with disabled children. She felt the Parent Participation network wasn't as robust as it could be as it seems to be segregating parents rather than including all parents together.

**ITEM 10** - Question "Could the Council clarify if they have signed up to the EDCM Local Authority charter?"

Sue Imbriano explained that Bucks County Council has not signed up to the EDCM Charter because they do not accept the principles of this. There have been numerous discussions and the view remains that the Council is committed to Every Child Matters and from that there are a range of groups coming forward, including children with disabilities. Under Every Child Matters the Council can demonstrate they have priorities about groups of children and young people, and that it is more about considering what the Council is delivering and whether it is meeting those priorities and needs.

Leigh Smith commented that she didn't feel the Council would get parent's confidence until they signed up.

Sarah-Jayne Taylor agreed, saying that parents on the ground level do not get as much information about what is going on, so see banners like EDCM as a commitment from the Council to show support for them and their families. Sarah Jayne recognised the difference of opinion but felt strongly that as a county we should be saying that disabled children need more and above to achieve the same as their peers.

Sue Imbriano agreed to look at this topic again, but will also look at what the Council can do to connect more with parents to show what they are doing collectively doing for children with disabilities in Bucks, as parents may not be aware, and this needs to be improved.

Penni Thorne felt there was a difference between signing the Charter because you are actually doing it already, and joining the campaign.

Gail Walshe commented that signing the Charter shows the Council is working towards, or is already there doing it – it shows that we are actively doing something otherwise it is hidden and parents can't see what the Council are doing. It is a visual opportunity and is important to parents.

Jo Keatch felt it was important to sign the charter, based on her experience of working with parents and commented Bucks County Council is standing out by not signing it, which is a shame as we are doing the work already in the County.

Helga Pinion felt there needed to be a structure to improve communication and get the knowledge of the work out to parents.

Sue Imbriano repeated her promise to look again at this, but couldn't guarantee any changes.

**ITEM 11** – Question “Is the Council using the DDA criteria for identifying a disability as mentioned in the Core Offer and NI 54? “

Kathy Forbes answered this question by informing the PCG that there was now a task group for eligibility criteria for Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC) and a structure for service from social care and these sometimes get mixed up. AHDC is looking at developing criteria for short breaks eligibility which is completely separate from the Social Care assessment methods for their services. The National Indicator 54 (NI54) is about parent satisfaction and some parents have been randomly selected to receive questionnaires for this.

Penni Thorne stated that the questionnaire from Together for Disabled Children (TDC) is not about disability, but they use the answers to set against the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements. They will then use the questionnaire in following years with parents who have a child that meets the DDA requirements which are different to the Aiming High eligibility.

Sarah-Jayne Taylor commented that having different criteria for disability in Aiming High makes it confusing for parents, and Helen Davies agreed that there needed to be more clarity in the public domain about what is a disability.

Kathy Forbes responded by informing the PCG that the eligibility for services from children and young peoples services teams uses the Children's Act 1989 to define disability.

Helen Davies commented that those who do not meet the eligibility are high-functioning autism and ADHD and those are the ones who feel most excluded.

Jo Keatch replied that if they didn't meet the AHDC assessment they could go to other teams.

Kathy Forbes informed the group that parents can make referrals to panels including the Early Years team, which feed into the Team Around the Child route.

Helga Pinion commented that the DDA Act broadened the criteria for disability.

Kathy Forbes replied that the definition of disability they use is clear, but it could be revisited.

Helga Pinion commented that the definition is what defines how services are shaped and developed which means there are no services currently for all children with disabilities as the current definition doesn't include them all.

Jane Turner agreed that children most in need are those who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the children with disabilities team, and people are getting muddled by different groups and teams.

Sarah-Jayne Taylor felt there was a perception that children will be picked up by other services, but this wasn't happening in reality, and recalled a parent she knew who was kept waiting for two years to access services and support.

Peter Whitaker said that parents could complete Common Assessment Frameworks (CAFs) themselves (*editorial-this is the paperwork which can lead to a Team Around the Child where several agencies/professionals can come together to support a family, and the parent would need to get a professional to sign the CAF referral form before submitting it*). Parents do not have to go to a GP, however all GPs will receive training in CAFs in due course. At the moment parents can access CAF online, and the referrals and assessment team can fill in forms for parents if they are unable to do this. The panel will consider all applications.

Sue Imbriano commented that she will take all the information back to County and will respond at the next meeting.

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**ITEM 12** – Question “What advice can be given to parents to help them support their children’s Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) entitlement as per their Statements of Educational Need whilst they wait for provision to be allocated?”

Christine Matthews answered by stating that SALT cost £2m and OT £0.5m and both services were being delivered on an informal partnership arrangement. This is no longer financially viable, so a commissioning process must be followed and will be going to tender as Mark Smith mentioned earlier. A survey in the summer highlighted areas of good practice and areas for improvement. There will be further workshops on proposed new models and a formal procurement process in the New Year. In OT comprehensive reviews have been undertaken on how to improve service, and consultation will also be undertaken to see how these can be improved.

Helen Davies asked what parents can do in the meantime whilst this is taking place.

Christine Matthews told the PCG that there are loose contractual arrangements between health, education the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Social Services. We are in the process of changing to joint commissioning to make a more joined up collaborative approach. In the meantime we have more therapists, including OT (three new posts purely for singletons, that is individual children within a school). The OT service is finding it hard to recruit and may look at different provision from different providers in the interim. We want to provide a better service in the future – moving away from providing the same, to a more robust service which utilises parent’s views and provide for the need.

Helga Pinion commented that for children who have already been assessed and have a range of difficulties, ASD, ADHD etc we offer all those children a review clinic appointment which is put on their report and they can then re-refer back into the service. This is a 1-1 session for about 45mins with parent and therapist. There has been a gap where a private OT assessment has taken place so the PCT OT service doesn’t know about the child as they are not in the NHS loop. We are trying to fill that gap by requesting names of children with private OT assessments, so we can bring them in. It should be noted too that parents can refer in for review clinic appointment. Also, if the child has been assessed and the need has been identified, they can be put onto a list for group sessions whilst waiting for their individual provision.

Georgina Fielden queried that once statements are in place the school needs equipment and training for staff, but this isn’t happening. What can parents do to help as schools do not know how to access this?

Mark Smith agreed that he recognised there have been difficulties with therapies, but that it is a legal requirement. He advised this was not about lack of funding, but about identifying the suitably qualified people to deliver the service. Cuts had been made due to a lack of staff, but now we can put back the provision due to staff recruitment. With the commissioning process coming up we are clear we are not going to get into same position again, so there will be a more robust system to ensure provision is maintained. He assured the PCT that Bucks CC is working with all providers to achieve that.

**ITEM 13 and 14** - Questions “What commitment is there from the Council to provide the information and support requested by parents of children with disabilities and special needs?” and “Would the council support parents producing guidance or a “FAQ” leaflet on SEN for parents at this time?”

Mark Smith answered that at the moment when Bucks CC agree to do a statement we send out information including a Parent Partnership leaflet, government book, details of the named officer for information etc.

Sarah Jane Taylor queried about the information needed at school action (SA) and school action plus (SA+) i.e. before the statementing process. Leigh Smith agreed in that there needs to be more information much earlier, even before school action. Early bird thing picks up youngsters, but Leigh feels there is nothing for older children, and that there should be something from a parent perspective. Helen Davies supported this by saying there was no support for parents with children on SA and SA+ in schools.

Mark Smith discussed how responsibility had been delegated to schools to provide for these children. Ruth McGoldrick commented that whilst some schools are doing good work, it is all dependent on teachers and school staff.

Sue Imbriano asked the group if they could clarify what the questions are that parents have. Gail Walshe responded by stating that when parents feel that they need more, they don't know what to do then, the next step. Gail continued by commenting that as parents the parent consultative group have the answers and information which they could write and distribute, and that the PCG could supply those questions for Sue Imbriano.

Penni Thorne agreed with this idea of using parental expertise and added that it was also about promoting and publicising to schools that this support is available.

Georgina Fielden felt it was important it came from a parent perspective, as it will be more beneficial to parents than something more official from the council.

Sue Imbriano ended the discussion by requesting for the questions to be sent to her, in order to assess how best to respond.

**ADDED ITEM-** There were some questions based on the discussions:

Helen Davies Glynis Haines asked if there was parental involvement for Secondary SALT, including schools with their own SALT. Glynis Haines confirmed that there was parental involvement.

Helen Davies asked Mark Smith to clarify what is phase 2. Mark Smith answered that this related to physical changes to buildings, right designations for schools, eligibility criteria for schools, and entry/exit criteria for pupils.

Ruth McGoldrick asked Smith about phase 2 and whether it meant the Council would be stopping out of county placements to special schools. Mark Smith answered that for those pupils already in system they will not be brought back into the country, but that in future years we don't want pupils going out of county, but to educated in Bucks, nearer to home.

Gail Walshe commented on this answer, reminding Mark Smith that as many children currently educated out of county are residential placements, if they are educated within the county it may mean there needs to be additional support regarding respite and short breaks, as the child may potentially be within the family environment more.

Sarah Jane Taylor also showed concern over phase 2 as it does not seem to address the future provision for high function ASD, and felt it was a considerable number of these children who are currently receiving education out of county.

The meeting ended at 12:00

#### Future Dates

Pre meeting 10 Feb 2010

PCG meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2010

Pre meeting 26<sup>th</sup> May 2010

PCG meeting 24<sup>th</sup> June 2010

PCG 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009

## **Appendix 1 – Speech and Language Therapy Update Report**

### **Staffing**

The SLT Schools Team employed 7 new staff over the Summer holidays which has enabled the levels of SLT provision for children attending mainstream schools to be returned to those specified on their statements of SEN. The Early Years Preventative Team, EY Complex Needs, Physical Disability and the Special Schools Teams have also recruited another member of staff each. There are a further 4 posts still being advertised, 2 for the Mainstream Schools Team, one for the Hearing Impairment Team and one for the Special Schools Team.

### **Collaborative Language Support for Schools, CLaSS**

The SLT and Specialist Teaching Service have concluded the CLaSS project and have now started to implement this model of working within all mainstreams schools with 3 or more singletons. (Please refer to the end of project report) The use of Multi-Agency Provision Plans, MAPPs, has enabled all the staff supporting the statemented pupils to develop joint targets

### **Integrated Service**

The Integrated Service is currently being delivered in 6 primary schools in Buckinghamshire. The SLT Service has just initiated discussion with the Cognition and Learning Service and the OT Service to broaden the range of support which could be delivered to schools to support both individual pupils prior to, and hopefully instead of, statementing as well as to develop class and even school-wide strategies to support children with speech, language and communication needs as well as those with coordination, sensory integration, and perceptual difficulties. It is hoped that this model of service delivery will be adopted by Early Years practitioners in due course.

### **Language Steering Group**

The Language Steering Group continues to meet on a termly basis to evaluate current practice, discuss new DCSF and DoH initiatives and explore ways of working collaboratively to ensure that the children in Buckinghamshire receive the most effective type and level of support. We are looking forward to Helen Davies's involvement in this group.

### **Secondary Language Steering Group**

The SLT Service has started a Secondary Language Steering Group which has already met twice. It consists of representatives from SLT, STS, parents, SENCOs, SEN Advisors, School Improvement and EPs. The group has done some extensive research into the various models of SLT provision discussed in the literature as well as by colleagues from other counties.

There is very little evidence of effective SLT practice for secondary age pupils in the literature and the group discovered that very few counties provide any support for pupils of this age. The group will be using all the examples of good practice to develop a new model of SLT provision for secondary age pupils which will be trialled at the beginning of the next academic year. Marie Ostercamp is representing parents on this group.

### **Special Schools Steering Group**

The SLT Service is also planning to develop a Special Schools Steering Group to evaluate current practice and develop a more effective, county-wide strategy for supporting the pupils in Special Schools. We will be looking for a parent representative for this group in due course.

### **Early Years Preventative Team**

SLT service is involved with the Every Child a Talker programme being rolled out in 22 Early Years settings across the county. The programme is aimed at developing skills in EY staff in settings, but additionally all staff in the project are considering how best to involve parents in the development of the project.

We continue to build services in Children's Centres and to develop training packages for Early Years staff across the Children's Workforce.

The SLT Community Clinics Team is in the process of reconfiguring the service into 3 localities. We would welcome parent involvement in this, and are seeking to set up a Parent Consultative Group around development of services

- a) into 3 localities to better meet local needs
- b) to employ evidence from research to ensure that therapy services targeted at the most appropriate client groups

We have SLT representation on the Local Authority EY Partnership Board with stakeholders from all areas of EY represented.

### **Early Years Complex Needs**

Services continue to build here particularly in relation to funding of EY singletons in EY settings. Training in EY also continues, and additionally for staff employing the Hanen model, aimed at developing skills preventatively with parents of young children with speech and language delay. Direct parent support remains an integral part of supporting preschool children with complex needs.

## Appendix 2:

Dear PCG,

I am sorry I am not able to attend the meeting today because of unavoidable circumstances. I know one of the agenda items today relates to the information, advice and support needs of parents of children with SEN and/or disabilities.

- I have worked very hard to develop a high standard of support for parents from very moderate beginnings into what is now a respected statutory service area by parents, colleagues, voluntary partners and many schools. This has been despite many barriers and many challenges due to the nature of an 'Arm's Length Service' within a local authority.
- Because of this we are so busy we barely get back to parents within 5 working days, often more, because we have less than 2 Full Time Equivalent casework staff for a statutory county wide service covering a pupil population of over 77,000 and with over 240 schools. I do not know if there are any other statutory county-wide services working within such limitations? And there are no other service areas giving parents completely impartial support, or recognising that parents want equivalent support navigating the system in other areas. (i.e. social care and exclusions)
- While I have tried very hard to get the service area recognised across the county council, as an area of development, the information advice and support needs of parents in our core work, has not been considered a priority for development to date. Parents should now have a much more persuasive voice and if this is considered a priority for parents then the county council should listen.
- We have had cost of living budget cuts and no staff rises since we became statutory in 2001. (We re-organised and cut admin to provide more casework, but there have been 0 rises and just year on year cuts) I am aware that we now have the transformation agenda to deal with to look at cuts in services where necessary and hope this agenda will properly consult on the needs of parents within the area of information, advice and support in this service area and perhaps other identified areas of gaps in parent support also.
- I have not had the time to put together the results of my most recent questionnaire as I have not had the necessary experienced business support to deal with this recently. We have however had an excellent response (nearly 25% from all new referrals in the last academic year). Responses will be included with the minutes but early indications are that a very high percentage of parents felt that their child's outcomes had improved as a result of our intervention. A very high percentage of parents felt more confident in supporting their child as a result and a very high percentage felt they had an unbiased service. Equally a high percentage also complained that an answer-phone and response times was not good customer service.

With best wishes and many thanks for your continued support.

Penny Chadwick  
Parent Partnership Co-ordinator  
PCG 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009

### Appendix 3 Children and Young People's Trust Structure

## Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust

