



MINUTES OF MEETING
held on
24 June 2009 10.00am - 12.00pm
Booker Park Community Special School

Present:

Zana Bayley	Parent Participation Worker
Penny Chadwick	Parent Partnership Coordinator
Helen Davies	Parent Rep, Vale Federation of Schools
Lucy Falconer	Parent Participation Worker
Ruth Goodman	Parent Rep, Chiltern Gate School
Rachael Judd	NAS Aylesbury
Stuart Mogridge	SEN Consultant
Dave Roberts	South Bucks Deaf Children's Society
Clare Reynolds	NAS Aylesbury
Shami Rait	Senior Educational Psychologist
Sarah Shaw	Parent Rep, South Bucks Downs Syndrome Group
Leigh Smith	Parent Representative
Mark Smith	SEN Manager
Vikki Smith	Parent Representative
Janet Sparrow	Divisional Manager, Achievement and Learning
Penni Thorne	Parent Representative
Sarah Jane-Taylor	Parent Representative
Norma Wallace	Parent Rep, NAS Representative, South Bucks

Chair: Peter Memory Independent Chair

Scribe: Fajita Wheeler Admin Assistant, PPS

Apologies were received from:

Janet Burgess	SEN Consultant
Marion Clayton	Cabinet Member for Achievement & Learning
Glynis Haines	SALT Services
Sue Imbriano	Director of Children's Services
Marie Ostercamp	Parent Rep, AFASIC
Jenny Pearce	Principal Educational Psychologist
Gail Walshe	Parent Rep and CAF
Suzy Woodmansey	SEN Manager
Kathy Forbes	Service Manager, Children & Families

Minutes of last meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed by Peter Memory, Independent Chair.

Educational Psychology Update – Shami Rait

Shami Rait (representing Jenny Pearce, Principal Educational Psychologist) discussed the changes in the delivery of the service effective from September 2009. Extracts from a presentation to be delivered by Jenny Pearce and Jane Turner Deputy Principal EP at the SEN Conference highlighting the changes was provided to attendees.

The purpose of the changes is to support the Every Child Matters agenda; to target vulnerable children, young people and families most at risk educationally; provide local delivery, widen access beyond the school focus and increase capacity to work preventatively and therapeutically. Equality of access to the service will be reviewed to enable parents and children to access the service. Also to be considered is equality of access of schools and educational settings, children's centres, children's homes, refugees, unaccompanied minor refugees and asylum seekers. Children 16 and over will be able to directly access the service.

The presentation showed a comparison between current and future provision which included that delivery will be around the eight Local Delivery Areas. Senior EP's will be allocated 1-2 Local Delivery Areas with the ideal being one delivery area per EP. Previously the service was based around the school liaison groups and line managed geographically by a particular senior EP. Currently EP time is directly allocated to schools, however, this will change and EP resources will be allocated by Local Delivery Area.

There will be no requirement for a formal EP report for requests for statutory assessments and in certain cases EP involvement will not be a requirement. Arrangements will be made to pilot a drop in service for secondary schools, special schools and also within children's centres. Referrals will be from a range of sources, for example, parents, carers and young people and improvement on the current system which is only via school SENCO's. The referral form will be simplified and priorities for EP involvement will be clear and transparent. Planning consultations will be spread throughout the

terms so that the service can target the priority areas first rather than attempting all at the same time. Schools will not have time allocated other than from the beginning of term. Work will be undertaken by a link EP as it is currently but there may be an EP with a particular specialism or an EP who already knows the family well where it may be more appropriate for that EP to undertake the work. Fortnightly Local Delivery Area meetings will be held to consider the cases that may be a priority and how to support that particular child and family.

The service will remain unchanged in respect of work with early years children and identified children with SEN, planning consultations, signed consent forms from parents, the consultation framework for service delivery and contributions to the statutory assessment process. Also unchanged is EP's being linked to schools, research and project work, contributions to L.A. panels and ongoing professional development.

New developments include more involvement with therapeutic work with individuals and small groups and specialist work which will give EP's the opportunity to develop their specialist areas that schools and other local delivery areas can draw on. There will be open access to referrals via a website which will also have contact details and a link EP list, guidance on drop-in sessions, advice and information for parents and young people and links to other websites.

Sarah-Jane Taylor enquired as to why there are Local Delivery Areas instead of geographical areas. Janet Sparrow explained that the LDA model of service delivery incorporates the whole county divided into eight Local Delivery Areas. Schools are kept informed of these areas. The ultimate aim is to have a team of multi professional teams supporting each local area which will make access to the service more accessible for children and young people and improve service delivery. Helen Davies asked whether this will mean greater communication. Janet Sparrow believed that it would and said the aim of the Every Child Matters Agenda is to get parents working together. It has not yet been determined whether the teams are going to be real co-related people sitting together or virtual teams that are working together as it is still in the early stages. Helen Davies stated that there are a great number of people accessing the service and wanted to know if the service had sufficient capacity to meet those needs. Shami Rait's view is that it remains to be seen. As time is not allocated to schools, time will be freed up for therapeutic work and targeting vulnerable children. Helen Davies wanted to know whether that will mean children who are considered lower priority will keep going down the list. Shami Rait stated that those children will be targeted and the service will be looking at how to close the gap between those children and those that are in need.

In response to a question from Penni Thorne as to whether there are changes in the team, Shami Rait stated that Peter Norman is due to retire and that she is taking over his role. The service is currently still recruiting. Janet Sparrow stated that retention and recruitment of EPs over the last few years has not been a problem and because of training there is a process of

retaining the EPs. Shami Rait advised that two of the trainees are remaining with the service. Janet Sparrow confirmed that trainees are required to stay if the service has paid for their training. There is still a lot of wrangling at national level around funding of EP training courses and the level of bursary and actual salary that is paid to EP's in training. There are other similar issues that were not agreed before the system was put in place. However, Buckinghamshire has put a system in place that enables recruitment and development of trainees, usually over a two year period. It is County policy that these EP's are retained during that time.

Helen Davies queried whether a gap in provision might occur if someone specialising in a certain area were to leave Bucks. Shami Rait did not believe that it would be a problem and that it was beneficial to the development of the service to have specialisms. Lucy Falconer wanted to know how parents would refer if they did not have internet access. Shami Rait advised that in such cases, they would phone the EP service.

Peter Memory informed attendees it was Shami Rait's last PCG meeting and thanked her for her input not only to the PCG meetings but also to the Steering Group Meetings.

SEN Update- Janet Sparrow and Mark Smith

Janet Sparrow presented the SEN update. Suzy Woodmansey is currently on maternity leave and Mark Smith has been taking on Suzy's work since she left at the end of May and the team has successfully managed to backfill some of Mark's work to enable him to do Suzy's work. Janet asked attendees for their patience and forbearance as clearly everybody is incredibly stretched and that despite this the team is still moving forward in some areas.

In terms of the special school re-organisation, the first phase is in the process of completion. Within that process there has been considerable investment in a number of special schools to update, refurbish or support the schools in improving their facilities. Janet regularly receives photographs from John Rumble showing the development of the site. There will shortly be a hydrotherapy pool at Maplewood. There will then be equality in terms of facilities in Wycombe and in Aylesbury. Heritage House school in Chesham also has hydrotherapy pool, however, access to it is appalling so funding has been identified and work will be taking place this funding year to make proper access from school to the pool.

Stoney Dean which was previously a secondary school for young people with moderate learning difficulties is being re-designated and received specialist status as a specialist school for children and young people with communication and interaction difficulties. It will be going through the statutory notice period over the coming weeks.

There was a hope that this would be in place in September but the government has made the statutory process very difficult. The aim is to

develop the school as a specialist school for children with speech and language difficulties and children within the autistic spectrum. There will be a phased implementation which will give the school time to develop its specialist status and ensure that staff develop the required specialism. Because of its specialist status the school has got quite a lot of money which is not just for the school itself but to ensure that it can be a resource for other mainstream schools in that area and can provide outreach support for children with communications and speech and language therapy needs. The cognitive ability range of children that the school takes will be extended so that specialist teachers can be accessed to try and ensure that children access the full curriculum. This is a move away from an old fashioned MLD school.

Regarding Furzedown School, the first two hurdles have been overcome in terms of building schools for the future. As Buckinghamshire is seen as affluent it does not qualify for much funding. Wave E was due to start in 2020 but the government found that some local authorities were not able to spend the money. Therefore the government invited bids to bring forward some of the plans. Buckinghamshire submitted a bid in March/April to rebuild or refurbish 5 secondary schools. It was not possible to include all of the schools as the bid had to be fairly limited. The bid was to refurbish four upper schools and rebuild one school (Furzedown). The first hurdle has been overcome as the government agrees that the bid is fairly sound. The next stage is coming up at the end of this month when a panel at the DCSF will discuss the shortlist (which Buckinghamshire is on). If Buckinghamshire get through this, detailed plans must be submitted by October which must then be approved. If this is successful the programme for the funding can start. With the amount of work required in submitting these bids and having to go through the stages it is not surprising that some local authorities cannot do it. However, the news is positive and Buckinghamshire is on the way and hopefully it will result in a successful bid to rebuild Furzedown School.

Vikki Smith queried whether a general election and change of government will change those plans. Janet does not believe that this should be a concern, as the recession is causing all parties to look at funding, and the costs of improving schools. Helen Davies wanted to know whether the four schools being refurbished are special schools. Janet confirmed that it was for both mainstream and special schools. There are a number of secondary schools that need refurbishing; however, the special school has the lion's share of funding in terms of the rebuild.

All of those projects are moving forward. Agreement has also been received to build a brand new residential unit in Wycombe. The agreement is to build (subject to planning permission) a small residential unit next to Chiltern Gate School in High Wycombe. A review was conducted a couple of years ago to establish whether the use of the residential unit could be improved to make it more holistic instead of just providing boarding 2-3 nights for a few children. It was discovered that none of it is suitable for disabled children, nor meets respite provision standards and a residential unit needed to be built that would meet all of the standards.

There is still a lot of work to be done on how to successfully build a unit that is available 52 weeks a year for some of the pupils that currently have to go out

of County. It remains to be seen how it will work but it will be a big step forward with some money provided by the government for this as part of a co-location bid which means sites that have access to other services on-site such as Health.

Phase I of the re-structuring of special schools has cost about £5m and Buckinghamshire has been fortunate in getting that amount of money. Phase II concerns BESD secondary schools that are in need of refurbishment. The range of needs that they cater for will be reviewed. There is also a need to look at vulnerable children who are currently at BESD to establish what provisions there are for them in the future. Mark Smith and Suzy Woodmansey are looking at this, however there is no money and unless funding can be identified there is little point in conducting the review.

Finally in respect of reorganisation there will be further provision for ASD at Oak Green Hill opening in Aylesbury from September. Statutory notice is finally going through. This will pick up some of the shortfall in primary schools created when the two primary Elmhurst schools were merged.

Helen Davies asked in respect of BESD provision whether entry and exit criteria be looked at. Janet confirmed that it would. Rachel Judd enquired whether there might be ASD schools within Aylesbury Vale in the future. Janet stated that Quarrendon School will no longer exist after the current term, and in September 2009 there will be a brand new academy under the Church of England Diocese and the Local Authority which is planned to have an additionally resourced provision for ASD. Toni Gunnell asked about timescales to completion for Quarrendon. Janet advised that the whole school was planned to be built for September 2010 but that was before the recession. Substantial land was being made available via the new build in Berryfields. However, most of those plans have been put on hold. The Government provide the capital funding and the local Diocese the remainder, so cannot say exactly how long it will take.

Peter Memory informed attendees that as most of them were aware Janet Sparrow is finishing in County at the end of July and moving on to other things and wanted to thank her for the vast improvement taking place within Buckinghamshire and knows that it is mostly down to her - with help from her team but with Janet leading them. Peter thanked Janet for her time and contribution. Janet advised that her post has been advertised. The closing date is on Monday with interviews planned for mid July.

Mark Smith presented the findings of the survey of parents who have gone through the statementing process which commenced last September. The responses relate to the period between November and June and have not yet been analysed.

The document contains the statistical data and answers to the questions asked.

For example questionnaire 1 had 178 responses. 79% of parents recorded that they were clear about who they had to contact with any questions or

concerns they may have had about the statutory assessment process. Whether 79% is good is not yet known and needs to be looked at. The second questionnaire regarding whether parents felt their children's needs were been met pre and post assessment contains interesting figures. In respect of the EP service 83% agreed that the EP had treated them with respect, 80% agreed that the EP behaved in a way that made them feel comfortable and 73% agreed that they had checked that what they were saying had been understood. The response has been good.

In response to a question about how the survey was conducted, Mark confirmed that it was postal. Vikki Smith questioned some of the numbers. Mark stated that he reviewed and analysed the data, however, more data needs to be received in order to look at it more closely. Sarah-Jane Taylor believes that there are parents who cannot access these sorts of questionnaires and a lot of parents who have to fill in numerous forms and so would not fill in yet another form. There are also parents who are less educated, who have visual impairments or are disabled themselves. Therefore their views are not necessarily being heard which needs to be noted. Mark stated that in an ideal world all of these issues would be addressed. The aim of the questionnaire was that it was as user-friendly as possible and for respondents to be able to complete it quickly. Some parents have included more detail. Peter Memory asked how many parents had been involved at looking at the wording of the questions. Mark advised that there was quite a long process involved in looking at the questions. Peter suggested that it might be worth the parents who attend this meeting to look at the questions and make suggestions. Mark Smith stated that data collected was about the service - there had been a lot of discussion about terminology etc. and a lot of thought did go into it. Mark is happy to share the questionnaire with people and will bring it to the next meeting. In response to a question from Leigh as to whether Mark could email the questionnaire to people, Mark confirmed that he could.

Note: The Questionnaire was brought to the PCG for comments the previous year

Mark stated that in the second page of Questionnaire 2, 70% of parents agreed that the SEN Officer had an all round picture of their child and his/her learning needs. 70% felt that that the correspondence was clear and jargon free. The aim is to make it as user friendly and jargon free whilst also including the legal bits so Mark felt that the figure of 70% was quite a heartening figure. Questionnaire 2 also dealt with the Specialist Teacher Service. 86% of responses agreed that the Specialist Teacher they had met behaved in a way to make them feel comfortable.

Mark concluded that there are a number of things that have to be unpicked but he thought it was important to share this data with attendees. The team will continue to collect the data and analyse it in order to improve the service.

Salt Update – Glynis Haines

Zana Bayley provided attendees with a document from Glynis Haines containing information regarding the SALT service, as Glynis was unable to attend. Attendees were advised to contact Zana Bayley with any queries. An electronic copy can be obtained from Zana Bayley also.

Participation Update – Zana Bayley and Lucy Falconer

Zana Bayley and Lucy Falconer have been in the post for 2 months and have been very busy. Six meetings have been established every half term for all parents with children with SEN to access. They have tried to vary times to make it as accessible as possible for parents and changing venues including Beaconsfield and Princes Risborough. Attendances have been quite varied. It is hoped that attendance will increase over time as word gets around and as more promotion is done. It is going well and hoped that the next PCG will have representation from all geographical areas as well as different needs of children.

The other aspect of their role is to improve communications and they are hoping to create a newsletter which will be distributed to all parents and professionals and are looking to send an interim newsletter soon. A major newsletter will be done in the autumn term which will have the Aiming High Board inputs. Another method of communication is to have a website. A lot of parents use the web and want that information, particularly parents who cannot get to the meetings. The aim is to have a web presence where parents can put their contributions and then parent representatives can bring this to the PCG.

Lucy Falconer and Zana Bayley are also involved in the Conciliation training. Attendees will be made up of 50% parents and 50% professionals. The principle aim is to have professionals and parents working together, but also to include disability awareness training. Parents are coming from a particular perception which professionals think they understand but parents believe they do not. It is equally important for parents to know where professionals are coming from. The training is planned for 19th January 2010 and 28th January 2010 at Green Park Conference Centre with hopefully 30 parents and 30 professionals each day, with child-care and payment of transport costs available. There will be a small charge for lunch and professionals will be asked to make a contribution of £20. Lucy Falconer and Zana Bayley are compiling a list of professionals to invite.

Peter Memory commented on how much things are moving at great speeds - in leaps and bounds and thanked Zana Bayley and Lucy Falconer for their contribution.

Sarah Shaw mentioned that she used to get a publication called 'In the Picture' which is no longer available. Zana is aware of the publication and its demise.

She has mentioned it to the professionals and will continue discussions with Family Information Service.

Discussion Point 1 – Expertise of Parents and Discussion Point 2 – Parent Led Training for Education Professionals

Peter Memory said that parents have expertise in various areas, however, when they are sitting in various groups sometimes they feel they are there as a token and are not involved. They are just sitting there and are presented with things as a fait accompli. Sarah-Jane Taylor said that parents often know about a particular condition. Vikki Smith added that some parents are also professionals, for example teachers. Sarah-Jane Taylor stated that there is a wealth of understanding and knowledge in parents which is not being tapped into. Ruth believes that the Conciliation training will help with this. If professionals can attend it, will make a big difference and is a good way to help. Rachel Judd wanted to know if the professionals attending will include doctors as a lot of doctors' attitudes to parents needs to change for example she knew of one case where a parent was told she was a terrible mother. That attitude amongst the doctors and paediatrician needs to change as they disregard the parents. For example a diagnosis is given and the attitude is 'this is it, off you go'. Vikki Smith counteracted this view as she believes that there are some who are really good and go beyond the call of duty to support parents. Sarah-Jane Taylor stated that over the years she has noticed that a GP cannot be a specialist; therefore the attitude of taking into account what a parent says can be useful in diagnosis. It is also very easy to place the problem as in the home for example diagnosing ASD rather than listening to the parents. Zana stated that it was her and Lucy Falconer's challenge to get those people into the training.

Sarah-Jane Taylor believes that there is a need to hold the training where the professionals are located, for example teachers will not necessarily attend. It is a great start though and a great long term goal. Zana stated that hopefully getting those professionals at the top will cascade down the knowledge and a variety of professionals will later become involved. She acknowledged that it will be a challenge to get the right people. Peter asked if County Councillors are being targeted. Lucy Falconer confirmed that all of the Cabinet were being invited. Zana Bayley added that a majority of people will be from the Council, but that people from outside the council may also be sought. Vikki Smith suggested that perhaps parents could attend the training that professionals have; parents are a free resource and should be invited. It was confirmed that 50% attendees will be parents.

Penni Thorne pointed out that the Lamb enquiry actually acknowledges that the basic nature between professionals and parents has changed fundamentally. The previous perception has changed and the parent has expert knowledge of their situation.

Penny Chadwick in response to a question about Health, advised attendees that she is hoping to have Chris Petford and Sue Imbriano as part of this meeting.

This will help with professionals and parents working together, and that Zana Bayley and Lucy Falconer are writing guidance for parents and professionals separately. This will help support parents in their role and also professionals.

Examples include avoiding jargon, having name labels so that parents know who the professionals are at the meeting etc. Parents in Policy Making training is about ensuring parents have skills at the meetings and to help parents and professionals be comfortable with each other. Helen Davies stated that it would be helpful to know what the parents' expectations are. Stuart Mogridge was interested in establishing what meeting parents wanted to attend. Sarah-Jane Taylor believes that parents need to be represented at all meetings, and explained that the parents' role at meetings is more generic and that they do not discuss their own individual needs. Leigh agreed that parents attend meetings as parent representatives and not as individual parents. Stuart has meetings where parents are involved at a school level. Sarah-Jane Taylor stated that none of the information she receives has come through the school as schools do not pass information on.

Penny Chadwick stated that this was very much the beginning of a culture of change with Aiming High and the Lamb report. The aim is promoting full participation in health, social and educational services. From the point of view of what the parent representatives want from professionals, it is a culture change of truly including them. At the moment parents are only included from a consultation point of view. Penny Chadwick is working together with others on changing that. The full participation model where parents are involved right at the beginning is the model that they are working towards. It will take time and it is a change both for parents and professionals.

Sarah-Jane Taylor believes that sometimes parents are complaining about things but the services provided are very good, however, it was from what the service provider thinks is needed. Parents understand that the service providers are working very hard, but it is a waste of resources when things do not fit and this is where parents can facilitate. Resources should be fitted to the children and their particular needs, for example the provision of LDA's does not seem to match the needs. Stuart agreed that the benefits of having parents involved as early as possible would reduce that as much as possible and avoid parents having to fight over their concerns later.

Penny stated that full participation will help that. The Lamb enquiry said that the system creates 'warrior parents'. Trust is needed in place of conflict rather than conflict in place of trust. Shami's view is that it is helping us to shape our service. There have been a couple of good examples today for example involving parent representatives in the consultation process in preparing the SEN questionnaires. Also in relation to training, it would be useful to go to where the professionals are (for example Health). Shami Rait believes that these forums can really help.

Stuart stated that he had learned a lot by listening to the parents at this meeting. He was at a SENCO Liaison group meeting yesterday discussing how to inform parents regarding grammar schools. These are the kind of meetings where parents should be involved.

Sarah Shaw felt that SENCO's are usually the most unhelpful. Ruth stated that there are children at grammar schools with SEN and it would be useful asking their parents to attend meetings. Peter suggested that the SEN

Governors could feed in the information. Rachel Judd felt that the SEN process is very stressful and it often comes down to the individual SENCO. The relationship with the school can get destroyed. If that was ironed out parents would not have such a hard job. Rachel has a fantastic SENCO but she has left and since then she has had no contact.

Penny Chadwick believes the problem is that there have been no qualifications for the SENCO job. County does offer training but it is voluntary. Rachel questioned why the training was voluntary and believed that it should be compulsory. Teachers should also undergo the training so that everybody is trained. Stuart advised that it is changing. He was in Norfolk prior to this job and the only training received was a one hour lecture. However, from September it is changing with number of universities offering training. Zana believes that there is also a need to train school staff about working with parents of children with special needs. The focus has been more on theory, brain behaviour etc. Stuart stated that his and his colleagues' job is to make sure that the SENCO's are getting it right.

Discussion Point 3 – Publication of Minutes

Zana stated the discussions had been very good and useful information has been exchanged. Therefore the minutes of this meeting should go out to as many parents as possible. The minutes need to be made more accessible by distributing them publicly and also publishing them on the internet so that parents can access them.

Ruth felt that a parent reading the minutes would not necessarily understand them and they also need to be summarised. Clare Reynold's concern was that this meeting was going on, minutes were not known about and decisions were being made and parents have been excluded. Sarah-Jane Taylor stated that it would represent County more positively if the things that are being worked on are communicated to other parents and would foster a better environment. Shami Rait agreed that the minutes should be available and Penny Chadwick stated whilst the PCG group has been established for 8 years, she has been trying to communicate its purpose to schools for the last 8 years but getting that information across has been in an ad-hoc way. Clare Reynolds pointed out that she recently attended a forum and had no idea that this meeting was taking place. Penny Chadwick stated that she did try to send it out to other people but there have been time constraints. Sarah-Jane Taylor has noticed that there does seem to be a block with not passing on the information.

Ruth stated that sometimes the provision of information can be seen as a threat and it is easier just not to mention it. Ruth has been on this meeting for 4 years. However, it is now time to focus on what parents can do rather than looking back.

Penny Chadwick stated that the whole of the government guidance is about parent involvement (Lamb enquiry and Aiming High). There is government backing to make this work in terms of engaging parents. Schools as well as

the Local Authority have to look parent participation in terms of listening to parents and involving them.

Shami Rait advised that with regards to the parenting strategy, lots of funding is available for POINT support advisors linked to the schools which will be really helpful particularly for schools. This is the first meeting she has been to which is really vibrant and lots of information has been provided from parents. Having Lucy Falconer and Zana Bayley dedicated to supporting parents will also help. Sarah Shaw stated that if the 'In the Picture' publication still existed more parents would have known about this meeting. Sara Jane Taylor felt there are lots of parents who are not represented, and this needs to be addressed in the future. Publicising the minutes will help to do this.

Provisional date and time of the next meetings

Pre-Meeting 16th September

PCG Meeting 14th October

Pre-Meeting 10th February 2010

PCG Meeting 10th March 2010