



South Glos Children & Young People Network Meeting

2 October 2007

Attendees

Helen	Martell	KIDS
Lyn	Mitchell	Circles Network
Tim	Carter	Barnardo's
Helen	Pocock	South Glos Council
Bobby	Owen	Contact A Family
Corrina	Wood	Fairplay
Anne	Jerrom	Supportive Parents
Jacqui	Buckley	South Glos Council
Dan	Cary	KIDS
Nicki	Townsend	UBHT
Kay	Sibley	KIDS
Mike	Connolly	South Glos Council
Richard	Broad	South Glos Council

Apologies

Ann Gillard	ASBAH
Julie Snelling	Southern Brooks
Jane Spence	Childrens Playlink
Clare Steele	Central Teaching Service
Dawn Taylor	Survive
Liz Cooke	Mencap – Avon North
Karen Bountland	Children's Workforce Learning Network
Matt Nichol	Family Centre (Deaf Children)

Presentation:

Disabled Children's Strategy and LDD Implementation Plan – Mike Connolly, Head of Specialist Care and Inclusion; Helen Pocock, Planning Officer (Disabled Children)

(Papers presented and circulated at the meeting can be viewed at www.thecareforum.org)

Mike Connolly, responsible for commissioning, children in care, care leavers, children with special educational needs, explained that the meeting was a good opportunity to have extended discussion on developing process and bringing people up to date about the implementation plan so far. The Disabled Children's Strategy is constantly evolving, leaving it open to national and local developments.

In Autumn 2005 a multi-agency review was undertaken by South Gloucestershire Council of services for learning disabled and disabled children. It was decided that the strategy needed to develop and respond to local and national changes, and with changes in general in children's services. The key themes for the strategy are: questions on information, thresholds for gaining access to services, and the co-ordination of services. A government review echoed these points.

Every Disabled Child Matters

South Glos needed to find opportunities to act on what parents said. Disabled children and parents should have the same rights as other children about improvements as regards to the Every Child Matters agenda. Every Child Matters is having an impact on mainstream services. Helen Pocock contributed to national policy development to address the Every Child Matters agenda for disabled children, working with the Council for Disabled Children. Workshops were

convened by the Council for Disabled Children and the DfES. They are currently developing a framework for measuring council performance with disabled children.

Locally parents have been included in discussions about the five outcomes and a steering group has been established in the Children & Young People Department. Health Promotion is now working to involve children and young people in these developments. A criticism of the Children & Young People's Plan has been that disabled children and young people are almost absent. The Every Disabled Child Matters report looked at these criticisms.

Over the past nine months work has been done to include learning disabled and disabled children and young people in the local implementation plan. An important aspect has been the development of pathway maps with parents and professionals, and finding out where the gaps in information are.

Short Breaks

£280m has been made available nationally to develop short breaks provision over 2-3 years nationally. The term short breaks can be interpreted to include support for parents. Funding can also be used to ensure that disabled children are more included in mainstream provision. For example, short breaks could include:

- List of disabled transport or accommodation (national and international) where disabled children and young people could go
- Dealing with the barriers to accessing mainstream services – especially transport
- Help with independence skills for disabled children and young people
- Getting more information about what disabled children and young people want.

This needs to be linked to the transitions issue; as young people get older, short breaks can contribute to their development and independence.

A website for holidays is currently being developed through the youth service.

Questions and comments:

Kate Oliver – Asked if direct payments were in use for disabled children and young people. We also need an outcomes-led approach to commissioning which will support innovative and responsive projects for children and young people.

Mike Connolly - Direct payments are one of the challenges. There is new funding for a year of pathfinder projects but no direct payments model for children and young people. Central government is piloting broader development of direct payments in adult services and wants to see the outcomes before introducing them into children's services.

Anne Jerrom– Any new initiatives need to be evaluated and followed up.

Kate Oliver – We need a quality assurance framework with defined outcomes and ensure it is monitored.

Richard Broad – Suggested that there could be an opportunity to log into a database for best practice examples .

Kate Oliver – Key workers could be instrumental in planning short breaks. Elsewhere direct payments are not always promoted well by social workers.

Helen Pocock – In South Glos there has been steady growth in the use of direct payments and some of these are related to short breaks. There is a lack of services available so that parents may have little choice. They may have to buy services outside the local authority area.

Kay Sibley – Sometimes it is difficult for parents to make use of direct payments. There needs to be a backup system so there is a way of checking the quality of staff and recruiting individuals to do the work. This is sometimes a burden for service users so parents mostly use family members. Sometimes they have the funding but cannot find the people to do the work.

Kate Oliver – The fostering service has a good model for family support providing short breaks.

Tim Carter – The voices of young people need to be prioritised. He expressed concerned that we do not get as far as we need with regard to children and young people getting what they want rather than them having to fit in with what is available.

Mike Connolly – South Gloucestershire Council has written principles for the provision of short breaks for parents, siblings, children and young people. All work with disabled children and young people should adhere to these principles.

Anne Jerrom – Funding needs to go into communicating with disabled children and young people.

Mike Connolly – The positive effects of doing this work should cross over into services for disabled young adults. The needs of siblings of disabled children and young people should also be considered. There are some services for young carers but not all siblings are carers. Some families speak of themselves as disabled families. Siblings see their brothers and sisters getting outings, etc. and want some of the fun. There needs to be a small provision for siblings.

Anne Jerrom – What services are families using? There are some services that run on a non-inclusive model but they are very popular with parents. Why? It would be good to investigate this.

Mike Connolly – We need to do more scoping to find out this kind of information.

Corinna Wood – How will families access short breaks?

Mike Connolly – Short breaks are available for all families of disabled children. Some services provide a more specialist service. It is not clear whether South Gloucestershire has the threshold for services at the right level, it has been raised. In disability services, there is a lot of focus on the condition but there needs to be more focus on the impact on the whole family. There is an element within the short break strategy that focuses on how mainstream services are getting in line with the Disability Discrimination Act; for example they can apply for funds to ensure that mainstream services such as school trips, leisure centres, etc. are accessible. Funding is needed for extra support for disabled children within these service, for example the shared youth service in South Glos.

Anne Jerrom – Parents need to know what is available to them.

Mike Connolly – This is related to the general ‘offer’ which needs to outline eligibility for particular services. This will take a couple of years to develop. We need to improve early intervention. Many CAFs have been completed on disabled children.

Jackie Buckley – Need a form of support for parents, for example access to after school services, children’s centres and extended schools. It is important that staff with the skills to work with disabled children are recruited into the mainstream posts so that universal services can develop in a more inclusive way.

Mike Connolly – At the beginning of this work people were saying that disabled children were not included in several mainstream initiatives. A positive sign is that now people are considering disabled children when they develop plans, they are coming and requesting advice from his team.

Anne Jerrom – Noted that special schools are not included in the Healthy Eating Plan.

Kate Oliver – Thanked the speakers and closed the meeting.

Evaluation

13 people attended the meeting. 11 evaluation forms were received.

	very good	good	satisfactory	no response
Start and finish times	5	5	1	
Pace of meeting	1	7	3	
Opportunities for networking	2	6	3	
Access to venue	5	5	1	
Standard of meeting room	2	6	3	
Relevance of speaker	7	2	2	
Felt better informed about the development of local services	5	4	2	
I took part in debate and my questions were answered	4	4	2	1

Issues for further meetings: young people and public transportation; speaker to return in a year to update the network on the Disabled Children Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Other comments:

“It could have gone on longer as the discussion session at the end proved fruitful”;
“good opportunity to network”.

Next Meeting: Children and young people’s experience of domestic violence in Bristol and South Gloucestershire, Tuesday 29 January 2008, 9.45am-12.15pm