



PARENT PARTNERSHIP SERVICE

**Executive Summary
2008-09**

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What do Parent Partnership Services do?

Parent Partnership Services work with parents of children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to provide information, training, advice and support, to foster networking and collaboration and to inform and influence local SEN policy and practice. With the development of integrated Children's Services, some Parent Partnership Services are also providing other services to parents and/or are supporting parents of children and young people with other additional needs.

Background

It has been the service's practice to produce an annual report every year. For 2008/09 this has not been possible due to the long term absence of the services manager Sharon Camilletti. Sharon had been off work due to illness since 2 January 2009 which culminated in her decision to retire with effect from 31/10/09. During this time Bob Wilson, Assistant Parent Partnership Officer (APPO), has covered a proportion of the service manager's role supported by the Area Casework Team. The strategic parts of the role were covered, where possible, by Sharon Camilletti's line manager. A further part time Area caseworker will be employed shortly to increase capacity following Sharon's departure.

Casework

During 2008/09 the Parent Partnership Service had 321 cases. The figure for 2007/08 was 230. This is a 40% increase. A significant part is due to a higher number of requests from parents for help. It is also due to the more accurate statistics obtainable from our casework database as a result of revised methods of recording. In addition to this considerable increase in caseload the complexity of cases has continued to increase with the additional pressure on time this creates. This has impacted on the time available for recording and filing cases.

Fortunately this has become a lot easier since the provision of additional admin support from the end of the last academic year.

This year showed an increase in two particular areas of concern prompting parents to contact us, namely

1. school refusal - where pupils refuse to attend (school phobic etc)
2. pupils not in school but receiving temporary education.

These were identified by staff and also during supervision of casework. Prior to this year we did not identify these as reasons for parents to contact the service. As a result of their increase and to enable them to be identified and quantified in future we have created new parental referral categories for them and added them to the database to allow for future recording and analysis.

When a case is closed an evaluation is sent to the parent to allow them to comment anonymously about the help and support they received from the Parent Partnership Service. Feedback in terms of the support and advice provided by the Parent Partnership Service and their case co-ordinator was highly complimentary:

- 100% of evaluations said that the Sensitivity and Understanding of the PPS staff was either Very Good or Good – there were no unsatisfactory or satisfactory ratings
- 97% of evaluations said the usefulness of the information provided by the PPS staff was either Very Good or Good
- 97% of evaluations said the speed of the PPS response was either Very Good or Good – there were no Unsatisfactory and only one Satisfactory
- 97% of evaluations said the quality of information was Very good or Good – there were no Unsatisfactory and only one Satisfactory.

Parents feedback particularly raised concerns that:

- the situation had to deteriorate to such a degree before something was done
- long term the school may still not meet their child's needs
- no one had told them about the Parent Partnership Service and they wished they had known about us earlier.

Training

The Parent Partnership Service delivered the following training events based on needs identified by parents:

Conciliation Skills - for parents

The course aims to help parents to prepare for meetings with schools and local authorities, techniques to use when disagreements arise and ways to develop and maintain a constructive atmosphere within meetings. The training is based on the course we commissioned and ran for education professionals which has subsequently been delivered to many local authorities.

- Thursday 18/9/08 Meadows Centre, Cambridge
- Tuesday 24/2/09 Wood Green, Godmanchester
- Thursday 21/5/09 OASIS Centre, Wisbech

Makaton - for parents

Makaton is a sign language used by children and adults without or with very limited language.

Introduction course (parts 1 and 2)

- Wednesday 19/11/08 Coton Hall, Girton
- Wednesday 29/4/09 OASIS Centre, Wisbech

Introduction Course (parts 3 & 4)

- Tuesday 30/6/09 Meadows Centre, Cambridge

PPS/SAS Coffee mornings - for parents

- Tuesday 2/12/08 Wood Green, Godmanchester
- Thursday 19/3/09 CPDC
- Thursday 11/6/09 YPM, March

These events are organised by the Parent Partnership Service to allow parents and carers of children and young people who are undergoing statutory assessment to have the process explained to them and their questions answered by staff from the Student Assessment Service.

PPS Road Shows – for parents and practitioners

Each Road Show has four seminars on a different topic related to SEN. Each seminar is presented by someone from the local authority or the Health Service. Seminars last year were

- SEN and Transitions
- Siblings of SEN children
- SEN Code of Practice
- Dyspraxia
- Dealing with conflict and talking to children (0-10)
- Connexions.

Each year the Road Show visits all three Areas in Cambridgeshire. The dates and venues for 2008/09 were

- Thursday 27/11/08 Meadows Centre, Cambridge
- Tuesday 10/3/09 Wood Green, Godmanchester
- Thursday 2/7/09 Trinity Hall, March

Maintaining this level of training has been very difficult due to the pressure the APPO was under but because of the positive feedback from parents and practitioners who attended every effort was made to ensure its continued provision. The anonymous evaluations completed at the end of each session showed a high level of satisfaction with the training provided. Requests for something similar to be provided but covering the subject in greater detail were often included in the feedback.

PPS Website

The PPS website had a total of 10,097 hits during the period September 2008 to July 2009. Although this is a very high number of views the figure for 2007/08 was 13,123. This is a decrease of 23%. This is probably due to the fact that it was not possible to update the website as frequently as was the case in previous years.

PPS Newsletter

Currently 8,458 copies are produced, an increase of 870 or 11% on the previous year. The move to a more factual and informative style has been well received with parents notifying us of their changes of address specifically so that they can continue to receive copies. Several schools have also requested additional copies to pass on to parents and carers of children with special educational needs.

Partnership Working

Partnership working is a vital part of Parent Partnership Services work and staff have continued to develop fellow practitioners knowledge of the service and foster good working relationships with them. Partnership Service staff cover the following Areas

- Bob Wilson – Huntingdonshire
- Peter Dawson – Cambridge City and South Cambs
- Juliet Greer – Fenland and East Cambs.

Each member of staff will visit the Locality Teams in their area once a year to speak about the role of the Parent Partnership Service. This is particularly important if there are new locality team members in post, as well as to inform them of new Parent Partnership Service initiatives and training courses.

The Service is represented on the Children with Additional Needs (CAN) Lunches planning group. This group holds meetings for practitioners in all three Areas of the county to facilitate networking and also to allow speakers from Educational, Social Care and Health Services to explain their role to facilitate partnership working and help promote more effective working practices.

Staff have also attended other networking and information events for parents and practitioners where time has allowed and where it has been an efficient use of resources. The publicity of the service and the good working relationships this has engendered has proved to be beneficial in terms of the numbers of parents contacting the service after advice from professionals and the efficient management and resolution of casework.

Transition Information Advice

The local authority has a statutory duty to provide Transition Information Advice (TIA) or Choice Advice. Transition Information Advice is split between Fleur Kerrecoe who started in March 2009 and Peter Dawson who is a member of the Parent Partnership Service. These posts were situated within the Parent Partnership Service as like the Parent Partnership they are required to provide an arms length and impartial service. Fleur provides support to parents and carers of children without SEN as well as promoting the service, writing and distributing literature and arranging events and training. Peter Dawson provides support to parents of children with special educational needs.

In the short time she has been in post Fleur has

- written to all schools informing them of her appointment and sent them copies of her leaflet for parents and carers explaining her role and the services she offers
- spoke to various groups about her role to publicise the nature of her work
- developed good working relationships with the Admissions Team
- organised five free transition events, one in each District of the county, for parents of year six children, year five if they have a statement of special educational needs. These will explain the process and the choices involved in the move from primary to secondary school. In addition the educational psychology service will give a talk advising parents how to support their child during the process. Other services involved are Admissions, Student Assessment and Support for Learning all of whom will speak about their role in the process.
- issued a year planner to all year six parents giving details of the various admissions deadlines and the contact details of the various departments involved in the admissions process

Schools – evaluation of PPS work

The PPS sends anonymous evaluation forms to all Cambridgeshire County Council schools, including pre schools, every year.

From this feedback:

- all of the schools that contacted the Parent Partnership Service found the advice and or support they received appropriate and useful
- 98% of them found the courses we ran useful.

Conclusion

It has been a difficult year for the Parent Partnership Service due to staff shortages and an increase in casework but despite this the evaluations from parents and professionals involved with our service have remained very positive. One Headteacher commented that even when they as a school had “got things wrong”, involving the Parent Partnership Service enabled a far more satisfactory conclusion to be reached. Partnership working has increased with more information being made available to parents and carers of children with special educational needs enabling them to make better informed decisions about their child’s education.