



# Parent Conference

North Staffs Hotel

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2009

Summary Report






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**'As a parent I will now always speak up because if nobody realises that there are gaps in services how can they put these services into use or in their plans?' Parent at the event**

## Why Have a Parent Consultation Event?

The City vision for the children of Stoke on Trent is to have a good life and be free from harm while inspired to achieve their potential. To make this happen the Children and Young People's Trust expects everyone to work together to meet the needs of children, young people and their families. The six identified priorities for the City are measured under the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes and are as follows:

-  Be Healthy
-  Be Safe
-  Enjoy and Achieve
-  Make a Positive Contribution
-  Achieve Economic Wellbeing

To ensure that the City provides services that parents want, the Children and Young People's Trust needs to consult with them not only around the current priorities but more importantly about what they would like to see as future priorities to ensure that the vision is achieved.

This event brought together parents and practitioners from across a variety of agencies to consult on the current and future priorities.

**The event was attended by 100 parents, 52 practitioners and 17 organisations provided displays about their services.**

As this was an event for parents and childcare is one of the biggest barriers to parental participation, we provided a free crèche. This was delivered in partnership with Thomas Boughey Children's Centre who are also the first Children's Centre to receive Parent Charter Status (please see full report for details)

### Speakers:

 **Rob Johnstone – Parent Commissioner**

Rob opened the event and spoke about the Parenting Commissioner role, what parents can expect from the City in relation to support and services and the importance of parents in shaping service provision and delivery.

 **Annalise and Anthony – Parents from The Crescent Children's Centre**

Both parents spoke about their personal journeys since engaging with services and their experiences along the way.

 **Elizabeth Goldstraw – Children and Young People's Trust Manager**

Elizabeth spoke about the Every Child Matters 5 Outcomes, the Children and Young People's Trust and how the outcomes from the day would shape future plans.



## **Workshops:**

### **Be Healthy**

This work shop was delivered by Carol Salt – Children’s Centres Services Manager – and focused on the ‘Be Healthy’ outcome and what this outcome means for parents and their children and young people around physical health.

The group were given information sheets to look at and a discussion around the topics on the sheet was conducted by parents and their views were recorded (please see full report). Sugar, fat, meal sizes, and active families were also discussed and the views and opinions recorded.

The main points that came out of this workshop were that while cook and eat sessions, healthy recipe options, free school meals and clear food labels were important to parents there were concerns about the vast number of take-aways, national (not local) advertising, lack of simple education around food and limited fast food labelling.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Universal Services: -**

- ✚ Parents want community events that promote healthy eating and demonstrations so they can have a go
- ✚ Cook and Eat sessions in community venues
- ✚ More activities in the city

#### **Health Visitors:**

- ✚ Parents would like healthy food information/training for all new parents

#### **Schools:**

- ✚ Re-introduce Home Economics in all secondary schools as a compulsory module and focus on health eating
- ✚ Encourage healthy options in the canteen with a reward card or discounted healthy meals to encourage children to take this option
- ✚ Focus on healthy eating in the early years

#### **City Council:**

- ✚ Free travel to parks and leisure centres
- ✚ Parks to be made safe so parents can take their children there to exercise and play
- ✚ Discounts for all families to engage in leisure activities and not just those on benefits, this is not inclusive.
- ✚ Develop an alternative to the old SPACE scheme.

### **Stay Safe:**

This workshop was delivered by Stewart Bray – Head of Access and Attendance Services and Karen Long – Parent Engagement Partnership Worker and looked at the ‘Stay Safe’ outcome. The discussions focussed on what staying safe means to parents, what is missing in the current plan and what parents want to see in the future.

The main points to come out of the workshop were that parents are scared for the safety of their children in a variety of different settings including on the roads, in the parks, in the communities that they live and in the schools they attend.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Local Safeguarding Board:**

- ✚ Provide help and information about computer safety for parents in making their computers safe and safeguarding who their children speak to online
- ✚ Offer Safeguarding training for all parents to access if they so wish
- ✚ Assessments of children in need done sooner and resources made available to meet the needs of every child that falls in this bracket

#### **City Council:**

- ✚ More CCTV – Parents feel children are not safe walking to school. E.g. bullying, safe areas to cross the roads, cars speeding
- ✚ Provide an alternative to the SPACE schemes

#### **Police:**

- ✚ Provide a visible police presence or increased protection in parks where children play as parents feel children are not safe in parks due to the increasing number / awareness of sex offenders

#### **Benefits Agency:**

- ✚ Look at how some benefits could be restructured to encourage parents who have alcohol and drugs problems, encouraging them to kick their habits and demonstrates that you don't get 'rewarded' for having an addiction

#### **Schools:**

- ✚ Ensure parents are actively involved in the development and implementation of 'anti bullying' policies
- ✚ Develop active parent boards in ALL schools
- ✚ Ensure schools are consistent –the perception is bad behaviour is rewarded
- ✚ Ensure parents have access to all school policies and are able to speak to the relevant member of staff when they have concerns, parents feel they are always 'fobbed off'

#### **Enjoy and Achieve:**

This workshop was delivered by Elizabeth Goldstraw – Children and Young People's Trust Manager and Kay Price – Cluster 3 Development Manager

The workshop focused on the Enjoy and Achieve outcome, what was important to parents and what they would like to see in the future.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Schools:**

- ✚ Improve relationships and communication with parents as parents feel that some schools do not speak to parents effectively

- ✚ Provide more information around changes to the Special Schools - parents want to know what has been done to alleviate this problem and their concerns as there are concerns with the special schools closing that SEN children will suffer in mainstream schools
- ✚ Provide more support for boys who have no interest in reading.
- ✚ Provide more school club activities and awareness programmes re ethnic groups to deal with integrating/working and living better in communities.
- ✚ Look at the focus within schools, parents feel the focus is on children who are not doing so well and those doing okay miss out

### **Universal:**

- ✚ Provide more family learning opportunities
- ✚ Ensure Learning Mentors and Home School Link Workers, Integrated Family Support Workers are introduced to the children as well as the parents at the outset
- ✚ Provide awareness programmes re ethnic groups to deal with integrating/working and living better in communities.

### **Youth Services:**

- ✚ Provide more for 11 – 15 year olds in term-time, evenings and weekends.
- ✚ Provide more activities that are fun but also have markers for achievement e.g. Duke of Edinburgh, life skills.

### **Making a Positive Contribution**

This workshop was delivered by Sue Thomas – Champion 4 Children – and Margaret Elks – Engagement Development Worker. It looked at the parents understanding of Positive Contribution, what services parents felt that they needed, what their goals were and what they would like to see from Trust partners:

### **Recommendations:**

#### **City Council:**

- ✚ Look at replacing the SPACE scheme as it is missed
- ✚ Fund more counselling services –waiting lists are so long that mental health difficulties can increase while waiting and resulting in the problem being harder to deal with when the appointment finally comes through
- ✚ Provide more staff on the telephones at Parent Direct to enable better access

#### **Universal:**

- ✚ Ensure other parenting courses readily on offer apart from Triple P
- ✚ Ensure crèche places/funding so that parents can engage in education and support their children's learning as well as their own
- ✚ Make parents feel that asking for support is a positive thing – change the perception, parents feel like they are failing when they are referred for help
- ✚ Develop more peer support from people who have been through what they have and fully understand
- ✚ Develop positive role models in Stoke on Trent to encourage parents and young people
- ✚ Develop support networks 'just to talk'

#### **Police and Youth Offending:**

- ✚ Spend more time in schools, show young people and parents the impact that making a positive contribution has on society and show the consequences of what happens when people don't

#### **CAMHS:**

- ✚ Provide support with mental health needs: clear diagnosis, holistic family work and support after discharge

#### **Schools:**

- ✚ Develop more after school clubs that teach children and young people the importance of making a positive contribution through fun and interactive activities
- ✚ Develop a structure that values the 'average' child and ensures that it isn't the worst behaved children that get the attention, rewards and days out

#### **Achieving Economic Wellbeing**

This workshop was delivered by Maira Foster – Team Leader, Stoke Western Connexions – and focused on what economic wellbeing means to parents and how the current climate will affect children and their prospects. Parents were asked what they felt we were doing well (please see full report), what isn't so effective and what needs to be done differently

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✚ Give young people realistic career advice about their options that match availability of employment in this area as well as realistic salary expectations for their choices
- ✚ Ensure clients with disabilities don't feel that they get pushed to the back of the queue / get the same opportunities for employment / get bullied

#### **Schools:**

- ✚ Ensure work experience is relevant to what the young person thinks they would like to do as a career; parents feel that the school needs to take this seriously.
- ✚ Ensure that, if the mentor service is available to all students then the staff availability reflects this
- ✚ Develop mechanisms to enable young people to report bullying more easily as children and young people are frightened to report bullying and the anti bullying policies are not working
- ✚ Ensure that parents do not feel 'blamed' for their children's behaviour when what they actually need is some help and support, if parents have no self esteem then they will struggle to support their children – don't make them feel worse
- ✚ Develop discipline within schools that enables teachers to command respect so students know there will be major consequences to their actions
- ✚ Develop mechanisms that support parents to learn and develop - parents need educating too!

#### **Parents identified some main themes arising from all the workshops:**

- Bullying
- Park safety
- Training for parents
- Policing the community (safety)

- The engagement of schools with parents
- Positive role models
- The SPACE programme

These themes will be taken along to our next event and parents will be asked if they agree / disagree with them. This will give a clearer picture of just what the priorities really are for parents in the City.

**All workshops and the event as a whole were evaluated to inform future practice:**

93% of parents were happy with the pace and delivery style of the conference and 100% were happy with the speakers and the topics covered. (Please see full report for all evaluation responses)

**Main points of the evaluations:**

*“Good information sharing, parents see for themselves what’s going on and who they can speak to”*

*“Attend as there is a wealth of information available and your opportunity to have your say about children and young people’s services (and parent / carers)”*

*“Quality opportunity to give parents some involvement in an environment which obviously values them”*

*“Do attend, great to get so many parents together to talk about their needs”*

**And finally.....**

Parental feedback from this event has raised a lot of issues and ideas; the next event will build on this and take all parental feedback into account. The issues raised will be fed through to the relevant services/organisations/departments and responses sought.

If you would like to receive regular information/updates about the consultation and training events that we deliver please get in touch...

For a full copy of the report, including presentations, speaker and workshop information please contact me, my details are as follows...



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