

## INFORMATION DAY - 7 JULY 2011

Below are the answers to questions noted at the event.

---

### ABOUT ASSESSMENT

**Access to respite is very difficult for under 8's, partly because of the problems accessing a social care assessment. How can this be made easier?**

**What are you doing about understanding the needs of parent carers of disabled children? Some parents have reported a negative response on first contact.**

**We have been assessed and turned down for funding for direct payments (after crossroads finished) it seems our child is too well looked after. What happens when we get too exhausted?**

*Response by Sonia Eager - Practice Manager Duty & Assessment and Short Break & Fostering - Children's Disability Services 01323 466614/466030*

Children Disability Services social work teams work with Children who have severe or complex disabilities. For children who do not have a social worker the access / contact point is through Children's Disability Duty and Assessment team. (CDS DAT)

Referrals to the duty team, either from professionals or self referrals from families are screened by the duty social worker and a decision regarding whether to undertake an assessment is made by the practice manager within 24 hours of the referral being made.

The screening social worker will obtain information that confirms whether your child has a severe disability or a complex medical need. . This will usually be done by accessing your child's statement of educational needs from our SEN colleagues or requesting a copy of your child's pediatricians diagnosis. If your child does not have a severe or complex disability we will offer you information and advice about targeted services including information about short breaks that can be accessed without an assessment or we will contact our colleagues in Children's Services locality duty and assessment teams to ensure that the referral for an assessment can be considered by them. For children with more moderate levels of disability our colleagues in locality will be able to offer an assessment of need.

East Sussex County Council have commissioned a number of short break services which can be accessed directly by families without the need for a social care assessment, and have also supported local community resources to be more accessible for children with disabilities. The duty worker will therefore always consider with you whether these services could meet your child's needs. If your child has a severe disability or complex medical needs an assessment of need will be required if specialist services are to be considered.

When a decision has been made to undertake an assessment this will be undertaken under the Framework for Assessing Children in Need and their Families. Current government guidelines require an initial assessment to be undertaken within seven working days or a core assessment to be undertaken within thirty-five working days. For most children an initial assessment is all that will be required. A core assessment will be

undertaken if there are child protection concerns; if the family situation is complex or if your child has complex medical needs. The assessment of need will assess your child's needs; your ability to meet those needs and family and environmental factors that impact upon you as a family.

The assessment will provide an analysis of your child's needs and will make recommendations regarding how those needs might be met. Community or targeted services might be recommended or exploration of further services might be recommended. Should referrals need to be considered to Children's Disability Services these will be need to be considered by a Resource Panel.

Direct Payments is one of a range of specialist services and are one way of meeting an assessed need. Children's Disability Services might consider that a service other than direct payments is more appropriate to meet an assessed. In considering whether direct payments is appropriate we always need to be confident that families have the time and capacity to manage the administration of direct payments; undertake a risk assessment to ensure that your child and any worker employed by you via a direct payment can be kept safe and ensure that direct payment is the best way of meeting an assessed need. Direct payments cannot currently be used to fund a service directly provided by East Sussex.

---

## **ABOUT INDIVIDUAL BUDGETS**

*Response by Bernadette Dawes – Development Manager – Short Breaks & Individual Budgets 01273 481749*

### **Will assessment take the whole family into account?**

Yes, however the child's needs are most prominent.

### **Does family income have an influence?**

No

### **Will there be one single assessment?**

Not at the moment, however, we are working towards this.

### **What about the child's voice in deciding about developing their support plan?**

The child's hopes and aspirations will help develop the plan. We want young people to help decide what will help them achieve their aspirations.

### **Short breaks**

#### **Do you need a diagnosis to have a short break?**

Not necessarily, but there are eligibility criteria

[www.eastsussex.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/specialneeds/childrenwithadisability/shortbreaks/default.htm](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/specialneeds/childrenwithadisability/shortbreaks/default.htm)

---

## SERVICES REACHING FAMILIES

### **Keyworking has worked really well - what are the plans to extent this?**

*Response by Julie Morehead – Early Support Co-ordinator – 01323 747470*

As you know, Early Support is a national programme which provides key worker support to families of preschool aged children. In East Sussex we were fortunate to be a government pathfinder, which led to us embedding Early Support into our Children's Services back in 2005. This means that we are now an established service, which has shown to provide good outcomes for the families we work with. It is also an effective way to work across services, to share information, reduce duplication and plan for children, with their families at the centre of what we do.

There is currently no national key worker programme which leads on beyond Early Support, but there are organisations such as Care Co-ordination Network UK (CCNUK) which lobby for key working throughout childhood and into adulthood.

In East Sussex we have noted parental request for an ongoing key worker service. Parents have told us that they like having a person they know, who knows their child and family and who will work with them when they need it. Parents tell us that they are unlikely to need support all the time, but that there can be times of change which increase the pressures on them, when they would like to be able to contact a familiar person for support and advice. Parents also tell us that they value have co-ordinated multi agency meetings which focus on the issues that are important to them and their child.

Alongside this feedback from parents, we are currently considering the content and implications for practice of the government's SEN Green paper, which frequently refers to key worker support.

We are unable to say at the moment that we will be able to extend our key working service; we all know these are difficult financial times, but we are committed to working with the families to develop services with their involvement.

We welcome parent/carer feedback at our Early Support parent forum meetings, so although we cannot guarantee that everything families ask for can or will happen, we do commit to considering all the views and comments we receive as our service develops. For further information about Early Support, please do contact me.

---

## **EQUAL ACCESS TO SERVICES**

*Response by Charlotte Papworth, Equality and Participation Team, Children's Services  
01323 747462*

### **How can we improve geographical equity in access to services?**

The new integrated therapies service will help. Some services are concentrated where there is most need or most concentrated population. If you notice a gap in services for under 5's please contact your local children's centre.

### **What about people who do not speak English?**

Children's services will provide interpreters if necessary for families to access services. Children's services are constantly reviewing their written information to make sure it is more readable for families with English as an additional language (EAL), by using more pictures and using plain English. Written information will also be translated on request.

Children's centres have community development workers and Family Outreach Workers who work to engage with all members of the community, e.g. children's centre staff regularly attend the Links project a project for asylum seekers and refugees in St Leonards to signpost them and link them into children's centre support.

There is an English as an Additional Language (EAL) team who work supporting schools and early years settings. The team work to ensure inclusion and improved achievement for those children supported by the service. The Service can give advice and training on good practice, as well as loan artifacts, books and curriculum materials to schools and settings.

The EAL Team that supports schools comprises peripatetic teachers and Bilingual Support Officers (BSOs). BSOs work with pupils in their home language.

Children's centres have also worked closely with the EAL early years workers to develop good practice around making services more welcoming and accessible for EAL families.

### **Resources to improve understanding of disability**

The Disability Images Pack has been circulated to all schools in the county and contains a wide range of advice, background information and guidance for teachers on how to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.

It contains recommendations for schools on developing a whole school approach and also sample lesson plans that can be used to raise topics such as discrimination, prejudice, stereo-typing and bullying.

A CD-rom contained in the pack includes positive photographs and images of local children and young people which schools can use in publicity material and displays.

The pack was compiled with input from a disability equality specialist, staff, parents, teachers and young people, and is one of a number of similar resources that have been produced to assist schools to meet their equality duties. Previous packs have covered issues such as cultural diversity, gender stereotyping and sexual orientation.

For information contact Charlotte Papworth, Equality and Participation Team, Children's Services – email: [charlotte.papworth@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:charlotte.papworth@eastsussex.gov.uk)

---

## **LIBRARY SERVICE**

*Response from Jacqui Richardson – Senior Library Assistant – Outreach  
01323 463881*

### **Do you go into schools to share these (sensory) books?**

There should be someone in each area of the county (the library service divides into four areas north, south, east and west!) who can go into school settings or nurseries etc to run bag book sessions. We can also run story sessions in the library. The bag books are available for individual loan - they are kept at our county store and can be reserved free of charge.

### **Does the library have books to inform other children about disabilities?**

Unfortunately we do not currently hold a lot of stock about disability awareness for children. If anyone knows of any really good books on the subject we can put them forward as stock suggestions to purchase.

*Response from Sue Stevens – Bookstart Project Manager – 01323 415324*

Bookstart also provide two leaflets 'Bookstart - Finding Inclusive Books' and 'Bookstart - Finding Books to suit different needs'. These include suggested books for children aged 0-5 which show positive images of disabled characters. There are books for use with other types of disability, eg: Downs syndrome, autism, etc

There will be an article in the January edition of the Parent Voice newsletter with more information about sensory books.

---

## HOW DO PARENTS GET INFORMATION ABOUT SERVICES

*Response by Viv Oliver – Parent Partnership & Family Information Service Manager 01273 481279*

The East Sussex website is a good source of initial information-it's being improved all the time in response to customer feedback.

<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/specialneeds/childrenwithadisability/default.htm>

The family information service (0345 6080192)/parentlink (01273 481172) take calls from parents and respond to questions that will tell parents about services relevant to them. We will work with parents and people who work with families to deliver information in the most effective way

The **PARENT INFORMATION CONTACTS** (PICs) are trained to be able to research services and sources of support as well as promoting services.

The Parent Voice newsletter has been well received as a good source of information about support available.

We are keen to relaunch the disability register which will further improve information for families.

All staff working with families should to know about what's around and this is down to induction and ongoing training.

Information events such as today can also help get the word out.

We are continually working with services to make sure their information is accessible and clear about what the service offers and who it is for.

**STOP PRESS** - We will be working with Contact A Family who have an exciting project to work with SENCOs and parents to improve information. Details will be in the January edition of the PARENT VOICE newsletter.

---

## **WHY CAN'T SOME OF THE 23million IN ES RESERVES BE USED TO PREVENT REDUCTIONS IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES?**

Excluding balances held by Schools, the Council maintains reserves for a number of defined purposes and these are kept under review by County Council members. In excess of £45m was used to balance the County budget in 2011/12 and supported departments and services across the Council. However it is important to note that the use of reserves is a one off measure and does not provide continuous year on year funding.

East Sussex County Council has always been, and continues to be, very supportive of services for disabled children and their families and it spends a lot of its funding on this when compared to other similar authorities. Clearly in these difficult financial times hard decisions have to be made about how to prioritise budgets but disabled children and their families in East Sussex have the strong support of elected council members from all political parties.

---

## **THERAPIES** (answers to questions below to follow)

*Response by Suki Ahsam - CITS Operations Manager East & Children's Professional Lead SLT 01424 728360*

**How can parents access funding for therapies outside the health service? Will personal budgets allow for this?**

**Where children are assessed as needing a service it is anticipated that personal budgets will be able to fund therapies.**

**Why do therapists 'sign off' when children are clearly not able to do what other children of a similar age are doing and their condition is life long?**

The aim of therapy is not necessarily to cure and because of this there are a number of discharge criteria that allow for this.

- a child has achieved their current potential
- a child's skills are delayed but in line with other areas of their development and general learning ability and there is evidence of ongoing progress
- a child is effectively supported by a wider team of professionals e.g. within a special school
- the child's difficulty would not respond to therapy

These criteria recognise that therapy needs to have functionality at its core, that there is a lot of overlap of skills (e.g. specialist language teachers or ASD support workers) and that the need for therapy may come and go across the span of a child's development. For example, a child with learning disability may be unmotivated to improve their speech intelligibility at the age of 7/8. It is likely that progress will therefore be minimal – in slightly older children progress on communication goals is often powerfully related to their

motivation levels. At this stage in the child's development it would probably be best to ensure school and home strategies are in place and not persist with this work. However, aged 16, the same young person may once again become motivated to work on their intelligibility because they are about to leave school, start College and want to make themselves understood. This would then be an appropriate time to revisit intelligibility with the young person and they would be likely to make better progress because of their motivation.

We never sign off a child indefinitely – the path is always open for a review in the future where a specific area of skill development could be usefully supported through a period of therapy.

### **Why do we change therapists so often?**

The Children's Integrated Therapy Service currently employs well over 100 therapists across East Sussex. Therapies have many specialised areas, e.g. working with eating & drinking disorders or sensory processing. We need to make sure we have the right therapist seeing the right child at the right stage of treatment and this can be a complex planning process.

We aim to cover all our areas as fully as possible, taking into account significant issues such as maternity, vacancy and sickness which all impact on staffing as well as our skill-mix. It can take anything from 3-6 months to fill a vacancy. Vital clearances such as CRB impact on this timeframe. We are developing a Bank of therapists to enable us to fill vacancy more effectively for interim periods. The benefit here is that caseloads do not remain unmanned as they used to and more children are seen but the downside of creating this flexibility is more frequent changes in therapy staff. There is no easy way of changing this but we try hard to minimise changes in staff where we can.

Parents should be reassured that we keep detailed case-notes for all of our children and that where possible we ensure that therapists hand over to each other directly