



# Children's Services Programme – July / August Briefing Note

27/07/2007

## Projects owned by the County, Unitary and Health Authorities in the South West and supported by the South West Centre of Excellence

### Summary

This is one of a regular series of briefing notes for those involved in Children's Services projects in the South West. Please forward it to any other interested parties.

The DfES (now DCSF) pilot commissioning projects are getting underway across the country and our Collaborative Commissioning Support Unit (CCSU) is being established. The Provider Forum on 8th June was well attended and lively. Much has happened on the Northern Group Residential Tender, the Peninsula Project, and the SEN projects and with the Cross Regional Placement database (CRPD)

### Key People

The Commissioning Forum membership address list is on the SWCoE website.

We congratulate Brian Grady of Devon on winning the prestigious LGA Local Government Worker of the Year award in the leadership category for his innovative work on commissioning Children's Centres.

Congratulations are also due to Vince Clark (Torbay), Delia Amos (Poole), Andrew Brocklehurst (Cornwall), Katie Mulford (Devon) and Jane Routledge (N Somerset) on completing the Bath University Developing Supply Strategy course.

We welcome Hilary Major as Placement Manager and Project Leader for Somerset, and Katherine Kedge, Dorset Commissioning and Contract Manager.



## Projects

### Commissioning Forum:

The next meeting is on Friday 21st September at the Cleve Hotel and Country Club.

### Children's Services Supply Base Management System (CRPD)

The Cross Regional Steering Group met in June and the Exceptional Fees consultation group in July. The Exceptional Fee process for 2007 is complete with data available to members, and again savings have been made on fee increases and on administration. The annual review meeting agreed to begin discussions on how to reduce the requirement for exceptional fee increase. Participating authorities have all supplied their placement information (thank you for a quick and efficient response) and allocations for next year will be made shortly.

### Provider Forum

The Forum met on 8th June at the Rookery Manor Hotel, Weston and both Providers and Local Authorities were well represented. Brian Jones of the SENAD group was elected as chair. Ben Arora of the DCSF market and commissioning group gave the keynote address on "Care Matters". The working groups met and committed themselves to an action plan for the forthcoming year. (Outcomes: Tracy de Bernhardt Dunkin, SW School & College; Placement Processes: Ruth Bayard, Regard Partnership; Contracting: Brian Jones, SENAD group; Placement Support: Paul Mills, Woodside Foster Care; and Needs Analysis, Angela Geer, Care UK).

The next meeting is on Friday 16th November at the Cleve Hotel and Country Club, Wellington.

### Development and Piloting of Model Partnerships with Providers

The Northern Group (seven authorities) received over 40 expressions of interest in their tender for a call-off contract for Residential Home provision. Selected Providers then attended a briefing session on the formal invitation to tender which went out in July.

The Peninsular Placement Tendering Group has received additional funding following the DfES bid to consolidate work so far and extend to other activities. Stage 1 has already saved over £500k. Cornwall will tender most placements by September with Plymouth & Somerset following before the end of the year. A tender invitation is going out via the Devon portal to extend the pre-qualified suppliers list. Funding will allow consolidation of processes including IT systems, and the evaluation of learning from the process to inform better commissioning. Somerset are leading the application and development of the process to SEN residential school placements. It is likely that North Somerset will join in this activity.

Seven authorities met on 13th June and were enthusiastic about scoping a SEN residential schools placement project sponsored by the SWCoE. Information is being gathered for a further meeting in September when the project will get underway.

## And Also

The National Residential Contract Terms & Conditions group met on 20th June and resolved outstanding issues. The outcome based specification is being revised to make it easier to use and monitor. DCSF have funded completion of the work with a target to launch in September.

The Regional Commissioning Pilots Steering group met on 23rd July and it became clear how much activity is going on across the country – not least in the South West! Claire Lazarus formerly of the Regional Partnerships is coordinating this work.

### Information on the Website:

Keep looking at the Children's Services information on [www.swce.gov.uk](http://www.swce.gov.uk). You will find that there has been a major revamp of the layout which will be followed by revision of the content. We now have our own Children's Services work stream area as well as a Children's Services members' area accessible by password.

On the home page under News and Newsletters you will find this briefing note.

In Work stream Areas under Children's Services you will find:

- A tab giving Children's commissioning contacts and areas of good practice
- Access to documents in National Requirements and Guidance such as the DfES Joint Commissioning Guidance, the Green Paper: Care Matters, and the Audit Commission Report on OOA Placements for SEN
- Particularly recommended is "a Regional Framework to Support Commissioning" from East Midlands which is likely to be extended nationally
- An increasing number of Case Studies from the region

In the Members Section other documents relating to the Programme can be found. The contact is below if you need the password. Currently the member's area is restricted to Local authorities.

Please let me know if you have comments on the website or anything that would be particularly useful to include.

### Contact

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