



Children's Services Programme – March Briefing Note

28/02/2007

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 Directors of Children's Services met at their annual conference in February and welcomed the proposal to set up of a Collaborative Commissioning Support Unit. The DfES has circulated a vision paper on Pilot Regional Commissioning Units asking for bids for funding. The draft National Residential Contract is now out for consultation. The Peninsular held their first Provider day.

Key People

We welcome Angela Geer to the Provider Forum Steering Group and as chair of the Needs Analysis working group.

Jeanette Young is moving into other activities following Little Islands becoming part of Care UK.

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

Projects

Directors of Children's Services will be talking to representatives on the **South West Regional Commissioning Forum for Children's Services** to establish perspectives on impact of the work so far and what is required locally, and will report back by 16th March. This recognises the need for clearly identified levels including regional, sub-regional and local authority. This consultation will inform the business plan and governance arrangements for a proposed South West Collaborative Commissioning Support Unit and a bid for funding to the DfES following their Regional Commissioning vision paper. Colin Diamond will be the lead contact for this activity with John Lees seeking ideas and comments for a deadline of 16th April. **The next meeting of the Commissioning Forum is on 18th May.**

Children's Services Supply Base Management System (CRPD)



10 authorities have now joined the CRPD which is an on-line searchable list of Residential Homes and Independent & Non-maintained Residential Special Schools with associated Monitoring and Exceptional Fee Increase processes. A small group met in February to begin updating and improving the system during 2007. Telephone training will take place in March for lead users of the system in each authority. Funding has been retained within the Children's Services programme for further development of information systems as the requirements for management decision making become clearer.

Provider Forum

A steering group meeting will take place in March to plan the next meeting and to further the activities of the working groups. (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 of the Provider forum is on 8th June** and it is hoped each authority will send at least one representative who would have an interest in working with one of the groups.

Development and Piloting of Model Partnerships with Providers

The Northern Group (Swindon) of seven authorities has drafted the Gateway 1 report, the first step in a joint tender for a call-off contract to meet needs for Residential Home provision. In the Peninsula rolling out of pre-qualification tendering to Torbay and Cornwall continues and will now be joined by Plymouth. Replies to the pre-qualification questionnaire are being evaluated and a Provider Day was held in February. A seminar on the benefits being achieved in the Peninsula is being planned and there is a lot of interest from outside the region. Discussions continue with a number of authorities regarding a project around Residential Special Schools and scoping continues based on Somerset. The recent Audit Commission report is helping this activity and has confirmed our initial thoughts.

And Also

The National Residential Contract is out for consultation. Provider events are being held on 1st March in Liverpool and 6th March in Oxford. Local authorities are asked to respond to a questionnaire which should have been received by the usual contacts. Nick Norris has offered to coordinate in the South West – please copy him on any responses. **THIS IS URGENT**, the consultation period ends on 16th March.

Forthcoming events include:

The launch of the South West Regional Strategic Implementation Plan for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Learning Disabilities on the morning of Thursday 8th March 2007 at The Rookery Manor, near Weston-super-Mare.

A workshop on the draft National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Commissioning, Procurement and Contracting for Adults, Young People's and Children's Social Care Workforces on the 22nd March at Gloucestershire Cricket Ground, Bristol.

Information on the Website:

Keep looking at the Children's Services information on the South West Centre of Excellence Website. Go to www.swce.gov.uk.

On the public pages you will find:

- This briefing note
- A tab giving Children's commissioning contacts and areas of good practice
- Access to documents such as the DfES Joint Commissioning Guidance, the guides to Fairer Contracting and to Procuring Care and Support Services, and the Green Paper: Care Matters. These and others are in a section headed National Requirements and Guidance, Children's Services.
- **New this month:** the Audit Commission Report on Out of Authority Placements for Special Educational Needs; and in SW Case Studies, "Changing Children's Services at Bournemouth Borough Council".

In the Members Section many other documents relating to the Programme can be found. The contact is below if you need the password.

Contact

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