



Annual Report

April 2009-April 2010

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Introduction

Welcome to the Devon Parent Partnership Service (which we will refer to in this report as DPPS) Annual Report for 2009-10. By the contributions in the annual report we hope to give you an insight into what we have been busy doing over the last year, explain how the service has grown and changed during the year, celebrate successes, highlight areas for improvement and plans for the future. There are contributions from all the staff, from some of our newly trained Independent Parental Supporters (IPS) and from our service users.

DPPS uses the DSCF national document 'Exemplification of minimum standards for PPS and Local Authorities' as the tool for planning service delivery and evaluation. Compliance with the standards range from Non-Compliant to Best Practice in seven areas and DPPS completes annually the National Benchmarking audit with the aim of raising the service into at least good practice in all areas. The benchmarking statistics are collected in October and the national statistics quoted in this report relate to the data for 2008-09. DPPS evaluates itself against these standards and will use the eight areas as headings for this report.

- Funding and budget
- Management
- Working with parents
- Information and publicity
- Training, advice and support
- Networking and collaboration
- Informing and shaping local policy
- Location

The Devon Parent Partnership Team



Sue Brealey
Service manager

Debbie Wheeler
East Devon and Exeter

Cath Butland
West Devon

Liz Batchelor
South Devon

Karen Horsnell
North Devon

Georgie Cridland
Central Enquiry Line

Our team is small but we are enthusiastic and committed to serve the parents of the 22711 children with Special Educational Needs who attend the 368 schools in Devon by providing independent and impartial information, support and training.

Devon Parent Partnership Service Overview Map for 2009-2010

IPS
38 completed training ,
22 interviewed, CRB
checked
IPS working in South,
East and North Devon.
IPS Handbook written

Training
Sessions for parents
Sessions for
Governors, SENcos
Portage, SLTs
Some training for staff
Training
materials developed

Work with Parents
Database setup
Up to date confidential
records
Quicker response time
CAF and tribunal support
28% more referrals

Parents say the
DPPS Team is:
Caring
Knowledgeable
Supportive
Professional

DPPS Achievements 2009-2010

DPPS team say :
We are good at
Sharing
Prioritising
Challenging
Smiling

Information
Library reorganised and
catalogued
2 new leaflets printed
6 leaflets revised
Website revamped
Regular contribution to 4
newsletters

Management
Fully staffed team
Strategic Involvement
increasing
2 Key Policies written
Established central base
Raised PPS profile

Monitoring
National Benchmarking -met
more minimum standards
Questionnaire to parents
Evaluation of DPPS training
Steering Group plan initiated
Good links with Parent Forums
established

Area reports



**East & Mid Devon,
East Exeter**

Debbie Wheeler

This year I continue to find that there are not enough hours in the week! Increased parent and professional enquiries, the opportunity to attend more networking meetings and a desire to build my skills through further training, all continue to require careful balance.

Working with Parents

I have been directly supporting over 133 families with children who have additional educational needs across a wide range of difficulties. In the Autumn, many of these centred on very young children who were being excluded from school for behavioural issues. Several parents this year have required long, complex and intensive support which has taken a disproportionate amount of my time and in a couple of cases there have been safeguarding issues to address. I find many more of the cases are now involving multi-agency work and I have supported many families at CAF and JAT meetings. Due to the number of exclusions coming my way I have built up a very strong link with the EOTAS team.

I attend parent groups when I can and have also visited a number of Step by Step groups at the Children's Centres. I represented the DPPS at a parents' evening at Ellen Tinkham School.

Training, Advice & Support

I have attended/completed many training sessions including disability awareness, mediation, database, supervision skills (in-house and online), person centred reviews, safeguarding and data safety (partly complete). In addition, I observed the statementing panel at work.

I have delivered training to Teaching Assistants, governors, 2 cohorts of IPSs, speech and language therapists and parents.

Independent Parental Supporters

Training potential new IPSs on both the May and Autumn courses and doing the follow-up interviews was quite time intensive. I have held an IPS East group supervision meeting, plus an individual supervision meeting for a particularly active IPS. Unfortunately, a couple of IPSs who were active in Autumn 09 have had heavy work commitments in the Spring term so have not been active.

Whilst active IPSs have proved to add another layer of support to my area, the time commitment it takes to train them, communicate with them, support them, run supervision, inform them of updates on the case and record all conversations, can not be underestimated in the early stages. However, I believe they will be a very valuable resource for our service as their confidence and skills build.

Networking and Collaboration – Forming and Shaping Local Policy and Practice

I have found that I regularly have to send apologies to networking meetings due to the volume of parent work. This is disappointing because I find AXS and Parenting Network meetings invaluable for making new contacts, speaking to PSAs, finding out what services are available for our parents and promoting PPS.

However, when I am able I do still attend PCV forums, Parenting Network meetings, parent support groups, AXS pathway meetings, SENCO groups and, in my new role, Children's Trust meetings. I continue to build excellent contacts across a wide range of other services and consider this to be one of my strengths. This is also an area that is creating more referrals.

Information and Publicity

Publicity

I would like to be much more proactive with regards to promoting our service at events and writing more articles for more newsletters and magazines – both consumer and professional. However, time usually only allows for a more reactive response to this. I have written articles for many professional magazines and newsletters and continue to write for the DiscPlus newsletter.

Web Site

I met with the web site designer to make some significant changes. The web site now looks much better and is a lot more user-friendly but there are still many changes I would like to make. My goal of spending 2 hours per month on the web site has not been achieved but one IPS has done some useful research for me on the links pages of the site.

Leaflets

I have reviewed leaflets DPP6 and DPP9 this year, as well as having input on the new IPS leaflet. I have also written DPP11, our general guide for parents, and almost finished a new transitions leaflet.



North Devon

Karen Horsnell

Working with parents

Over the past year I have supported around 60 parents, less than my colleagues I expect but reflecting the fact I was new to the service and it is taking time to make myself known to the parents and schools in the locality. I found that during the first 6 months the type of support required was more general and signposting where as the last few months the cases are more complex resulting in a bigger time commitment on my part.

I have attended meetings with parents for annual reviews, discussions around exclusions and transferring to senior school. I have also supported a parent at an admissions appeal.

CAF meetings are becoming more frequent and I have found myself giving more information on this in recent months.

Having an office base with the Portage workers means that they are more aware of our service and have given DPPS leaflets out to their families which in turn has bought some new referrals. These have been mainly to do with statementing and transfer.

Worryingly an increasing number of parents are seeking support due to exclusions, this affects all age of children. What has been bought to my attention is that schools are not always working through the correct process and often it is an 'illegal' exclusion which in itself is worrying.

Training, Advice and Support

I have attended various training opportunities including CAF, Person Centred Reviews and supervision skills. I have delivered training on Safeguarding to my colleagues and offered training on anti-bullying to parents as well as talking, on a more informal basis, about our service to other professionals at meetings.

I have taken on responsibility for collating and streamlining the training we offer as a service to parents and other agencies and created a matrix of training needed by the Officers and IPS. Also I have produced an evaluation sheet for our officers to use when delivering training. This gives us an 'at a glance' reference to see where we are, helping to identify gaps to make part of our role less time-consuming and more efficient.

Independent Parental Supporters

The format for the IPS training was already in place when I joined so I joined in and acted as an observer for the 3 days initial training. This was very informative for me as it gave me a deeper understanding of the work the service undertakes as well as seeing my colleagues work together.

The idea of an IPS is great. It potentially offers a wider service to parents and professionals by tapping into their experience and knowledge and gives DPPS better resources to fulfil their role. In practice it takes a lot of our time to train, support and supervise IPS. Initially in North Devon I had a good response to the training but I am now down to 2 active IPS. At the moment I would say that the amount of time spent

balanced against the tangible increase in parental service support is not cost effective however I plan to offer another training opportunity in the area and once we can get a few more on board this will alter.

Networking and Collaboration

My priority is to attend the local PCV meetings as this is a good way of meeting with parents in an informal setting where they have time to discuss their concerns. If I cannot attend for any reason I ask an IPS to go so that the service is represented. I also attend the local Parenting Network meeting as this is where I can make contact with a wide range of people including PSAs. Time restraints require that I have to prioritise the other meetings which can sometimes mean that there is a group of parents/ professionals I don't come into contact with regularly. We have discussed as a team the need for our service to be flagged up to parents and other agencies at regular intervals, by sending leaflets and flyers and I feel that by meeting people face to face, it helps consolidate our position, so it is a pity when we can't do this. I have recently made some good links with the EP service and Speech and Language team. I hope by fostering these relationships I will obtain some more referrals. I have attended a Step by Step drop in afternoon and been asked back which will give another point where parents can talk with me informally.

Information

I have reviewed DPPS leaflet 2 this past year and also had input into the IPS handbook. I have written the service Safeguarding policy and procedure which when agreed should be on the website. Also I have taken on responsibility for the update of the events calendar on the website in order to promote the different training/events in our localities.

My IPS have been going out to local schools/early years settings to talk about our service and offer to leave the display boards to promote the same. I am making a list of those school visited so as to get a better feel for the schools that do not use our service. This will give me a more focused target next term

Overview

This first year has been a steep learning curve for me. I was always aware that there would be a lot to do in the hours given but over the year the added responsibilities and the increasing complexities of the enquiries means that there is never enough hours, leading to a heightened need for supervision during which time we can prioritise the work. My case load isn't as heavy as some of my colleagues and this I feel stems partly from the limited networking I have been able to do as well as the specific characteristics of this area.

I am sure all people say there is never enough hours in the day but with our statutory obligations, pressure from above to increase and evidence parental engagement as well as trying to enhance the service's 'best practice' over a geographically difficult area it is highlighted again and again that there are not enough posts to offer the service all parents have a legal right to. It seems perverse that the better we do our jobs (networking, referrals and parental satisfaction) the less we will be able to offer in the future because of limited personnel numbers.



**South Ham &
West Devon**

Cath Butland

Working with Parents

Parent enquiries have been as varied as ever with the minority completed in one phone call or email. The majority are complex - involving more than one agency and with several strands of work to be followed up by the parent or myself and then regroup for the parent to decide what action to take next. I enjoy giving parents information and a range of skills to employ as they work (hopefully) increasingly confidently with their child's provision and the range of professionals involved. I find an increasing number of parents want information by email rather than by post – by far the majority.

This year I have attended training on the CAF process and recently I have supported two parents at Team around the Child meetings. These happen after a CAF application has been made and involve all the agencies working with the family. With one of these I took on the Lead professional role for a period. This would not normally be the case as DPPS role is to provide support for the parent not to facilitate the process.

Management.

My regular supervision meetings with Sue Brealey enable a much clearer focus to the prioritisation of tasks. Highlighting the development of skills for efficient data collection and statistical analysis is proving most effective for me. Managing one of my IPS has proved complex as her day for volunteering is not a day that I am able to work; however our supervision training this year has improved my confidence in providing supervision from a distance as well as engaging others in the process.

Information and publicity

I have worked with our team to develop Impartiality and Confidentiality policies which now inform our practice and they are on our website. I've reviewed the 'links' page on our website as it's important to have up-to-date information about National as well as Devon organisations and services available for parents and carers. I've also managed a very able volunteer IPS to organise and collate our office Library of information so that as Officers we have e access to it through our computers. I've written an article for the DiscPlus newsletter outlining the complimentary work of DPPS Officers and Parent Support Advisors (PSA) and contributed to our IPS Handbook.

Networking and collaboration

This is the first year I've worked in West Devon and South Hams, an area which hasn't had a dedicated Parent Partnership Officer for over a year. Over the months I've visited, made contact with and given presentations to Parent Carers' Voice, AXS Pathway, Local Children's Trust boards, Children's Centres, PSAs, Parenting Networks, Secondary School SENCos, NHS and Social Services managers and staff

to a point where the number of referrals are continually rising and many have indicated they will pro actively recruit for volunteer IPS to join our training next term.

Informing and shaping local policy and practice

I refer many parents to their local Parent Carers' Voice Forum to engage in specific discussions about policy and practice within children's services which are passed to the County Parent Carer Forum which has representatives at Devon's Children's Trust decision making level. I also pass observations of uncomfortable patterns of parental experience through Sue Brealey to the SEN Strategy Group for consideration.

Training and Support

I developed and delivered training for a Parent Carers' Voice meeting in West Devon 'Preparation for meetings with an assertiveness slant'; it was well received and the evaluations were all complimentary. I have identified a number of potential IPS in South Hams and West Devon whom I hope to engage in our initial IPS training next term. Through discussion I have offered to provide interactive training around a case study for the area Parenting Networks and the Early Years Practitioners' meeting.





Teignbridge, Totnes and West Exeter

Liz Batchelor

Management

I now have 5 active IPS who have completed the training and begun working. Each brings different experience and skills to the position. One IPS has done research, marking up a map of Exeter with each of the schools in my area. This was very useful as I don't know Exeter as well as the other areas I cover. Other IPS have supported at meetings and written parental contributions. This has saved me from some visiting and enabled me to cover more cases and keep records up to date. One IPS came to work with me in the office and I will repeat this as it proved a successful exercise. Attending the DPPS supervision training has given me confidence in supporting this team.

Working with Parents

Throughout the year parent enquiries have gradually increased so that it has been necessary to find ways to save time in order to support more parents. This has been done by strategies such as asking parents who are able to email in their comments for statutory assessment and sending back encouragement and ideas. A team of IPS are now available to support at meetings where requested. They are also able to meet parents face to face where necessary. This is often a much more satisfactory way of working but very time consuming so it's a big help to have our team of volunteers to lighten the load.

When I looked at the distribution of parents I had supported this year I was surprised to find that I had supported more Exeter and Totnes parents than I had originally thought. I have worked in Teignbridge for a number of years and had time when I first came into post to research the area, schools and services. I have not been able to do the same piece of work in Exeter as there is simply never enough time so that the work in Exeter is needs-led. Exeter takes much more travel time (and therefore increases the cost to the service) for me than Teignbridge and Totnes and I feel that to give Exeter a better service it would be better treated as one whole area than split between 2 Parent Partnership Officers (PPO) as it is currently.

I recently supported a parent at a governor exclusion meeting and although the head teacher's decision to permanently exclude was upheld I had the satisfaction of knowing that the parent was able to argue her case because of the preparation and support I was able to offer. I also supported a parent at a SENDIST tribunal this year. Each time I attend a new form of meeting it adds to my own skills and experience as a PPO, enhances the knowledge of the whole team and enables me to pass on my knowledge to my IPS team.

Training, Advice and Support

Recently I very much enjoyed the event put on by the Parent Carers' Voice (PCV) in South Hams and was delighted to be asked to put something together on resolving conflict for parents in the Teignbridge area. We had a good turn out, everyone participated well and we had good feedback from the day. I also had the pleasure of

visiting a primary school in Exeter to talk to their governors and look forward to more such opportunities.

Networking and Collaboration

The increase in parent enquiries has also had an effect on the capacity to network by attending meetings. Again IPS have begun attending meetings and conferences as representatives of DPPS thus increasing our ability to know and be known. I always prioritise the PCV meetings in my diary. In the Teignbridge area there is a good relationship between Disc+, PCV and DPPS. This was demonstrated at the local PCV Aiming High Event at Ashburton where Helen Phillips arranged the event, Cathy Hill suggested asking DPPS to provide training and I delivered the 'Are you a shark or a teddybear?' workshop – if you're not sure which category you fall into look out for future DPPS training events!

Informing and Shaping Local Policy and Practice

It's good to know that we now have a strategy for dealing with trends noticed when working directly with parents and attending parent support groups and PCV meetings. Information can now be passed to Sue Brealey in the knowledge that there is a strategy for passing on this information and seeing changes made as a direct result of parent concerns.

Manager's Report

The DPPS response to the Minimum Standards

Funding and Budget

This has been a year of financial turmoil nationally and internationally and the ripples of this have been felt by DPPS. We are allocated a budget by the Local Authority (LA) for which we have autonomy in making decisions about how it is spent. The constraints on LAs has been well publicised and DPPS has not been exempt from the need to keep a tight reign on spending and close monitoring of budget to not allow overspend. Our funding levels in comparison with other PPS, data taken from the National Benchmarking shows that

- Service funding per head 0-19 shows DPPS well below the national mean and placed at 117 from 130 responses.
- Service funding per SEN pupil, including those on School Action, School Action+ and Statemented pupils, shows DPPS well below the national mean and placed at 115 from 130 responses
- Service funding per service user was on the national median but below the national mean, DPPS placed at 63 from 127
- Staffing levels per 1,000 pop.0-19 comparisons show that DPPS is well below the national mean and placed 115 from 130.

Annual Report Financial Data 01/04/09 to 31/03/10

Income		£
DCC		133,144
Other income – supervision & parenting w/end		1,527
Other income - IPS		5,000
Total Income		139,671
Expenditure		
Salaries		110,103
Staff expenses		6,884
Staff training		249
Temporary Staff		0
Disagreement resolution		5,950
Stationery/postage/telephone/office expenses		10,577
IT		379
Recruitment/CRB checks		108
IPS volunteer training		2,832
Total Expenditure		137,082
Income less Expenditure		2,589

DPPS has, by careful monitoring, restriction of travel and other spending cuts kept within budget. The underspend of £2589 is explained by savings on staff costs of £500, generation of income £1527, Disagreement Resolution cost reduction £500

Tight budget restrictions have denied the opportunity for staff to attend specialist national training. There were only sufficient funds to enable attendance of the team at essential core training on CAF.

Concerns, about how expected cuts of 4% and efficiencies of 10% for 2010-2011 will affect the ability of the service to deliver the statutory responsibility, were submitted to senior management.

All is not glum news and in response to the resubmission of requests for additional funds for IPS development, DPPS was awarded an additional £5000 to help fund IPS costs. This funding has been used to pay for the training and expenses of IPS and additional staff time used for development of policy, IPS handbook and Leaflet. This has enabled DPPS to keep within budget whilst beginning to develop a team of IPS which is a requirement in the Exemplifications.

National Benchmarking

There is an annual audit of National PPS data. Devon submitted a return and this provides a comparison of DPPS funding and staffing levels with provision by other LAs for their PPS.

The service funding per SEN pupil shows DPPS at a funding level which is very low, 115th from 130 returns and well below the national median and mean.

Numbers of Parent/ Carers using DPPS are above the national median with a return 40th from 129. Service funding per parent carer user is on the national median but below the national mean. DPPS therefore is delivering a service that provides value for money in comparison with other PPS nationally.

Staffing levels show that DPPS is 64th from 129 returns with the number of Parent/Carer users to total employed FTE staff which is on the national median. However DPPS is well below the national median at 111th from 133 at number of staff per 1,000 population(0-19).

This demonstrates that in comparison with national figures DPPS staff currently provide a service to the number of parents/carers that would be expected from the funding provided. However this figure is low in comparison to the number of parents who should have access to the service. The DPPS funding levels would not enable the DPPS to expand the service for all the potential service users. The Code of Practice states that all parents of children with SEN should be made aware of and have access to PPS support. This lack of capacity was also identified by parents in their comments to the feedback questionnaire about DPPS when asked how DPPS could be improved

- By letting more parents know about the service
- More people so everyone can get help
- Completely satisfied no improvement except more advisors
- More promotion as I feel it was too late before I was aware you existed. Would have benefited from your service much earlier on
- More hours for local advisers
- It would be great to have more staff- easier to contact, lady I spoke to was part time.
- Increase availability

Management

A crucial development for the direction of DPPS is the establishment of a Steering Group. This is vital to enable DPPS to meet the National Minimum Standards for PPS and has been a priority project this year. This has not yet been fully achieved but there have been great steps forward. We are intending to join the Steering Group requirements for DPPS and the Choice Adviser Service by having one panel that will function from the Children's Trust Parenting Board. The terms of reference have already drawn up in draft and will be ready for adoption at the first meeting. Parents will be a crucial part of this group and several parents, who have used our service, have expressed an interest in participating. Representation will also be sought from other Parent Forums including PCV.

DPPS has now had a full team for a whole year and this has been a time for settling and establishing but not a time to rest. Supervision of staff and team meetings are key in ensuring that we deliver an equitable service across the county and for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of our service. Monitoring of impartiality has been added to the regular agenda and supervision of IPS, which is an additional task for all the staff.

A key development has been the drafting of two essential policies, The Confidentiality policy and Impartiality Policy. These are now in place and are the guidance for all our work with parents. They can be read on our Website. The policies have not been adopted yet as this will need to be done by the Steering Group. We are still awaiting feedback from the Parent Forums, PCV, on the confidentiality and impartiality policies.

Impartiality is fundamental to the ethos of DPPS and the following definition of impartiality, from the DPPS policy, is the basis for all our work: 'Not taking sides, not favouring one point of view over another because of pre-conceived ideas or beliefs, and ensuring that all available facts, truths, opinions and perceptions are being shared openly.'

Feedback from parent service users was very positive and found that 96% gave responses which identified our service as independent and impartial, none stating that we were biased. Impartiality is a hard concept to explain and to be understood by both parents and practitioners. This is a very positive indicator that DPPS as an in house service has not compromised its independence but through recent developments and improvements has reinforced its impartiality.

The Minimum Standards state that the Local Authority are expected to;

- take responsibility for monitoring the overall standards of the service and ensure that it is subject to best value principles.
- ensure adequate resources and staffing to meet the needs of the parents in their area
- ensure that the service has a development plan which sets out clear targets and is regularly reviewed: such plans should specify, short ,medium and long term strategies and arrangements for evaluation and quality assurance

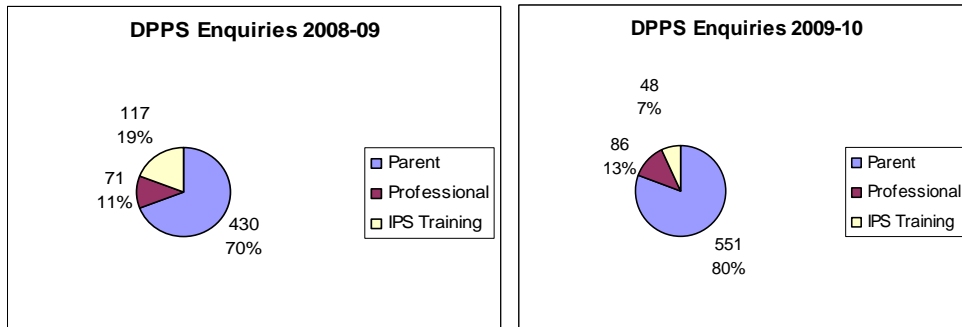
Parent Partnership Services are expected to;

- regularly review the effectiveness of the service they provide, for instance by seeking feedback from users

In order to report on these standards to the LA and to monitor service effectiveness, DPPS has undertaken feedback from parent service users. A questionnaire was sent to parent service users termly, in November 2009, February 2010 and May 2010, to gather feedback from those that have accessed our service from April 2009 to April 2010. Taking regular feedback has enabled us to quickly see trends and measure impact. We have used this to inform our short term planning and the service plan for 2010-11. Statistics gathered from responses to the questionnaire are used throughout this report. A full report on the questionnaire is available on request.

Working with Parents

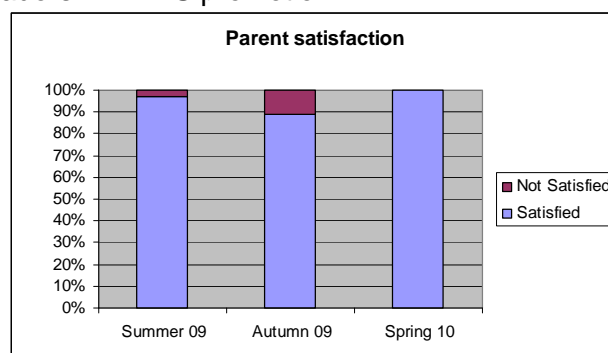
We have had a very busy year. Total number of enquiries have risen by 11%, the largest increase has been in parent enquiries 28%. We have also noticed an increase in more complex casework and increased work load through involvement in more multi-agency meetings with parents. This has had a considerable impact on staff capacity and ability to undertake other aspects of their role such as networking and delivery of training. The development of a team of IPS will help to address this but it takes time for them to be trained and develop skills and confidence with the role before it can have an impact on capacity.



Parental confidence

In May 2010 we began using the EMS database to keep all our case records, the area we use is completely confidential to our service and no-one else has access to the information. Using the database for record keeping has meant that transfer of cases within the service can be undertaken more efficiently, without parents needing to provide all the information again. This has had a direct link to improving parental confidence. In addition we are able to look at trends in type of enquiry.

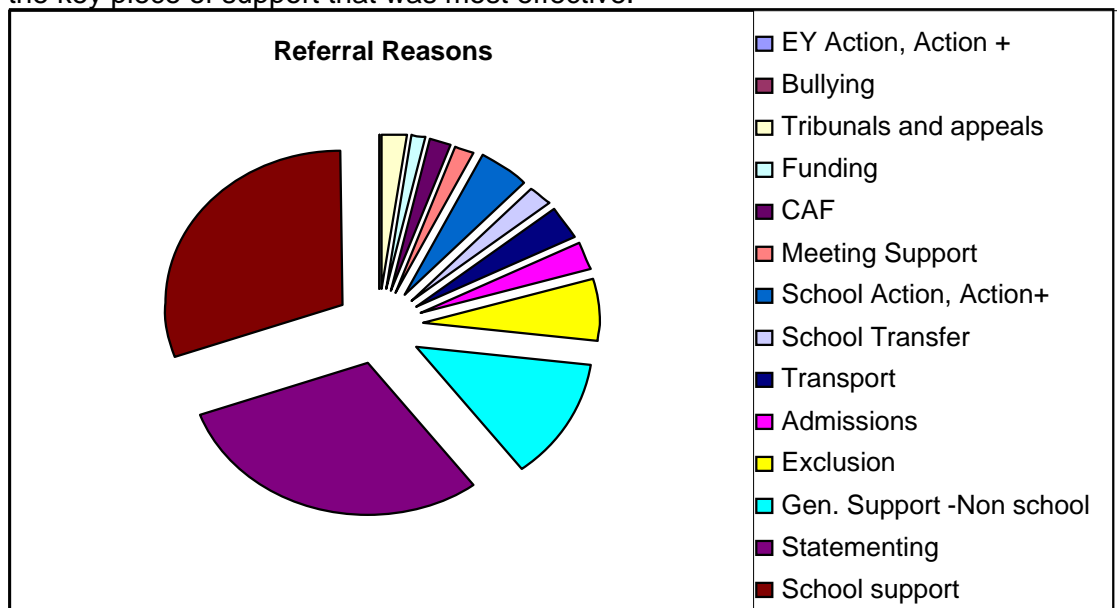
Another notable increase was the increase from 13% in November 2009 to 30% in May 2010 of parents identifying friends as the referral source. During the year April 09-April10 the referral rate to the service had increased by 28%. Together with the questionnaire finding, this suggests that parents satisfied with the service were becoming ambassadors in DPPS promotion.



Reasons for referral

The database has given us the opportunity to collect data on the range as well as the number of referrals we receive. This year has been a steep learning curve for DPPS to explore how to categorise the reasons that parents contact our service. The database pick list developed during the year and the figures that have been gathered therefore do not accurately reflect all the support that was given for each of the categories listed but does give an idea of range. In addition we currently have no facility for identifying more than one type of support given for each case. It is usual

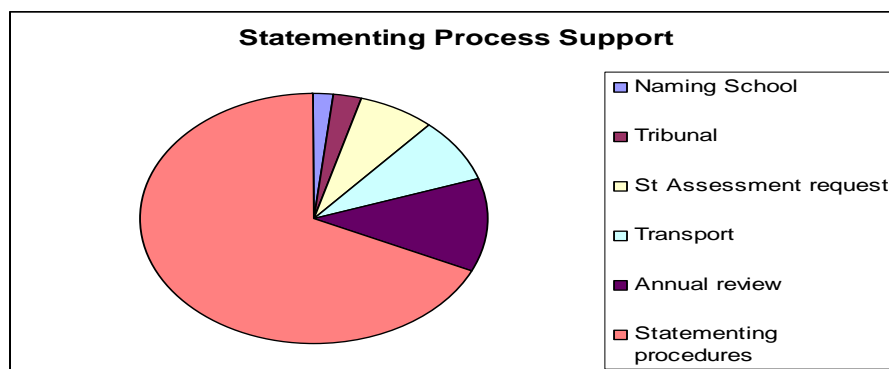
for cases to involve more than one issue and the initial referral reason may not reflect the key piece of support that was most effective.



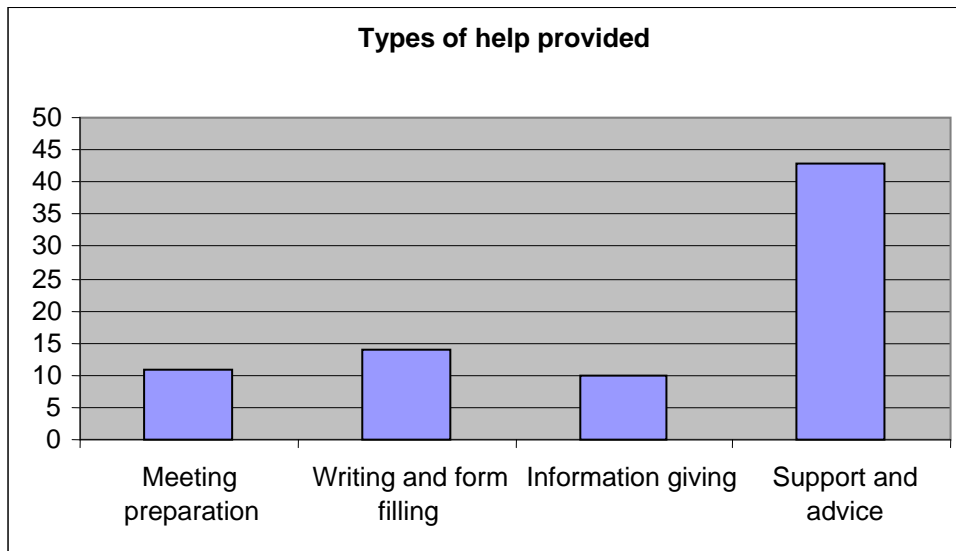
The chart shows the range of support we provide. This can only be achieved by having staff with the breadth of knowledge and expertise in SEN process and the Code of Practice.

- We were impressed by the way our PP officer got to grips with our child's complex education situation within a short space of time. Her knowledgeability, support and professionalism gave us the added confidence to fight our child's corner. Her attendance and subsequent summary of our child's annual statement review really helped to take some of the pressure off.

Children with SEN are 20% of the school population, 2% of the school population are children with statements. These are the children with the most complex needs and support for various aspects of the statementing process represent 35% of our referrals. The statementing process is long and can be complex for parents. DPPS provides support for all aspects from applying for a statutory assessment through to support with appeal. Statistics from the database show the range of support.



Types of support

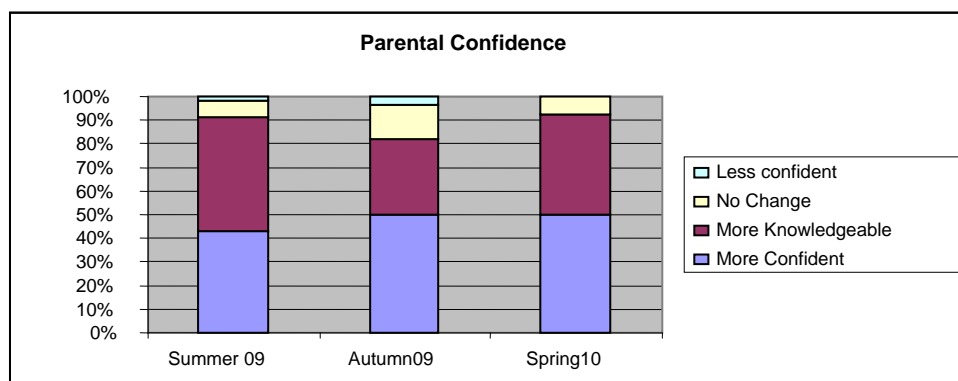


Comments from parents:

- Allowed time to talk through frustration and gave general advice on how to conduct myself at meetings with school.
- Helpful information but most importantly the first person I felt listened without dismissing my concerns.
- I felt more prepared, more in control because I had prepared a written list to address, made the staff take notice of what I had to say.
- I approached it in a knowledgeable and confident manner and made it clear that I knew my rights
- Help given aided my communication with CSET and other agencies

Outcomes

Lots of parents have given us positive feedback, 77% said they were more confident and 71% more knowledgeable. Whenever we receive negative feedback, in 2 responses, to the questionnaire, we use this as an opportunity to analyse and improve our working practice.



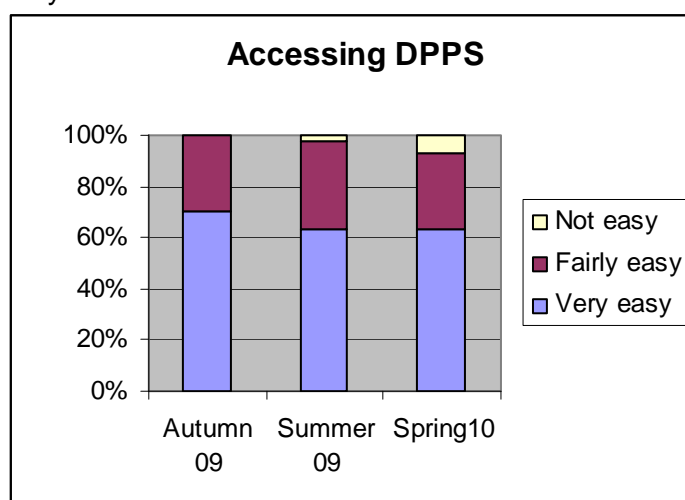
"Good, clear, helpful advice, to help you have the confidence to help be an ambassador for your child"

Key themes of the outcomes identified by parents were that they felt more informed of their rights, more able to communicate their wishes, more confident and able to function in partnership with professionals, more informed of their choices and supported to make decisions, improved understanding of process and ability to complete paperwork.

From analysis of the reason for referral and outcomes, DPPS was identified as the catalyst for change in both parental confidence and in the situation.

Accessibility

Since the development of a specialist central enquiry line manned by DPPS staff parents tell us that they find it easy to get in contact with DPPS with only 2% finding the service not easy to access



Fluctuations in figures from 71% of parents finding DPPS very easy to access in February falling to 65% in May, with 29% finding it fairly easy, can be explained by the increased referral rate which affected staff availability.

Service users (96%) found the response from staff polite, friendly, helpful, understanding and knowledgeable. A common feedback theme from the questionnaire was that we need more staff as described by these responses:

'Have more workers for your sake, I bet you guys are run off your feet!'

"Completely satisfied no improvement except more advisors"

Examples of How DPPS works with parents

Debbie Wheeler Case study: Working with parents – Providing information and advice

A parent emailed from Hong Kong to say they were moving back to Exeter but had no idea of the support there might be available for her son with ADHD and Aspergers. She also required information on schools and the admissions process as she was unsure how to go about this.

DW's primary role was in providing information about contacting SENCOs and the Choice Adviser and using the Ofsted site, plus explaining how the SEN process works in Devon. Questions were suggested for school visits when the family came over to the UK and we had email discussions about the need for EP involvement. When the parent arrived in Exeter, DW recommended meeting at a PCV forum which the parent found helpful.

The positive impact on the parent – and how well she felt supported - can best be seen by her email comments:

“THANK YOU! You are so helpful and supportive; I really feel you have thrown us a lifeline!

I know a lot about M's needs but virtually nothing about the provision he would be entitled to or the procedures, so your advice would be extremely welcome and needed. The questions you suggest are really helpful. I am so hopeful now that we will be able to get the right help for M I just didn't really know where to begin. And yes, I would certainly appreciate your input. I have felt alone in this for so long that I feel quite excited to have someone to share this with!
Thank you again for taking the time to reply.”

Cath Butland case study: Working with parents - Supporting and Improving communication

K is in year 5 at a small rural primary school on school action plus
T called us because CSET had turned down the application for Statutory Assessment. School staff supported the application.
T had applied to SENDist and they had an Appeal hearing date.
Having listened to Theresa explaining the complexities of the situation CB suggested a meeting with staff at school where CB would support her in ascertaining current and future support for K. as well as identifying any actions.

At the meeting it was explained that M has emerging emotional difficulties. Theresa agreed to the school staff making a referral to CAMHS. CB explained the additional options of arranging a meeting with CSET with DPPS support or using Wessex Mediation. T decided to meet with CSET with DPPS support to explain the emerging emotional need in the hope that CSET would reconsider their decision not to assess.

Following the phone call to make an appointment with CSET T received a return call to explain that CSET will now undertake a Statutory Assessment for K.

DPPS support in enabling thorough mutual communication resulted in the SENDist Appeal being cancelled, improved understanding of K's needs as well as considerably less stress and expense for all.

Cath Butland Case Study 2: Meeting preparation

T. is in Year 4 at a small rural primary school on school action plus Hilary called us for support in preparing for a meeting with the school SENCO because she felt previous meetings had been difficult and unproductive. H. was considering moving T., who is diagnosed with ASD to a different school if provision at his current school didn't improve. CB listened to the complex needs of T. and how the County Autism Team recommendations had not been implemented.

CB explained the formulae that DPPS suggest parents consider when preparing for a meeting with school staff. H and I discussed possible 'topics for discussion' for her meeting. H said she found this explanation and discussion helpful and felt capable of developing the topics for discussion herself.

The following week I received an email from her;

Hi Cath,

I just wanted to thank you for your time last Friday and to let you know that my meeting yesterday with the SENCO at school was very positive and productive. Thanks to our preparatory work I was able to get all my points across, come to an agreed action plan with school and home working together and have set a date for our next meeting in January. All in all a successful session.

Thanks again for your help and time,

H

Liz Batchelor Case study: Working with Parents - Support with applying for a Statutory Assessment

My first contact with N was when she asked for support for a TAC meeting. An IPS was available and attended the meeting, but the IPS commented how stressed the parent was and how difficult she (the IPS) had found the meeting because there seemed to be a lot of people at the meeting but not much action – in particular there was no-one who appeared to be taking the overall view of the whole family.

I next visited the parent at home to help her write her contribution for statutory assessment. I simply listened to the parent talk about the way her child's difficulties were affecting them, and then wrote up her words in an organised way so that anyone picking up the document could pick out the salient points most easily. N was already more relaxed than she had been at the time of the TAC meeting because some small progress had been made. She was very clear what she wanted from the statement she hoped to get, as she had concerns about her child continuing to manage in mainstream. We talked about the scarcity of places in special schools in Devon and the fact that most children are educated in local mainstream schools.

When the proposed statement arrived I visited again to explain what had been written and to show N how to check that any recommendations in the advice had been included in the statement. N wanted some extra comments included so she sent the document back to the case work manager with her request for some additional information to be included.

I explained that the timescale for statutory assessment meant that the final statement may be sent out before N's changes had all been agreed and encouraged her to ask for a meeting to discuss anything that remained unresolved. I also explained her right to appeal to the SENDIST tribunal within a given timescale and that she could drop her appeal at any time if she was satisfied with the outcome before reaching tribunal. The IPS who originally supported N spoke to her recently and was greatly encouraged at the change in N. Time has moved on, N feels that she is making progress towards the right school for her child and feels more confident in dealing with those she previously saw as difficult to engage with.

I feel that this case demonstrates the value of the work done by DPPS in empowering parents through difficult situations. This parent has learned skills she can use next time she has concerns over her child's education and may even use the skills in other situations and to support others in a similar position to herself.

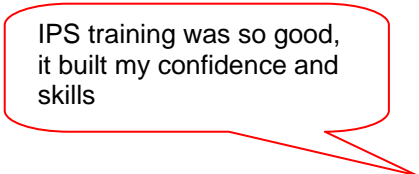
Liz Batchelor



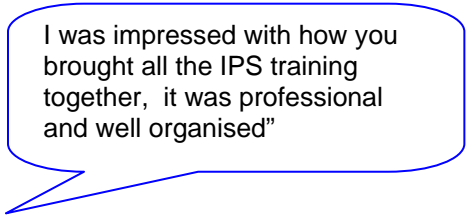
Supporting parents to express their contribution

Independent Parental Supporter (IPS) development

During 2009-10 we completed delivery of 3 day IPS training in North Devon, East Devon and Teignbridge. A further course was delivered in Exeter in the autumn. A total of 38 completed all three days of training. The training was offered to anyone interested in finding out about the role of IPS, function of DPPS and SEN law and process. Attendees were encouraged to apply to become an IPS at the end of the course but it was not a pre-requisite for attending.



IPS training was so good, it built my confidence and skills



I was impressed with how you brought all the IPS training together, it was professional and well organised"

22 of the people who completed the course have applied to work as IPS, they have been interviewed and CRB checked. IPS are allocated to work with a Parent Partnership Officer who provides supervision and support. We have been pleased at the range of skills that our IPS offer and have been developing a range of roles that utilise these in the support of parents. To demonstrate some of the outcomes from this we include reports from some IPS on what they have achieved.

Reports from IPS

Parent Support at a school meeting.

After completing the IPS training I felt very well informed and supported by the PPOs to embark upon my first experience of parental support. I finished the course with a thorough working knowledge of the SEN processes and Code of Practice. Elements of the training that were particularly helpful was the actual practical training on the role of the IPS within a meeting which was done through role play and discussion. The aspect of the service I and my colleagues on the course had most difficulty with was the issue of remaining impartial at all times - and although we understood why, I think we all felt this was going to be tough.

I have had the privilege of supporting parents in a variety of meetings and the training has proved invaluable in that I was very clear about my role within such meetings. Although DPPS is a Devon County Council service, some members of staff from schools where I have attended meetings, although may have heard of DPPS, were not clear what an IPS is. I have been able to share information not just with educational staff but also with a variety of professionals from services such as Joint Agency Team, Social Work and Health about the role of the IPS and the service we provide. Prior to attending a meeting with a parent, I phone the parent and arrange to go round to meet them. Although Debbie (my PPO) will have discussed the case with me, it is good to meet with the parent and child if possible, so that both parties are clear on what the issues are. Although my involvement with the family is short lived I have found it helpful to build a relationship with them so that I am able to work out what the parent really wants to say. I have found that sometimes the parent may need prompting within a meeting to bring up a point I know they wanted to make or in some cases, I have found that parent has forgotten altogether what they wanted to say and so I say it on their behalf. Meeting with them for that brief time before the meeting really enables me to gauge what level of support they need. After the meeting, I leave with the parent and spend time de-briefing. If the parent is

not happy then I am able to discuss their concerns with them and am able to point out if the school has planned any actions that may address their concerns . I have really enjoyed the work I have done with DPPS, it is a great to be part of something that provides an invaluable source of support to families who are wading through the SEN process and to help them make sense of it all. I am looking forward to continuing within this role. **Lucy**

Notes on being an IPS for the first time

I really enjoyed the experience and although I did not say much I could tell that T felt happier having someone there for her, which was very rewarding.

During the meeting I felt that T expressed herself really well, I think there was a little wobbly moment when she looked a bit emotional, but she held it all together. I sat next to her and wrote notes and at the end checked that she had said everything she wanted to and if she wanted me to raise anything.

The Reception teacher was very articulate and I think T was reassured by them and more confident about the experiences her child would have at school.

I feel that the meeting went well and that T was happy with the result. It was good to see multi-agency working happening and her child's needs being discussed in a positive way.

T emailed me last night and I feel really happy that I was a help

Emma

Working as a representative for DPPS

I have been working as an Independent Parent Supporter (IPS) for about 6 months now. Basically, my role has been to contact schools in the Bideford area, putting a face to the flyers which have been sent from Head Office to all schools in Devon. I drew up a letter of introduction which I send to a few schools at a time, explaining who I am, and what the service Devon Parent Partnership Service (DPPS) provides. This is followed by a phone call to arrange a visit to meet the Head Teacher or SENCo and to answer any questions.

On several occasions, SENCos or Head Teachers have telephoned the office to ask for a visit from (DPPS) and I have visited the school, delivered more flyers and discussed with the SENCo or Head teacher the role of an IPS and DPPS within their school.

I have worked, on the telephone, with a parent who wanted some information and support before a meeting with her child's SENCo and the Educational Psychologist. I listened to the parent express their concerns and answered a few questions. We then spoke again after the meeting. The parent was satisfied progress was being made and that case was closed, though the parent is aware we can be contacted again if the need arises.

I attend the Parent Networking meetings in Torrington on behalf of DPPS. These meetings occur every 2 months and bring together the many different services available to parents. We inform each other about our service, what support we offer, what criteria is necessary for us to become involved and what the referral process is. It is a very useful way of bringing attention to parents and Parent Support Advisers (PSA), who also attend the meetings, what services are available.

Lynda

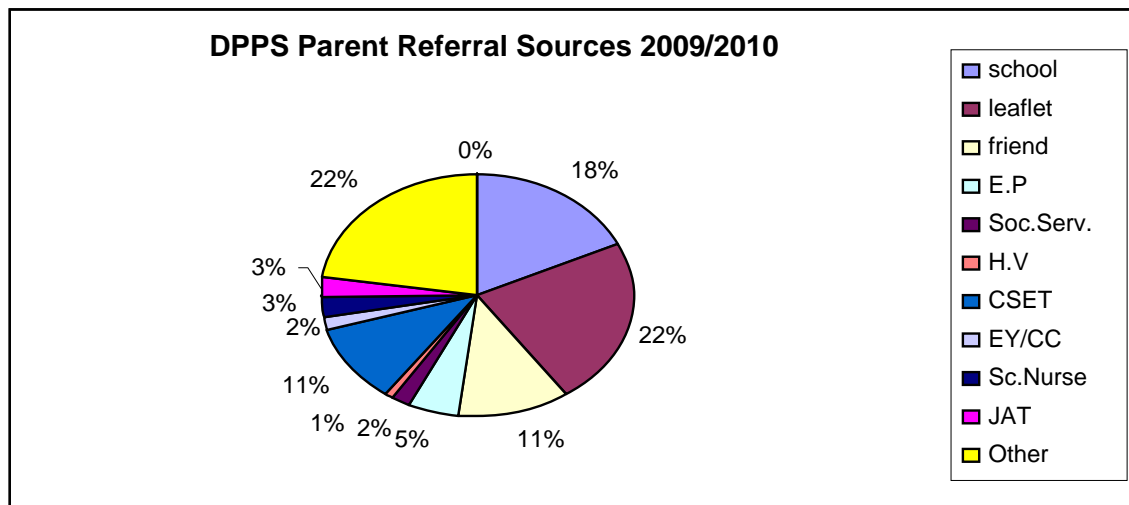
Information and Publicity

Our impartiality policy is important as it gives the structure for monitoring the impartiality of the service and DPPS information. All information and publicity produced by DPPS is now checked for impartiality by the team and IPS. A more formal process which has been written will be put in place when the steering group is set up and this will enable us to move into good practice on the Standards.

Leaflets have been an important aspect of our way of promoting the service and providing information to parents. Feedback through the questionnaire has shown that 29% of parents received information about our service twice before they contacted us for help. This suggests that the information needs to be provided at the time of need and that parent's feel more confident to contact a service when they have already been made familiar with its purpose.

How parents found out about DPPS

We are reliant on schools and other agencies giving out our leaflets. A common theme that comes from parents is their frustration about not knowing about DPPS from schools earlier. This year we have sent leaflets to every school in Devon. Data from the questionnaire to parents showed that this had a positive impact on the referrals from schools for the following term rising from 24% as referral source to 33%.



In September 2009, DPPS helped CSET to redesign the letters sent to parents with a more clearly defined information section on DPPS separated at the end of the letter. DPPS feedback showed CSET being identified as a source rose from 5% in November 2009 to 28% in February 2010.

This year we have reviewed and reprinted 6 of our leaflets. We have also developed a new general information leaflet about our service and a leaflet to explain the role of the IPS.

Sometimes it is professionals who are also parents of children with SEN who are the source of publicity;

'I had support from one of your colleagues some time ago as my son is partially sighted, I can't praise the support I received highly enough!
I will forward on the leaflet to others within my team, thanks'

In addition to our own leaflets we do have a considerable library of information that we provide on other services and support for parents. This year we are very pleased that an IPS has given us many valuable hours sorting and cataloguing the library to make it more accessible for staff.

The website has been revamped; this was overseen by Debbie with input from the team and valuable work from IPS. We have sought feedback from the Parent Carer Forums, professionals and the parent questionnaire. All comments have been noted and changes made.

DPSS has also increased the number articles we provide for newsletters. Some, such as DISC+, are for parents and others are for professionals. These included Devon Governor, newsletters for SENCOs, PSAs and Devon Assoc of Primary Heads.

Feedback from a parent in November 2009 was noted.

"More promotion as I feel it was too late before I was aware you existed.
Would have benefited from your service much earlier on"

The 28% rise in referrals suggests that we are having some success with our publicity but we continue to look for opportunities to promote the service as it should be offered to all parents of children with SEN.

Training Advice and Support

The Minimum Standards says that an effective PPS should ensure that:

- Advice on SEN is available to parents through information, support and training
- Recruits and trains sufficient IPS to meet needs of parents
- Training for teachers, professionals, governors and staff on good communication and relationships with parents is made available

These are the courses we have delivered this year with feedback from post course evaluations

Training For Parents

- How to get the best for your Child
- Anti Bullying
- How DPPS can offer support
- Resolving Conflict

I thought the course was ACE!!!

The information you gave me meant I could look at more options



Training for Professionals

- Working with Parents
- How DPPS can support your parents
- Transition – Person Centred Planning
- Parent Group - How to facilitate effectively
- Preparing for the role of SENCo – Using DPPS

Extremely knowledgeable, fantastic information

Training for IPS

- 3 day Initial training – North, South, East, Exeter
- Safeguarding
- Ongoing supervision

Training for Staff

- Supervision
- Safeguarding
- Database
- Mediation
- Person Centred Planning
- Volunteers and the Law
- CAF

All trainers have been outstanding in terms of knowledge, presentation and people skills. All very personable and genuine

Networking and Collaboration

The minimum standards require that PPS should be involved local, national and regional networking and collaboration in order to develop and sustain a high quality and impartial service

Local

The Chart on page 26, showing the DPPS referral sources indicates the range of professionals that DPPS need to maintain links with to ensure that parents of children with SEN have access to information about DPPS. 'Other sources' were identified by 22% on this chart, these included a wide range of services, Exclusion Officers, Dyslexia adviser, County Autism Team, School Admission, Paediatricians, ASD, ADHD and Dyslexia Parent support groups, Internet, PCV. Most of these sources could be directly attributed to the networking pattern of activity by DPPS staff.

We have a firm commitment to working with the PCV parent forums and use this as a two way process of updating parents. We regularly share information about DPPS, local and national developments relating to SEN and also take feedback from the forums to strategic groups and LA services.

The range of professional meetings that have been attended by DPPS officers this year:

- Parent Network Meetings – Attended by PSAs and other parenting support workers
- AXS Practitioner Meeting – Workers supporting the CAF process
- SENCo Forums
- Speech and Language Therapist team meetings
- Portage Team Meeting
- Choice Adviser Team Meeting
- Joint Agency Service
- Children's Trust
- Devon Association of Governors
- Connexions
- Educational Psychologists
- Face2Face

We have also visited parent groups

- ADHD
- ASD
- Dyslexia support group
- Children Centre SEN groups
- School parent support groups
- Aspirations

National

This year we have had more input to the National PPS agenda. Sue Brealey attended the Lamb Enquiry Policy day and Lamb Enquiry Developments day as a regional representative and has participated in national on line working parties in response to the Lamb report recommendations.

Regional

DPPS has had representation at 3 regional PPS meetings and participated in a regional training.

Informing and Shaping Local Policy and Practice

To be effective Minimum Standards say that PPS should ensure that

- Parents views are heard, understood and inform local SEN policy
- Seek regular feedback is sought from service users to review of the effectiveness of the service

This year the service manager has established a regular meeting with the manager of the County Special Education Team in order to raise concerns and comments about parental experience of the LA observed through DPPS support and through PCV forum discussion.

The core function of the PCV forums is to provide a mechanism for the LA to consult with parents about additional needs provision. DPPS sees supporting these forums as an appropriate way to support parents to inform and shape local policy. DPPS also works with a lot of parents who do not attend the PCV forums and we endeavour to gather their views and use the channels available to feedback on local practice.

DPPS attends the LA SEN strategy group meeting in order to be informed of county developments and ensure the parents' perspective is considered. DPPS raised the need for parent consultation in the Stepping Stones development.

DPPS staff have attended the LA SEN panels as observers. These panels are the discussion forums that inform the LA decisions for Statutory Assessment and Special School placements. This gave staff a better understanding of how LA decisions are made. A more regular attendance may be proposed to ensure parental contributions are considered equitably.

Parents can find challenging schools, services or the Local Authority intimidating. DPPS gives parents, who are unhappy about the service they have received information about routes for making complaints about LA services and are supported to do so if they require it. This includes support with appeals. These challenges should be treated by the LA as an opportunity to review the service offered.

DPPS holds the Wessex Mediation Service funds in its budget and acts as authorising officer. This means that DPPS can challenge if the Local Authority is being unreasonable in refusing to enter mediation when requested by a parent.

The DPPS Feedback Questionnaire has been used to review service delivery and was used to inform the writing of the 2010-11 action plan. As feedback was taken at regular termly intervals it was possible to gauge the impact of particular DPPS activity, this has been described thorough out this report.

Location



DPPS central office is now settled into Great Moor House, Exeter. We are co-located with several other education support services such as Governor Support and Library Services. We are pleased that we are distanced from the County Special Education Team and located in a different building.

At the central office we have our central enquiry line, managed by Georgie, and administrative base. Sue and Debbie are also based here.

In North Devon Karen has office space with the Portage service and Cath and Liz are home based.

As Devon is such a large county it is not possible to provide equitable access to one drop in location. DPPS endeavours to make access to the service local by meeting parents, by arrangement, at a venue near to their home.

All DPPS staff are very mindful of protecting confidentiality wherever they are working.

Evaluation

Taking the plans that were made in the last year annual report 08-09 as the basis for evaluating whether the DPPS has made progress in 2009-10 the following analysis has been made. (Evaluation in red.)

- To establish a Monitoring /Steering Group with Choice Advisors and ensure it provides effective support to guide DPPS work
- **Steering group was not set up due to national changes in funding but work on the structure and terms of reference are complete and will be transferable.**
- To increase parental confidence in the DPPS by achieving the minimum practice for all the standards
- **Minimum standards achieved in all the standards except the requirement to have a steering group**
- To have Confidentiality and Impartiality Policies written, agreed, in place and publicised
- **Achieved. Written and published on the website**
- To improve effectiveness of the DPPS by ensuring that some parents who request it have access to IPS volunteers trained and working in each area of Devon
- **Partly achieved. DPPS had no IPS at the beginning of the year and had 22 who had been trained by the end of the year. They are not yet working in all areas of Devon**
- To continue to build links with the Parent Forums and provide parent support, training and information at their meetings.
- **Achieved. DPPS has been committed to attending all PCV forums with an improved working relationship**
- To continue to encourage the involvement of DPPS in LA strategic planning for SEN and Parent Support
- **Partly achieved. DPPS involved in SEN strategic group and has input to Parent support work and planning but not at strategic level.**
- To continue to develop opportunity for parents to access DPPS support by drop in surgery.
- **Achieved – DPPS has increased the number of parent support groups attended and offers regular drop in support at PCV forums.**

Other achievements

- Review and revamp of website
- Increased parental referrals
- More newsletter articles written
- New DPPS leaflet published and distributed
- Database records system established
- More national and regional representation

Plans for 2010-11

In response to the findings of this report and the feedback from parents through the questionnaire priority projects have been identified and are set out in the DPPS action plan. They are;

- **To set up monitoring /steering group with terms of reference, job descriptions, accessibility and links with the LA's decision making process**
- **To increase staffing capacity to enable effective networking and to support increased casework**
- **To plan and implement DPPS re-launch as response to Lamb Report recommendations**
- **To review publicity of DPPS including leaflets and implement findings**
- **To support establishment of team of IPS volunteers across all of Devon**
- **To seek feedback from schools and other professionals about their promotion of DPPS**

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

We welcome feedback from service users and others about the work of DPPS so that we can continue to monitor, evaluate and improve the service we provide. This includes feedback on the Annual Report.

Once you have looked at this report, if you would like to let us know your views please contact us so that we can use the information to shape the way that we formulate our report in the future.

How to Contact us

If you or someone you know would like any of the following:

- to receive some support
- information about SEN
- information about training courses
- to know how to become an IPS
- any other information about DPPS

Please contact us by phone or email.

Telephone: **01392 383080**

Email: parentpartnershipservice-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

More information about DPPS can be found on our website

www.parentpartnershipdevon.org.uk

Glossary

The following abbreviations are used in this report

SEN	Special Educational Needs
DPPS	Devon Parent Partnership
DPPS	Devon Parent Partnership Services
IPS	Independent Parental Supporter
PPLO	Parent Partnership Liaison Officer
PPO	Parent Partnership Officer
LA	Local Authority
DCC	Devon County Council
CYPS	Children and Young Peoples Services
CSET	County Special Education Team
PCV	Parent Carer Voice(Parent Forum)
CRB	Criminal Record Check
SLT	Speech and Language Therapy
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
JAT	Joint Agency Team
EOTAS	Educated other than at school
AXS	Devon process for identification of need at an early stage
PSA	Parent Support Advisor
EP	Educational Psychologist
EY	Early Years
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
TAC	Team around the Child
HV	Health Visitor
CC	Children's Centre