

## Supportive Parents AGM Chair's Report 2010-11

Our charity's main objective is to enable parents of children with Special Educational Needs to play a more active and informed role in their child's education. We do this by providing information and support to parents, encouraging partnership between parents and professionals and giving feedback about services.

The Charity receives funding from the three Local Authorities to provide the statutory Parent Partnership Services under Service Level Agreements. This year, financial constraints have meant that our previous 3-year agreement has not been renewed, but it has been extended for another year. We continue to liaise with each authority about how our work develops in their area, and to provide regular reports on our activities.

As always the core element of our work has remained the provision of information and support to parents and we have been able to increase our team of helpline support workers. We can provide the following statistics from the service monitoring activities undertaken over the past year:

### Achievement and performance 2010-2011

- We have provided information and support to almost a 1000 parent enquirers.
- 89 first contacts from professionals and voluntary organisations came through our Information and Support Line Team.
- 23 support group meetings for parents and Professionals have been held.
- Display boards or publicity materials have been provided at 56 settings
- 18 responses to consultations, including involvement in consultation events and working parties, have been made.
- We have made a contribution to strategic work on 77 occasions.
- The Charity has been represented at more than 43 events and conferences. We have had involvement in the delivery of more than 27 training events or conferences.

- Our website has received almost 30,000 unique visits between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.
- Team members have attended various training opportunities during the year, including wordpress(website) training, CAF and safeguarding in South Glos; structured conversation in Bristol; participation, public speaking, committee and chairing skills in North Somerset, two SW Parent Partnership Services networking days and SEN & Disability Tribunal (SEND) training. Five members of staff have completed the NPPN accredited Legal Training, including all of our helpline staff.
- We have organised and facilitated 3 Network and Collaboration meetings, sharing developments and changing practice with professionals across 3 Authorities
- South West Regional Parent Partnership Network (SWRPPN ): 5 members of staff regularly attend these meetings, held 3 times a year.
- More than 400 newsletters in hard copy in three editions have been distributed to members and others as well as an increasing number sent out via e-mail. The current newsletter is also available on our website.
- To celebrate our 21<sup>st</sup> birthday we held an Open meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2010 at BAWA, where the main speaker was Jean Gross the Nationally appointed Communication Champion and a Coffee Morning on 2nd December when colleagues from the voluntary sector, old friends and supporters and parent members joined us to network together and celebrate our work.

Parent participation : During this year we have continued to support the development of parent participation forums in each Local Authority. This is a continuing national government initiative aimed at enabling the voice of parents and carers of children with additional needs to have direct influence on strategic planning and the development of services. We provide stakeholder input in all 3 areas and have taken the programme lead in North Somerset.

A significant amount of our time has been devoted to this work. The further increase in our helpline team has allowed us to absorb this without impacting on our core activities.

Enquiry Monitoring System (EMS): We have produced an annual report from our Enquiry Monitoring System (EMS) setting out details and issues from our parent enquiries. Although the core issues raised by parents remain pretty constant (the majority of our calls continue to come from parents of boys, in mainstream schools who have social and communication difficulties where behaviour is an additional issue) there have been some areas of significant change.

Although our staff spend a lot of time helping parents to prepare for meetings, these are now much more likely to be school based meetings rather than meetings with Local Authority staff. The other area where there has been a significant change is in calls around permanent exclusions. This probably reflects the national stance that children with SEN should not be permanently excluded except in very exceptional circumstances. Calls around fixed term exclusions remain roughly constant.

Service User Satisfaction Survey (SUSS): We carried out our annual Service User Satisfaction Survey (SUSS) during January February and March 2011. This went to 100 parents the first time they rang during this time, and 42% responded. We are able to report, as before, 100% satisfaction with our service and this year more parents found out about us from Children and Young Peoples Services. We continue to use the comments made by parents to improve our service in a variety of ways.

Full and summary reports are available on our website, with hard copies on request.

Information & Support Course for Parents: Phase 1 is an opportunity to meet with other parents, share experiences and gain an overview of the relevant Education Policies and Procedures. 7 parents joined us from Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire areas when we ran the course from September 2010 (4x2hour sessions).

The course was led by Moira LLOYD (South Glos. Educational Psychologist) with support from Anne Bush and Davina, with additional input from Elaine. Many thanks to Moira and Anne for their work in revising and updating our course materials.

SEN Partnership Manual: We continue to work on revisions to our manual in order to publish it for the remaining authority, in the hope that it will offer a route through to closer partnership working with schools in Bristol and improved links with SENCOs. This manual will not be published as a hard copy due to financial cut-backs and because many

settings have now gone "paperless", but it will be available on our website in the autumn term.

The SEN Green Paper "Support and Aspiration": The vision for reform set out in this document includes wide ranging proposals for children and young people who are disabled or have SEN. However it has been described as "the greenest of green" papers and contains a number of aspirational ideas that would require significant changes to assessment processes, service delivery, funding and legislation that are unlikely to be brought in before 2014.

A major proposal is the introduction of an education health care plan, to replace the statement of SEN and a resulting revision to the current SEN Code of Practice. We are not yet clear what implications this might have for the future of parent partnership services.

Supportive Parents have made a group response to this consultation document and Local Coordinators have additionally supported parent participation forums in the three authorities to submit further comments. We have been told that these responses will be taken seriously and will shape the future White Paper, expected in Autumn 2011.

Restructure of SPSC: One of our greatest challenges this year has been the changes to our organisation necessitated by Elaine's decision to take early retirement, Maggie Wilmore's retirement from the helpline team and Janet's final departure. This has resulted in changes to personnel, to roles and responsibilities, but we are pleased that we have retained Maggie Potter and Carlyne Ablitt on our staff team and welcome Jodie Thame as our new Office Manager.

Acknowledgments: A great many thanks go to the whole Supportive Parents team who enable our work to be carried out: The trustees, volunteers, staff, members, parents and those committed professionals who give their time and experience to maintaining and developing this service.

We send our hopes and best wishes for a long and enjoyable retirement to Elaine, Janet and Maggie and move into our 22nd year with confidence and every hope for the future of our service.

This report was presented at our AGM at Royal Oak House Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2011. If you wish to become a member or would like to renew your membership please use the enclosed form.