



Together we can make a difference

Parents In Partnership

pip news

Issue 5

Winter 2013

For parents of children and young adults with special needs or disabilities

Hello to all you parents and carers out there

Welcome to our winter newsletter. This edition is a special one, focussing on the changes to the law about special educational needs provision as set out in the Children and Families Bill.

There is a lot of quite complex information in this newsletter. Parents have a right to be given this information about changes which will have an impact on all our families, so we make no apologies for writing about the reforms at length.

The Bill is still going through Parliament, so we must emphasise that none of the reforms are yet law and there might still be some last minute changes to the new system. The information provided is correct at the time of going to print.

We will be holding an information session for parents early in 2014 where Council representatives leading on the reforms in Croydon will be available to discuss their plans and answer questions. The details for this will be published on our website and emailed out as soon as we have a date, so keep an eye out for this.

If you would like further information about the SEN reforms, you can search on the Department for Education website, www.education.gov.uk, where you can get news of the latest developments.



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What's new at PIP...

Following the opening of the Carers Support Centre in Croydon, PIP are delighted to be able to provide an open 'clinic' on a Tuesday. Tansy Muller, our transition worker for parents of young people 14+ is based at the centre between 10am and 4pm and is happy to meet with you and provide information and support. There is no need to book an appointment and there are facilities for you to talk in confidence if you prefer. The Carers café is also open for a quiet place to rest and recuperate.

Carers
Support
Centre

PIP Plus

As we come to the end of 2013 and our thoughts turn to planning the new programme for PIP Plus, we have taken this opportunity to look back and review the value and benefits of our guest speakers and how PIP Plus has helped you the parents, in providing a regular meeting place for you to relax and share with each other. One parent stated that...

'...all the information from all the speakers is vital to all parents with special needs young adults and children...'

As we move into 2014, we aim to make our services accessible to as many parents as possible and with this in mind we intend to hold some PIP Plus meetings at the Carers Support Centre on a Tuesday morning as well as continuing to use Cornerstone House as our evening venue.

Details of our forthcoming programme are:

- ◆ Tuesday 21st January 2014 - Supported Living and Housing Options (Mike Corrigan)
7.30pm-9.30pm at Cornerstone House, 14 Willis Road, Croydon, CR0 2XX
- ◆ Tuesday 11th March 2014 - Sexuality & Relationships (Izzy Valenti)
9.30am - 11.30am at the Carers Support Centre, 24 George Street, Croydon,
- ◆ Tuesday 13th May 2014 - Benefits and Welfare (Carole Webster)
7.30pm - 9.30pm at Cornerstone House, 14 Willis Road, Croydon, CR0 2XX

PIP welcomes a new staff member - Sharon Scott....

I have worked with parents of children and young people with a special need or disability for over 20 years and joined PIP on 01 July 2013 to continue this work. My first five months seemed to have gone by very quickly. I have joined Kat and Tansy as a Family Link Worker.

I have been getting to know parents, staff and the PIP trustees as well as other professionals and services around the borough. In addition to my direct support to parents I have enjoyed meeting parents at PIP+ sessions, training workshops and parent consultations with the local authority.

I am working closely with the other partners of the PRISM consortium and going forward will be particularly focusing on work with parents of younger children, under 5.

*PIP has a new website
www.pipcroydon.com*

The Children & Families Bill Update...

You will be aware that the government is changing the system for children and young people with special educational needs. They want the new system to provide consistent support from all services to support the best outcomes for children and young people.

Firstly, the law has not changed; all current arrangements remain in place until the bill becomes an Act. The recent changes in funding do not change the legal responsibilities of schools and local authorities for children with special educational needs.

It is expected that the new regulations will be in place by September 2014. There is still much discussion and debate and the work is being led by Edward Timpson MP for Crewe and Nantwich. In a recent letter he writes **“We want children and young people to benefit from the changes as soon as possible, however it is not proposed to move wholesale to the new system from September 2014; rather it will be the beginning of a period of gradual and orderly transition to full implementation.”**

The definition of Special Educational Needs remains the same as set out in the current Code of Practice: children with significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age.

- ◆ The new regulations will apply to all schools including academies and free schools
- ◆ The local authority will be responsible for identifying those children and young people with SEN
- ◆ The new regulations apply to children and young people from birth to the age of 25
- ◆ There will be a new, shorter and less bureaucratic Code of Practice. The new draft Code of Practice is available on line.
- ◆ Statements will be replaced with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC)
- ◆ There is a proposal to replace School Action and School Action Plus with a single category
- ◆ There will be a legal duty on education authorities, health authorities and social care to work together
- ◆ It remains the duty of the local authority to secure the educational provision set out in the EHC Plan
- ◆ These new EHC plans will focus on outcomes including employment and independent living
- ◆ Each local authority is required to publish a local offer which will include the education, health and care services that are available locally or nearby. The purpose of the local offer is to enable parents, carers and young people to have easy access to the information they need. There is a duty to consult with parents, schools, colleges and other services when preparing and reviewing this offer. Currently Croydon Local Authority is organising consultations with parents in regards to Local Offer.
- ◆ Families and young people will have the option to request a personal budget in relation to the EHC Plan.

What we have provided for you is what we know at the moment.

*Aurelija Mulier,
Parent Partnership Service, Family Lives*



Education, Health & Care Plan...

Under the current system, some children with special educational needs have a Statement, or if they have left school and are at college, a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA). From September 2014 Statements and LDAs will start to be replaced by Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). This does not mean that everybody with a Statement/LDA will suddenly have to change to the new system. It will be phased in gradually over the next few years.

The idea behind the EHC Plan is that education, health and social care professionals should work more closely together and focus on looking at the whole range of children and young people's needs, rather than just concentrating on their own speciality. Parents should not have to keep repeating the same information to different professionals – information should be co-ordinated across all agencies involved.



EHC Plans can run from 0-25, covering a child's earliest years until they are settled into adulthood. This will mean a consistent approach to support and better forward planning, so those tricky transition points should be easier to manage, particularly when young people leave school and start college.

Plans will be “outcomes-focussed”. This means that there will be more emphasis on what children and young people hope to achieve, and long-term aspirations will be encouraged, rather than the shorter-term outlook we have at present. Specialists will still undertake their own assessments, but now they will discuss their findings with everyone involved in a child's care. Parents and professionals will work together to decide what support is needed to help children and young people achieve their aims and who is best placed to provide that help.

The Plan will name the school/college the child/young person will attend, and other educational support needs. It will also set out the health support and social care support necessary to help the child/young person reach their aims, as decided in the Plan. The Education Health and Care Plan will have the same legal weight as a Statement currently does, so if support is specified in the Plan, agencies have a legal obligation to provide that support.

Pathfinders who have been testing the use of EHC Plans have shared their learning of what has enabled the process and Plans to be effective. This is what has emerged:

- ◆ Effective co-ordination should take place between education, health and care services, working together both to reach agreement on key outcomes with children, parents and young people and to secure the appropriate provision to deliver those outcomes.
- ◆ Practitioners should be engaged and committed to the co-ordinated assessment and planning process and where necessary, trained in person centred approaches.
- ◆ Families and young people should be supported through the assessment process by a single point of contact, particularly in more complex cases and during difficult transitional periods.
- ◆ EHC plans should be person centred, evidence-based and focussed on outcomes (both short term outcomes and longer term aspirations for children and young people). Outcomes need to be specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound.

Education, Health & Care Plan cont....

- ◆ EHC plans should be specific about the interventions identified to make a difference, including the provision needed to help secure those outcomes. EHC plans should not be service-driven.
- ◆ Decision-making in relation to the content of EHC plans should be transparent and involve parents and children and young people themselves.
- ◆ EHC plans should be clear, concise, readable and accessible to parents, children and young people. EHC plans should offer practical information for providers and practitioners. They should be able to be used on a daily basis, especially where high or complex support is required to meet the child's/young person's needs.
- ◆ EHC plans should support portability across geographical areas, particularly in relation to assessment information and agreed outcomes.
- ◆ EHC plans should support preparation for key transition points. Plans must be "forward looking" – e.g. anticipating and planning for key review and transition points, including transitions between different stages of education and on to higher education, paid employment and / or independent living. Plans should be used to inform commissioning of future support and provision.
- ◆ EHC plans should explore how informal (family and community) support as well as formal support from statutory agencies can be used to achieve agreed outcomes.
- ◆ EHC plans should indicate how the child/young person's learning and development is going to be monitored and promoted.

What is happening in Croydon?

Croydon Local Authority and Health Services are working together with parent representatives, PIP and other organisations to decide the best way of developing the assessment process and EHC Plan in Croydon. The ideas about working together and working very closely with families are very similar to what happens already with those families on the Early Support Programme, so many people in Croydon have experience of supporting families in this way. We are also discussing what an Education, Health and Care Plan should look like and how it should be presented so it can be clearly understood by parents, children and young people.

From September 2014 when a child is newly referred for Statutory Assessment, the assessment will be for an EHC Plan. For those children who already have a Statement, they will gradually be changed on to a Plan over the next three years, probably at the end of a key-stage. The SEN Department have a group of parents who have volunteered to test out the new system, so any blips should be ironed out before the new processes are extended to everyone.



The Local Offer...

The local offer is for all families of children and young people with special needs, those who have an EHC Plan and those who don't. The local offer is to help parents who have said that they find it hard to access information about what support is available.

Every Local Authority must publish, in one place, information about provision they expect to be available in their area for children and young people from 0-25 who have SEN. There should be information about:

- ◆ Education provision
- ◆ Health provision
- ◆ Social Care provision
- ◆ Arrangements to identify and assess children and young people with SEN
- ◆ Eligibility criteria for services and how decisions are made
- ◆ What support is available to help children and young people move between school phases
- ◆ Services available to support young people preparing for adulthood
- ◆ Sources of support, advice and information
- ◆ Arrangements for disagreement resolution, complaints, mediation and appeals to the SEN Tribunal
- ◆ Also arrangements on how the Local Offer will be reviewed and feedback on the Local Offer from families

The local offer should be easy to understand, factual and jargon-free. It should be structured in such a way that information is easy to find. So information might be categorised by special need, or age group for example. The local offer should be developed and reviewed with local parents, children and young people so it reflects what families need.

The local offer must be available online and on paper so it's accessible to all.

In Croydon

There has been a lot of work done recently on developing Croydon's Local Offer. Many parents will have attended a session either at their child's school or elsewhere to discuss what information they would like to see in the offer and give their opinion on how they would like that information presented.

Questionnaires will be sent to schools for parents to complete. Alternatively, an online version will be available on the Council website www.croydon.gov.uk and on our website www.pipcroydon.com

The Council will use all this information to start creating Croydon's Local Offer, and will then start asking parents views on what they have developed. If you would like to be on a parent panel to review the Local Offer as it continues to develop, please contact us at PIP.

Personal Budgets...

When a child or young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan and parents and professionals have agreed what help the child needs to achieve their aims, parents have the choice of taking a personal budget.

This means that Education, Health and Social Care Services have to work out what it would cost them to provide certain services agreed in the plan, and tell parents what that cost is. Parents can then choose either to have services provided by the Council or Health Services, or parents can take charge of that budget and choose to buy those services from somewhere else.



There will be strict rules in place to make sure that this funding is used for what has been agreed, and parents will have to account to the Local Authority for how they have spent the money. The Local Authority has to make sure that parents know where to go for help and support in managing this funding.

Pathfinders have said:

- ◆ Personal budgets should be an integral part of the EHC process in order to empower creative solutions.
- ◆ All decisions about personal budgets (including direct payments) should be made with the involvement of the family/young person.
- ◆ Personal budgets should reflect the holistic nature of an EHC, which details agreed outcomes to be achieved across education, health and care.
- ◆ Personal budgets should allow families and young people to manage agreed elements of the additional and individual support they need.
- ◆ Personal budgets should be based on clear agreed outcomes.
- ◆ The process for getting a personal budget should be transparent and challengeable.
- ◆ Personal budgets should support greater family resilience.
- ◆ Families and young people should have the opportunity to manage all, some or none of their personal budget - either themselves or with third party support.
- ◆ Where parents do not want a personal budget, other ways should be identified to offer them choice and control, so that they can exert influence on planning, review and provision effectively and within their capacity.
- ◆ Effective monitoring and audit arrangements should be established which are not onerous to families and which are not overly bureaucratic.
- ◆ Personal budgets should be underpinned by strategic commissioning principles that allow for greater choice in the market and support market development.
- ◆ Information and support should be available to support parents/young people who are interested in taking up and managing a personal budget, including information on sources of independent advice.

In Croydon

There is a working group in Croydon consisting of parents and professionals which is discussing how to make personal budgets work here. Many parents have experience of using direct payments from social care to pay for short break services and the working group is working out how this experience can be built on to include health and education provision.



CROYDON PARENT PARTNERSHIP SERVICE

Advice Drop-in sessions

Do you need to talk to someone about your child's special educational needs? We can offer advice and information in the following areas:

- Information about special educational needs (2-19yrs old)**
- Information and advice about the statutory assessment process, help with form filling (including A2 - Parental Views form)**
- Advice on your child's statement of special educational needs**
- Advice on annual reviews and working with professionals**
- Information about the Special Education Needs Tribunal and Mediation Service**
- General advice and support and signposting to other sources of help/advice**

Every Tuesday 10am-12 noon (term -time only)
Woodside Children's Centre
(by Woodside School, nearest Tram Stop Blackhorse Lane)
Morland Road, Croydon, CR0 6NF

Parent Partnership Service tel: 020 3131 3150,
e-mail: parentssupporters@familylives.org.uk

There is no need to book, just drop-in.

Parent Training...

PIP recently hosted another Makaton Course run by Anne Chapman, which was extremely well received by parents. This is the third course we have hosted in the last couple of years and we are very pleased to be able to offer a further course (modules 3 & 4) next year for parents that have already attended and received a certificate for Modules 1 & 2. Details will be released shortly and all previous attendees will be notified.

'This course has made me feel I can enter my son's world...'

We are also considering sessions for parents on subjects such as play & social skills, challenging behaviour, and assertiveness and positive thinking. Once our training programme has been agreed, we will publish it on our website and via our email bulletins. You will also be able to find details through the Carers Information Service and Carers Support Centre, but please do not hesitate to contact the office for information.

PIP Croydon

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