



Policy & Research Briefing

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A short guide for Trust partners on what's new in policy and research

Dear Colleagues

Happy New Year! – I hope you all had a restful and enjoyable break and are ready to take on the challenges the future holds as well as making the most of the opportunities it will bring. I believe the only way forward for Children's Services and its partners is to come together, work together and go forward together. Both I, and managers of all levels across our organisation, are aware of the innovation and expertise amongst our staff and at this time your support and enthusiasm is more important than ever. Should you see opportunities for savings within your own work, no matter how small, please don't be afraid to speak up!



This year we will see the publication of our new Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014, which will outline how the Trust plans to improve outcomes for children and young people for the next three years. Consultations will be underway soon and you can have your say on the plans for the future.

There are other key documents to look out for as we publish them early this year. The first is the Disabilities Strategy. This seeks to scope and affirm the varied needs of disabled children and young people in the city and sets out a clear framework for the commissioning of any future services. The aim is that the strategy will enable a consistent approach across the city and ensure that specific provision for disabled children is embedded in all services that children and young people receive. Secondly a Behaviours for Learning Strategy is being developed. This strategy looks at supporting positive behaviour. Behaviour, learning and teaching in our schools are inseparable issues as poor behaviour denies the right of the pupils to learn and teachers to teach. This strategy will focus on collective responsibilities so that it is not just the responsibility within the schools but within the wider community also. Watch this space for more updates on these important strategic documents.



With Best Wishes

Bronwen Lacey

Chair of the Plymouth Children and Young People's Trust Executive

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Focus on: Speech, Language and Communication – 2011 National year of communication

In the 21st century, the ability to communicate - to say what you want to say and to understand what other people are saying - is fundamental. Speech, language and communication underpins everything we do in life. Babbling babies do not become talkative toddlers by chance. Communication is a skill that we learn and develop and is something we can all improve.

What do we mean by Speech, Language and Communication? (information below from the [Communication Trust](#))

Speech refers to:	Language refers to speaking and understanding language:	Communication refers to how we interact with others:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saying sounds accurately and in the right places in words; • The sounds people use to communicate words • Speaking fluently, without hesitating, or prolonging or repeating words or sounds; • Speaking with expression with a clear voice, using pitch, volume and intonation to support meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using words to build up sentences; • Sentences to build up conversations and longer; • Stretches of spoken language; • Understanding and making sense of what people say. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language is used to represent concepts and thoughts; • Using language in different ways; to question, clarify, describe etc; • Non-verbal rules of communication; good listening, looking at people looking at people when in a conversation, knowing how to talk to others and take turns, how to change language use to suit the situation or the person being spoken to; • Many children and young people communicate successfully using non-verbal means such as signing, gestures, communication books or electronic equipment.



'[Hello](#)' is the 2011 national year of communication - a campaign to increase understanding of how important it is for children and young people to develop good communication skills.

'Hello' is run by over 35 leading voluntary and community organisations and aims to make communication for all children and young people a priority in homes and schools across the UK so that they can live life to the full. The campaign is backed by the Department for Education and BT. 'Hello' activity will stretch across public, voluntary and commercial sectors with direct involvement from frontline staff across all areas of the campaign. Visit the [website](#) to get involved and sign up for regular updates. Through this website you can find out about the monthly themes that have been devised for the year. The website also features free resources to help support children's communication development and you find out about events that are happening in your area.

In Plymouth a recent visit from the Communication Champion Jean Gross resulted in very positive feedback, placing Plymouth amongst the top Children and Young People's Trusts for early intervention and prevention work. In December Jean Gross visited professionals, parents and children at a Children's Centre in the city to see first hand the innovative work taking place. Speech and language therapists working in the Early Years Advisory Team are part of the Every Child A Talker (National programme rolled out across LAs aimed at developing communication skills in the early years) and ICAN Early Talk accreditation ([ICAN is a children's communication charity](#)). To gain this accreditation, settings must go through a process to demonstrate that they support early communication development in everything they do and they every staff member knows how to interact with each child to help their speech and language development. Currently 24 settings in the city now hold this accreditation.


The work happening in Plymouth has resulted in year on year improvements in the percentage of children achieving a good level of development at age five on the early year's foundation profile scales that relate to communication and language. Also a below average percentage of children with very low scores for communication and thinking scale and a steadily narrowing gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest.

Safety in the snow advice

Recent snow across the country has caused problems, but for many children and young people it has provided an opportunity to try sledding and tobogganing. Whilst these activities are exciting and fun they can also be risky, especially for young children.

[Child Accident Prevention Trust](#) has issued a few key safety measures families should consider to help ensure safe fun in the snow:

- Choose a slope that's not too steep and ends with a long flat run
- Do not sledge on slopes that end near a road, pond or lake, line of trees, fence or wall
- Make sure the slope is free of obstacles such as trees and rocks
- Only sledge during the daytime when obstacles are visible
- Only let children sledge individually when they know how to stop



Studies have shown that older children and teenagers are more likely to want to take risks. Managing their safety is more difficult and parents are recommended to help their children to understand the risks and encourage them to adopt safe habits early on.

A further precaution, whilst the UK is experiencing some extremes of low temperatures, is to consider appropriate clothing. Ensure children, especially those under the age of three, are dressed appropriately and changed out of wet clothes as soon as they get home.

Tackling knife and violent crime for young people



December saw over 150 young people learn about the devastating consequences of violent crime.

Funded by Tackling Knives Action Plan (TKAP) and held at the Plymouth Professional Development Centre, students watched and interacted with the very hard hitting and engaging theatre production ('Skin Deep' by Solomon Theatre Group), followed by a carousel of sessions which explored various aspects violent crime, including a real life testimony from Adam Fourace, who's brother was beaten to death in an alcohol fuelled crime.

This excellent example of partnership working included the Streetwise Team, The Coroners Office, Devon & Cornwall Police and was delivered by Plymouth City Council. Comments about the event from teachers included, 'Schools should all come to this event,' 'Outstanding', and 'Jaw droppingly brilliant' and student comments included 'So brave,' 'Gave me a better understanding,' 'Very close to home' and 'Amazing, total respect.' Young people in year ten from schools across the city, including special schools and alternative complementary education, were able to attend.



This successful event is now being followed up in school settings so please look out for further information or contact michael.house@plymouth.gov.uk to get involved

National Playground 2 Podium talent ID scheme in Plymouth

The Playground 2 Podium scheme is in its second year. It supports young disabled people in sport and PE, and ensures that those with a higher level of ability are identified and are able to access a talent pathway. Last year there were over 100 young people who entered and some individuals have been fast tracked on to talent pathways.

This year the Devonshire Health and Racquet Club hosted the event on 19 January. On the day, the young people were able to take on 10 different challenges which tested their agility, balance, co-ordination, speed and power. It is hoped that these events will help to raise the aspirations of young people with a disability and sustain their participation in sport by joining the new inclusive sports clubs like wheelchair basketball and boccia. Contact Martin.Lees@plymouth.gov.uk for more information.

Preventing violent extremism is everyone's business – FREE training in Plymouth

The current round of twelve half day sessions for front line staff have all been booked. So a further three sessions are now available, in February and March 2011. The aims of the sessions are to provide opportunities to raise awareness and deepen understanding of: the latest Government thinking on the 'Prevent Strategy', violent extremism, myths and misunderstanding about Islam, the process of radicalisation, our roles and responsibilities. These sessions will run from 9am - 12.30pm.

Available dates are: Friday 18 February, Tuesday 8 March and Thursday 17 March 2011.

Held at the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity, 3a Watts Road, St. Judes.

To book a place, please contact Gemma Foster Tel: 01752 254438 or email: gemma@pcfcd.co.uk

Policy

Improving services for women and child victims of violence: The Department of Health (DoH) Action Plan

This [action plan](#) responds to the work of the Taskforce on Violence against Women and Children (VAWC), and sets out how the DoH in partnership with others will improve the way health services support victims. This action plan details how they will respond to the following recommendations in detail, referring to case studies where appropriate:

1. Awareness-raising:

- a. more awareness amongst health professionals of their role in addressing the issues;
- b. patients should be provided with information that helps them access VAWC services quickly and safely.

2. Workforce, education and training:

- a. Improving the competencies and skills of NHS staff to equip them to identify, treat and refer
- b. Improve the quality of forensic services for victims of sexual assault.

3. Improving quality of services

- a. Ensure universal services are equipped to deal with this, and the right specialist services are commissioned, i.e. Sexual Assault Referral Centres.

4. Evidence and information

- a. Improving consistency of health data collected on violence;
- b. The need to support health professionals to appropriately share information.



Focus on families – new drive to help troubled families

The Governments [new drive](#) will set out to ensure that the 120,000 families who are facing multiple problems are helped to turn their lives around.



These families may need extra help with health problems, substance misuse issues, children's behaviour and/or employment.

As a first stage of the drive the Government:

- Will give LAs new freedoms to pool budgets to help provide more joined up solutions for troubled families;
- Will provide new money to a number of LAs through the Early Intervention Grant for trialling innovative new approaches to help families with problems;
- Welcomes the announcement that Emma Harrison, an entrepreneur who specialises in getting jobseekers into work, will help up to 500 families in an initial six to ten areas of the country to develop and deliver these trials.

The Government has also announced a further £30 million funding over four years for relationship support. It will be used to deliver better support for couples in relationship distress by encouraging couples to take up preventative support, and minimise the negative impacts for children when relationships breakdown. This could potentially be delivered in Sure Start children's centres.

£20 million to help school pupils be more active

Up to £20 million of funding to help get the least active children more involved in school sport has been [announced](#) by the Secretary of State for Health. Two key initiatives have been outlined including:

1. Continuing the Change4Life Clubs in secondary schools, which are aimed at 13-19 year olds, who do not regularly take part in sports or physical activity? The clubs place an emphasis on a whole range of activities, including healthy eating, and not simply sport or physical activity. They aim to attract and engage young people early by developing a sense of belonging within a club setting.
2. A new 'School Games', for which every school will be invited to sign up. This package of annual events at school, district, county and national level has the potential to engage and excite every child.

Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) Evaluation – Phase 3

This [evaluation](#) builds on two earlier evaluation reports that pointed to positive potential impacts on breastfeeding and reduced smoking in pregnancy. This evaluation looks into the toddler phase of the FNP implementation. The FNP project offers help to young parents with intensive support through home visits from early pregnancy until a child is two years old. The programme complements and supports the work of Health Visitors, providing the "intensive care" end of prevention for families who need more help to care for their children and themselves. The findings include:

- Mothers are very positive about their parenting capacity and report high levels of warm parenting;
- Mothers have significantly increased mastery, which is linked to increased confidence and higher aspirations for themselves and their children;
- Children develop in line with age group norms.

Research & Consultation

The Adoption Research Initiative (ARI)

ARI is a group of Government funded research projects which is contributing to the evaluation of the Adoption and Children Act (2002). The initiative includes seven studies which focus on four broad themes:

- Permanence planning
- Family finding and matching
- Support for adoptive placements
- The costs of related services.

The findings include key messages for all those who have an interest in securing permanence and stability for children who cannot live with their birth parents. They are particularly helpful to those who are working to reduce delays in the adoption process and overcome the barriers to achieving permanence for children.

The key messages from the projects are being distributed in various ways to a range of interest groups with the support of the DfE.

The ARI [website](#) offers a range of useful resources, including the full reports and useful summaries giving key findings and messages for practice. Seven have now been published.



Also available on the website is news of upcoming conferences and seminars. Visit the [website](#) and register to make the most of it.

The mental wellbeing of young carers



This [report](#) presents the findings of a two year study by Manchester Carers Forum and the Young Carers Research Group that looked at the mental wellbeing of young carers. It aimed to gain further insight into how children cope with the demands of caring on their emotional health. Using a recognised wellbeing measure, the study aimed to understand more about the impact of caring on children's energy levels, self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as on levels of resilience and to what extent children develop coping strategies when they care.

Recommendations for research, policy and practice from the report include:

- Early interventions in young carers' lives, including needs assessments and referral to service – a clear message from the research showed that the longer children are caring for relatives unsupported, the greater the negative impact on their mental wellbeing;
- Increased knowledge and awareness of young carers' issues among professionals and health care practitioners – one way to achieve this would be to improve training programmes for primary and secondary care practitioners;
- Support services for young carers should be based on professionals listening to young carers about their needs and their expertise – this will enable professionals to understand how young carers respond to problems and manage the demands of caring.

The changing shape of children's services

This [survey](#) conducted by the National College and the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) was carried out during a two week period in November 2010. The aim of the survey was to establish more clearly the actual scale and nature of changes taking place in LAs and their impact on the organisation and delivery of children's services.

57% of Directors of Children's Services indicated that their authority is planning to change the way in which services are delivered, with a further 34% saying that the situation is currently under review. Only 9% commented that there are no plans for change.

Options for change that are being implemented or planned are varied between LAs. The most commonly mentioned option is that of partnering with the private sector for back office functions, and commissioning for specific service delivery.

Reading by age six – How the best schools do it

This [report](#) from Ofsted draws from the practice of 12 outstanding schools across England to highlight what works in teaching children to read. Key recommendations include:

- The diligent, concentrated and systematic teaching of phonics is central to the success of all the schools that achieve high reading standards in Key Stage 1;
- The assessment of individual pupils' progress, phonic knowledge and skills is sufficiently frequent and detailed to identify quickly the pupils who are failing;
- Effective provision for them to catch up is put in place early and there are high expectations of what all pupils should achieve;
- Children should be involved in the assessment of their progress and receive regular supportive feedback on their work.

Training and Events



FREE Inclusion Training to providers working with disabled children and young people

To promote the inclusion of all children and young people, free inclusion training is being offered to providers working with disabled children and young people, like childminders, leisure and sports club leaders, before and after school care, community groups e.g. Beavers/Rainbows, holiday care providers or youth workers. The training is available for two members of your staff. Each course will equip staff with the knowledge and skills to enable the out of schools workforce to include disabled children with a range of complex health and social care needs. The sessions will be interactive, mainly structured around group exercises, discussions and case studies. The sessions are designed to be information based, and to have a practical focus, that should equip participants with ideas and strategies for implementing useful and relevant changes.

'Aiming High to Include All', provided by Inclusion Works in partnership with Plymouth Psychology Service is offering 6 evening sessions. The sessions include elements on:

- Child development 5-16
- Working with teenagers
- Understanding children and young people with additional needs
- Attachment and resilience
- Working with parents and carers

All sessions will be held at Windsor House between 6-8.30pm on the following dates: 18 Jan, 10 Feb, 1, 15 and 23 March, 7 April.

Two further one day 6 hour sessions available are - *Inclusion 'Out of School'* Wednesday 9 February 2011 and *Let's All Play Outdoors!* 18 February 2011. These courses are run by KIDS and will increase your knowledge of inclusive outdoor. KIDS have developed and extended the current 'Let's All Play' course to include activities for staff who work in a variety of places and settings. There are opportunities to experience some outdoor games and discuss other activities whilst considering ways of challenging negative attitudes towards disabled children and young people.



A booking form will need to be completed prior to each course. Please contact Jude Odell at judith.odell@plymouth.gov.uk for a booking form and for further details. Inclusion Works 01752 307559

Useful Links

Plymouth Children and Young People's Trust

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/pcypt.htm>

Research in Practice

www.rip.org.uk

Care Knowledge

www.careknowledge.com

Department for Education

<http://www.education.gov.uk/>

Plymouth Parent Partnership

www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk

Safeguarding Children

www.safeguardingchildren.org.uk

Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board

www.plymouthscb.org.uk

Department of Health

www.dh.gov.uk

Children and Young People Now

www.cypnow.co.uk

Service Directories

National Service Directories

<http://www.careknowledge.com/secure/contenttypes/doc.aspx?id=58466>

Plymouth Service Directory

<http://www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk>

Supporting People Service Directory

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/supportingpeopledirectory>

Parents Guide to Plymouth

<http://www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk/index.php?p=4>

Plymouth's Public Interpretation and Translation Service

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/communityandliving/socialinclusion/translateplymouth.htm>

Printing Schedule

For further information contact:

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To download previous Policy Briefs go to:

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/socialcareandhealth/childrensocialcare/pcypt/pcyptpolicybrief.htm>

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Issue 2	February	4 February 2010
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