

Hazel Ball, Director, Community and Environment

Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1RQ

Tel: 01392 277888 www.exeter.gov.uk

Ms A Whiteley
Director of Children Services
Devon County Council
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QD

Direct dial: 01392 265105

Fax: 01392 265533

email: Hazel.Ball@exeter.gov.uk

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Dear Anne

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the first draft of the Children and Young Person's Plan 2008-2011.

I have the following comments on behalf of the City Council.

General

The document is well and clearly structured and generally easy to read. Some sections are somewhat impenetrable however (e.g. 8.7.7). A single editorial hand on the final version should be able to resolve this.

The other general principal, which we would like to see enshrined within the plan, is that budget should follow need. It should be explicitly recognised that more resources will be diverted to areas of higher deprivation.

Introduction

Paragraph 2.19 underplays the concern about the lack of aspiration in Devon's children and young people. The concern is a current one (the plan refers to it in the past tense) and, certainly within Exeter, is shared much more widely than among head teachers. The opportunity to work to raise aspirations is not taken elsewhere in the document. This is particularly important as raising aspirations features as a key priority in the latest draft of the LAA (outcome SCS 17). There is certainly data from Exeter which supports the need for this priority, e.g. over 11% of young people entering jobs without training and a lower number continuing in full time education. The issue of aspirations permeates a number of the themes. For example Exeter has the highest number of teenage pregnancies and the lowest proportion terminated, surely something that must be tackled through raising aspirations?

Paragraph 2.34 seems to refer to the Children's Trust Executive as the lead agency for achieving the



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CYPP. Surely that responsibility lays with the statutory Children's Services Authority, in this case, Devon County Council? The plan might benefit from a description of the role of the statutory Children's Services Authority.

Paragraph 2.37 does not make it clear how local partnerships will be resourced to carry out their responsibilities. If there is a real desire to tailor services to address some of the very clear locally distinctive needs then this is crucial. It is a role that could be usefully supported by the local CYPS link i.e. in Exeter's case Debbie Pritchard. There needs to be clarity about what commissioning/budgets will be devolved to a local level and what local discretion will exist. Under the previous CYPP, the Children's Trust Constitution and structure never became a reality. There is a clear risk that history will repeat itself. If there is no real intention to allow local determination of services then the CYPS should be open about this.

The role of local partnerships in delivery is not clear. In 1.10 you refer to delivery plans being the responsibility of reference groups. How will the local dimension be incorporated into delivery?

We would like some amendments to the diagram at 2.39. To whom are the local groups accountable and who steers them – the Children's Trust Board and Executive or the LSP? It will cause confusion if joint accountability is shown and the local groups may be pulled in different directions. Our view is that the LSP should take this role. The relationship of DCC as statutory body is not shown at all. In our view it is misleading to call the local groups the CTLSPs and this will give rise to confusion as to their role. We feel that Local Planning and Implementation Group, although a mouthful is a clear descriptor.

Paragraph 2.40 refers to some working across three areas with Exeter being combined with East and Mid Devon. It is widely recognised that Exeter's distinctive urban focus requires a very different approach. Insistence on working over this wider area has slowed and blocked action in the past for example around work regarding teenage pregnancy. Exeter should be treated separately to reflect its distinctive urban nature and particular challenges.

Being Healthy

Paragraph 3.3 gives a rather one-sided view of things. Our past experience in Exeter was that we had a very good PCT that was responsive and effective in meeting local needs. One could equally argue that loss of local PCTs could reduce the scope for innovation; reduce the likelihood that local needs and priorities will be met; result in a slower, less responsive bureaucracy and level services downwards. Multiple IMT systems clearly existed before but how did this result in less effective outcomes for children & young people? We suggest that 3.3 is deleted and the words up to and including *opportunity* be deleted from 3.4 with this paragraph beginning *Devon PCT intends*.

Perhaps the approach should be to clearly identify the risks brought by a single PCT, some of which are listed above, and explicitly deal with how these could be mitigated?

Enjoy and Achieve

This section is silent on the role of schools and colleges in raising aspirations. There has been some excellent work done already and we feel that building on this should be a key aspect of the plan.

We suggest that an additional objective be added at 5.10 along the lines of *reduce the gap between the schools with the lowest value added scores and the rest*. As you know we have had concerns about the relative performance of Exeter's young people for some time and indeed requested in our comments

on the previous plan that this be addressed. We would like more support to be made available to those schools that would like it.

Making a Positive Contribution

This section is written in rather a negative way, for example, referring to reducing anti-social behaviour and unplanned pregnancy rather than talking in a positive way about what will be done to raise aspirations and allow young people to experience the pleasure that can be gained by making a positive contribution to society, opening themselves to new experiences and achieving the unexpected.

We would like to add at the end of the first sentence in 6.9 *and in the evenings*.

Housing

The heading to this chapter implies that the focus is on young people only. Children and their families also need to be considered.

We are pleased to note the priority given to agreeing protocols for helping homeless children and young people. There is a desperate need for these, which we have been pressing for some years now to no avail.

8.5.3 needs an additional objective to support young people and families to sustain their accommodation. All too often we house young people or families who then, all too predictably, fail and end up as intentionally homeless. We then have no duty to house them. There is often the need for support, which goes beyond that which is appropriate from Supporting People. This also links to the need for parenting support mentioned elsewhere. This needs to be picked up in the action section as well.

Parenting

In our view this is a key area and it would be good to see more tangible proposals in 8.6.5. An outcome measure we would favour would be that within the lifetime of the plan all agencies would be able to refer families who are experiencing significant difficulties to a family intervention project able to provide them with intensive support. Too often families become intentionally homeless because they lack the skills and support to sustain a tenancy.

Improving Provision for Children with Special Needs

It is not clear how the indicator *reducing new statement starts in 8.7.9* will indicate a positive impact on children and young people if a statement is needed in order that a child receives appropriate support.

Every Child's Future Matters

We are delighted to read in 8.9.6 that Devon is promoting access to school green spaces outside of school times and would like to see an indicator which measures progress on this including PFI schools.

Early Years, Childcare and Children's Centre Development

It might be useful to mention the important work done by Surestart and others in developing parenting

skills.

Participation

With reference to 9.1.5 (1), all partners are not signed up to the advanced hear by right standard as far as we are aware.

Risks

In addition to those listed, without local flexibility there is a danger that innovation will be stifled.

There is also a significant risk that in trying to provide the same service across the county we will continue to fail to increase the life chances of the most disadvantaged.

Without significant movement of resources, both to the more disadvantaged areas and upstream to more preventative work at lower thresholds it is difficult to see how this plan will contribute to making significant improvements in the life chances of the most disadvantaged children and young people.

A further risk is that the structure will continue to fail to function as intended. Devon PCT and Devon County Council need to take clear decisions about how much decision making they are prepared to devolve to a local level and how much difference they will accept in service provision at a local level.

At recent consultation events we have been consulted about underpinning beliefs and principles. A key principal around equity (point 8 in the first iteration) – the most important as far as we were concerned - had disappeared in the second version of this paper. We would like to see this reinstated as a priority.

We have commented on the proposals set out in the draft plan. We are aware that there has been a subsequent move by the Children's Trust Executive to focus local working on three large areas, incorporating Exeter with East and Mid Devon. We wish to place on record our grave concerns about this approach, which we will pursue through other channels. It is absolutely vital that Exeter's distinctive urban needs are considered separately.

I hope you find these initial comments helpful.

Yours sincerely

Hazel R Ball

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Director of Community and Environment