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DAPH Autumn Briefings

Below is a summary of issues raised by heads with Sue Clarke (Strategic Lead Officer for Achievement through Collaboration) at the East Region Briefing held on 8th October 2008, with subsequent responses from Judith Johnson Director of Learning and Schools.

1. Need for a safe and transparent complaints process for DCC services

There is a clear corporate process for complaints handling at both corporate and service levels. This requires stage 1 to be dealt with at the relevant specialist level and if satisfaction is not secured to escalate the process up to the relevant head of service and again if satisfaction not secured to then follow the formal complaints procedure. **(Tel contact – Customer Complaints 01392 384803)**. The latter system ensures all complaints are logged and followed up within due timescales and are reported on bi-monthly to SLG as an overview/trend. It is mostly at this level that the Director of Learning and Schools would be involved re any complaints relating to staff in their portfolio. It is often the case that schools have been responded to but the message has not reached the head. Equally services do need to know that they are dealing with a formal complaint not just a query.

Currently there is an Alternative Portfolio process, namely **(schoolsportfolio@devon.gov.uk)**

For ISSSS services in the future, reporting on complaints will be required as part of the annual review process

2. Invitation for SCC amended processes to be brought back to DAPH for discussion.

Judith Johnson identifies the need to include this on the agenda for the forthcoming Spring 2009 DAPH Briefings. It is also proposed that David Chaplin (Primary SIP Manager) will be invited to join the discussion for some consultative group work around the SCC amended process.

3. Formal explanation as to why there are differences in KS2 and KS3 funding.

Details about how and why funding varies between key stages can be accessed through:

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/revisedformula2007postconsultation.pdf>

4. Information about when changes to admissions (single point of entry) will be discussed with schools

The delay was attributable to waiting for the new term to begin before sending out the information – this has since been sent out in the week beginning 13th October 2008.

5. Possibility of introducing a priority flagging system for the Communication to Schools List

Presently these are already flagged by staff recipient e.g. for headteachers, Administrators, Subject Co-ordinators, Continuing Professional Development etc. The expectation is that all those flagged for the headteacher should all be read by the headteacher.

However, consideration could be given as to how a system of priority flagging might be applied and who is best placed to judge which e-mails headteachers must read.

6. General

Judith was concerned to note some of the comments relating to lack of action from some services and style issues. Whilst not wanting to minimise these in any way, Judith wishes to set them in the context of the many positive and supportive comments received from schools about the work of school improvement staff – in the round.

School improvement is a statutory function at the sharp end of working with schools – there will inevitably be many instances where the work of advisers on behalf of CYPs will be viewed negatively if it applies pressure to heads/staff. Judith is always happy for specific instance to be raised in line with the complaints process above and remains convinced that service staff wish to do a good job and, for the most part, they achieve this aim in often very difficult, low resourced and negative conditions. Judith repeats her intention that collectively we need to understand better each others respective roles and intents so that we can focus better on the core business.