

Cross Party Group on Children and Young People

Minute

Topic: Is the Scottish Parliament doing enough to support children and young people with additional support needs?

Date: 20.02.2018

Time: 13:00 – 14:30

Venue: Committee Room 2

Chair: Brian Whittle, MSP

Attendees:

Brain Whittle, MSP	Alison Johnstone, MSP	Agnes Mullen
Aiden Duffy	Annie McGovern	Aqeel Ahmed
Cherie Morgan	David Johnson	Dinah Aitken
Eilidh Currie	Elizabeth Barbour	Elizabeth May
Emma Rogan	Gill Westwood	Helen Sykes
John Loughton	Karin Tirevoll	Katie Rafferty
Lisa Ilari Fallon	Lizzie Morton	Lois Drake
Patricia Hutchison	Rachael Le Noan	Salena Bagely
Sally Cavers	Susan McKellar	Susan Wallace
Tim Rogerson	Yaritza Santos	Sara McFarlane
Anne-Marie Fleming	Sam Petrie	Sarah Paterson

1. Welcome from Chair

2. Confirmation of Previous Minutes – including update on previous actions. This were agreed to.

Previous Actions Update

- A letter to the Minister for Childcare and Early Years has been drafted as well as to Equalities and Human Rights Committee. It was agreed that the conveners would sign off these letters and the secretariat would send them out.
- No progress yet made on how we will use the 2018 report on Children and Young People (Scotland) Act as a programme for action for CPG. We have not yet had update on when the contents will be or how we can engage with the report. This action will be carried forward.

3. Sally Covers – Manager of Enquire, The national advice service for additional support for learning.

- Enquire provide support to children, young people and parents to ensure they get the support they need. The helpline receives calls from parents regularly, while their Reach website, provides peer support for children and young people with additional support needs.
- Enquire are well placed to identify whether Scotland is meeting the needs of children and young people with additional support needs. They know about national challenges and also any emerging themes.
- Sally outlined findings from the helpline and discuss where we are and where we need to go.
- Enquire are hearing that Co-ordinated Support Plans are being phased out in some areas.
- Sally discussed the Extension of Rights for children and young people with additional support needs and the new service being provided by Enquire and partners from across the children's sector.

4. Susan McKellar, Parents perspective

- Susan McKellar talked about her perspective as the parent of a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Susan has spent the 9 years her children have been education ensuring their rights have been met.
- She outlined the both positive and negative experiences she has had throughout this process. Susan has received support from Parenting Network Scotland and now provides support to other parents.
- Susan has set up a parent support group in her child's school and also have been involved in the Glasgow City Council additional support for learning forum.
- Susan's aim is to empower parents to be part of the process and support children and families to reach their fullest potential.
- Susan identified that it is vital that parents feel listened to.

5. Aqeel Ahmed former MSYP & Member of Haggeye Youth Forum

- Aqeel talked about his experiences of school as a young person with additional support needs and of additional support for learning. Aqeel will also discuss the campaigning he has been doing to improve the situation for children and young people with additional support needs.

- Aqeel spoke about the Don't Stop & Stare Campaign.
- Aqeel identified that he feels there is a lack of awareness among teachers about additional support needs.

6. Katie Rafferty – RespectMe

- Katie spoke about new anti-bullying guidance, Respect for All. This was influenced by the findings of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee enquiry, which raised significant concerns about prejudice-based bullying.
- Prejudice-based bullying is explicitly addressed in the resource and Katie would like to see a commitment to addressing prejudice-based bullying embedded in Local Authority and school policies.
- Katie also highlighted the importance of supporting children who display bullying behaviour.
- Katie would like to see a whole-school approach to anti-bullying, with an emphasis on prevention and a culture of inclusion and respect. Bullying should not be seen as isolated incidents.
- Katie would encourage the response to bullying to be led by the impact the bullying has had on the child. We have a unique definition of bullying in Scotland which highlights the impact on the person and the loss of control.

7. Floor Debate

Anne Marie Fleming, RNIB Scotland

- Marie highlighted the importance of specialist training for teachers who have to support children with a range of Additional Support Needs. Marie would like to see incentives for teachers to go on training as there are none currently.
- Marie is concerned about governance and how ASN will be funded in the future – while headteachers will have control over budgets and staff, responsibility for ASN will remain with the Local Authority

Brian Whittle, MSP

- Brian believes that funding for ASN currently sits with the local council. With regards to staff, headteachers will be responsible for staff and need to be asking the question, are staff equipped to meet the needs of pupils?

Susan McKeller, Parenting Network Scotland

- What Susan hears is that teachers do not feel equipped to deal with ASN. There are also challenges for teachers with how to engage with parents, especially around difficult conversations.

Patricia Hutchison, Clic Sargent

- Patricia reflected on Susan's presentation and the importance of parents being listened to.
- Patricia supports young people who have been diagnosed with a brain tumour and would like to know if Parenting Network Scotland work with families with children aged 16-25.

Susan McKeller, Parenting Network Scotland

- Usually Parenting Network Scotland works with families with children up to 18 but can go up to 25.

Aqeel Ahmed, Haggeye

- Aqeel added that Haggeye also works with parents
- Regarding teacher training, which Aqeel is currently undertaking, Stirling University offers a longer course which builds in ASN. For teachers who are qualified and working, they have less and less time to take to go on training.

Salena Bagely, Family Fund

- At Family Fund, they hear similar things from parents that the panel have spoken about.
- Salena spoke about being aware of bullying that happens in communities and the impact not only on the child but the wider impact on family members.
- Salena is concerned that children with ASN are often seen as a homogenous group who are seen as a "difficulty".
- Salena recalls that at a previous CPG, John Swinney spoke about making more space for teachers to go on training.

Sally Covers, Enquire

- Sally agrees with the importance of information being available in a range of ways.
- Sally raised the issues on Educational Psychologists, the bursaries for whom have been removed leading to a reduction in numbers.
- There is a need to ensure that nurturing professions are being nurtured.

- The National Inclusion Framework, last reviewed in 2014, addressed how we equip teachers to teach. The Doran Review also raised issues with teacher training and this was 6 years ago. This is perhaps something that we need to do some campaigning on.

Dinah Aitken, The Salvesen Mindroom Centre

- Dinah agrees that all the issues raised so far have been important.
- Dinah drew attention to the resource, It Takes All Kinds of Minds which was distributed via the GTCs to all teachers. While it will not solve the problem, it can offer a starting point for knowledge.
- From the points everyone has made so far, Dinah pulled out three key issues:
- Time- we don't necessarily need more equipment, but we do need to invest time to support children and their families
- Children out of school – it is very concerning that some children are missing significant amounts of school. The legislation with regards to this is not being implemented.
- Communication – this is one of the biggest issues for families accessing support for children and young people.

Susan McKeller, Parenting Network Scotland

- There is often no record of part time timetables or informal exclusions. There is no accountability for this and parents do not feel empowered to challenge it.
- There is a financial burden on the family when a child is on a reduced timetable.
- There is a mental health impact on children who are not being properly supported at school – they are suffering trauma through their experiences.
- There are some fantastic teachers who do listen to parents and provide support.

Susan Wallace, Contact

- Returning to the question for today's meeting, is the Education Committee asking enough questions about ASL.
- Susan was disappointed that no one from Education Scotland or COSLA was present to answer questions or participate in the discussion.
- Susan also reiterated the need for teachers to have specialist training.
- Susan feels that parents are going to charities for support and advice when they should be going to the public sector. This is because it is not clear who is making decisions, the Local Authority or Headteachers.

Brian Whittle, MSP

- Brian's understanding is that Headteachers are going to be taking on more of the decision making.

Lizzie Morton, Celcis

- Lizzie is concerned about how the ASN of looked after children are met. Birth parents are not always able to ensure they are, are corporate parents doing enough?

Brian Whittle, MSP

- Thanked all for their contribution to the discussion.
- Brian reflected on his experience of coaching a care experienced young person who has Additional Support Needs as an example of good practice.

8. Actions

- Gill Westwood would like children in Kinship placements to have the right to be assessed, liked looked after children.
- Brian Whittle recommended that the group writes to the Cabinet Secretary, with a focus on GIRFEC, to ask if we are equipping teachers through teacher training.
- Sally Cavers recommended that we could ask for the call for training from the Education and Skills committee to be progressed.
- Brian Whittle agreed, we should be asking what progress has been made with regards to recommendations.
- Brian also suggested that we write and engage with the Education Committee and COSLA and consider targeted invitations for future meetings.
- Helen Sykes underlined the importance of any actions being rights-based.

9. AOB

- No additional business

10. Dates of Future Meetings

- Tuesday, 17 April, 13:00 – 14:30 – Children and Young People's Mental Health
- Tuesday, 12 June, 13:00 – 14:30 – Year of Young People (Date subject to change). This will also be the group AGM.