

Enquire within

THE NEWSLETTER BULLETIN OF ENQUIRE, THE NATIONAL ADVICE SERVICE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN SCOTLAND

Where are we now? a review of the service so far

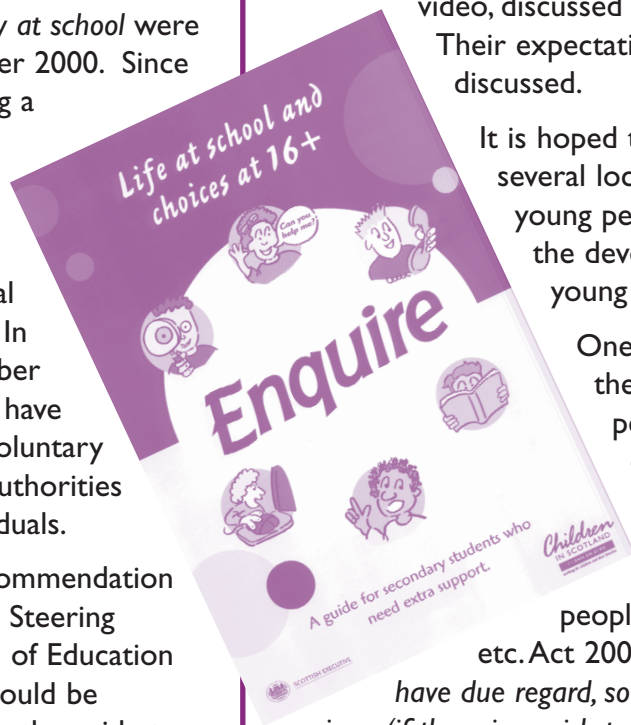
Enquire's sixth bulletin looks at the development of the service since it began 18 months ago. It details the progress of the main elements of the service - the helpline, training events, the mediation project and publications.

Guide and video for young people

A guide for young people titled *Life at school and choices at 16+* and video called *Having your say at school* were launched in December 2000. Since then packs containing a guide, video and teachers' notes have been distributed to all secondary and special schools in Scotland. In addition a large number of guides and videos have been requested by voluntary organisations, local authorities and interested individuals.

In response to a recommendation made by the Enquire Steering Group, all Directors of Education were asked if they would be interested in adapting the guide to make it specific to the services/organisations in their authority. Several authorities have registered an interest in this proposal.

If you would like a copy of either of these free publications please contact Enquire administration on 0131 222 2425.



Consulting children and young people

A consultation event involving young people was held last month in Aberdeen. With support from staff, a group of pupils watched the video, discussed the main points and examined the guide. Their expectations of information services were also discussed.

It is hoped that consultation exercises will be held in several local authorities to get feedback from young people on the materials. This will influence the development of future publications for young people, including website development.

One of the main aims of the production of the guide and video was to enable young people to actively contribute to the decision making process. This is particularly appropriate in light of the recent guidance and legislation supporting the involvement of young people, eg. the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 states "...an education authority shall have due regard, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the views (if there is a wish to express them) of the child or young person in decisions that significantly affect that child or young person".

Enquire is keen to develop a service that children and young people find informative, meaningful and accessible through a range of media. Currently, Enquire provides a telephone helpline (textphone and Typetalk are available), written materials and an e-mail service. A website for young people is also planned for the near future.

E-mail: Enquire.SENinfo@childreninscotland.org.uk
Internet: www.childreninscotland.org.uk/enquire
Or write to: Enquire, Children in Scotland, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RG.



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



Improving services for deaf and hearing impaired people

Subtitles

Voluntary organisations recommended that subtitles were added to the video *Having your say at school* to make it fully accessible to deaf and hearing impaired young people. This video is now available and will be distributed to deaf and hearing impaired units/schools in Scotland and to relevant voluntary organisations.

Textphone

Enquire now has a textphone helpline number to improve access to the service from deaf and hard of hearing people.

The textphone number is **0131 222 2439**.

The helpline hours remain the same for this service, 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday. An answermachine will be in operation out of office hours.

Second annual national conference

Supporting children and young people in schools – creative approaches to a positive future Dundee Hilton, Friday 11 May 2001

This conference examined ways in which professionals and families can support children and young people in schools to allow them all to develop their “*personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.*” This was Enquire’s second annual event and attracted a range of professionals and parents. Information on the event and comments from delegates will be included in the next edition of *Enquire within*.

The programme included presentations from Nicol Stephen, Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs, Pamela Munn, Professor of Curriculum Research and Associate (Postgraduate) Dean in the Faculty of Education, University of Edinburgh and Mel Young, one of the participants of the Enquire video *Having your say at school*.

The next Enquire national event planned is a conference for parents. Details of this conference will be available shortly. If you would like to be included in the mailing list for this event please contact Moira Cameron, Administration Assistant, Enquire on 0131 222 2425 or e-mail mcameron@childreninscotland.org.uk.

¹*Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000. Section 2.*

Helpline enquires

Since its launch, Enquire has received over 1250 enquiries ranging from requests for general information to advice on complex issues. The helpline database is used to inform Scottish Ministers of the pertinent issues, comments and concerns of users in the field of special educational needs. This is done through regular reporting at Steering Group meetings and an extensive statistical report submitted as part of the annual report. The database is confidential to the Enquire team. However, if callers do not object to their details being used for the purposes of reports or to support relevant policy work, this can be recorded on their database record.

Staffing

Susan Wheatley leaves the service when the maternity cover post comes to an end in June. Carole Moore will return as Senior Information and Advice Manager on a part-time basis, sharing the post with Dinah Aitken. Another new full-time post of Mediation Project Development Officer has also been funded by the Scottish Executive.

Pilot Mediation Project

Enquire is currently developing a special educational needs mediation project in five local authority areas: Argyll & Bute, East Dunbartonshire, City of Glasgow, South Lanarkshire and Stirling. The pilot will run until the end of March 2002 after which there will be a major dissemination of information and findings, with a view to possibly extending the mediation project to other parts of Scotland.

The aim of the project is to offer an informal way to attempt to resolve difficulties that sometimes occur between parents/carers of children with special educational needs and relevant local authority departments. During the process of mediation a neutral third person (the mediator) helps people in disagreement or dispute work towards finding a mutually acceptable agreement. The mediator does not make decisions or recommend solutions – his/her role is to facilitate communication between the people in dispute and help them work out their own solutions.

Participation in the mediation process is voluntary – people take part because they genuinely want a resolution. However, reaching an agreement is not the only measure of success – helping to repair damaged relationships and to clear up any misunderstandings is of equal importance.

A team of eight volunteer mediators has recently been recruited and intensive training is underway. The mediators come from a variety of backgrounds and all have a sound knowledge of special educational needs and high level inter-personal skills. In order to ensure their neutrality, none of the mediators are employed by a participating local authority nor is associated with any advocacy agency.

Initial training will be completed by the beginning of May 2001 and the project will then be in a position to accept referrals. If parents or professionals from a participating local authority feel that a situation they are currently involved in could benefit from mediation, they should contact Enquire. Enquire staff will talk through the issues and ask what steps have already been taken to try to find a solution. If it seems that the situation could benefit from mediation, details will be passed on to a volunteer mediator who will start the mediation process.

For more information about the pilot project please contact: Morag Steven, Mediation Project Officer, Enquire, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RG

Telephone: 0131 222 2422 or
e-mail: msteven@childreninscotland.org.uk

volunteer mediators



anne kane



catherine mckenna



doreen allan



janie law



john garroway



jean mcnamara



katy macfarlane



moira bruce

Training events

On behalf of Enquire, the Sparky Project has successfully completed ten events in the former Strathclyde region. These events were of a practical nature and covered issues such as inclusion, setting up a parents' group, and play and art therapy.

The data from evaluation forms for these events was very positive. Delegates commented strongly on the benefit of hearing the experiences of a disabled young adult or parent at some of the events.

In addition, an event *Working together for children and young people in the Highlands* was run in September by Enquire in association with Badaguish. This event signified the last in the first tranche of events and focused on issues within the document *The same as you: a review of services for people with learning disabilities*. Again, evaluations proved that the event was felt to be worthwhile, relevant and useful by delegates. Previous events run by Enquire had tackled issues around the Riddell report, parent partnerships and supporting families of young children with SEN.

Enquire has now completed five of the twelve local training days *Meaningful meetings: promoting joint decision-making in special educational needs*. These events aim to:

- help participants develop effective negotiation and communication skills;
- promote joint-working between professionals and parents;
- raise awareness of dispute resolution techniques.

Each event uses a detailed case study to examine how parents and professionals can prepare for a meeting concerning a child's education. The events also offer an opportunity to reflect on good practice in relation to joint decision-making.

To date these events have been successful. One hundred percent of all those who completed the evaluation form indicated that they were satisfied, fairly satisfied or very satisfied with the day. Most delegates thought their awareness of SEN issues was raised either slightly or significantly. The range of delegates has included professionals from social work, education, health and the voluntary sector as well as parents and volunteers.

The evaluations also showed that delegates were generally positive regarding the opportunity to network, hear different points of view and see the world through the eyes and ears of someone in a different role.

There are five *Meaningful meetings* local events still to be held this year. These are planned as follows:

Tayside	Tuesday 5 June 2001	Discovery Point, Dundee
Central Belt	Tuesday 4 September 2001	Forthbank Stadium, Stirling
South West	Tuesday 9 October 2001	Douglas Arms Hotel, Castle Douglas
Edinburgh and Lothians	Tuesday 6 November 2001	Donaldson's College for the Deaf, Edinburgh
West Coast	Friday 7 December 2001	SECC, Glasgow

If you are interested in the *Meaningful meetings: promoting joint decision making in special educational needs* events, please contact Julia Dee Wilson, Training and Development Officer on 0131 222 2424 for more information.