

# Enquire within

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

## Making the right choice

Leaving school or home can be a challenging time for young people. Sometimes there are many choices available to them and this can cause anxiety in case they make 'the wrong choice'. Other times, they may feel there are very few choices available to them – especially if there are few local services that can cater for their needs as a young person. This issue of Enquire Within looks at the issue of transition to adulthood for young people with special educational needs.

Paul Treagus, Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians, discusses the role that the careers service can play when assisting people with learning difficulties and other disabilities at this stage, and we cast an eye over some anticipated changes in legislation, and where this issue falls within the National Debate on Education.

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## Opportunities for school leavers who have additional needs

Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians currently provides a careers guidance service to pupils in schools throughout Edinburgh and the Lothians. In April this year, Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians, along with the other Scottish local careers companies, will become part of Careers Scotland. Individuals of all ages will be able to access a new enhanced and inter-related range of preparation for work, career planning and development services through this new organisation.

Careers advisers in schools will continue to support pupils in making decisions about their future. They do this through interviews, group work and by arranging work experience placements. Career planning for many pupils with additional needs is covered by the Future Needs Assessment

process. Careers advisers are part of the Future Needs Assessment team. The careers adviser starts to get involved when the pupil is about 14 years old. Careers advisers work with young people, carers, school staff and other professionals to help pupils to plan for their future. The careers adviser can advise pupils about the range of options available to them after leaving school. They will also discuss any additional needs for support with individuals.

Pupils might opt to stay on at school after the age of 16 to gain further qualifications, to develop a greater degree of independence and confidence or to improve personal and social skills. Further Education is another option; school leavers have access to a wide range of college

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**Website:** [www.childreninScotland.org.uk/enquire](http://www.childreninScotland.org.uk/enquire)

**Website for young people:** [www.enquire.org.uk](http://www.enquire.org.uk)

**E-mail:** [Enquire.SENinfo@childreninScotland.org.uk](mailto:Enquire.SENinfo@childreninScotland.org.uk)  
**Or write to:** Enquire, Children in Scotland, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RG



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



courses including those with special support. The other options available to school leavers are training and employment. On Skillseekers, young people have work experience and the chance to gain a nationally recognised qualification. Other training opportunities are available through the Department of Social Work and voluntary organisations. Employment is a further option for school and college leavers which can be explored with a careers adviser. Extra help may be available to enable young people with additional needs to succeed in employment.

Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians also co-ordinates and contributes to a range of projects

and activities aimed at combating social exclusion. Through these activities the company is working with a wide range of excluded and potentially excluded young people whilst they are still in school and with those who have left. Excluded adults are also assisted through the company's adult guidance service.

Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians is also the co-ordinator of the 15:24 Inclusiveness Project. This targets some of the most vulnerable young people, including those looked after by local authorities, young people with learning difficulties and young people with physical disabilities. The Project has three strands - Key worker development

and support, Assessment and Tracking and Mentoring.

*For further information about any of the services provided by Career Development Edinburgh and Lothians, please contact Paul Treagus or Margaret Kay at the Career Development Centre, Cairncross House, 25 Union St, Edinburgh, EH1 3LR, Tel 0131 556 4110.*

*If you would like information about the local careers offices outside the Edinburgh and Lothians area, details can be found at [www.ceg.org.uk](http://www.ceg.org.uk) (follow 'Career Choice' then 'Career Links'), or look under 'Careers Service' in your local phone book.*

## A Breath of Fresh Air on a Windy Day

Re:solutions in SEN, the Enquire conference on special educational needs and mediation in Scotland, was held on 28 January 2002 and was well received by the 100 delegates who attended.

The day started with the keynote speech from Zanne Findlay. Zanne has worked hard to engender a mediation culture within Local Government in England. Zanne gave an impassioned and clear address about the many benefits of mediation, which was the highlight of the day for many delegates. "Short sharp and to the point, clear, concise, with warmth, experience and commitment" one said. "A breath of fresh air" said another.

Nicol Stephen, Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, arrived later than expected, due to high winds on the Forth Road Bridge but he spent little time before making a major

announcement about the Executive's plans for mediation. He stated that he was "seriously considering a requirement that education authorities should in future provide mediation services, using independent mediators, to aim to resolve disputes between the authority, schools and parents." This announcement was confirmed in the recent Scottish Executive response to the Record of Needs Consultation.

Two sets of workshops provided more depth to the day, looking into good practice from England and Wales, mediation skills, peer mediation and the legal framework. There was also an opportunity for delegates to find out more about Enquire's mediation project, both from the Enquire staff and one of the participating local authorities.

Most of the delegates who provided

feedback after the event indicated that their understanding of mediation had increased and that they believed mediation was indeed an appropriate way to resolve disputes in special educational needs.



*Nicol Stephen, Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, addresses the delegates.*

### Helpline - comments from callers

**"I am very impressed by the quality of the helpline service." (professional)**

**"Thank you for the time and support!" (parent)**

**"I found it very helpful speaking to Enquire before the Record of Needs meeting, as it helped me with some of the questions I wanted to ask." (parent)**

## What's in the future?

Calls to the *Enquire* helpline relating to transition and the Future Needs Assessment (FNA) process reflect the feelings of anxiety for children and young people at these times. The Scottish Executive has been made aware of the sorts of concerns which arise, but what is likely to be done? Proposals have been outlined in the response to the recent review of the Record of needs in a document entitled *Assessing our children's educational needs: The Way Forward?*

For many families who have opted for a mainstream placement throughout primary school, the transition to secondary school seems extremely daunting. The sorts of concerns expressed to *Enquire* relate to the number of teachers who will become involved with the young person, and the extent to which they are made aware of the additional support required; the selection of curriculum subjects (often especially modern languages); and the sheer physical size of the school. It is often the time when the mainstream versus special school question raises its head again.

Despite these concerns, in the Record of Needs review less than half of those consulted felt that a review of the Record at key transition points should be a statutory requirement. It is now proposed that the Record should be replaced with a Co-ordinated Support Plan. This will require to be reviewed at key points, most likely between pre- and primary school, at the end of P3 and P6, and in the middle of S2 and S3 or 4.

In the case of FNAs, calls to *Enquire* relate to the composition of meetings; how to involve young people in the decisions which affect them; and the timing of meetings. Despite the legislation which states that the FNA process should begin for a young person at age 14, and



should end not less than 9 months before school leaving age (16 years), practice varies from one local authority to another, and indeed even from school to school within an authority.

In the review consultations, there was widespread support for retaining a statutory basis for the FNA. There was also considerable support for the idea that ALL children with additional support needs, not just those with a Record, would benefit from a FNA. This was accepted in principle by the Scottish Executive in its response to the consultation. It is therefore expected that, after some further

consultation, there will be legislation to define who would be entitled to an assessment.

One of the difficulties faced by young people with special educational needs is the fact that the school age is defined as ending at age 16. It is often most desirable that the young person should stay on at school. This may be the case even if no exams will be taken. Many schools are indeed supportive of those young people who would benefit from extra years in the school environment. However, if the school is reluctant to accommodate those wishes, then the law does not assist, as the duty to provide education for children extends only until they reach 16. One of the questions posed in the Debate on Education, now being held nationally, is whether 16 is the right age for children to be allowed to leave school. Our experience is that a mandatory upper age limit of 16 is not always appropriate, and can make the transition from school more complicated than it might otherwise be. The ideal would be a system that was more flexible in relation to pupils with additional support needs. Perhaps views gathered through the education debate will help to shape the future on this issue.

*Please see Enquire Update on the next page for details of how to obtain copies of "Assessing our children's educational needs: The Way Forward?"*

*Information on the National Debate on Education is available at [www.scotland.gov.uk/nationaldebate/](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/nationaldebate/)*

**"All the information sent has been very relevant and has proved very useful." (parent)**

**"Good to know that there is someone you can talk to who can understand how you feel and give advice and information. Thank you." (parent)**

**"Keep up the great work you do." (parent)**

# ENQUIRE UPDATE

## Factsheets

A new Enquire factsheet on transport to school is now available. If you would like to order copies or obtain a full publications list, please contact the Enquire administrator on 0131 222 2425.

## Legal Subscription Service

Enquire has recently launched a pilot service offering a valuable resource to all those involved in giving advice on special educational needs issues. Subscribers to the service are provided with an Adviser's Guide answering common questions arising in special educational needs advice work, with detailed reference to legislation, guidance, etc. They will also receive updates on legislative changes, legal briefings on specific topics, a listing of Education Departments and psychological services for all local authority areas with contact details, and a directory of solicitors in Scotland with an interest or expertise in special educational needs.

If you are interested in subscribing to the service please contact Dinah Aitken, Senior Information and Advice Manager, Enquire on 0131 222 2434 or email [daitken@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:daitken@childreninscotland.org.uk)

## Assessing our children's educational needs: The Way Forward?

The Scottish Executive response to the consultation on assessment and recording for children with special educational needs is now available. The document is on the internet at [www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/aocen-00.asp](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/aocen-00.asp). Alternatively, please phone The Stationary Office Bookshop on 0870 606 5566 to obtain a copy.

## Supporting Children with Dyspraxia - New Guidelines for Teachers

Funded by the Scottish Executive Education Department, and as a result of collaboration between AFASIC Scotland and the Dyspraxia Foundation in Scotland, these Guidelines were launched in September 2001. Dr Christine Macintyre (Faculty of Education, University of Edinburgh)

produced the Guidelines based on the work of a group of teachers, together with parental input.

The Guidelines are being distributed to every nursery, primary and special school in Scotland to support teachers in early years working with children who may be affected by Dyspraxia/DCD.

Graham Robertson, Dyspraxia Foundation Scottish Co-ordinator and parent of a 16 year old son with the condition, comments, "The guidelines are a significant step forward but are only the beginning. The ball is now in the court of the Education Authorities in Scotland. If they take a positive approach and make best use of these Guidelines, perhaps developing motor programmes, then the maximum benefit to the children with Dyspraxia/DCD in Scotland will be realised."

For further details please contact Graham Robertson, Dyspraxia Foundation in Scotland, on 01383 736814, or Ann Auchterlonie, AFASIC Scotland, on 01382 666560.

## Come and see the latest technology for SEN!

The CALL Centre is organising a series of one-day exhibitions and demonstrations of hardware and software for pupils with special educational needs run by a number of Britain's leading suppliers. Though the focus of the days is primarily on the use of technology in education, much of the equipment and software on display will also be of interest to people who work with adults with disabilities and to parents.

The exhibitions will be held in Inverness on 24 April, in Glasgow on 25 April and in Edinburgh on 26 April 2002, and will be open from 9.00am until 4.30pm.

For further details please phone 0131 6516236 or email [call.centre@ed.ac.uk](mailto:call.centre@ed.ac.uk).

## Dyslexia in Scotland

Dyslexia in Scotland, previously The Dyslexia Association, aims to raise awareness of the nature of dyslexia and how it can affect children, young persons, and adults in all aspects of their daily life. Dyslexia in Scotland gives advice, information, and support to

dyslexic people, their families, teachers, employers and to other professionals who have an interest in dyslexia. Their service includes:

- a confidential telephone helpline service, Monday to Friday from 10.00am to 4.00pm, with a messaging service outwith these times (01786 446650);
- workshops, talks or seminars for professional and non-professional groups;
- a National Conference held annually in Edinburgh, which anyone can attend;
- details of psychologists or those able to carry out screening tests for dyslexia throughout Scotland;
- a Resource Centre based at the Headquarters in Stirling, stocked with books, teaching materials, specialist computer software, audio and visual aids;
- a membership service - members are kept up to date on advancements in the world of dyslexia as well as the activities of Dyslexia in Scotland and its local branches.

For further details please go to [www.dyslexia-in-scotland.org](http://www.dyslexia-in-scotland.org), email [infot@dyslexia-in-scotland.org](mailto:infot@dyslexia-in-scotland.org), or phone the helpline on 01786 446650.

## The Family Fund Trust for families with severely disabled children

The Family Fund Trust is a Government funded independent organisation, whose purpose is to ease the stress on families who care for very severely disabled children under 16. As well as providing grants for items related to the care of the child, the Trust provides information to families about other services and benefits. From the outset the Family Fund Trust has demonstrated that services to families with very severely disabled children are most effective when they can be adapted to families' individual needs and personal ways of coping. The Trust encourages families themselves to say what kind of help would best meet their needs in easing the stress of caring for their very severely disabled child.

For further details please go to [www.familyfundtrust.org.uk](http://www.familyfundtrust.org.uk) or write to The Family Fund, PO Box 50, York, YO1 2ZX.