

A newsletter for *all* parents

This new-look Enquire newsletter is written for *all* parents - because any child, at any stage in their lives, for *any* reason may need additional support to help them learn.

We want to empower you to make the right choices for your child's education by making sure that you are aware of your rights and your child's rights under Scottish education law, which has undergone huge changes over the past 12 months.

This newsletter will keep you informed about additional support available for your child by bringing you up-to-date with relevant developments in Scottish law, policy, research,

projects, and provide a forum for sharing experiences and good practice. It will also signpost you to useful resources.

This edition has a special focus on the early years.

We welcome your comments and feedback on what you would like to see in future editions of the newsletter.

Anne Lennon, Enquire Manager



Receive this regular newsletter by email. To be put onto our e-list email info@enquire.org.uk

Issue 1 FOCUS – Your guide to additional support during the earliest years

Each newsletter focuses in-depth on one particular area. This edition, we focus on the importance of the early years and so is particularly useful for new parents and those who have very young children just starting their journey through nursery and school.

Turn to the centre pages.

Parents' Guide

Any child, at any stage in their life, for any reason, may need additional support.

It is vital that you, as parents, are aware of your rights, your child's rights and your education authority's responsibility to your child.

What are additional support needs?

Does my child have additional support needs?

Is my child eligible for additional support?

How will my child's additional support needs be managed?

Order your **Enquire parents' guide to additional support for learning** FREE by calling 0845 123 2303 (textphone: 0131 222 2439) or visit www.enquire.org.uk



One year of Additional Support for Learning

A year has passed since Scottish education law changed in a bid to improve the way that children are supported to help them learn.

Over the past 12 months your local education authority will have been assessed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) to find out how well its pre-schools, schools and all professionals working with children have embedded the new law into their daily practice. It will be publishing some of its interim findings shortly, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses. Assessment is ongoing and the HMIE is expected to publish a final report next year.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 replaced the law relating to special educational needs in November 2005.

It means that many more children are now eligible for extra support to help them learn, both during their pre-school years and at school. Any child, at any time, and for any reason, can have additional support needs. It is therefore vital that all parents are aware of their rights, their child's rights and their education authority's responsibility to their child under this new law.

Enquire has received a large number of enquiries from parents and practitioners about the legislation since the Act was introduced. 15 per cent of the enquiries have directly concerned the legislation, in particular the arrangements in place to change over from the previous system to the new one and the status of a Record of Need.

A further 6 per cent of enquiries have been about the assessment process for identifying whether a child has additional support needs and the right of a parent to request a specific type of assessment.

Planning is another issue that is frequently raised, with two particular areas of interest: the use of an Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) for a child with additional support needs; and the new Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP). The main question on this topic tends to focus on the criteria for eligibility.

Enquire

THE SCOTTISH ADVICE SERVICE FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING



Call our helpline on
0845 123 2303

For more information
turn to page 4

Additional support during the earliest years

There are so many milestones for your young child to reach during the earliest years of their life that school education may seem a distant future. But making sure your child is properly supported and, if necessary, has help to learn early on at home, in any care or pre-school settings they attend, will help them to make the very best of their school education. It will also help prevent difficulties from developing later on.

It is very important that all parents and carers of babies and young children are aware of important changes in Scottish education law, which were introduced last year to ensure children of all ages and all abilities receive the extra support they need to help them learn – whilst they are at school but also during the pre-school years to help them prepare for school.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act, which became law in November 2005, recognises that children might need extra help with their learning for a variety of reasons. It is designed to ensure they get that support by placing a number of duties on education, health and social work services, and giving parents new rights.

There is no definitive list as to why a child might need extra support - it all depends on the child. However, some reasons might include; a child who is delayed in beginning to talk, who has behavioural or learning difficulties, has a sensory or mobility difficulty, or has suffered a loss, like the death of a

parent. It may be decided that your child needs some extra support because they are gifted.

It does not matter why your child needs extra support, the key concern is to make sure they are able to reach their full potential.

Additional learning support for children under three:

Information about your child is gathered and recorded as soon as they are born. Professionals such as health visitors, your GP or community paediatrician make a range of observations and assessments designed to measure whether your child is meeting the expected development targets for their age. Although education authorities are not legally obliged to provide extra learning support to children under the age of three, it may do so if it thinks your child will benefit. Children under three who have been diagnosed with a disability are legally entitled to additional learning support. Extra support might include advice from a home-visiting teacher about suitable activities you can do with your child to help them with their development and learning. An action plan might be drawn up that details what support your child needs and how you can contribute.

Additional support at pre-school:

Sometimes the first indication that a child may have additional support needs emerges when they attend a nursery or pre-

Why infant mental health matters

“Research has revealed critical periods of brain growth during the first months and years of a child’s life. The part of the brain responsible for emotional responses is not fully formed at birth and only begins to mature after the age of two. How it develops is dependent on the quality of the infant’s relationships.

Our earliest relationships have, therefore, a huge impact on development. Positive early relationships can create the basis of a sense of identity, self esteem, appreciation of others and self-control. But it is also true that adverse early relationships, and trauma, can create the opposite. Psychologists who work with older children displaying behavioural problems often find that the underlying cause of their behaviour began to manifest itself much earlier in their lives. Improving knowledge around infant mental health can prevent problems from escalating later on.” *Julie Watson, development manager, infant mental health, at the Scottish Institute of Human Relations.*

New project to raise awareness of infant mental health

A nationwide project to help improve the mental health and well-being of babies and very young children has found that help for parents is patchy across Scotland.

Julie Watson, development manager for infant mental health at the Scottish Institute of Human Relations, has found a number of good practice examples of local programmes designed to strengthen parents’ relationships with their babies. Parents are encouraged to attend a variety of parent/child interaction focused sessions which include baby massage classes and ‘Getting to know your baby’ sessions. They also give parents information and advice on how to improve their child’s speech and communication and are being offered free of charge in a small number of local authority areas. They are proving popular in some other areas but are run privately and have to be paid for. This means that not all parents have access to them. She said: “It really does depend on what area you live in as to whether you have access to these kinds of programmes, which are hugely beneficial. It’s all about making sure that parents can enjoy their babies.”

The Infant Mental Health Project is a three-year national project, funded by the Scottish Executive. Julie has been visiting different local authority areas to find out what support is currently offered and identify any gaps. She is also looking at ways to make sure key frontline professionals are properly trained in infant mental health, which is only just beginning to gain the recognition, as an area of huge importance, that it deserves.

For further information email: j.watson@sihr.org.uk

school centre. Early years staff along with other professionals working in partnership with you, will have a key role in early identification. The kind of support available for pre-school children is similar to support provided in schools and might include staff taking advice from a particular specialist, adapting the curriculum and/or the building, individual or small group teaching, making sure particular resources such as computers are available or a therapist working within the nursery or pre-school with your child.

Moving up to school:

Information about any extra support your child gets should be passed to their new school in advance to ensure it is properly prepared and able to continue providing your child with the support that they need.

Use Enquire to make sure you know your rights and your child's rights:

The law can seem complicated, but it is important that you understand your rights, your child's rights and your education authority's responsibility to your child as early as possible. Enquire hopes to empower parents to make the right choices for their child's education and there are number of different resources available for you to use. Turn to page 4 for detailed information on how Enquire can help.

Top tips

Working in partnership with your preferred education authority is essential for helping your child's transition to school. Good transition planning includes:

- Identify the school early – at least three months before the school entry date (excluding the summer holidays) to allow advance planning
- If your child has an Individualised Education Plan or Coordinated Support Plan, it should reflect their key strengths and support needs
- Where possible, visit the school before the summer holidays. Discuss this with the school's headteacher
- It is very helpful if the teacher from the school goes to your child's nursery or centre, and perhaps the family home, to observe your child's abilities in a familiar and comfortable setting
- Schools can provide photographs to help your child to become familiar with their new environment
- In some cases a phased entry is helpful. This is at the discretion of the education authority and relates to your child's needs
- Both you and the school should be involved in discussions about whether your child is ready to move on, or requires another year at nursery
- A deferred year may be possible if your child's additional support needs could be best met by having another year in a pre five setting.

Resources – 'The early years'

Visit your local authority's website. They will have useful information on services available in your local area

Learning and Teaching Scotland's early years website

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/earlyyears>

Information and resources on early years education and curriculum

Parents' guide to birth to three

A parent's guide to the national guidance for those working with babies and very young children.

Download from Learning and Teaching Scotland's early years website (see above)

Search for local childcare providers, and access information on lots of useful organisations at:

<http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk/index.asp>

A summary of the Additional Support for Learning Act

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/welfare/ASLsummary>

Useful Enquire factsheets:

(order at www.enquire.org.uk or email info@enquire.org.uk)

Moving to additional support for learning. No. 14

General information on the legislation that replaced the law relating to special educational needs.

Roles and responsibilities in additional support for learning. No. 8

Includes sections on children under three and pre-school children

Resolving disagreements No.5

Describes the processes that can be accessed to resolve disagreements.

New Enquire factsheets on page 4.





Support from Enquire – for parents, children and young people and the professionals and practitioners who work on their behalf.

Contact Enquire for information and advice on:

The education system and how it works

Your legal rights and responsibilities

Resolving disputes or concerns

Local services to support you

The meaning of educational jargon

Enquire's helpline staff will treat all discussions in the strictest confidence (unless you tell us a child or young person is being, or has been abused, or is at risk of serious harm). If you agree, your details and a brief summary of your enquiry will be recorded in a confidential database, where access is limited to helpline staff. Keeping a record of calls will help staff deal with any follow up calls you make and help to identify any trend in the nature of calls.

Enquire is staffed by a fully trained team who have a range of experience in teaching, information provision and family support.

How to get support:

Enquire's telephone helpline

Telephone: **0845 123 2303** (a lo-call number)

Textphone: **0131 222 2439**

A fully trained team are at hand to answer calls at the following times:

Monday: 9am – 5pm

Tuesday: 9am – 5pm and 7pm – 9pm

Wednesday: 8am – 5pm

Thursday: 9am – 5pm and 7pm – 9pm

Friday: 9am – 5pm

All out-of-hours callers will be directed to an answer-phone. Messages are picked up on a daily basis (excluding weekends) and dealt with promptly.

Visit www.enquire.org.uk and email us your enquiries.

Helpline users give thumbs up

In an evaluation of Enquire's telephone helpline, 95 per cent of those who responded rated the service as 'excellent' (57 per cent) or 'good' (38 per cent).

"Excellent service. Really helped to clarify issues for me. I acted on the advice given and this has helped my son to get the support he is entitled to."

"Thanks for getting me on the path I needed to follow, much appreciated. Lovely, kind, caring girl I spoke to, couldn't ask for a more understanding person."

"We were extremely impressed with Enquire's speed of response by email followed by its response in the mail! Thank you - it has meant a lot to us!"

Attend our annual conference in Edinburgh

Enquire's seventh annual conference - **Making transitions work** - will take place on **9 February 2007** at the Hilton Airport Hotel, Edinburgh.

The conference will explore the skills, attitudes and approaches necessary to support pupils' learning as they start school, move between schools, leave school or experience interruptions to their education. The conference will also look at existing good practice and issues and solutions in making transitions work.

There are a limited number of free places for parents. These will be awarded on a first come first served basis.

Full registration fees are as follows:

- Small voluntary organisations and individuals £105
- Nurseries, schools, colleges and universities £125
- Large statutory and voluntary organisations £150

To register your interest in this conference please contact Charlotte Richards on 0131 222 2422 or email: crichards@childreninscotland.org.uk

Order your new Enquire factsheets or download them at www.enquire.org.uk or email info@enquire.org.uk

Co-ordinated Support Plans

Focuses specifically on Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSPs) and includes: the criteria for opening a CSP; how to apply; what a CSP contains; timescales involved in the drawing up of CSPs and what you can expect in terms of preparation and review.

Transitions

A look at the choices for young people with additional support needs at 16. Includes an overview of the different options available and contains some relevant information relating to each option.

Consulting with children and young people

Involving children and young people in decision-making processes – this factsheet sets out the law, guidance and good practice on involving children and young people, with an extensive list of resources for anyone who is seeking to promote pupil participation.