

A newsletter for *all* parents

This newsletter is written for all parents and carers – because *any* child, at *any* stage in their lives, for *any* reason may need additional support to help them learn.

In this edition we focus on how professionals are having to change the way that they work to ensure that support fits your child's individual needs rather than you and your child having to fit around the service available. We also look at ways of making sure that even the youngest children are able to

make their views known and influence the important decisions that are made about their education.

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Reform to improve children's experience of support services

The Scottish Executive has unveiled detailed plans for a new law to improve the way that children and their families receive support from public services such as, health, education and social work.

It has been drawn up in response to concern that too many children are not getting the help they need when they need it. Research found that in some cases, the different agencies and professionals involved in helping individual children and their families were not communicating with each other effectively. This led to a number of problems including:

- duplication and overlap of agencies' efforts
- families having to attend lots of different meetings and repeating the same information
- children having a number of different assessments and support plans that were poorly co-ordinated
- children being referred from one agency to another without necessarily receiving help from anyone

It also suggested that assessments determined whether or not a child was eligible for a service rather than identify how that service could actually help the child.

The draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill attempts to address these, and other problems. If it becomes law, agencies and professionals will have new responsibilities to ensure that services are delivered in a much more co-ordinated and unified way, and that they

fit each individual child's needs, rather than children and families having to fit around the service available. It will:

- place legal duties on agencies such as health, social work and education to assess what children need for their overall wellbeing (their physical, social, educational, emotional, spiritual and psychological development) and ensure appropriate action is taken
- require the different agencies to work together and share information when they are assessing a child's needs and providing support.
- Introduce a "lead professional" where a child needs support from more than one agency who will be the child's and their family's main contact and who will co-ordinate the work of all the other agencies and professionals who are supporting the child.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, which replaced the law relating to special educational needs in November 2005, already encourages different professionals to work much more closely together when assessing children and providing support. It recognises that any number of different circumstances can affect different children's ability to learn, which means support may need to come from health, social work or certain voluntary organisations as well as from education. The draft Children's Services Bill goes much wider than children's learning needs but it would further strengthen the system in which

their learning needs are identified and provided for.

The Scottish Executive is inviting the public to read and comment on the draft Bill until 31 March 2007. It will make changes in light of the public's response and publish a revised Bill after the Holyrood election in May 2007. It will then be down to the new Scottish Executive to decide whether or not to take it forward. If it is taken forward, it will be debated by the Scottish Parliament, which could result in further changes being made before it becomes law.

Additional support needs in the news

The Scottish media carried news early in 2007 about two different cases – one regarding a school placement for a primary school pupil with additional support needs, which had been refused, and a series of articles on provision for pupils with autism.

If you, or any parents you know, have questions about support for your children at school please contact Enquire. The helpline team can provide information and advice about a child's rights to assessment and support if they have additional support needs. Enquire can also talk parents through the process of contacting the relevant people at their child's school or in the local education authority. Enquire has contact details of education staff and relevant organisations across Scotland.

Enquire's Focus feature

Many professionals, one support package

A proposed new law for Scotland aims to ensure that support services from social work, health and education are delivered in a much more co-ordinated and unified way, and that they fit your individual child's and family's needs, rather than you and your child having to fit around the service available. (see lead story page 1).

One of the ways it intends to achieve this is by requiring different agencies and professionals to work much more closely together and, if your child needs help from multiple professions, by providing you with one "lead professional" who will be a point of contact for you and your child and who will co-ordinate all the different aspects of support.

Although the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 does not require professionals to work closely together by law, its very nature encourages this way of working. This is because it recognises that a wide variety of expertise may be required to help your child learn. This is particularly true if your child has very complex needs.

The length and breadth of Scotland professionals are gradually changing the way that they work. It used to be unusual for health professionals such as speech and language therapists and clinical psychologists to be in contact with education professionals. Now they often use their expertise to advise nursery and school teachers on how to support children in their class who have additional support needs.

Each local authority delivers additional support to children using slightly different systems and structures. Here, we focus on how professionals in Moray are working together to provide co-ordinated support to pre-school children who have complex additional support needs.



The MIDAS team

Pre-school children up to the age of five with complex developmental disorder/delay, and /or significant medical needs are referred to a team of professionals called MIDAS. Conditions may include cerebral palsy, global developmental delay, autism spectrum disorder, language disorder, visual/hearing impairment and other complex medical disabilities. A child can be referred to the service by any professional working with them.

An appointment is offered with a MIDAS team member where initial information is gathered and the family can discuss any concerns.

The information collected is discussed by the MIDAS team who then decide which professionals need to be involved with the child. Following a comprehensive assessment, a co-ordinated plan of support is drawn up between the family and the relevant professionals involved – "a 24/7 plan of what the child needs". Support might involve input from a physiotherapist and social worker, organising respite, transport to appointments and advice on benefits that are available to the family. A team leader is chosen by the team to co-ordinate this support – someone the family knows and is likely to have a lot of contact with them. They will be the family's main point of contact.

The benefits of this team approach are numerous. The child and their family do not have to repeat the same personal information several times or have to go through several assessments. A member of the team explained: "Our work is driven by each individual case. We are always looking to see how it can be a co-ordinated approach. The focus now is not on how the child fits in with the therapists' time, but on how we can fit into the child's life." Another said: "We are trying

to blur the edges between different professionals. There is a lot of commitment, sharing and trust between the team and that is absolutely essential for it to work."

Who is in the team?

Consultant Paediatrician – specialises in a child's overall medical care. Provides a full assessment and, if necessary, arranges for any investigations and/or referrals to other professionals, which may lead to a specific diagnosis. They also provide parents and professionals with advice and guidance on a child's condition and review the child's progress.

Clinical Psychologist – specialises in children's social behaviour and emotional development in the context of the family.

Occupational Therapist – specialises in improving children's sensory and fine motor skills to help them be as independent as possible. They can advise on specialist equipment.

Educational Psychologist – provides assessment, support and advice on children's development and educational needs. Works closely with specialist teaching services including Language Support Early Years (LSEY), Hearing Impairment Service (HIS), Visual Impairment Service (VIS), and English as an Additional Language (EAL).

Physiotherapist – specialises in mobility. Shows parents the best way to handle their child and assist with their physical development.

Dietician – specialises in the nutritional care of infants and children and can be involved in the support of children and their families requiring dietary treatment for specific conditions.

Speech and Language Therapist – assesses a child's language, communication, play and feeding skills with the aim of improving their development.

Principle Teacher of the Deaf – a qualified teacher with expertise in working with children who are deaf or have hearing impairments.

Social Worker – provides advice, information and support with the practical needs of the child and their family.

Helping young children express their views

If children can influence the decisions that are made about their learning and support needs they are more likely to feel comfortable with them and to benefit from them.

Early years centres and primary schools are encouraged to build children's confidence in making their views known by asking for their views, listening and allowing them to make choices as part of their day-to-day school life. Several successful projects have proved that this can be a rewarding process.

Talking Mats

'Talking Mats' is a tool that can help young children express their general feelings about particular questions using picture symbols. The session can be recorded on video and digital camera to ensure that both verbal and non-verbal communication is taken account of, and to give a permanent record. The technique was originally developed for those with communication impairment. Although there has been no formal research done into its use in the early years, Stirling Council has reported success in this area and has an accredited trainer. Visit: www.talkingmats.com/aac-page.htm for further information.

Self and peer assessment

Nursery staff in nurseries in west Edinburgh worked with children to put together folders of their work, including drawings, writing and photographs. The folders were used to pinpoint areas of strength, as well as areas where extra help might be needed. Seeing all their work put together is inspiring for the children and made it more personal. Staff and parents work with the children to add notes and captions to the pictures.

Sign language

Signalong is based on British Sign Language but much simpler, designed to help children and adults with communication difficulties. Sometimes it is used to communicate with infants before they can talk. Visit www.signalong.org.uk for further information.

Observation

"Seeking young children's views is as much to do with indirect observation as it is about asking them directly. We can often establish from how children behave whether an intervention has been successful. As long as we respond to that we are taking their views into account" explains Dr Chris Wiles, a clinical psychologist in Moray.

Nursery staff at a pre-school education centre in Elgin used a digital video camera to film children at play and played footage

back at staff meetings, so it could be reviewed and discussed, and used to help plan the next steps for securing an appropriate support strategy for each child. Although it is mainly used with children about whom staff have concerns, staff at the centre plan to extend its use to benefit all pre-school children as they prepare to start primary school. One member of staff said the technique produces a "truer picture of the child than written accounts".

Resources

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

Introduces the different professionals that may support your child. Order this and other Enquire factsheets at www.enquire.org.uk or email info@enquire.org.uk

To find out more about Scotland's **children's services reform programme** (see lead story page 1), visit: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrenservices

View the **draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill** at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrenservices/Consultations/childrens-services-bill

Learning and Teaching Scotland's website www.ltscotland.org.uk



Enquire

THE SCOTTISH ADVICE SERVICE FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING



Call our helpline on
0845 123 2303

For more information
turn to page 4



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

Enquire to launch more user-friendly website

Enquire will launch a new look website for parents, carers and practitioners in February 2007.

Browsers accessing the site can opt for either adult or children and young people's information pages.

The new www.enquire.org.uk complies with Web Accessibility Initiative standards, governed by the World Wide Web Consortium and is therefore accessible to disabled people regardless of impairment or condition. It complies with obligations set out under the Disability Discrimination Act, with better colour contrast making content easier to read and to navigate.

There will be links from the homepage to important and popular elements of both the adult and children and young people's websites including the publications page, the legal subscription service for adults, the iMap (an online interactive map of out-of-school clubs and services for young people) and "tell us what you think" pages of the children/young people's website.

Enquire annual conference 2007

Enquire's 2007 annual conference "Making transitions work" has proved to be a very popular topic and places sold out quickly. To make sure that discussion from this conference is available to interested people who did not attend, a full report will be available and podcasts of the main presentations will be posted on the Enquire website after the event. If you would like to receive a conference report please contact the Enquire office on 0131 222 2425 or visit www.enquire.org.uk

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



What are partnership nurseries' responsibilities when it comes to additional support needs?

The Enquire information line has received a number of calls from parents asking about their child's rights to additional support when they attend a private nursery that is working in partnership with the local authority.

Partnership nurseries have the same responsibilities under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as local authority nurseries.

If your child is aged three or over, attending a partnership nursery and seems to require additional support to help them learn, the education authority should arrange for them to be assessed, and provide the necessary support in an appropriate setting.

All three and four-year-olds in Scotland are entitled to a funded part-time pre-school education place. If you have chosen for your child to go to a private nursery, or decided to educate them at home, the education authority is under no legal obligation to provide assessments or additional support for your child. However, you can request an assessment and the education authority can choose to agree with your request.

Online document gives snapshot of additional support for learning work across Scotland

A new online document showcases practical examples of how professionals are embedding the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 into their everyday practice.

The examples were chosen by the 700 professionals from education, health, social work and voluntary organisations, as well as parent representatives, who attended seminars held across Scotland in October and November 2006. The seminars were held to share information about how people have been working to implement the Additional Support for Learning Act. Delegates shared their own experiences with colleagues and then chose a number of practical examples that demonstrate effective ways of identifying and assessing children's learning needs, professionals working together, sharing information and transitions. To view the report visit: www.ltscotland.org.uk