

A newsletter for all parents - because any child, at any stage in their education, for different reasons, may require additional support to help them learn.

Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn issue of Enquire Within, the second edition of 2009, with news, features and advice to keep you informed about your child's rights and education.

In this edition, we explain the most significant points of the Additional Support for Learning Bill 2009, which amends the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, and which received Royal Assent on 25 June 2009.

We also learn more about the varied and important role of a Speech and Language Therapist. And keep you up to date with Enquire's work across Scotland.

As always, we hope you find the newsletter interesting and informative. If you have any comments, or ideas on issues you think we should be looking at, please send an email to info@enquire.org.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Setting a higher standard – the Additional Support for Learning Bill 2009

The Additional Support for Learning Bill 2009 was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 20 May. The original Additional Support for Learning Act 2004, which enjoyed strong cross-party support, remains one of the great achievements of the Scottish Parliament's first decade.

A few highlights of the ASL Bill 2009 include:

- More parents and young people will have an easier time getting a school placement outside their local area, and finding sources of information, advice and assistance (such as Enquire's helpline and website services)
- It will be simpler and less confusing for parents and young people to appeal ASL decisions by education authorities
- Additional support for learning will not be limited to extra help provided within classrooms or schools
- It will be easier for young children (aged 0-5) with additional support needs to be known to local authorities
- New data will be collected and reported, so that more is known about who is receiving what ASL services across Scotland.

Predictably, the give and take of the parliamentary process meant that no one got everything they wanted. While going beyond the Scottish Government's original intention for a narrow set of technical amendments, the ASL Bill did not make sweeping changes. There will now be a process of consultation around a revised ASL Code of Practice. In practical terms, little will change for parents, pupils or providers for many months.

This Bill also provided a lesson about how legislation is influenced by the Concordat between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA). In exchange for freezing the council tax, local authorities now set their own priorities and control their own spending. In the event CoSLA opposed any amendments that would be costly to implement or would create new legal duties.

By affirming the right to all children and young people throughout Scotland who need extra help 'for whatever reason', the ASL Act created a high standard and a model for other nations. Its universal approach to education rights and commitment to social justice remain its greatest strengths.

The ASL Bill 2009 honoured the spirit of the original Act, while increasing the likelihood of improved ASL implementation. The reality remains that additional support for learning is not just a good idea: it is the law everywhere in Scotland. The ASL Act should trump the Concordat in making decisions about funding priorities. After all, a law mandates how to make difficult choices. Children and young people with ASL needs are counting on all of us to do our part to keep the promises made in the ASL Act and to ensure that the new ASL Bill will make a positive difference in their lives.



Enquire helpline: 0845 123 2303

Visit www.enquire.org.uk. Email enquiries to info@enquire.org.uk
Opening hours: Monday 9am-5pm • Tuesday 9am-5pm •
Wednesday 9am-5pm • Thursday 9am-7pm • Friday 9am-5pm

A day in the life of ...

a speech and language therapist

Jane Mallinson



What is the role of a Speech and Language Therapist?

A paediatric speech and language therapist has a variety of different roles and these are constantly evolving as we respond to the various national drivers, including the ASL Act. We work with children, their families and with our colleagues in education and social work, always operating as a part of a multi-disciplinary team, providing assessment and intervention when appropriate, to children and young people referred to our service. The role has changed since the implementation of the ASL Act, to include an increased training element for colleagues, parents and carers.

What's involved in a typical day?

It is difficult to describe a typical day, they are all different. Activities may include: Providing speech and language therapy support to children and families in their local clinic – involving assessment, review or 1:1 or group therapy; Visiting a school or nursery to update staff on a child's additional support needs, reporting on assessment results, working through a programme of work or offering strategies to help the child with communication difficulties in the classroom; Writing a 'supporting learning profile' to identify strengths and to plan a programme of work for the next few weeks and / or to contribute to the Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP); Training a learning assistant in group or individual work to maximize a pupil's access to the class curriculum; Meeting with the speech and language therapy team leaders to progress service management issues, or working jointly with a teacher in class or small group.

What factors made you choose your job?

At the time that I left school I had an interest in the allied health professions and choosing speech and language therapy combined this with my interests in language and communication. I enjoyed my job post qualification and made a positive decision to return to the profession after a break when I had my children.

What is the most rewarding part of the job?

Making a difference!

It is very rewarding when working with a family has helped them to come to terms with their child's communication problem, and the child can be seen to make progress. I also find it rewarding to work with the speech and language therapy team leaders to adapt and improve the service that we all provide. Years ago, I did not expect to be in a management role but I do feel that having that role allows me to be a part of developing speech and language therapy at various levels, and I believe that makes a difference.

What is the least rewarding part of the job?

Juggling the finances!

What constraints or barriers do you face in your job?

Time – the job is diverse and varied and managing my diary is a nightmare.

If you could correct one misconception about speech and language therapy/therapists, what would it be?

I would like to correct 2 misconceptions: Firstly, that speech and language therapists deal only with speech problems. People regularly say "I had better watch how I speak" when they hear about my job. And secondly, that the only way to support a child with communication problems is by providing weekly one to one speech and language therapy. In fact, there are many possible models of intervention and all have value. Some children learn best in their classroom, some in groups, some on a 1:1 basis. Most children need to learn through a model of 'blocks and breaks'. They need regular input for a while and then need a period of consolidation.

What advice would you give to parents, to help them get the best out of their contact with speech and language therapy services?

We are always delighted that parents place a high value on the speech and language therapy service. It is important that parents accept the professional advice that they receive, recognising that we always focus on the best interest of the child. Parents often ask us to provide more therapy in the hope that that will increase progress, and they also seem to feel that speech and language therapy can only be provided by a therapist. When a child and their family is first referred, a qualified speech and language therapist will always assess a child and diagnose the problem. After that, a plan of work will be developed, which is

likely to involve work with the speech and language therapist and colleagues from other disciplines who are working with the child. Speech and language therapists are skilled at sharing information to enable our colleagues to implement our strategies, supporting our work. This system, at its best can provide therapy support for a child throughout the school day, every day.

It is very important that all the child's communication partners understand the strategies that are most beneficial to enable the child to communicate as his or her best with everyone, not only with the speech and language therapist.

Jane Mallinson is Lead Paediatric Speech and Language Therapist for Edinburgh, East and Midlothian.

For more information, visit the website www.asl.scot.nhs.uk, which was developed by the NHS Lothian ASL team.

New BSL video online

There are lots of reasons why your child might need extra help. These can include:

- Physical or learning disabilities
- Problems at home making it hard to focus on schoolwork
- Not having the right equipment or learning tools
- Being anxious, stressed or depressed
- Changing schools
- Being bullied
- Finding it difficult to join in or make friends

Enquire can give you and your child advice and information about getting extra help at school.

To find out more, visit the 'About Us' page on our young people's website – www.enquire.org.uk/yp/about-us.php. You'll find a BSL video version there too.

If you or your child want advice, do get in touch – we'd love to hear from you: Tel: 0845 123 2303 – Textphone: 0131 222 2439 – Email: info@enquire.org.uk

Let us know where you are

Do you know about a fantastic youth club or service near you that other parents should hear about? Then help us promote them on 'Your Area', Enquire's online map of local youth clubs and services in Scotland.

Working in partnership with local projects that support families is a vital part of Enquire's work, and we are keen to hear from projects working with children and young people from diverse backgrounds. No matter what size the club/service is, we'd love to hear from you.

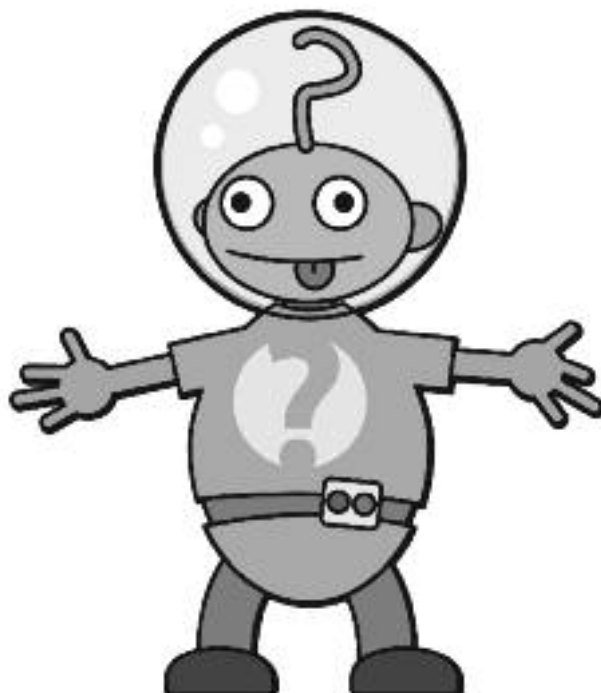
To find out more, please visit www.enquire.org.uk/yp/your-area

for Scotland's Disabled Children (fSDC)

Do you want to help turn good intentions into better lives? Then become a supporter of for Scotland's Disabled Children (fSDC), the national campaign coalition aiming to ensure that families with a disabled child enjoy the same quality of life as other families.

The coalition focuses on improving services and provision to families with a disabled child around the areas of short breaks, transition support, childcare and education, and over 30 organisations have already joined.

To find out more about for Scotland's Disabled Children contact donna.tomlin@cafamily.org.uk or call 0131 659 2939.



Postcards send an important message

Enquire is currently developing two colourful, new postcards for children and young people.

The first will be targeted at young people who are having a tough time at school, to encourage them to think about the issues in their lives that are making school hard for them. It is hoped the postcard will point readers towards Enquire's young people's website for advice and information about where to get extra help. The second postcard will be aimed at younger children, and will include a joke and a story about Zod (above), the alien featured on the Enquire website. Designed to encourage children to talk to their parents if they are upset or worried about school, it will include details for parents who wish to seek advice from the Enquire helpline advisers.

A postcard campaign is also being launched to help practitioners working with families to share key messages with parents and carers about what Enquire can do for them in relation to the ASL Act.

"Parents' awareness of the Additional Support for Learning Act is crucial in supporting their children's learning," explained Linda Alexander, senior manager at Enquire. "Existing good practice in education often demonstrates much of what is enshrined in law, but it's vital not to underestimate the role of practitioners in supporting parents and raising awareness of their rights."

Additional support needs arise from a wide range of factors, including family circumstances, the learning environment, disability or health needs and social and emotional factors. Enquire can support parents by: listening to their questions and concerns explaining the law as it relates to their issues and advising them on ways forward.

"No problem is too small or too big," assured Linda, "and we are here for practitioners as well as parents through our telephone helpline and information service. Partnership working is crucial for effective communication and it's this that works in the best interests of the child."

Making a placing request

Rachael is in Primary 6, and has additional support needs, but no co-ordinated support plan. Her dad made a placing request, but this was turned down. He would like some advice on what he can do next.

Mr Dunedin rings Enquire about his daughter, Rachael, who is in Primary 6. Rachael has additional support needs, but does not have a co-ordinated support plan. Mr Dunedin has recently made a placing request for her to attend a special school within his education authority area, where he feels she might receive a more supported education. He has learned, however, that this request has been turned down, and wants some help with his next steps.

Enquire tells Mr Dunedin that the letter he was sent by the education authority, detailing the placing request refusal, will have details about how to launch an appeal, which would be heard by the education appeals committee.

Enquire explains that the committee is set up by the education authority, and will comprise no more than seven people from the local area, who will be chosen from a range of backgrounds, such as Councillors, parents and teachers. The appeal committee will give Mr Dunedin a

date for a hearing within 14 days of receiving his appeal, and will give him at least 14 days' notice, so he has time to prepare.

Enquire also give Mr Dunedin information about the format of the hearing. During the appeal, Mr Dunedin will have the opportunity to say why he wants his daughter to attend a special school. He will also be able to question the education officials. Similarly, they will have the chance to give their reasons for refusing the initial request, and ask Mr Dunedin further questions. Mr Dunedin will be able to take someone to the meeting with him, as a supporter or advocate.

Enquire tells Mr Dunedin that the appeals committee must give its decision, in writing, within 14 days of the appeal, along with the reasons for their decision. The committee must either confirm or refuse to confirm the education authority's first decision, and the authority must adhere to this final decision. If Mr Dunedin loses the appeal, he will have the option of taking his case to the Sheriff Court.

Mr Dunedin thinks he will go ahead with an appeal, and Enquire send him their factsheet on 'Resolving disagreements'.

This case study is based on real situations but details and names have been changed so that individual cases cannot be identified.



Making Connections

A new Making Connections initiative is targeting specific local authority areas to deliver awareness-raising messages to parents, practitioners and young people about the ASL Bill. Enquire is starting to recruit key individuals in Aberdeenshire, South Lanarkshire, East Lothian, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk and Inverclyde to help identify ways of maximising Enquire's impact on these target audiences in ways that can be measured. The venture will involve working with integrated primary school teams, nurseries and home / school teams, as well as secondary schools and community-based learning projects to build effective partnerships in disseminating information to the

widest possible audiences. "Making Connections is a strategic response to the need to develop our marketing channels to broadcast key messages to parents and young people about the ASL Bill and their rights under it," Linda Alexander, senior manager at Enquire explained. "We need to make everybody aware that the legislation exists and that it is intended to help parents and carers get more support for their child at school when they need it and for whatever reason." "Partnership working is key to this and we are very grateful to all the local authority staff and practitioners who are supporting our efforts."

Conference publication –

Live it, breathe it, read it all again...

If you missed Enquire's Annual Conference but you'd like a detailed overview of what was covered, get hold of the Conference Report.

With full accounts of the keynote addresses, reports on all the breakout sessions, and useful links for further information, this publication is both a record of the event, and a useful reference for the future.

To download a free PDF copy of the report, visit www.enquire.org.uk/pcp/pdf/three_years_on_2009_report.pdf