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Enquirewithin

THE SCOTTISH ADVICE SERVICE FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

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

This edition is an extended one, as we celebrate ten years of Enquire. We also bring you the latest news from Enquire, and from across the sector, as well as advice and features.

As always, we hope you find the newsletter interesting and informative.

A decade of support: Enquire is ten

Welcome to the 10th anniversary edition of *Enquire Within*.

We have asked our partners and parents who have used the helpline to help us commemorate this milestone by telling us what they think about the services we provide. See pages 4-5 for their comments.

While we are excited to celebrate 10 years, we are not resting on our laurels.

Enquire is staffed by a very committed group of people who are constantly looking at ways to improve the advice we give parents. We really welcome feedback on our services so, if you have any comments (bad or good!) or ideas for better ways to reach parents please let us know.

We look forward to continuing to provide you with advice and information.

Enquire helpline: 0845 123 2303

Visit www.enquire.org.uk. Email enquiries to info@enquire.org.uk

A day in the life of ...

A Principal Teacher of Guidance



If you had to sum up the role of Guidance within the modern education system, how would you do it?

I feel my role as a guidance teacher is to have an overview of the social and emotional welfare and the academic progress of each pupil in my caseload and to monitor this from their move from primary to secondary school right through until they leave to go to work, college or university. The guidance teacher is an important link between the pupil, the parents and the school and is there to deal with social, emotional, curricular and vocational issues as and when they crop up.

If you could correct one misconception about Guidance staff, what would it be?

A common misconception about guidance teachers is that we are all “bleeding hearts”, only there to listen to problems all day with a box of man-sized tissues at the ready! Actually, guidance staff play a key role in the raising of attainment within the school. As well as sorting problems that might stop a child achieving his/her potential, we spend a lot of time monitoring academic progress and setting and reviewing targets with pupils. A thorough knowledge of all aspects of the pupil helps to make sure that targets are appropriate and realistic.

What advice would you give parents to get the best out of their relationship with their child’s Guidance teacher?

Parents often seem anxious that they are contacting the school about a trivial matter. We need to make sure parents realise that every member of staff in school has their child’s welfare at heart and that any matter, however small, that is affecting their child’s wellbeing is important to us. The earlier an issue is brought to our attention, the easier it is to deal with and the more quickly it can be addressed.

At the same time, parents need to be aware that guidance staff have a fairly hefty teaching commitment on top of their pastoral duties and may not always be able to deal with a situation immediately. It helps to make appointments in advance, for example, rather than turning up unannounced in reception. Finally, guidance staff may not be able to solve all the problems that come our way, but we do have contact with a large number of other agencies who can be referred to for further help when necessary.

What is involved in a typical day – and what else might you be required to deal with?

In the school I work in, there are nearly 1800 pupils and 220 in my caseload, so I can be dealing with anything from a pupil needing an ice pack for a bump on the head, to the repercussions of online bullying from the night before and on a

bad day, even child protection issues. Guidance staff deal with a huge variety of problems and spend a lot of time speaking with individual pupils, gathering information from staff, talking on the phone and meeting with parents and outside agencies and report writing. And then of course there are classes to teach!

What led you to becoming a Guidance teacher, and is this very different from your initial experiences of subject teaching?

I think it was a desire to have a more holistic relationship with my pupils that led me to become a guidance teacher. I feel it is very important that every pupil in a school feels really known, not just for his or her achievements but as an individual, by at least one member of staff and that he or she knows that this person can be relied upon for support when necessary. I enjoy getting to know the children in a more informal way than the constraints of the French class normally allow and find that teaching PSE is an excellent forum for this.

What is the most rewarding part of the job?

For me the most rewarding part of the job is feeling that I have made a positive difference in someone else’s life. It makes my day when an ex-pupil pops in to tell me all about their new job or how much they are enjoying their college or university course.

What is the most valuable lesson you’ve learned in your job?

The most valuable lesson I have learned is that no matter how trivial a problem might at first seem, it is always very real to the person who is coming to you with it and must be treated seriously. Respect and empathy are a must in this job. It is also important to accept that you can’t solve everything on your own and to know when to pass a problem on to someone with more specialised expertise.

What constraints or barriers do you face in your job?

The main thing I feel constrained by in my job as a guidance teacher is time. The sheer number of people I am involved with and the endless variety of problems they come to me with, means I never really feel I have finished! I often feel bad about having to dash off from one task to another without having properly resolved the issue and would love to have more time to do things more thoroughly! Having said that, it is the same endless variety and the adrenalin rush of having to multitask that attracted me to the job, so really I’m not complaining!

Fiona Cowieson is a PT Guidance at Queen Anne High School in Dunfermline, Fife.

NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS

'Just Ask' for additional help

On 2 November the Scottish Government launched the 'Just Ask' campaign.

Running until March 2010, the campaign aims to raise parents' awareness about additional support for learning and encourage them to 'Just Ask' for help at school if they are worried about their child's learning.

The campaign comprises television and radio adverts and a website that looks at the different reasons why children need ASL, and shows some of the different types of support that schools can put in place.

'Just Ask' also encourages parents to contact Enquire if they want more information about additional support for learning.

Linda Alexander, Enquire manager, thinks the campaign will help parents who may not have realised they have the right to ask for more help at school: "A lot of parents don't know what to do, or aren't confident enough to act on their concerns about their child's learning. Hopefully, the campaign will encourage them to speak to a teacher about their worries or talk to one of Enquire's helpline staff about what they can do next."

The 'Just Ask' campaign is also taking to the streets with a roadshow that will be visiting nearly 20 towns and cities throughout Scotland over the next 2 months.

For more information about additional support for learning (or the campaign) visit the website on <http://campaigns.stv.tv/just-ask/>



Supporting your child's learning journey

Parents often describe accessing the right additional support for their child as an emotional roller coaster. Enquire helpline staff have identified four key points on this rollercoaster ride that parents often seem to find particularly stressful:

- Finding out a child has additional support needs
- Transitions
- Planning for life after school
- Disagreements

We have produced a webtext looking at the issues that cause distress at these times and how Enquire can help at each different stage. The webtext will be available to download in late December.

Remember: getting help and advice at the right time can stop small issues turning into bigger, more problematic ones.



Promoting parents' rights – new leaflet offers advice

Enquire's new parent and carers information leaflet is now available.

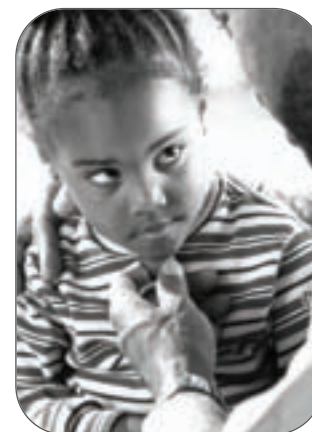
If you work with families whose children may benefit from Enquire's advice and would like to order copies of the leaflet please contact Jacqueline

Wilson on 0131 222 2425 or email jwilson@childreninscotland.org.uk

We have also produced two new postcards for parents that provide our helpline telephone number and email address. They are a great way to pass on Enquire details to parents who may already be suffering from information overload, and handy for including in parents' information packs, pinning to a notice board, handing out at events – or sticking on a fridge door as a reminder that Enquire is here to help.

Please contact Jacqueline Wilson on 0131 222 2425 or email jwilson@childreninscotland.org.uk and order some today.

Scottish Government consultation on health professionals



The Scottish Government is currently carrying out a consultation on National Guidance on Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) and Education working practice. (Allied Health Professionals include staff like speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and dieticians).

The guidance has been written to help school staff and AHPs work more effectively together to support children and young people. It has been put together with input from all the relevant professions and the Government are now seeking views from the people who will be involved in implementing it, including staff from education, social work, health and voluntary sectors along with parents and other partners. The views collected during this exercise will inform the final development of the guidance.

The consultation document and response form is now available at www.scotland.gov.uk/Consultations/Current

The consultation will run until February 2010.



Enquire Manager reviews ten successful years ...

I started working for Enquire just after its launch in 2000. Although I've had a couple of stints away doing other things, I have been delighted to return.

In 1999, there were loads of things happening as the service tried to get itself known across all the local authorities and with parents across Scotland. There was talk about the special educational needs legislation changing, and lots of groups representing parents of children with special educational needs campaigning for that change.

Now, here we are 10 years later still dedicated to making sure that parents, practitioners and children and young people have access to full and comprehensive information, these days about additional support for learning.

I'm proud to see the testimonies of parents who have used the Enquire helpline and website, read our publications and been to our events, and to hear the value they feel Enquire added to their experiences. It's great too that professionals feel that we can provide a similar valuable service to them.

Here are some comments from others – and yours would be very welcome too.

Sally Cavers, Enquire Manager

What Enquire has done for you ...

Parents' comments

Excellent service. Helpful helpline worker – delivered complex information simply. Many thanks.

I can't praise the ladies on the Helpline enough! They answered my query and provided further assistance as required and sent out further info/leaflets. Thank you so much. It's a fantastic service.

Reassuring, knowledgeable, very useful, encouraging, informative and kind. Thank you.

The service that Enquire provides is second to none!

You provided me with some excellent information and I was impressed that I received a second letter with additional leaflets without prompting. I would have no hesitation in contacting the service again or recommending to other parents.

Enquire has been a great help to me. It's been great to get the right information, which I needed to help my two dyslexic children when going into meetings with their schools. A great big thank you. The Enquire team have made a great difference.

After getting in touch with your helpline after 5 years of asking for help with my son's school, my son, who has ADHD, is finally getting support from an outreach behaviour support worker. I thank you for the support and information that was sent to me.

As a result of the confidence and support provided through the 'phone call, my son is now in full time school and very happy. Many thanks.



Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years

'The Scottish Government is committed to improving the lives of children with additional support needs. That is why we fund Enquire to provide a valuable advice service for parents, carers and families of children with additional support needs to help them understand their rights. Professionals working with children who need extra help at school also greatly appreciate the information, advice and support provided by the service.'

Charles Gibb, Educational Psychologist

'The key to Enquire's reputation as a source of good and well-informed advice is its neutrality. It does not take sides. This is especially important given the current climate – and simple good practice: that everyone

should co-operate, compromising where necessary and with mutual courtesy and respect, if they are to meet children's needs effectively. As a former head of a local authority EP service, and now in private practice, Enquire and its publications have been useful to me. I meet many parents who have used Enquire, and they say the same.'

James Law, Professor of Language and Communication Science, Director of the Centre for Integrated Healthcare Research and Chair of the Enquire Advisory Group

'Negotiating the eddies and rapids of the educational system can be a real challenge for parents of children with additional support needs. Of course, there are many challenges in promoting a service with such a broad coverage and which must try and reach parents who most need the service – at the time that is right for them – as they engage with the educational system or when they feel that their needs are not being met. But the staff at Enquire are clearly up to these challenges, always pressing to improve services whether by widening the range of areas covered, focusing services on the needs

of specific groups and by consistently updating materials so that parents, children and young people have the opportunity to access the most recent information.'

Elizabeth King, Principal Educational Psychologist, South Lanarkshire Council

'In our rapidly changing social and economic climate, professionals and parents need to work collaboratively to help identify the best choices for the education of our children and young people. Professionals and parents need to model a mutually respectful and positive approach to problem solving. Enquire play a key role in improving the quality of the dialogue between professionals and parents. Enquire's recent initiative with local authorities, 'Making Connections', has great potential to ensure information sharing has local and national relevance for parents and professionals.'

Bronwen Cohen, Chief Executive, Children in Scotland

'Enquire has helped thousands of families over the last ten years by giving parents and professionals advice and information about their rights to additional support. As can be seen from

comments from parents the impact on families cannot be underestimated. Enquire's main role involves giving parents knowledge about what the law entitles them to, which in turn often gives them the confidence to discuss issues of concern with their child's teacher or school. As we all know tackling worries early on can stop small problems becoming bigger ones.'

Dr. Stuart Aitken, Enquire Advisory Group member, Senior Consultant Sense Scotland, Senior Research Fellow, CALL Scotland

'Enquire can look back with pride at how their service has, from a standing start, developed over its first ten years. Parents and carers of children and young people with additional support needs, and the children and young people themselves, value the Enquire team's free and impartial advice. Parents and professionals consider their publications to be an important and authoritative complement to those available locally in their area. In the short time since Enquire opened its doors the educational landscape has seen dramatic change for children with additional support needs. As everyone comes to grips with the next round of change, following implementation of the

ASL Amendment Act 2009, parents will continue to seek information, advice and support from an authoritative source like Enquire.'

Penny Brodie, Executive Director of Lead Scotland

'Enquire is a dedicated, independent service that helps parents, children and young people identify and access sources of help when additional support for learning (ASL) is needed. This is an organisation that engages with stakeholders in a variety of ways and provides support during what can be very challenging and difficult circumstances when tempers may be frayed, when people may feel that there is no one there to listen.....Enquire shines through. Enquire has, over the past 10 years, faced many challenges as an organisation, not the least of which is how to provide appropriate support across all of Scotland, to increase awareness of people's 'rights' when it comes to ASL and to ensure that people get the best possible information thus empowering them to make informed choices. This is an organisation that continually challenges itself to 'do better' and succeeds in meeting that challenge.'

And feedback from other professionals too

"It is extremely useful to have an independent helpline which advises everyone. It means parents, professionals, and advocacy workers are all getting the same advice; it all supports consistency."

"The people I have spoken to have been more than helpful, giving freely of their time. This is an excellent service that I have used more than once and have recommended parents to use it. The written information also provided was of an excellent standard. Keep up the great work!"



ASL – sorting fact from fiction

Sometimes legislation can be intimidating, but we aim to simplify and explain. Here, we look at private assessments.

Myth – Local education authorities must accept the findings of private assessments and act on recommendations in them.

Parents turn to private assessments for a number of reasons:

- They feel they have waited too long for an assessment.
- The school or education authority do not think the child has additional support needs.
- They disagree with the results of an assessment carried out by the school or local authority.

Private assessments can provide

parents with the long-awaited confirmation they want – that their child has a particular additional support need or condition and should have extra help in school.

Truth – While it is true that education authorities must take account of information from private assessments they are under no legal obligation to accept and act on the findings.

When advising parents in this situation Enquire suggest that parents:

- Arrange a meeting with the school to talk about their concerns (either by making an appointment with the head teacher or raising them at a scheduled planning or review meeting.)
- Talk to their child’s educational

psychologist about the results of the private assessment.

The Additional Support for Learning legislation aims to make sure children’s individual needs are met, regardless of the reasons they require additional support. This means that a formal diagnosis is not required for support to be put in place. The child’s actual needs are more important than what might be assumed to cause them.

If agreement cannot be reached this way parents can ask for mediation or dispute resolution (independent adjudication).

For more information contact Enquire helpline on 0845 123 2303, or download Factsheet 9 on Mediation or Factsheet 13 on Dispute Resolution from the Enquire website –

www.enquire.org.uk

Enquire annual conference news – date for your diary

It’s that time of year again, when the Enquire team starts to plan our annual conference. As always we look at the issues we are hearing about from parents and professionals and use the event to provide a forum for discussion, to offer helpful, practical advice and to highlight good practice.

This year’s conference is entitled Families as Learning Partners and will be held in Hamilton, South Lanarkshire on **Tuesday 9 March 2010.**

So what’s the issue?

It can be hard for parents of children with additional support needs to get involved with their child’s school. It’s not always through lack of time – although this often plays a big part. Sometimes parents struggle because they don’t feel confident enough to get involved, have language or communication difficulties or haven’t had a great experience of school themselves. Sometimes it’s simply because they don’t know they can get involved!

It’s also difficult to get involved if you are a carer rather than the parent. So for children looked after by the local authority, or by grandparents or other family members, it can be tricky. In some cases it is difficult to identify who has the ‘parental’ rights and even then there may be a conflict of interest if a local authority holds these.

The conference will consider these issues and provide advice and good practice covering a range of topics including:

- Parental rights
- How parental involvement links with additional support for learning
- The opportunities, through parental involvement legislation and parent councils, for parents of children with additional support needs to get involved in school
- The importance of partnerships between the child, the school and the family

- Making the most of parent/carer’s expert knowledge of a child
- How school staff can help parents get involved.

Cost

The full price of the conference is £160, but there is a subsidised rate of £10 for parents of children with additional support needs.

Each year the conference offers more than just practical help: it gives parents and professionals a chance to talk about the issues and share their own experiences.

To register online go to www.enquire.org.uk/conference





On the road: ASL seminar series

Enquire staff have been hard at work, facilitating and scribing discussion groups during a series of consultation and information events held during November and December on revisions to the secondary legislation which supports the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004/2009 and the Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice.

Run by Children in Scotland, on behalf of the Scottish Government, the events brought together over 400 parents and professionals from across education, health, social work and the voluntary sector to discuss the proposed changes. Attendees were given information on the ASL Act 2009, background to the current proposed changes, information on the online consultation process, as well as an opportunity to take part in group discussions on four core themes within the consultation:

- dispute resolution regulations and sources of information order
- the Tribunal rules
- co-ordinated support plan regulations
- the Code of Practice.

The events included a presentation by Robin McKendrick and Susan Gilroy from the Scottish Government, in which it was stated that the Act 'needed to be strengthened', with the revisions not to be regarded as 'a change of ethos or direction'.

Attendees were reminded that the Code of Practice supporting the Act is what places the Act in context with

Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), the Early Years Framework and Curriculum for Excellence, rather than any Amendment Bill.

Proposed revisions will strengthen the ability of the Additional Support Needs Tribunals for Scotland (ASNTS) to deal with references made to it. These proposals were summarised as addressing:

- the rights of young people and parents of children with additional support needs to make out of area placing requests
- parental and young people's access to mediation and dispute resolution from the host authority following a successful out of area placing request; and
- increased parental and young people's rights in respect of access to the ASNTS regarding failures by the local authority.

The Code will also deal in more depth with the role of parents, supporters and advocates, and look at the use and introduction of an advocacy service. It is intended that this will go further than the Act, providing advocacy prior to a reference to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal.

These events form just one part of the Scottish Government's consultation strategy – the full consultation will take place online and runs until 8 January 2010. The consultation document can be downloaded at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/10/05090858

Children in Scotland will be compiling all of the feedback from facilitated discussions and passing this to Government.

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Surely it's not that time already.....

At this time of year, most people are thinking about their festive plans. Not many will be thinking about next summer.

But it's worth remembering that for children who require additional support, who are moving up to secondary school in the summer or are leaving school altogether, planning for that move should already be in full swing.

There are two great Enquire publications for children and young people to help them during this time: *Going to Secondary School* and *Getting Ready to Leave School*.

Audio and large print versions of these guides are available as well as the standard format. You can also look at an online video of these guides in British Sign Language at www.enquire.org.uk/yp/BSL.

If **you** have any questions about your child's move to secondary school or about leaving school you can call and speak to one of our Enquire helpline advisers on 0845 123 2303.



What's on in YOUR AREA?

Finding interesting out of school activities for children can be tricky at the best of times but finding clubs and groups for older children is even harder. If you are looking for youth groups or out of school clubs why not have a look at YOUR AREA, Enquire's database of local youth groups, projects and clubs.

Visit www.enquire.org.uk/yp/your-area.php

Get involved – If you run a youth group why not take five minutes to fill in the YOUR AREA application form and appear in the local directory.

I know how you feel.....

If a young person is struggling at school because of personal issues it can help to hear about others who have had similar experiences and hear how they coped.

As part of our programme of youth participation, Enquire does podcast interviews with a wide range of children and young people. For example, we recently met with pupils at Leith primary to discuss their drama about bullying and their ideas for making school a better place. You can listen to our podcasts on our website at: www.enquire.org.uk/yp/podcasts.php

