

## Welcome



Welcome to the Spring 2010 issue of *Enquire Within*, the first edition of the year, with news, features and advice to keep you informed about your child's rights and education.

In this edition, we discuss the outcomes and discussions from our recent annual conference.

We also learn about the varied and challenging role of the Deputy Director (Support for Learning) with the Scottish government, offer advice on some commonly held myths about ASL, and bring you the latest news from Enquire – and the additional needs sector.

As always, we hope you find the newsletter interesting and informative. If you have any comments, or ideas about issues you think we should be looking at, please send an e-mail to [info@enquire.org.uk](mailto:info@enquire.org.uk). We look forward to hearing from you.

## Families as learning partners

Families are among those best placed to bridge gaps between services and help deliver policies such as the Early Years Framework and *Curriculum for Excellence*. How best to support parents and carers to achieve this is a key question facing the Scottish government.

That was the message from Maggie Tierney, Deputy Director (Support for Learning) of the Scottish government's Learning Directorate, at Enquire's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference *Families as learning partners* in Hamilton in March.

Addressing an audience of practitioners, policymakers and parents, Maggie suggested that looking to families own relationships and networks would form a good model for the broader community - including schools and children's services - to help support families.

She said that to achieve this there are three important challenges:

- the need to improve help and support to families at the earliest stage - be that when their children are young or as soon as problems arise
- to help practitioners understand better where their role fits alongside others
- to build strong partnerships between individuals and organisations.

With services facing budget restrictions across the board, meeting these challenges will require open and honest discussion about service provision, Maggie said.

"We need to effect cultural change using existing money," the conference heard. "There has never been more spending on public services than now, but we have to get smarter about how we spend. If money alone could fix the problems they would already be fixed, so it must be something

else that has to change."

Maggie pointed to developments like the new *Curriculum for Excellence* as crucial to changing the way we support children and young people - particularly those who might otherwise leave school ill-prepared for the future, and in particular those making the move from children's services into adult ones.

"At heart is the question, how do we do better by these children?" she said. "*Curriculum for Excellence* is inclusive or it is nothing. We can't afford to lose 20% of our children as active contributing citizens. If [*Curriculum for Excellence*] doesn't change that, it won't have delivered."

Delegates took part in a number of workshops on topics including supporting parental involvement among parents who have support needs themselves; among mobile families within Scotland's travelling communities; among looked after children; and for kinship carers. They also heard from young people with first-hand experiences of homelessness and of managing a long term medical condition. They provided an insight to how they feel about these issues and how to improve additional support for young people facing similar circumstances.

During one workshop about transition, delegates had the opportunity to think about how young people and families feel during big changes in their lives such as leaving school. Discussion during the sessions sums up nicely a key message from the day – and that is remembering the importance of keeping the vision of the future that the young person and their parents have for them at the centre of any decisions about their life.

*Families as Learning Partners* was run by Enquire with the support of South Lanarkshire Council

**Enquire helpline: 0845 123 2303**

Visit [www.enquire.org.uk](http://www.enquire.org.uk). Email enquiries to [info@enquire.org.uk](mailto:info@enquire.org.uk)

# A day in the life of ...

## Maggie Tierney, the Deputy Director (Support for Learning), Scottish government Learning Directorate



### **What does the role of Deputy Director involve?**

My role involves supporting Ministers to deliver the 15 national outcomes set out in the Scottish government's National Performance Framework.

In leading the Support for Learning Division within the Learning Directorate, my job is to support *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) and other government priorities which improve outcomes for children and young people. My division's specific focus is around additional support for learning, ensuring that inclusion remains at the very centre of CfE.

I also help to develop joined-up working within the Scottish government and with public agencies and organisations, including Enquire, to make sure that we are all doing the best job possible – and for me, this means doing so in light of Ministerial policy priorities and objectives, and in partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Cosla), local government and other partners.

### **What do you think are the main challenges of the job?**

The principal challenge of the job is leading change during these interesting times. There are high public expectations for service provision against a context of reduced available public spending and forthcoming UK and Scottish elections. These factors present policy development and policy implementation challenges for my division and our partners. We need to ensure we grow in capability and leadership; that we become more strategic and also more efficient; that we manage risk and also foster innovation.

It's liberating and inspirational to work in this way, and I am so pleased to be working with dedicated exciting and skilled colleagues both in and out of government.

### **In what ways does your work make a direct difference to the lives of young people, and their families?**

The policies we develop around support for learning – promoting positive behaviour in schools, making sure there is nutritious food in schools, fostering an ethos and culture of respect for others in and beyond the classroom and playground, and making sure that all children can access learning that's right for them – influence the lives of young people. Policies by themselves are not enough of

course. It is parents, carers, teachers, support staff, volunteers and friends of children and young people who play the biggest part in directly making a difference on a daily basis.

### **What's involved in a typical day in your job (if such a thing exists)?**

There's no such thing. I enjoy fantastic variety in developing programmes of work with policy colleagues and external partners on a range of issues. We advise Ministers frequently or accompany them on a visit or at an event.

I enjoy finding myself in all sorts of settings, doing all kinds of work, and meeting every kind of person. The variety and challenge of the job is truly exceptional.

### **What led you to your current role?**

I arrived though a roundabout route, like many of my colleagues. I joined the Scottish government 10 years ago, having worked first in Dublin and Norway, in a number of different sectors.

I have worked across a range of areas in the Scottish government – previous posts included leading the team addressing workforce planning for social work and social care staff and then the team progressing child protection policy. Most recently I moved to the Learning Directorate as Deputy Director with responsibility for Support for Learning Division.

### **What is the most rewarding part of the job?**

Beyond doubt, it is the privilege of working on this vitally important area of social policy development, working collaboratively to develop a better future for the children and young people of Scotland.

### **What is the most valuable lesson you've learned in your job?**

To reflect on why we are doing something, and to always remember the most important element of any policy we develop – the children it will directly affect. In my work I strive to remain open to new ways of thinking and working, to make sure that we deliver properly for our children – every different last one of them.

## Enquire's Outreach Services

Enquire is sad to say goodbye to Gavin Crosby, Outreach Development Officer. Gavin, who worked at Enquire for three years, did a fantastic job of raising awareness of Additional Support for Learning legislation and providing training and outreach work to hundreds of parents, carers and professionals. We all wish Gavin good luck in his new post with Edinburgh Council.

The Outreach post is not being filled but Children in Scotland has a Practice Development team which organises training and events for the children's sector. They run planned training sessions, and can also organise commissioned sessions on different topics including issues related to additional support for learning.

ASL events being run by Children in Scotland in the near future include:

**An introduction to working with ADHD and Autistic Spectrum Disorders**  
11 May, Edinburgh

**Managing Challenging Behavior**  
20 May, Glasgow

For more information on other related events or to organise training visit Children in Scotland website on [www.childreninScotland.org.uk](http://www.childreninScotland.org.uk)



## Talk to us

Enquire is always delighted to hear from parents who feel that the advice they've received from us have been useful to them. We recently received this positive comment: "I found the person who answered my call extremely helpful, respectful and understanding. She made me feel so much better about my situation, and through her help and information given by phone and then by post, I now feel more comfortable speaking up on my son's behalf. I would not have been able to do this without the information from Enquire and would not hesitate in making contact again or passing on information to other parents/carers."

Let us know how the Enquire service has helped you – [info@enquire.org.uk](mailto:info@enquire.org.uk)

## New report

The Long Term Conditions Alliance has recently produced a report called **Seen and not Heard?** which explores issues facing children and young people living with long term conditions. For a copy visit [www.ltcas.org.uk/policy\\_reports.html](http://www.ltcas.org.uk/policy_reports.html)

## Good to glow

Glow is the world's first national intranet for education. Funded by the Scottish government, Glow is managed by Learning and Teaching Scotland and to date all 32 authorities have signed up to be part of this exciting new way of learning, sharing and collaborating.

Glow benefits teachers, learners, parents, school administrators, managers and local authorities and it reaches out to include and involve everyone involved in children's education. As part of the very successful Additional Support for Learning National Glow Group, Enquire has its own group that can be accessed by parents, teachers and pupils. The group itself is still being developed but you can request membership by going to [www.portal.glowscotland.org.uk/establishments/nationalsite/Enquire/default.aspx](http://www.portal.glowscotland.org.uk/establishments/nationalsite/Enquire/default.aspx)

If however you do not have a Glow login and would like to get one please contact your local authority Key Contact – you can find out who that is at [www.ltscotland.org.uk/glowscotland/localauthorities/index.asp](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/glowscotland/localauthorities/index.asp)

## Young People News

Not just missing out on a home.....

Every day 60 children are made homeless in Scotland. That in itself is a worrying figure but when you find out that this makes them:

- twice as likely as other pupils to leave school without qualifications
- 5 times as likely to lack a quiet space to do homework
- twice as likely to suffer persistent bullying

you realize the massive impact homelessness has on children's ability to learn.

To find out how young people, who have experienced homelessness feel, Enquire recently held a consultation with children (aged 8-15) at Shelter in South Lanarkshire. The youth group created artwork and recorded interviews in which they share their views and suggest ways that schools could help families facing homelessness. Have a listen to their ideas at <http://www.enquire.org.uk/youngpeople/wordpress/?p=694> Also look at some of their great pictures at

[www.enquire.org.uk/youngpeople/wordpress/?p=678](http://www.enquire.org.uk/youngpeople/wordpress/?p=678)

\*Source: Shelter research Against the Odds 2006



## ASL – Sorting fact from fiction



Sometimes legislation can be intimidating, but we aim to simplify and explain. Continuing our series, we look at the facts around receiving extra support in class.

**MYTH: 'Additional support' always means one-to-one support in class**

One part of additional support for learning that confuses parents contacting our helpline – and one that can often cause disagreements between families and education staff, is the duty for education authorities to provide 'adequate and efficient' additional support for pupils who require it.

We get quite a few questions from parents, whose child has been identified as having additional support needs, about one-to-one support from a classroom assistant or learning support assistant. When giving advice on the helpline we can not say whether this is or isn't appropriate for a particular child, but this is just one of the ways children with additional support needs receive support in schools. Whilst there will always be children who require, and receive, this type of extra help, it wouldn't be appropriate or practical for every pupil with additional support needs to have this type of support in class.

Below are just a few of the range of ways that support can be provided:

- a pupil can spend some time each week out of class with learning support staff
- teachers take advice or get training from parents and/or a specialist in the child's particular condition

- extra time is given to finish work or sit exams
- class materials are provided in a different format
- help is provided by a visiting professional for example a speech and language therapist or English as an additional language teacher
- a learning plan is developed to monitor a child's progress, identifying short and long term targets. The most common example is an Individualised Educational Programme (IEP)
- a pupil receives specialist equipment such as laptop, reading or writing aids
- pupils get informal support from classmates through group work or peer support projects such as paired reading.

Whatever support is provided, it should always be designed to meet a child's individual needs.

For younger children who are struggling in school having a buddy for playtimes or for school work can often provide that little bit of extra help they need to feel confident. To listen to what children think about having a reading buddy, listen to our podcast with primary school children from Ashpark Primary School in Glasgow, go to

[www.enquire.org.uk/yp/buddy](http://www.enquire.org.uk/yp/buddy)

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