



**Parent focus group: Revising Chapter 7.
NPFS Conference, Bishopbriggs Academy, Saturday 5th October
2013**

What should be in the new Code of Practice?

The structure

There was strong support for the proposed structure of the new document and specifically for parental engagement to be a 'golden thread' throughout the new document and its five stages, rather than presented as a separate section. It was felt that this reflects in the physical form of the document how they want engagement to feel like as parents (ie integrated into every stage rather than sometimes appearing an 'add on').

The objective of parental engagement

Parents need to be clear about the **objective** of effective engagement with parents (there will be a wide range of practical ways of achieving this objective) – ie

"How do schools make people feel – part of a joint venture focused on the understood needs of their child."

Apparent variations and local flexibility

There was a need for schools to be able to interpret guidance consistently – but there was also a need to help parents to be clear that the focus of SG is on ensuring that schools focus on identifying and responding to the needs of every child – there is not specification about how schools and their partners respond to similar conditions, so the fact that different areas appear to respond in different ways is most likely to be about the different issues and needs of individual children.

General requirements of parents

Parents want their schools to be honest, transparent, open and communication needs to be timely – the earlier the better in terms of engagement about issues and changes.

Parents need to be clear about their rights and what they can expect from a school and a teacher. It is not enough for this to be in Code of Practice – it needs to be made clear that these rights and expectations need to be actively promoted and communicated.

"Parents need to feel confident about their rights at every stage and in every situation."

The Enquire representative confirmed their view that school is the place where parents should get information, but there are lots of external sources and schools should engage with parents to ensure they are able to find these easily.

"Glow access is patchy – it's still appealing to have ready web-based access to everything a parent needs"

Parents want teachers to communicate clearly about how each child is being supported – this is unlikely to be obvious on a day to day basis. Many teachers will be providing all sorts of support as a matter of course – but it is important that parents understand the amount and nature of support that is going on.

The range and complexity of current documentation

The Code of Practice is part of quite a complex array of documents – each of which has a specific purpose – but the distinction between these is not clear to parents (eg the fact that the Code of Practice presents a guide to the practical implications of the Bill/Act and is not designed to go beyond this).

"What is this document?"

So parents were a bit baffled by the array of documents, guidance and Codes and specifically about what the Code of Practice document was, what its role was and how it fitted in? How can they be helped to get to the heart of what it is they need, when they need it? SG may want to consider how to ensure that parents are clear about rights, expectations about schools communication and involvement, and how to source these.

When is information and engagement particularly needed/important?

The creation of an IEP is one of the points at which a parent's need for information becomes important – but there will be a range of transitions and events when information about rights, expectations and sources of support will become particularly important.

"With the introduction of National 4 and 5 – a lot of parents will be looking for additional help at this stage."

'Named person'

There was a short discussion about the 'Named person'. Parents felt they needed to be clear about the specific role of this person and the fact that it doesn't cut across or replace other relationships. It would be easy to convey messages that would confuse parents and may get in the way of existing relationships that parents value.

Richard Scothorne
7 Oct 2013