



the National Parent Forum of Scotland

Dear Dr Allan

AGASL Meeting, 24 October 2012

Further to the meeting on Wed 24th Oct, when I was unable to submit our comments due to time constraints, I am writing to make the following points on behalf of the National Parent Forum of Scotland's Additional Support for Learning subgroup:

1. Effective Communication with Parents/Carers

We believe this is crucial to building relationships which can be sustained throughout our children's school lives. To support this, we suggest that there needs to be:

- Compulsory teacher training in communicating successfully with families (we understand that the Strathclyde teacher training optional module in this, for example, is very popular with teacher trainees but that the course is always oversubscribed and is not available to all). This would facilitate greater sensitivity in dealing with parents and families of ASN children who are often upset and vulnerable it would also outline what the parents/carers can reasonably expect along their journey for the different ages and stages.
- Clarity for teachers about the appropriate support services/systems within their schools and authorities, so that they can help parents through these systems
- An information pack for parents/carers from the outset i.e. early on in diagnosis or when there is professional input for the first time, which contains key contact points, details of rights and responsibilities, plus support agencies, plus clear pathways for complaints/concerns/information/appeals/mediation it would also outline what the parents/carers can reasonably expect along their journey for the different ages and stages.
- Each family has such a steep learning curve and much of the learning curve could be reduced/concentrated if procedures and terminology were outlined from the start. Case conferences could be a trigger for updating the information pack e.g. approaching the exam years; transition years.
- Clear points of contact for the parent/carers within the school and the authority and support services
- Clearly set out mutual expectations (see our Plea from Parents, attached)

2. Consistent Implementation and Expectations and Transparent Spend by local authorities

Patchy provision/implementation still remains a significant problem, both within schools, when teachers are either not trained appropriately or lack awareness of support strategies and obligations, and within authorities. Parents still have to undertake their ASL journeys as if they were the first ones to do so, without clear general principles to steer them. Open and clear communication would do much to empower and inform parents about their rights and responsibilities. However, we remain very concerned that ASL is an area which faces significant and consistent budget cuts by local authorities, as much provision is 'invisible' and is managed within schools with no allocated budget and no public-facing strategy. We would like transparency and accountability in this.

3. ASL Act and Complaints Procedure

We are undertaking research on this with parents and will feed back as soon as possible.

Kind Regards

Billy Gibson
NPFS ASN Group Lead