

**Scotland's Ten Year Strategy for the Learning Provision for Children and Young People with Complex Additional Support Needs 2017-2026**

**Introduction**

The National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS) was formed in 2009 following the introduction of Parent Councils in the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) 2006 Act. The Forum aims to support parental involvement in education and provides a parental perspective at a national level. The Forum is parent-led; comprised of volunteer parent representatives from each local authority area, who communicate with Parent Councils and support parent involvement at a local level.

This response draws on the views expressed in the many discussions with these representatives, and the parents in their local authority, around Additional Support Needs (ASN) issues.

While NPFS provides a parental perspective on matters pertaining to education policy and practice, we do not claim to represent all parents. Our policy positions are informed by the views of parents, as gathered through our research and as reported to us through our network of parent volunteers representing local authority areas across Scotland. However, some parents may have a different position from the majority view presented.

**General**

Although parents agree with the laudable aims of this strategy, and the National Improvement Framework generally, they believe the level of initial funding does not meet their needs. Parents frequently describe situations where they felt it was impossible to provide services ‘to improve outcomes for children and young people with complex additional support needs’ due to inadequate funding.

Although the NPFS supports the Strategic Commissioning of Services, parents feel that children with all levels of ASN have been disproportionately affected by budget cuts. We would like to take this opportunity to ask Scottish Government to increase funding, rather than maintaining the current funding of c. £11m. We would also like to ask that the funding is ring-fenced for the education of children and young people with additional support needs.

It is important to note that the transition process may bring with it extra costs for providers adapting to the new process, and these too should be considered.

**Structure**

We agree with the aims and objectives of this Strategy. We believe the achievement of these will meet the Scottish Government’s purpose: improving outcomes for children and young people with complex additional support needs, through strategic commissioning of services.

Although the structure of the strategy is appropriate, and the document flows well and is easy to follow, it is lengthy for the average parent to read. Parents we consulted recommended the creation of a summary document.

**Scope**

We are encouraged by the ‘Scope of Services to be commissioned’, which is a comprehensive list. Parents frequently tell us that they would like staff, working with children with all levels of ASN, to undergo more thorough training. We hope that more research and improved training will ultimately lead to a higher quality of provision.

**Pathfinder** **activity**

We feel this is the correct approach, as long as it does not draw too heavily on the establishment’s resources (both staff and financial). Parents, with children and young people involved in the pathfinder exercise, should be kept fully informed and have their views taken into account at all stages. This would reassure parents and ensure that the introduction was successful.

We would like to see parental engagement skills included in staff training: how to involve parents in the decision making process and how to work together in partnership with families.

**NIF Drivers**

We understand the purpose of adapting the NIF drivers for this strategy and it is appropriate to include careers and the corporate parents. Parents would also certainly welcome research into transitions.

However, we feel that vital aspects of the Parental Engagement driver have been lost. Whilst the strategy mentions working in partnership, the emphasis on two-way communication has been lost and should be reinstated.

Furthermore, it is still entirely appropriate to draw on the knowledge base of parents with complex additional support needs, as described in the original NIF driver. Parents have a wealth of knowledge, which should be utilised.

To conclude, we feel this strategy is a positive step in Scottish Education and, if given appropriate levels of funding, could improve outcomes for children and young people with complex additional support needs. However, we would seek for a comprehensive redraft of the Parental Engagement section in relation to the NIF driver.

Kind regards,



Joanna Murphy, Chair, National Parent Forum of Scotland