



# the National Parent Forum of Scotland

## Extending Children's Rights

The National Parent Forum of Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to fostering a positive culture towards children, and agrees that taking children's views into account is a key aspect of this. However, in our experience guidance that is not enshrined in law is frequently interpreted differently by varying audiences; at worst it is ignored completely. NPFS would prefer statutory guidance to be issued to ensure children across Scotland are treated equally.

Professionals will require additional training and/or guidance to ensure that communications with children are age appropriate, clear and accessible. Whilst it is progress that children will receive correspondence, such as the outcome of requests or copies of their co-ordinated support plan, this will be of little value if it is not set out in a way that a layperson can understand.

We find the wording of point 12 problematic. Many parents, as the primary educators of their child, would disagree completely that teachers '*are best placed to decide on a child's capacity*'. Although we understand the intention of this statement, we would like to suggest a rewording of the partnership arrangement between parents and teachers that should be in place.

The flow chart on page 11 is a clear and accessible description of the process, and NPFS are pleased that priority is given to notifying the child's parents. However, in point 31 this priority seems rather lost. We suggest that these bullets are reordered to reflect priorities i.e. ensuring active participation of the child and informing parents is vital.

We would like to see more frequent mentions of involving parents throughout the document. In our experience, if practitioners are not reminded to involve parents they are easily overlooked.

We appreciate that involving and informing parents has been recognised in points 44 – 48 but do not understand the value of point 46:

*Parents need to receive information on: how well all learners and particular groups of learners are achieving; the performance of children and young people in the school in relation to expected levels at particular stages in key areas such as literacy and numeracy; and how the school is applying national standards and expectations.*

This point seems to go against the ethos of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), which discourages comparing children. Although parents of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) may find value in being notified of how their child is performing against CfE benchmarks, we see little or no value in any further information being provided. We will continue to argue against the comparison of schools at a local or national level, as we think it is damaging to school communities as a whole.

Lastly, parents understandably have concerns over how their own rights will be balanced with the rights of their child. We would urge all involved in the process to be aware of any possible family conflict and to work to prevent this.

Kind regards,

*Joanna Murphy.*

Joanna Murphy, Chair, National Parent Forum of Scotland