

Scottish Government Consultation on Putting Learners at the Centre – Delivering our Ambitions for Post-16 Education

Regarding Scottish Government commitment to offer a place in post-16 education and training to all 16 – 19 year olds:

In the case of young people and young adults with enduring and complex additional support needs, it is essential that transition planning is started within the statutory timescales, at the latest, in order to identify and secure the *right* provision, whether this involves staying on at school, entering further or higher education or participating in other programmes. It is essential that there is open and frank discussion between training and education providers and young people and their families about the type and availability of support. Enquire hears from families about the reluctance of providers to specify the type of support that will be available, as they are not aware of the funding and resource allocation in an adequate timeframe to support the transition duties in the additional support for learning legislation. This creates a stressful and disorganised transition from school, thus beginning the next stage of the young person's learning journey in a detrimental way.

Some young people stay on in special school education beyond their 18th birthday after which point they no longer have rights under the ASL Act, and therefore cannot refer a failure to carry out transition planning to the ASNT. In some cases the young person has remained in school education because no suitable post school learning opportunity has been identified. School, carers and social work staff may lack the knowledge required to identify opportunities and information may not have been shared with or sought from voluntary sector providers.

Parents and carers report that FE college support services can be reluctant to discuss a student's support needs with their parent on the grounds that they do not have time to do this, college is not school and discussion should be with the student. This causes anxiety for parents particularly when transition planning has not been satisfactory and parents are left to follow up post school options. A more understanding approach to parental involvement by colleges would be helpful. Initiatives like the City of Glasgow College Parents' Voice survey with the Scottish Parent Teacher Council are a positive step.

The majority of the calls we receive about post 16 education concern a pupil's right to stay on at school after their 16th birthday, where the school has suggested the pupil should leave. We also hear of situations where the local

authority advises, midway through the school session, that a young person's special school placement will end on their 18th birthday, when it had been previously agreed that the young person should remain at school until the end of the school year. Once again, this is not in line with the objectives of the transition duties embedded in the additional support for learning legislation.

Regarding the SCQF framework:

Calls about qualifications refer to assessment arrangements rather than the availability and type of qualification so we cannot comment on how effectively the SCQF promotes flexible learner journeys. We receive some calls from parents who say it has been recommended that their child leaves school as there is no suitable course available to them and college would be more suitable. While this may be true in some cases it creates an inequity for pupils whereby school education is more suited to more academically able students.

Supporting young parents

Supporting 16-19 year old mothers, and fathers, is important to ensuring post-16 learning is available for all. The availability of affordable flexible, high quality, consistent early childhood education and care would support young mothers and fathers continuation or re-entry into education or training, increasing their employment opportunities and decreasing the likelihood of their child growing up in poverty. While appropriate childcare places and funding might be available locally to suit re-entry into education and training (and if not, this should be a priority) other barriers might prevent young parents making use of them. Young parents might not be familiar with the options available and lack trust in formal services. While ensuring the options are available is very important, information and support should be in place early on – even during pregnancy – to familiarise young mothers and fathers with these options. Building positive relationships with institutions and childcare providers such as childminders or nurseries in advance would make it easier for new, young parents, to make more informed decisions about when and how to return to learning or employment. Teenage parenthood is often a catalyst for young people to change their lives and being aware of their new responsibility invest in their life-long employability. Making it easy for them to take up new opportunities that they might have rejected before parenthood will bring benefits for their young child throughout life.

The current fragmented nature of early childhood education and care, which impacts all parents, will have a particularly negative impact on more vulnerable or disadvantaged parents. Increased local knowledge about childcare availability and attitudes to it by young parents is required to be able to both make changes to the system and to better support, inform and respond to the needs of young parents. More information on Children in Scotland's recommendations for investing in early childhood education and care in Scotland is available here www.childreninScotland.org.uk/earlyyears

Consultation questions:

- (1) How can we ensure delivery of an appropriate place in post-16 learning for all 16-19 year olds?
- (2) What do we need to do to ensure this commitment is delivered to more vulnerable young people? What are the priority actions?
- (3) What more could the Government and its delivery partners do to improve retention and progression?

Children in Scotland is the national umbrella agency for organisations and professionals working with and for children, young people and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that policies and services and other provisions are of the highest possible quality and are able to meet the needs of a diverse society. Children in Scotland represents more than 400 members, including 90% of Scottish local authorities, all major voluntary, statutory and private children's agencies, professional organisations, as well as many other smaller community groups and children's services. It is linked with similar agencies in other parts of the UK and Europe.

The work of Children in Scotland encompasses extensive information, policy, research and practice development programmes. The agency works closely with MSPs, the Scottish Government, local authorities and practitioners. It also services groups such as the Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Children and Young People (with YouthLink Scotland). In addition, Children in Scotland hosts Enquire - the national advice service for additional support for learning, and Resolve: ASL, Scotland's largest independent education mediation service.