



Having Your Say at School

Children and Young People discuss:

Best ways to give their views

Attending meetings

Proposals for keyworkers

Current involvement in decision making

Implications of the Education (Disabilities Strategies and
Pupils' Educational Records) Scotland Act 2002

Children in Scotland

Children in Scotland is Scotland's national umbrella agency for organisations and professionals working with and for children and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that relevant policies, 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 over 300 members, including all the major voluntary, statutory and private children's agencies, professional associations and local authorities as well as many smaller community groups and children's services. Children in Scotland facilitates the National Early Years Forum, the Scottish Parenting Forum, the Special Needs Advisory Group, Enquire, the national advice service for special educational needs in Scotland and a National Steering Group on children infected/affected by HIV/AIDS. In addition, Children in Scotland is involved in a number of projects promoting children and young people's participation. This includes a two-year project to increase and encourage the involvement of children and young people with learning disabilities in collective decision making. This work is funded by the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

Children in Scotland works in partnership with the National Children's Bureau and Children in Wales, and is a member of the European Forum for Children's Welfare (EFCW).

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for their time and assistance.

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Executive Summary

- 46 young people from around Scotland (aged 11 to over 21) took part in Having Your Say at School. These young people had a range of special educational needs and attended various types of school including local authority schools, independent schools, mainstream and special schools.
- Using a mixture of methods, including group work, questionnaires and individual interviews, young people discussed: the best way to give their views; attending meetings; proposals for a keyworker; current involvement in decision making at school; and the implications of the recent Education (Disabilities Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) Scotland Act 2002.

Main points made by young people:

- Young people identified relatively few ways they could give their views at school. This was particularly the case for more individual/ personal issues and for less confident young people. It is recommended that schools develop coherent 'whole-school' approaches to tackle this, covering participation in decision making on a small and large scale.
- Improvements to current practice in involving young people in meetings would help to support young people's input and ensure that young people's views are central to the decision making process. Alternatives need to be offered to young people who do not attend meetings.
- The majority of young people welcomed the principal of a keyworker on an 'as required' basis. Careful thought needs to be given to the role and remit of a keyworker and how it would mesh with existing provisions such as guidance teachers, learning support and social workers.
- Young people expressed concern that their views were not always truly listened to and/or acted upon. Evaluating existing decision making processes, developing new processes and offering bespoke training to professionals would help change this.
- Young people reported difficulties in accessing particular parts of their education. This included: the science and language curriculum; limited subject choice at some special schools; sport at mainstream schools; and the impact of transport and changing facilities.
- Young people were overwhelmingly in favour of helping local authorities with access plans. Young people felt they could offer particular expertise on practical issues and that plans needed to cover extra curricular activities and attitudinal barriers.

Having Your Say at School

Introduction

The Scottish Executive launched *Assessing our Children's Educational Needs – the way forward?* in summer 2001- a consultation on the current assessment and recording arrangements for children with special educational needs. As part of this the Scottish Executive asked Children in Scotland to find out the views of children and young people. Working in partnership with Capability Scotland and Enable, Children in Scotland consulted almost 40 children and young people, finding out about their experiences and opinions. These were summarised in a report to the Executive.¹

The Scottish Executive produced their response to *Assessing our Children's Educational Needs – the way forward?* in February 2002. Some proposals raised by respondents required further consideration and more information. This included some issues raised by children and young people. In addition the Executive wished to explore some of the implications of the new Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) Scotland Act 2002 with children and young people. As part of its Special Needs Advisory Group activities, Children in Scotland has therefore run subsequent consultations (working with some of the original groups as well as involving new groups) to follow up these points.

Areas to be covered by consultation

Three key areas were identified by the Scottish Executive for further investigation with more specific points detailed within these:

- **Best ways for children and young people to be involved in assessments**

Exploring young people's views and experiences of:

-What works best

-Attending meetings

-Keyworkers

- **Pupil choice within current systems**

Exploring young people's views and experiences of:

-Relationships with parents and professionals during decision-making

-Disagreeing with a decision

-How involved children and young people feel in school

In covering these areas, groups also sought to identify examples of good practice and who initiated these.

¹ The summary from this report is given in Appendix 1

- **Education (Disabilities Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) Scotland Act 2002.**

Exploring young people's views and experiences of:

-Access to information in suitable / understandable forms.

-Ways to make the curriculum accessible to young people's needs.

-Changes to make it easier to study the subjects young people want to.

-How children and young people can help local authorities plan strategies.

Range of consultation

The remit for this consultation was wider than for the initial consultation in June 2001 both in terms of topics to be covered and the children and young people involved. The Scottish Executive wanted this consultation to concentrate on children and young people with special educational needs in its widest sense (i.e. involving pupils with and without a Record of Needs) and including a mixture of ages and local authorities. Children and young people attending a variety of school types were to be included. Local authority schools, independent schools, mainstream and special schools were all targeted.

Methods used

In order to consult with children and young people from the range described above, three routes for consultation were chosen:

- 1. Group Work**
- 2. Questionnaires**
- 3. Individual Interviews**

These routes all concentrated on certain key areas of information, common to all. This allowed comparisons to be made within and across groups but also provided useful and differing perspectives to emerge.

1. Group Work

- Worked with six groups over two sessions (or equivalent)
- 33 young people involved through this method
- Mixture of discussion and individual exercises

Groups were:

Harmeny School, Leith Academy, Uddingston Grammar School, Capability Scotland's Corseford and Stanmore House Schools and a group of young people with visual impairments from a special and a mainstream school.

Methodology was largely the same between groups; however some adaptations were made to suit the needs, interests and experiences of participants. Methods included:

- Group discussion stimulated by prompt questions from researcher
- Voting on questions using Yes/No/Not sure cards
- Individual comments on post-its in response to group questions
- Individual prioritising using beans on a scale of 1-10 or Lots/Some/None cards

2. Questionnaire

- Questionnaires sent out through Capability Scotland's Community Support Services and Consultation Group²
- Questionnaires sent to three schools who had expressed an interest in the consultation
- 120 Questionnaires sent out. 10 questionnaires returned³.

3. Individual Interviews with School Leavers

- Interviews with young people who have left school, with previous contact with Children in Scotland
- Three young people involved through this method
- Reflection on their experiences and identification of good practice

Respondents

The summer term is not an ideal time for consultation with young people's exam commitments and other end of year activities. This particularly affected the number of questionnaires returned. Even schools that had contacted us, wishing to take part, found themselves unable to complete the forms before the end of term.

However, combining all three methods, 46 young people took part, 27 male and 19 female. The group covered an age range from 11 to over 21 years (for school leavers) from 15 different schools⁴ with a geographical spread including Aberdeenshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Renfrewshire and South Lanarkshire. Children and young people with

² Capability Scotland's Community Support Services provide a range of flexible services for children and young people with disabilities throughout Scotland. The consultation group is made up of children and young people with disabilities who use a range of Capability Scotland's community support and respite services. Children and young people using these services in Glasgow, Renfrewshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Perth and Kinross and Dundee were contacted.

³ One questionnaire was completed by a parent on the young person's behalf as the 'child would not be able to understand the questions.'

⁴ For a list of the schools see Appendix 2

communication difficulties, learning difficulties (mild to severe and specific learning difficulties), physical disabilities, sensory impairments, complex special needs and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties were all involved. Participants attended a mixture of local authority schools and independent schools, mainstream (primary and secondary) and special schools.

Results

All three routes (group work, questionnaire and individual interviews) covered similar questions and there were not substantial differences in the type of answer elicited. This report therefore presents information from all respondents together and does not differentiate by the method used to collect it. Figures are used in the report at various points to indicate the number of young people that agreed or disagreed with a particular issue. Only the young people who responded to that particular question are represented in the tally, so numbers do not always add up to the total number of respondents, 46. Quotes are used throughout the report to illustrate points in the young people's own words. The age and gender of the respondent are given in these cases.

Due to the size and nature of this consultation it is not a systematic survey of children and young people's views. Instead it offers: varied snapshots from around Scotland of current provision; young people's views and experiences on what works; and their thoughts on how provision could best be developed. It offers a more extensive and detailed examination of how children and young people are involved in their education than the initial consultation. Their thoughts, views and hopes directly impact on many of the proposals currently being considered by the Scottish Executive.

The consultation was carried out following Children in Scotland's ethical guidelines. These are available on request. The children and young people who took part are not named in this response, to protect their anonymity.

**"What I battle for is to be listened to and for
action to be taken."**

Young man aged 17

Best ways for children and young people to be involved in assessments

What ways can you put your views forward?

Young people came up with a variety of ways to put their views across – these are discussed below. If young people attended meetings they tended to concentrate on this. Involvement in meetings is discussed separately.

- **Student Councils**

Student councils tended to be raised as a way to put views across only in schools where the council was active and seen to be effective.

"There's a student council meeting every month and every class has a class rep and they put down the class views and then put their views forward."

Young man aged 16.

Four groups and one school leaver discussed student councils. In two cases pupils were sceptical about how useful the council was due to the infrequency of meetings and the lack of feedback. At one school pupils were genuinely unsure whether they had a council or not.

All young people saw student councils as a way to bring up general issues, not individual matters. It is significant that for some young people issues about for example, accessibility, would be seen as an individual matter and not a concern for the whole school.

- **Speaking directly to a teacher**

This was mentioned by a number of young people. Some, however, would prefer the teacher to initiate discussion (i.e. "If one of the teachers talks to you" - *young person aged 12*) and others noted that it "depends on how confident the student is" (*young person aged 15*).

Generally, speaking directly to a teacher was seen as an informal way to raise issues, some describing it as 'chatting'. It helped if the young person liked the teacher and had some choice about who they could go and see – some issues were easier to talk about with certain people.

One difficulty highlighted by young people about this more informal method was the lack of action that sometimes resulted:

"Some people try but nothing really changes very quickly." *Young woman aged 13*

For particular issues, for example learning support or obtaining specific equipment, some young people expressed a preference for having one point of contact so they knew they were informing the 'right' person and action would hopefully follow.

- **Guidance teachers**

Guidance teachers were rarely mentioned by young people. When the subject was initiated by the researcher it appeared most schools had a guidance system in place but it was not frequently used.

"I don't know my guidance teacher, you only go to them if you've been bad or have a problem." *Young woman aged 14*

"I had a guidance teacher but I didn't get on with her." *School leaver*

"I don't use it at all" *Young man aged 15*

Only one of the guidance systems spoken about allowed pupils any choice in who their guidance teacher was. The guidance system tended to be seen as covering academic issues not social. Some young people would use the learning support system rather than the guidance system.

Although very few of the young people seemed to have built up a relationship with their guidance teacher, guidance teachers were often reported as attending review meetings.

- **Writing things down**

Several young people thought that writing things down either in a letter or in a less structured form was beneficial:

"I find that easiest sometimes" *School leaver*

"There are things you can say in a letter that you can struggle to say."

Young man aged 16

Writing things down allowed young people time to think about what they wanted to say and how they wanted to say it. It also avoided other people interrupting - something several young people spoke about happening at meetings.

"You're frightened about people butting in" *Young man aged 17*

A couple of schools had systems like suggestion boxes or worry boxes although it was unclear whether young people would use these for more individual concerns.

Young people did highlight the benefits some kind of written system could have in supporting their involvement in meetings. This is discussed in more detail in the section on meetings.

- **Talking with friends**

The support, help and advice offered by peers was evident in most discussions: "We talk to each other, that is a brilliant way because one understands the other. The teachers say they understand and know how difficult it is, they don't." *Young woman aged 13.*

Most recognised, however, that this rarely resulted in any change. "It's hard because nine times out of ten nothing gets done when we just talk to each other." *Young woman aged 13*

For some groups finding somewhere for a private conversation (without staff) could be problematic – "There's always somebody, somewhere, even the toilets." *Young man aged 17.*

- **Group discussion**

Some young people spoke about talking some decisions / issues through as a group with the teacher present. This 'sometimes worked, sometimes didn't'. For primary schools or schools with small classes this seemed easier to implement and was used. In other schools there seemed less evidence of this, perhaps because of lack of opportunity.

Comment and Recommendations on

Ways for pupils to put their views forward

- Young people identified relatively few ways they could put their views forward. This was particularly true for more individual / personal issues.
- The methods available varied from school to school. Young people tended to volunteer ideas where they thought methods were effective. Other ideas emerged as a result of the researcher asking directly whether a particular method was available.
- Systems that had been put in place required on-going support and commitment from teachers – this was particularly clear from comments made about student councils.
- Young people were put off giving their views if it did not seem to have any effect. Young people needed to see change or receive feedback on the issues they had raised.
- Many young people preferred more informal methods like speaking to teachers; however some found this difficult to initiate.
- Discussion with young people suggests that the current system of guidance teachers would benefit from review.
- A number of young people recommended writing things down. Systems could be established in schools (like the 'worry box') although consideration needs to be given to issues of confidentiality and whether concerns should be addressed to individual teachers or one teacher overseeing the whole process. Establishing a system with input from young people/student councils should help create an appropriate and better used process.
- Peer group discussion was an important way to express views and gain support. This method would be more fruitful if schools developed more accessible routes for issues raised in such a way, to come to the attention of staff. (A good student council being one obvious route).
- For a number of young people finding a private space without adults was difficult. Whilst taking into account necessary safety aspects, schools could work with young people to create the time and space for this to happen more frequently.

Pupils views on attending meetings

37 young people attended meetings of some sort

26 young people attended large review meetings

31 young people thought meetings were a good way to tell people their views,
4 were not sure and 8 thought they were not.

Positive aspects of attending meetings:

- "It means you can get together with all your teachers" *Young woman aged 13*
- "You can discuss decisions that you might have" *Young woman aged 16*
- "A good way to get listened to" *Young man aged 12*
- "A range of different opinions is good" *Young woman aged 16*
- Some young people enjoyed meeting people from outside school

A number of young people spoke about finding their first big meeting quite difficult but that it was easier the next time.

"I don't mind talking in meetings because I'm used to it. I was scared at the first one." *Young man aged 17*

One school had a regular class meeting every Monday where young people made decisions about the activities they were going to be involved in during the coming week. Not only did this offer an opportunity for the group to develop their understanding of decision making, it also allowed them to 'practice' useful skills for larger meetings in a less formal environment. This process appeared to have been initiated by the class teacher.

A small but significant number of young people did not think meetings were a good way to give their views:

"I hated reviews, I came out more upset than I went in. I felt that people were talking over me - there was no eye contact. I felt like a shadow."

School leaver

"I just have to sit down and shut up and I'm not allowed to say anything"

Young man aged 14

"I didn't feel under pressure or intimidated but a lot of people will."

School leaver

"I sometimes felt like walking out and saying - you made that decision for me." *School leaver*

"It's difficult to say what you want to say because you have all these people staring at you. You could give things in in writing but there is not a system set up." *Young man aged 15*

Seven young people did not attend meetings. Occasionally young people were not invited:

"The staff, they say [it] isn't for my ears. Huh." *Young woman aged 11*

Other young people said they would get the opportunity to attend when they were older; some young people did not think there were meetings held about their education. The questionnaire filled out by the parent on the young person's behalf indicated that her daughter did not attend as she 'would not be able to understand or participate in the meeting' (*parent*).

Even among young people who thought meetings were a good way to give their views, there were comments and recommendations that suggest much could be done to improve the effectiveness and the overall experience of these meetings for young people. These are discussed below.

- **Environment**

A number of young people spoke about how difficult going in to a room full of people was:

"I felt very nervous - you walked in and there was a whole load of people."

Young man aged 16

"I was worried going in to Future Needs meeting as everyone was looking at you." *Young woman aged 16*

Who you sat next to could also have an impact:

"I felt more calm sitting beside [name of teacher] than my Mum."

Young person aged 15

In addition some spoke about needing to make the experience less formal and less intimidating:

"Make it a much less formal, pressurised situation...more relaxed and more looking at it from the young person's perspective." *School leaver*

"You feel that small" *School leaver*

Two young men recommended providing biscuits and sweets.

- **Length of the meeting**

Larger meetings could last anything from 20 minutes to 3 hours. In general young people seemed to prefer shorter meetings (about 30 minutes) but even these could be described as 'boring'.

Some young people attended for part of the meeting only and this worked well for some, however, care needs to be taken that within that time, young people have

a chance to put forward and discuss their points of view and are not just told 'what has been decided'.

- **Who attends the meeting**

Larger meetings tended to have upward of five people present and could be as many as ten. Parents and teachers generally attended and a mixture of doctors, social workers, educational psychologists, careers advisors, physiotherapists, guidance teachers and occupational therapists.

Several young people found the number of other adults overwhelming:

"It's easier to talk to less people" *Young man aged 17*

"I prefer a nice small group, I can't relate to a big group, it's overpowering."
Young woman aged 14

A number questioned whether it was necessary for all the people to be there:

"I felt the educational psychologist's range of knowledge of me was just that half hour every year - when you bring in people from outside who don't know you it seems a bit daft." *School leaver*

"There are a lot of people who have nothing to do with you. I think they want to fill their time." *Young woman aged 16*

Question asked by researcher: "Who was at the meeting?"

"The careers advisor - though I don't know why." *Young woman aged 15*

One young person questioned the privacy and confidentiality that was possible with so many people attending:

"Because of overstaffing there cannot be confidentiality within that group."
Young man aged 17

Young people did not agree on a particular group of professionals being unnecessary. They all had different views with regard to their own situation. However, young people did agree that it was unnecessary for someone who did not know them or did not contribute relevant information to the meeting to attend. For some young people this might be the educational psychologist, for others the guidance teacher, social worker, careers advisor or medical staff.

Other young people did not know all the adults there or their purpose:

"I go to meetings with people I don't know - my Mum knows them."
Young woman aged 14

"It was my first meeting so I didn't know what they were there for."

Young man aged 14

"People do explain at the beginning of the meeting who people are which is good, but it's difficult to know their purpose." *Young woman aged 16*

Two things young people found particularly insulting were professionals who did not know them well, having a large input at the meeting and unknown professionals covering for others unable to attend. This was felt particularly strongly when personal and medical matters were discussed at the meeting. Young people gave several examples:

One young person spoke about a social worker who did not know her very well, writing a report using information from years ago that was no longer relevant. She felt unable to say anything as she thought she would be told she was being 'cheeky'. In the end her father commented.

Another spoke about a meeting where personal matters were discussed in front of a replacement guidance teacher stepping in to cover at the last minute – "I felt so small". *Young woman aged 15*

Young people seemed to have very little control over who did attend meetings. Even when there were strong reasons for a pupil not wanting someone to attend, the pupil seemed unable to prevent this.

- **What is discussed at the meeting**

Young people rarely had much input into what was discussed at the meeting. A number felt that 'you talk about the same thing every time you go' whilst others felt some topics were irrelevant or inappropriate:

"People bring up things that I didn't know was an issue, from years ago, not even from the same school. It really annoys me and annoys my Dad."

Young woman aged 15

"If it is something personal to you, you don't want everyone knowing because sometimes in big meetings it is not relevant to people and they chip in."

Young woman aged 14

Equally young people often had little idea of what was to be discussed at coming meetings although there were exceptions:

One young person described how before his meeting, his Occupational Therapist told him what she had written in his report and asked him what he thought. The

rest of the group agreed that this was a good thing to do and should happen with each report.

At another school a system had been devised where the Personal and Social Development teacher spent time with each pupil before his/her review discussing how the pupil felt the previous year had gone and plans for the coming year. Any issues were identified and noted down and the young person was then able to take this document along with them to the meeting.

- **Do people listen to what you say at meetings?**

<p>29 young people said 'Yes' people did listen to what they said at meetings, 3 said 'No' and 3 said 'Sometimes'.</p>
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The majority of young people did feel that people listened to what they said at meetings, although their responses to later questions often qualified this assertion. Most young people were invited if not encouraged to speak but many felt adults listened but did not truly 'hear' what they were saying. Young people demonstrated this happening in a number of ways.

- Adults 'arguing' about points young people made or just saying 'yes that's fine' and moving swiftly on.
- Adults 'reinterpreting' (incorrectly) young people's views:
"Teachers will listen to young people's views but if they don't agree, will adapt it and put their views on it." *School leaver*
- Adults interrupting a young person before they had finished what they are saying
"I hate it when they interrupt when I'm speaking but I am not allowed to interrupt them...if they're allowed to we should be." *Young person aged 12*
- Adults telling young people they were 'cheeky' or 'giving the school a bad name' if they criticised the school.

Young people found it very difficult to challenge these attitudes:

"I said 'Aye, right, whatever' but deep down I was fuming" *School leaver*

"I felt at my Future Needs meeting I did want to speak but got shut out at some points." *Young man aged 16*

"I have felt at times I was bullied into doing things." *Young man aged 17*

Another source of frustration was the lack of action that often followed young people speaking up:

"I say things and they just write it down and don't act on it."

Young woman aged 14

"You only really get a result if you all unanimously go against what the teachers are saying." *Young man aged 17*

"I just get really annoyed, it goes in one ear and out the other."

Young woman aged 14

Young people identified two main elements that had a fundamental impact on how well they felt they were being listened to:

- Adults attitudes' towards young people during the meeting
- Young people's views leading to action being taken.

When these two elements were 'right' young people spoke positively and enthusiastically about being involved in meetings:

"I thought the staff were very positive and didn't do any tongue in cheek talking like lie about me. They were always up front." *Young man aged 17*

"I was quite fairly treated - any problems I could say and get them treated." *Young woman aged 16*

Comment and Recommendations on Pupils attending meetings

Much could be done to improve young people's experience of and input into meetings, particularly review meetings. The vast majority of young people appreciate the opportunity to attend these meetings. Some feel they have a right to be at a meeting where decisions are being made about them. Many young people now seem to have the opportunity to attend. However, very few examples were found where the meeting process had been altered to accommodate young people's attendance.

Large review meetings are essentially an adult orientated process. The formality, the number of people attending, the language used and the manner in which issues are discussed in this kind of environment does not generate a 'child friendly' atmosphere. Indeed, consultations involving parents last year as part of Children in Scotland's adult response to *Assessing our Children's Educational Needs – the way forward?*⁵ highlighted that parents often perceived similar barriers to their own contribution during such meetings.

⁵ A copy of this response can be found on Children in Scotland's website: www.childreninscotland.org.uk

In an effort to make the process both more focussed on the young person and more supportive of young people's input, some of the key points raised by young people are given below with related recommendations for improvements to the system.

- **Before the meeting**

Young people need a clear idea of what a meeting will involve, who will be there and what will be discussed. A system similar to the one described where the PSD teacher spent time with a young person prior to a review would seem worth exploring. A list of areas such a meeting could cover are proposed below:

An 'introduction' to meetings for young people attending their first meeting – an informal chat with an adult (and possibly a young person who has already attended a meeting) about what to expect.

Input into the agenda – young people given the opportunity to reflect on the past year, look at the future and identify any issues they would like to bring up. They should have the chance to think about how they would want to raise issues (personally/ through someone else/ in writing) and the words they would want to use.

Some sort of record of the above to take to the meeting (most other people at the meeting will have 'notes' and earlier comments from some young people show they clearly value 'writing things down').

If an agenda is put together by the chair of the meeting, its contents should be shared with young people so they know what to expect and their own issues can be included in it.

If possible, a chance to go through written reports that have been submitted by other professionals for the meeting. A discussion of who else will be at the meeting, why they will be there and any concerns regarding this. Comments from young people continue to question the necessity of some professionals being at meetings (see earlier) which should be given serious consideration.

- **The meeting**

During the meeting, young people identified a number of things that affected their ability to participate:

Unsurprisingly young people preferred shorter meetings, although they obviously need to be long enough to cover all necessary issues.

Attention to the physical layout of the room may help. Some young people may find it easier if they were in the room from the start and met the adults one by one as they arrived (particularly if they did not know them all) rather than entering a room already full of adults. Young people could also have some say in how the room was set up including who they sat next to.

A clear agenda worked through in order would help many young people (and adults). This would be particularly effective if it included points young people wanted to raise. This would help to avoid people bringing up irrelevant and inappropriate matters and ensure young people had a chance to raise their issues.

The attitude of adults towards young people and what they were saying was vital. In short, young people wanted more than one 'tokenistic' opportunity to speak and enough time to make their views understood. In addition young people referred both obliquely and directly to the importance of adults respecting the independent thought of young people and properly valuing their views.

Another source of frustration for young people was feeling that their views rarely led to action. Perhaps a clear summary at the end of the meeting of the issues raised and the action to be taken would be of benefit.

- **After the meeting**

Young people may find some sort of informal debrief useful. In one school pupils went for a quick coffee with their keyworker and discussed how things had gone. Again this may provide an opportunity to underline key points from the meeting.

While a full set of minutes may not be appropriate, young people might appreciate some sort of record of what was said and what action would ensue. On-going feedback on action taken after the meeting would also mean young people were kept abreast of developments and did not feel that 'nothing happens'.

- In addition it is essential that systems are put in place to ensure that young people who do not get the opportunity to attend meetings; who choose not to attend meetings; or who find it difficult to contribute to a meeting for whatever reason, are given alternative ways to put their views and preferences forward and that these are built into the meeting process. This may be an area where a keyworker could play a central role; working directly with the young person and/or the people who know the young person best (where appropriate).

Key workers

19 young people thought it would be useful to have someone special to talk to about how things were going at school, 4 were not sure and 9 thought it would not be useful.

The term 'keyworker' did cause confusion with some young people – some schools already use that term to describe a teacher or more commonly a residential worker overseeing a pupil's progress. If proposals are taken forward, perhaps an alternative title would be better.

This very mixed response seemed to reflect quite directly young people's experience of being involved in decision making at school. Where young people felt they were effectively listened to or where young people already had someone fulfilling that role, they tended to feel a keyworker was unnecessary. A number of young people identified their parents as being 'someone special to talk to' and others identified a school keyworker or teacher that they got on particularly well with. Others thought it was a good idea but did not believe it would work. Reasons for this included potential difficulties in accessing keyworkers; negative attitudes from other professionals; and it being an 'unrealistic' concept given current school set ups.

There were two situations in particular where young people thought a keyworker would be beneficial. The first was if a young person was quiet or lacked confidence; the second was where there was disagreement or awkwardness between young people and their parents:

"If you're quiet and don't want to speak up it's a good thing." Young man aged 16

"You don't feel you can talk to parents at certain ages" School leaver

Virtually all young people supported the idea of a keyworker if it was optional (i.e. you could use them as and when you wanted or needed to but you did not have to). There was concern that if it was compulsory it would be just another professional to get to know. A couple of people suggested that a keyworker should be available for all pupils. Just having keyworkers for people with additional support needs would make them feel different and they felt there were young people without any 'registered' additional need who lacked confidence and found it difficult to speak out, who would equally benefit from the services of a keyworker. The keyworker could take a particular role in promoting good mental health and well being.

What should a keyworker be like?

'Trustworthy', 'a good listener' and 'understanding' were the three most common answers⁶.

Young people wanted someone who knew them 'as a person, not a job'; who spent time getting to know them and who shared similar interests: 'Have good conversations with you'; 'Like the same things'. It was vital that young people liked their keyworker and for that reason most young people thought they should have some choice over who their keyworker was:

"You should be able to change the keyworker without red tape if you don't get on with them." *Young man aged 17*

The key worker should be primarily for young people:

"They should be slightly biased towards the child - their role is to look out for the best interests of the child." *School leaver*

They should not speak for young people but should support them. They should help give confidence but know when to step back.

'Being able to keep secrets' / confidentiality was a priority. For some young people this was a direct result of them feeling their confidentiality had been breached in the past when they had told things to teachers.⁷

"Somebody you can trust not to broadcast" *Young woman aged 16*

"If you say it's confidential it has to be confidential." *School leaver*

Most young people agreed they should be able to contact their keyworker whenever they needed to. Generally this was through face to face contact although being able to contact them by phone or email was also suggested. It was important that young people could contact their keyworker without having to go through a third person. Young people were also looking for commitment from keyworkers:

"If you employ someone and you trust them and they leave it is annoying."

Young woman aged 15

Some young people thought the keyworker should be someone within the school; this was generally so young people could get to know them. The majority, however, thought the keyworker should be independent from school. Some thought it should be independent from the education authority, suggesting it

⁶ A full list of young people's comments on what a keyworker should be like is given in Appendix 3

⁷ Most young people seemed aware that if they disclosed something of a serious nature this had to be passed on. These matters did not seem to fall into those categories.

should be 'linked to the whole advocacy system instead'. As well as being a majority view, the view that keyworkers should be independent was strongly felt by many:

"It would only work if the keyworker didn't have a vested interest - they would have to be there for the young person." *School leaver*

"Independent so they work with your views instead of trying to stand up for how the school is currently run." *Young man aged 17*

Comment and Recommendations on Keyworkers

- Young people supported the introduction of some sort of keyworker system that was optional (i.e. available as required) not compulsory. Some suggested it should be available to all pupils not just those with special educational needs.
- Comments made by young people about their experiences of meetings suggest that some would find a 'keyworker' (or someone specifically there for them) beneficial. There is also potential for the keyworker to be involved in implementing some of the proposed improvements to meetings, suggested earlier.
- Some young people identified keyworkers as being someone they could approach about more personal issues, issues of mental health and well being (e.g. bullying) and issues where they disagreed with the school.
- Confidentiality was extremely important to young people. The implications of how this would fit into a keyworker's remit would need to be looked at carefully.
- The role keyworkers may play needs to be considered in conjunction with others, in particular guidance teachers, learning support staff and social workers. An associated review of such existing provision may result in a more effective, streamlined system for all. This would be particularly true if keyworkers were available for all pupils not just those with special educational needs.
- It is unclear what relationship keyworkers would have with schools and education authorities. Many young people wanted the keyworker to be independent from the school but also wanted them to be about regularly so they could build a trusting relationship with them. How these two potentially conflicting wishes could be resolved needs careful consideration as does the range of influence keyworkers may hold.

Pupil choice within current systems

What decisions are you involved in?

Most young people highlighted choosing which subjects they studied. Other choices included: where to go on a school trip; what to eat or do at lunchtime; setting targets for the next term; and what age they left school. The types of decision young people were involved in varied significantly from school to school.

A young person from one school commented:

"We only get to choose our subjects and that's us, we don't really get to say much more than that" (young man aged 17).

At another school pupils were involved in a number of smaller decisions but could not choose their subjects until after they were 16 (which they thought was 'a bit unfair').

There were examples of good practice where projects had been set up which developed understanding of decision making and responsibility:

*"We run a school enterprise shop to make money. We have our own budget and get a choice as to what we buy for the shop and whether we take part."
Young person aged 17*

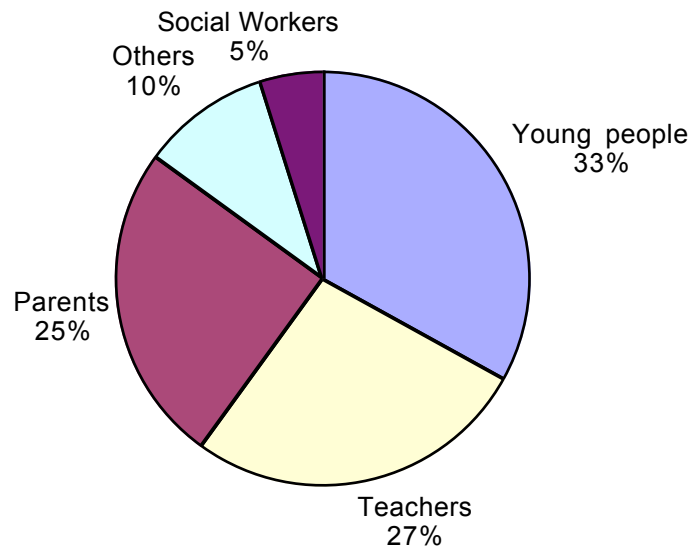
There were also examples where young people had issues they would like to raise (for example about school uniform) but felt that currently there were no systems in place to support this.

Relationships with parents and professionals during decision-making

Young people were given ten beans and asked to divide them up to show how much say different people had in making decisions (for example, if you thought parents had all the say you would give them 10 beans; if you thought teachers had some say, parents had some say but you had most, you might divide the beans 3, 3 and 4 respectively). Groups were asked to do this first for big decisions then for smaller everyday decisions. (Not all groups completed this exercise: some did more suitable alternatives; others were restricted due to time). A full record of the results can be found in Appendix 4.

- **Big decisions**

Person	Number of beans	Percentage of beans
Themselves	73	33%
Teachers	59	27%
Parents	53	24%
Social Worker	12	5%
Headteacher	5	2%
Previous School	5	2%
Guidance Teacher	4	2%
Keyworker	2	1%
Auxiliaries	2	1%
Educational Psychologist	2	1%
Health Authority	2	1%
Medical Staff	1	0.5%



'Others' includes guidance teachers, auxiliaries, educational psychologists, medical people, the health authority, the previous school and keyworkers.

Generally young people divided the beans between three categories; themselves, teachers and parents. Other professionals' scores were significantly lower and were often made up from votes from just one or two participants.

These low scores are interesting bearing in mind young people's comments about who attends review meetings and that they feel the attendance of some professionals is unnecessary. Not only do they feel that some professionals do not know them, they also do not think they take an active role in decision making.

The high score that young people accord themselves is interesting. In part this may be due to the fact that many people identified choosing their subjects as the one big decision they had been involved in. This tended to be a decision where young people had a high degree of autonomy (although this was not always the case as is discussed further in the section *You and Taking Part* Pg. 26). But the high score also parallels similar responses when asked *Are meetings a good way to give your views?* and *Do people listen to what you say at meetings?* Both these questions received a majority response of 'Yes' which was then heavily qualified by comments made by young people when discussing the questions further.

In this instance young people were later asked whether they felt they had enough say and while some answered yes, a number of others replied more negatively:

"I didn't have enough say myself" *School leaver*

"We should have more say. We do get a say but not as much as we should do." *Young woman aged 16*

"I feel that when we make decisions someone else changes them for us. It's our opinions not theirs." *Young man aged 17*

Some young people also spoke about decisions being made about them behind closed doors.

"Some decisions are made for us before we even know it's happening. Our opinion doesn't matter." *Young man aged 17*

"I personally have found a lot of people making minor decisions, making them behind my back without consulting me." *Young man aged 17*

Young people sometimes correlated age to the amount that they were involved in decisions making:

"We're all teenagers and we should have a say in what we do."

Young man aged 14

"There gets an age where it's you, not your parents they should talk to, and it's your decision." *Young woman aged 14*

Most young people were quite open and often welcomed advice from parents and teachers. A number spoke of making decisions together. Any unhappiness

seemed to stem from times when their opinion within the decision making process was given less value than others, particularly if what they said was treated in a demeaning way (see earlier comments under *Do people listen to what you say at meetings?* Pg. 13)

"The staff say we have more say but I feel teachers are trying to take our say away from us. They bully us into saying what they want us to say."

Young man aged 15

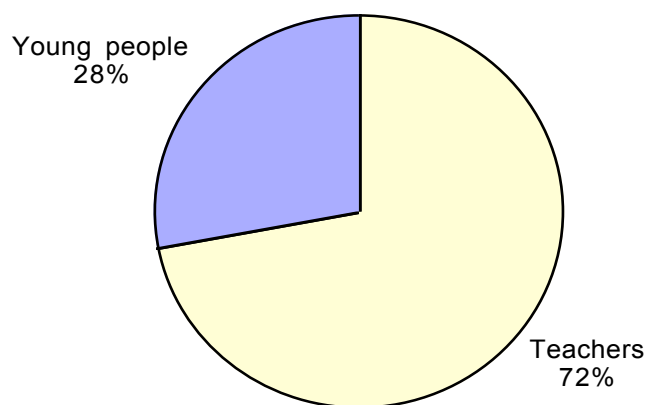
"I do get some say but they don't listen to me as much as my parents which is annoying because they're not me - nobody knows what I need except me."

Young woman aged 14

- **Small decisions**

All the young people divided the beans between two categories, themselves and teachers.

Person	Number of beans	Percentage of beans
Teachers	86	72%
Themselves	34	28%



Although less people (only 12) participated in this part of the exercise due to time limitations, it produced a noticeable reversal in positions. Young people felt there were very few 'everyday' decisions that they were involved in and opportunities for making choices were therefore low. Ideas for more everyday decisions that they might be involved in (for example school uniform or trips out) were either already governed by school rules or arranged automatically by teachers. Some

young people felt that there were no suitable systems in place to raise these kind of issues, or did not know who to approach:

"I find it hard to know where to go to express views" *Young man aged 17*

Some young people obviously railed against this lack of choice

"What pencil I use, that's how much say I get!" *Young woman aged 11*

But many seemed quite accepting of the situation and did not appear to have questioned how decisions about the day to day running of the school were made.

Disagreeing with a decision

Most young people had disagreed with a decision, some 'plenty'. As reported in last year's consultations young people felt there was very little they could do in these situations. A few young people felt able to speak to a teacher or parent, although they themselves suggested that not everyone would feel confident enough to do this. Sometimes this made a difference, sometimes not; but being told why a decision had been made, even if it was not changed, helped.

The majority of young people did not feel there was anything they could do in this situation. Many kept quiet, a few screamed or stormed off in a huff but readily admitted that 'that way you still don't get your way'. Young people spoke of the frustration of not knowing what to do or who to go to. Again, there were no examples of any systems being in place to help young people.

"I needed to go through lots and lots of people to get a decision changed.

Last week I needed to go through five people." *Young man aged 17*

"If there is nowhere to get your views across you bottle it up and bottle it up and get angry. There needs to be something. If I can't get my views across I tell my parents but for people where there is nowhere else to go, there needs to be something." *Young woman aged 13*

Young people also felt that adults and particularly teachers did not always appreciate how important some matters were for them:

"Problems I have are big to me but to them [school] it is a small thing. I can't speak to anyone in the school, I need to go outside the school."

Young woman aged 16

Comment and Recommendations on Pupil choice within current systems

- Young people clearly valued the opportunity to be part of decision making processes (both big and small) but their later comments raise questions about how much weight their views carry and how much they are taken into account.
- Most young people were aware of how much help and advice they might require in making decisions. They appreciated that this changed according to factors like age and the type of decision and often welcomed support from adults when it was given in the right way.
- Young people felt they were involved in bigger decisions but less so in smaller. Examples where schools had introduced projects that encouraged young people's involvement in smaller scale decisions (for example the weekly class meetings; effective student councils; or the school enterprise shop) demonstrated clear benefits for young people developing a better understanding of choice/ responsibility/ compromise and other aspects of decision making. Without such on-going education underpinning decision making it is questionable how empowered young people are to participate in bigger decisions.
- Some sort of support or system needs to be in place for situations where young people disagree with decisions that are made about them. Without this young people could become disaffected with the education system as a whole. Again a keyworker could play a central role in this.
- Young people reported difficulty in getting their own concerns 'onto the agenda' of decision making. This parallels earlier comments made by young people and the recommendation for young people's own issues to be on meetings' agendas.

You and Taking Part

These questions referred to the recent Education (Disabilities Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) Scotland Act 2002.

Can you take part in subjects and activities with everyone else in your class?

24 young people could, **5** could not and **6** were not sure (or said it depended on the subject).

- **Subjects**

The three most common subjects people highlighted difficulties with were science, languages and information technology.

In science, young people spoke about practical work being curtailed. The number of experiments they participated in was often cut and for many this made science 'boring'. Equipment was also an issue with schools not having enough or pupils waiting long periods for particular pieces to arrive (one young person spoke about lower laboratory benches being on order for over three years):

"We don't do as many experiments and we don't have as much equipment. What I really want to do is dissect rats." *Young man aged 17*

In language classes some pupils commented on difficulties with pronunciation or written work and in using tapes (particularly if the recording was old, bad or used lots of different people). In these cases it was easier if the teacher spoke:

"When my teacher spoke out (because the tape ran out) I got a much better grade than if it had been continued on tape. It's clearer." *Young woman aged 14*

In information technology, difficulties had normally centred around needing particular pieces of equipment. This had been resolved by schools in all cases.

A number of young people had dropped subjects with which they had had difficulty. Some of the examples young people gave were ambiguous whether this was due to a lack of support or personal preference. In some cases there was no ambiguity. One young woman opted to do biology instead of chemistry as she thought it involved fewer practicals; she was unable to do practicals as the tables were too high.

Another young person felt that the exam procedure at her school was too inflexible. She would prefer to have exam questions on tape and then write out

answers on computer or in Braille. Instead she was only able to use one method of communication for questions and answers. She found this rigid structure peculiar; she felt using two methods would improve her results and that this should be a common goal for her, the teachers and the examiners.

Young people also recommended that when external speakers came to schools (to talk about potential careers, for example) they should be aware of the information/communication needs of the pupils and adopt their presentation accordingly.

Most of the comments from young people focused on difficulties with equipment or the curriculum. A few, however, also mentioned difficulties with people's attitudes. One young person spoke about other pupils being 'funny' about doing joint projects with someone who was visually impaired. A couple of others spoke about feeling that some mainstream schools or education authorities thought including them was too much work or too much money. Another commented: "Some schools put up barriers re attitude if they have had a bad experience of accommodating a disabled person." *Young woman aged 17*

Young people also spoke about teachers. Occasionally pupils felt they were impatient, did not understand their disability (i.e. what they could and could not do), or did not prepare work in the necessary formats. One young person felt that because she used a wheel chair she was not given the opportunity in drama to 'change character'. She thought the teachers assumed she did not know how to or could not 'change character'. One young man, who has since left school, felt that his teachers could have been more informed and that he often had to work out his own way of joining in:

"The teachers didn't know how to help develop ways to help me join in... I felt I was passively educating them a lot of the time. If they had actively gone out and sought knowledge it would have been easier." *School leaver*

Young people highlighted the important role special schools could play in sharing good practice with mainstream schools⁸:

"There are a lot of tried and tested methods for including visually impaired people. Specialist establishments can support mainstream." *Young man aged 17*

and in last year's consultation young people spoke about the possibilities of themselves being involved in training for teachers.

⁸ It should also be noted, however, that a number of the pupils who felt most involved in decision making attended mainstream schools – good practice could be shared both ways.

One area that a number of young people commented on was the lack of choice in the curriculum at some special schools – particularly if the school was small. Pupils spoke about not having teachers for some subjects (for example drama) and a number were either unable to choose their subjects until after they were 16, or there were a higher number of compulsory subjects. Young people also spoke about some of the disadvantages of very small class sizes (some were as small as two). While they appreciated the attention they received they said they would prefer to be in a bigger class and be able to learn from their peers as well.

More general comments were also made about access in schools:

"If schools want to bring disabled people into the school they have to think about space and having the appropriate equipment." *Young woman aged 15*

- **Activities**

As well as accessibility to academic subjects, young people were also asked about other activities within school. There were some difficulties with sports, particularly within mainstream schools. Some activities like 'fitness' were fine but there were many that they could not do – some said they did not want to anyway, but others said it would not be possible even if they did want to:

"The teacher does not want me to do basketball but I do it with the class. If the class is doing other stuff, I can't do it and will do something with the auxiliary or sometimes I practice basketball [alone]." *Young woman aged 15*

In special schools it was less of a problem; it seemed easier to arrange group sports to suit the participants. A couple of young people in different mainstream schools suggested it would be better to do PE with other pupils with disabilities, meeting up with pupils from other schools. One recommended putting together a wheelchair basketball team:

"Then I would not feel as stupid doing basketball for one person."
Young woman aged 15

School trips could also be problematic. One young person spoke about being taken inside before everyone else, and the rest of her class being seated in a different part of the building (despite there being seats around her). Similarly others spoke about wanting to be with their friends but having to stay with their auxiliaries. They felt that teachers were a bit 'scared' about taking people with disabilities on trips, feeling more comfortable if they were with an auxiliary at all times. One school leaver spoke about not being able to go on a French trip. What he found upsetting was that it was just assumed he would not go (even though the rest of the class went) and nobody gave him the option or even discussed the matter with him.

Again in special schools there tended to be less issues about being treated differently but a number of young people spoke of the lack of variety – visiting the same place repeatedly. Often this was due to accessibility issues. These not only included accessibility into buildings but also changing / toilet facilities – in particular the lack of an adjustable changing bench limited trips to half day excursions for some young people. Another significant limitation was transport with some special schools only being able to go out between 9.30am and 3.00pm (approximately) in order to fit in with local authority transport arrangements to and from home.

A couple of school leavers spoke about these difficulties ‘encouraging’ them to be very academically focused. Reflecting back one young man felt that he had missed out a lot in terms of extra curricular activities and that this had resulted in him having a much smaller circle of friends. Having separate transport arrangements to and from school exacerbated this situation.

“Looking back, it was quite a lonely time.” School leaver

Are there things that people can do to make information easier for you to understand?

Young people used various methods that are summarised below.

Method	Number using it
Large print	11
Braille	5
Audio tape	14
Pictures	6
Symbols	5

Method	Number using it
Photographs	4
Scribe	3
Reader	2
Specific IT equipment	3
1 to 1 help from staff*	24

**Most young people commented that 1 to 1 help from staff was required sometimes but not all the time.*

In addition young people also mentioned communication books, 3D symbols, big Mac switches, video cameras, speech therapy and planning meetings where they could discuss the week ahead and any decision they needed to make. Young people also spoke about the need to just communicate more, to 'speak directly to me'.

What is clear is that there is no one way to make information accessible. Often a combination of methods was most effective and the methods that each individual used could vary at different times in their lives and according to what they were

doing. A flexible open approach was required and the high count for 1 to 1 help from staff, coupled with comments about communicating more, indicate the importance of people in making information understandable even when presented in an 'accessible' format.

Generally schools seemed able to provide information in the formats young people required. There were sometimes delays, particularly if the pupil was the only person (or one of very few) requiring that input. This seemed true for specific pieces of equipment too and was a particular problem when it did not seem to be any one teacher's responsibility.

Can young people help local authorities with their access plans?

All but one of the **25** young people asked thought young people could help local authorities with their plans, many commenting "definitely".

Young people focused on the very practical information they would be able to share and the fact that they had direct experience of what worked and what did not:

"The thought that local authorities would look to adapt schools to make them more inclusive without real input from young people is just scary."

School leaver

"Young people understand what you want and what you need."

Young woman aged 16

"If they do not consult with service users they will do the wrong things - you need to put in the final effort to ask people who are using it [schools]"

Young man aged 17

A number of young people spoke about how vital it was that people making the plans understood the reality of attending a school and having additional support needs.

"We should get the council to put themselves in my shoes and see how they cope. They'd then see, oh look there's loads of problems." *School leaver*

"They really need to think it through step by step, take it step by step, not rushing." *School leaver*

"It's pointless spending millions on adapting schools if it is not practical."

School leaver

Young people suggested a number of ways they could be involved. Many preferred some sort of face to face discussion (some suggested a similar format to this consultation).

"Consult in the school. Talk to disabled people, talk to young people and ask them what they need - simple." *Young woman aged 15*

"Discussion works well. People meeting face to face occasionally, to hammer things out." *Young man aged 17*

Some other young people suggested a questionnaire to give a wider idea of what was needed. A number of people suggested a combination of questionnaires and face to face meetings would be good.

Other suggestions included planners shadowing young people at school; doing research to make sure the most appropriate equipment and aids were being used; and getting specific information on certain impairments. For example:

"Sessions that talk about visual impairment would be useful. Find someone from the Royal Blind School to come along and give views or write them down. Have some guidelines." *Young woman aged 17*

Young people needed to be involved in a structured way, not just as an one off event. One young person spoke about the need for preparation before they became involved so they were aware of the strategies and their implications.

Another spoke of needing to maintain on-going dialogue with young people:

"Continue to go back to groups saying this is what we're thinking, this is what we're planning, what do you think." *School leaver*

Recent school leavers could also play an important and active role in such discussion.

Several young people highlighted that making a school accessible was not just about bricks and concrete but about attitudes too:

"Its not just the building barriers but the people barriers too." *School leaver*

Accessibility and inclusion is a 'cultural' matter that requires thought, planning, training and implementation on both a physical and mental level.

Comment and Recommendations on Pupils Taking Part

Referring to the Education (Disabilities Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) Scotland Act 2002

- Clear systems need to be in place so young people know who to approach about getting support and equipment and that person, in turn, knows how to access this without undue delay.
- Difficulties accessing certain subjects, such as science and languages, would benefit further investigation.
- Not just core academic subjects need to be made accessible, sports, leisure, guest speakers and school trips should also be included.
- Issues such as transport and accessible changing facilities have a considerable impact on some young people's lives, directly affecting how 'included' they can be in society immediately outside their school.
- Access to sports and extra curricular activities should be explored, as should accounts from some pupils about limitations in subject choice at special schools. Perhaps closer links between special and mainstream schools would be fruitful in both instances.
- Facilitating young people with disabilities from various schools coming together for team sports (as in the para-olympics) would further increase young people's opportunities in this area.
- Sharing good practice between mainstream and special schools should be encouraged and supported.
- A flexible approach to making information accessible should be adopted and the importance of 1 to 1 support as and when required never underestimated.
- Young people were overwhelmingly in favour of helping local authorities with their plans. They felt they would be particularly well placed to offer realistic, practical advice about what works and what does not. In turn, it was suggested that this could save local authorities a lot of money.
- Young people want to be involved in plans in a systematic, planned way, not as an one off event. It was felt that on-going dialogue regarding progress would be beneficial for both parties. A process involving some face to face consultation was preferred.
- Any strategy needs to address attitudes as well as physical issues regarding accessibility and inclusion. Other related comments from young people suggests this can be true for staff as well as other pupils.

Summary and Recommendations

- Although significant changes are occurring, this consultation has highlighted a dearth of effective methods for young people to express their views within schools. There is a particular need to develop easily approachable systems for more personal issues, accessible to all, including pupils who are perhaps less articulate or less confident than others. It is recommended this be done as part of a move to develop a more coherent whole-school approach to educate young people in aspects of decision making.
- Significant improvements could be made to current practice in involving young people in meetings (in particular larger review meetings) to the benefit of all participants. Young people who do not attend their meeting need to be given alternative ways to ensure their views remain central to the decision making process. More detailed changes are given in the report: it is suggested that these could form the basis of a pilot study which could lead to written guidelines on this matter.
- The principal of a keyworker was welcomed by the majority of young people if they could use it on an 'as required' basis. Young people's comments on how effectively they feel their views are listened to also suggest a need. The role of any such keyworker needs to be carefully thought through and their purpose clear to young people. Particular consideration needs to be given to how such a position would dovetail with existing provisions such as guidance teachers, social workers, learning support staff and children's rights officers.
- The consultation raised some questions about professionals' attitudes towards young people. At times the way young people's views were treated within the decision making process smacked of tokenism, where their input was not equally valued. A raft of changes would help with this, including improvements to the meeting process; development of other effective decision making initiatives within schools; on-going evaluation of existing systems; and making specific training on consultation and decision making available for professionals.
- Young people raised specific points in relation to the Education (Disabilities Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) Scotland Act 2002. These include access to the science and language curriculum; limited subject choice at special schools; difficulties with sports provision at mainstream schools; and the impact of transport and changing facilities on providing broader based educational experiences.
- Young people are keen to play an active role in developing local authority's plans. Their input would benefit from being structured and systematic. Young people were concerned that plans covered access in its widest sense including extra curricular activities and barriers created by people's attitudes.

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Appendix 1: Summary to Children in Scotland's Assessing our Children's Educational Needs – the way forward? Children and Young People's response

Summary

Only 6 children and young people out of 39 had heard of the Record of Needs

Legislative Principle

- All children and young people thought they should have the right to express their views about schooling. Some thought this right should be underpinned by legislation.

Definition and Criteria

- 'Additional needs' was preferred to 'special needs'. It was seen to cover a wider range of support needs.
- It was suggested that all children and young people should have some sort of record which could be as detailed as necessary.

Transition Points / Future Needs

- Young people seemed more aware of their Future Needs Assessments than their Record of Needs. For some young people the FNA was the first time they had been involved in decisions about their education.

Monitoring Progress

- Most children and young people were aware of some sort of annual meeting looking at their education. It was generally described as "boring".
- Children and young people found it extremely useful to have a key worker/ form teacher etc to talk to in a more regular, informal way about school issues.

Information and Advice

- There was very little information or advice suitable for children and young people about their education. They were dependent on what their parents or teachers told them.

Appeals

- Most young people said they would like to dispute a decision they felt was wrong. There were very few systems in place to support this, even in an informal way.

Children's Views

- Most children and young people had the option to attend their annual review. Approximately half the number we spoke to took up this option. If they chose not to attend, there were rarely any alternative ways for young people to put their views forward.
- Children and young people had strong views about who should be at their reviews. Generally they were keen to keep numbers low and to include only people who knew them well.
- Children and young people liked the idea of having a representative at meetings who could present the child or young person's views or support the child or young person to do so themselves. Children and young people would want to chat to their representative before the meeting to prepare and, for some, afterwards for feedback.
- Children and young people would like to choose their representative. There could be a conflict of interests when form teachers etc filled this role.
- Meetings need to be more 'child-friendly'. Children and young people could find it difficult to take part and sometimes felt they were not being listened to.
- Children had other ideas about how to put their views across. They would like a range of different alternatives (meetings being one of them) so they can choose the best way to say how they feel about school.

Sharing Information

- Children and young people's view of their education was much more holistic than the current Record caters for. Friends and other social aspects were equally important.

Good Practice

- There seemed to be huge variation in practice concerning how much and in what way children and young people were involved in their Record of Needs. In environments that supported their understanding and participation in decision making, children and young people were more confident about expressing their views and had a better developed sense of what their views were. This was equally true.

Appendix 2: List of schools attended by participating young people

Ashcraig School, Glasgow

Banchory Academy, Aberdeenshire

Capability Scotland's Corseford School, Renfrewshire

Capability Scotland's Stanmore House School, South Lanarkshire

Clippens, Renfrewshire

East Fulton School, Renfrewshire

George Watson's College, Edinburgh

Graysmill School, Edinburgh

Harmeny School, Edinburgh

Leith Academy, Edinburgh

Lenzie Academy, East Dunbartonshire

Royal Blind School, Edinburgh

Ross High School, East Lothian

Saint Joseph's Primary, Renfrewshire

Uddingston Grammar School, South Lanarkshire

Appendix 3: What should a keyworker be like? – list of responses from young people

Capability Scotland's Corseford School

Everyone agreed that you should be able to choose your keyworker.

Have the same hobbies

Have good conversations with you

Like the same things

Good sense of humour

Talk to them as often as you like – as often as you need to

Easy to talk to

Someone who is nice to you

Someone you can trust not to broadcast – talk to them about personal problems

Somebody that can help you with your personal hygiene

Someone you can trust (x 2)

Someone you can feel you can talk to (x2)

Reliable

Having a good sense of humour

Friendly

Caring

Energetic

Concerned about people

Group of young people with visual impairments

Someone you can trust

Not patronising

Should not speak for you

Helpful

Keep things confidential

Should be able to contact them when you want and not through a third person

'Having weekly sessions is a waste of time. You should be able to contact them through email etc. It should be straight forward.'

'For the scheme to work it needs to be an informal environment, out of the office situation and school. That helps you to say things, if you are in an office environment or school it is difficult to say things.'

'You need to get on with them. Sometimes you want them to advise you, other times just to listen.'

'You should be able to change the keyworker without red-tape if you don't get on with them.'

'Need someone who has nothing to do with the school.'

'Someone who has little contact with the school.'

'For some people it might be best for people to come from outside.'

Harmeny School

Someone who is fair

Somebody who gives us treats

Someone that makes us feel welcome

Someone who is kind to us

Someone who doesn't talk too much and listens all the time

Someone who doesn't lie

Someone who is separate from school, who we know and is really nice

See them every day

Leith Academy

Honest

Understanding

Respect confidentiality

Likeable

Individual and have their own opinion

Able to keep secrets

Trusty

Consensus amongst the group that young people 'need to be able to meet them [keyworkers] easily'

The key worker needed to get to know the young person as a 'person not a job'

Consensus that keyworker should be independent of the education authority.

Uddingston Grammar School

Friendly

Good listener (x2)

Listens to you (x2)

They would have to be able to listen

Doesn't force things on you – a good listener

Outwith the school so they can openly criticise

Independent so they work with your views instead of trying to stand up for how the school is currently run.

Not know any of the teachers in the school

Someone not connected with the school otherwise they'd know too much about the school and the way it's run.

Someone outwith the school

Should contact the pupil regularly and get to know them so they can try and interpret the pupils needs and ideas.

Should be with in the school or easy to get in touch with

To be helpful
Should be able to understand what you want
Understanding and helpful
Good at understanding
They will have to be able to understand the child
Helpful and understanding
Trustworthy (x3)
Have the same person from the start of school
Good personality
Someone who will make the meetings with him/her less boring
Someone of the same sex as the child

Capability Scotland's Stanmore House School

This group were asked to think about whom they would like to support them at a meeting. When they had identified a person, they were asked why they had chosen that person.

J – She is my friend. She helps me in class. I like **, she takes me shopping in Tescos. I like talking to her.

G – ** is nice. She takes me on the bus. She lets me help in the bungalow. She makes me laugh. She makes me happy.

K – ** smiles and makes me feel happy. She helps me in the bungalow.

R – ** is interesting. She is funny. She knows what I like. She is a good listener.

The group were also asked how often they would want to talk to the person. One young person chose two people and said that she would want to talk to one of them once a week and the other every day. Another young person said quite a lot, more than once a week; another said every day and another once a week. This person was then asked if she would want to meet more often coming up to a meeting and she replied yes.

Appendix 4: Relationships with parents and professionals during decision making

Young people were given ten beans and asked to divide them up to show how much say different people had in making decisions. Groups were asked to do this first for big decisions then for smaller everyday decisions. Some young people completed a more suitable alternative which is described below. Some young people were unable to complete both parts of the exercise due to time restrictions.

The table lists the different types of people involved in decision making across the top. Each young person is given a letter down the left hand side and the way they split the ten beans is shown by the numbers going across.

- **Big decisions**

	Parents	Young person	Teacher	Head teacher	Guidance teacher	Support worker/auxilliary	Educational Psych	Medical/health authority	Social worker	Previous school	Key worker
A	4	2	1		1				2		
B	2	1	3						2		2
C	3	3		2	2						
D	4	4	2								
E	3	4	3								
F	1	4	5								
G	2	5	3								
H	5	3	2								
I	3	2	5								
J	4	4	2*								
K		1	9								
L	1	8	1								
M	4	3	3								
N	1	3	3						3		
O	2	3	4						1		
P	1	2	3						4		
Q	1	7	1		1						
R	3	1	4			2					
S	3	3	2					2**			
T	2	5	3								
U	2	1		1				1***		5	
V	2	4		2			2				

*2 beans were given to 'everyone else' (including the teachers)

** 2 beans were given to the 'health authority'

*** 1 bean was given to 'medical people'

- **Small decisions**

Alphabetical letters used to identify each young person are the same for big decisions and small decisions (i.e. 'A' in the table above relates to the same person as 'A' in the table below).

	Young person	Teacher
A	8	2
B	7	3
C	3	7
D	1	9
E	5	5
F	-	10
G	8	2
H	1	9
I	1	9
J	5	5
K	1	9
L	4	6

- **Alternative exercise**

Some groups completed an alternative exercise that better suited their circumstances or understanding. Instead of voting with beans, these groups were asked:

'How much 'say' do you have in big decisions?' and 'How much 'say' do you have in smaller decisions?'

Young people were able to choose from three options, 'Lots', 'Some' and 'None'.

	'Lots'	'Some'	'None'
Big decisions	6 votes	3 votes	3 votes
Small decisions	7 votes	4 votes	2 votes