

## Dumfries & Galloway Parent/Carer Council Forum

*Our aim is to provide a voice for all parent councils in  
Dumfries and Galloway*

dandgparentforum@gmail.com

Find us on Facebook, search for  
Dumfries & Galloway Parent/Carer Council Forum

All meetings are held at  
Castle Douglas High School  
(Dunmuir Road, Castle Douglas, DG7  
1LQ) and Parent Council  
representatives are welcome to join any  
meetings:

19 February 2018, 6.30pm

21 May 2018, 6.30pm

Chair: Mel McGill  
Vice-Chair: Laura Moodie

We hope to produce a newsletter  
similar to this after each Forum  
meeting, based on the minutes taken, to  
give you an idea of the issues we cover  
and any input from local authority  
officers.

The issues highlighted in this edition  
were discussed in the **November 2017**  
meeting, where Hew Smith (Integration  
& Inclusion Manager) and  
Clare Clanachan (Supporting Learners  
Manager) joined us from Dumfries &  
Galloway Council.

### Supporting Learners

- Hew and Clare presented information on the current situation within D&G's Supporting Learners service:

This time last year, after budget adjustments and restructuring plans had been implemented, the evidence indicates that the Service could be more effective and a number of managerial changes have been made to address these issues. Hew acknowledged there is a need to improve parental engagement to move away from an adversarial relationship, and to develop the partnership with pupils and their families, and to have less of a "them and us" situation.

Hew stated there is a need to make sure that the resources we have and how we use them best match the expectations of the families engaging with the Service. There is a need to ask the people who take part in the process whether it worked, regardless of any outcome. Though the outcome may be the same, it can only help all parties to understand the decisions made and the process required.

Clare C will be picking up the responsibility for parental engagement in this area and is keen to work with all parents and the Forum to ensure good relations between families needing support and the local authority.

Management arrangements have been reviewed and the service has moved away from the 4 localities teams in favour of the cluster model, redistributing areas of responsibility within the team. As Integration and Inclusion Manager, Hew Smith has overall responsibility for the Supporting Learners Service and Mary Thomson will continue in her role as Education Officer for the Service. Dorothy Aitchison and Clare Clanachan (Supporting Learners Managers) will have strategic oversight of ASL for all primary schools across the region and Colin Turner (Supporting Learners Manager) will provide this oversight for secondary schools. As the newly appointed Principal Educational Psychologist, Linda Biggar will be responsible for taking forward the Educational Psychology Service Improvement Plan."

While there are now separate streams for primary and secondary pupils - by working alongside each other, the hope is to allow for smooth transitions – there is one point of contact for each cluster, one of three Supporting Learning Managers.

The new regional management arrangements will mean that resources can be allocated more effectively rather than not being available because they are in the wrong area. This will make it easier to move resources around on an annual basis, as cohorts of needs change.

Transition is key for the whole department, all staff make the best plans possible for the pupils, while recognising existing relationships between the schools as well as the capabilities of the team. It is key to manage the expectations of all the team as well as those of the schools, the child and their families to ensure a smooth move. All 3 Leads communicate regularly already, and are looking for more opportunities to ensure all information is passed from the primary team to the secondary team.



*Continued overleaf...*

...continued... **Supporting Learners**



Clare C spoke of how challenging it is to engage parents with consultations and asked how the Forum can help.

We suggested, as always, a need to simplify information and questions – there are often very good messages within consultation documents but they are usually hidden in jargon or over-complicated wording making them difficult for the average parent to engage with. A ‘translation’ of questions is often required.

There is a general feeling, with both Government and Local Authority consultations, that parental involvement is ignored or that decisions have already been made as there is never any feedback about how the parental voice has influenced or been considered. For parents to participate there needs to be a way to show that we can indeed influence, make a difference, to a decision somewhere, perhaps Parent Councils that have taken part in a consultation could be given feedback to show how their input was considered or added to the decision-making process.

**Supporting Learners and 1140hrs Early Learning & Childcare (ELC)**

Q: How does the increase in funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) affect the remit of ASL?

A: There are more and more children coming into ELC with behavioural issues as part of additional support needs – the funding application to Scottish Government has taken this into account.

Simply, there are not enough Learning Assistants in the region – as with all roles within teaching, it is very hard to recruit in D&G. Ideally, we want the most experienced working with those with the most complex needs but this does not always work geographically across our region. It is very hard to balance the staff available with the very different needs of every school.

The matrix worked better this year, with the introduction of moderation that all staff found very useful giving a standardised approach but still allowing individual school needs to be met as best as possible. The Authority want to keep staff where they are where possible to allow continuity of relationships for pupils and staff and there is a hope to minimise the movement of staff. Support is allocated based on information given by the school; the Authority would question why, for example, a child that had support in P1 no longer needed it in P2. There are systems in place to follow up on changes in circumstance or need.

The ideal scenario for ELC is for the Health Visitor to identify needs, who will pass this information on to Educational Visitor → Early Learning & Childcare staff → P1 teacher, but this does not always happen.

**Email Addresses**



It is strongly recommended that your Parent Council sets up a generic email address, such as [HogwartsPrimarySchool@gmail.com](mailto:HogwartsPrimarySchool@gmail.com), to ensure information is held in one place and can be passed very easily from one Chair to the new after elections. Remember to let the council know so they can send relevant information straight to you.

**Useful Contacts**

Both of the associations below are valuable sources of information for running a Parent Council, as well as for updates on national educational issues:

National Parent Forum of Scotland - <http://www.npfs.org.uk>

Scottish Parent Teacher Council - <https://www.sptc.info>

**DGPCF's Aims and Objectives**



- As a member of your Parent Council you are already aware of the positive impact parental involvement can have on your child's education. However, you may not be aware of the Dumfries & Galloway Parent/Carer Forum.
- This regional Forum is made up of parents from across our region and our aim is to provide an independent voice for all parent councils in Dumfries & Galloway. Whilst we aim to and want to work alongside the local authority to ensure information can be shared, we are an independent parent group.
- We aim to ensure all available information is shared to allow informed discussion within your own school Parent Forums, your Parent Councils and your clusters.
- With 2 Parent Representatives from this Forum on the Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning Committee (formerly Education Committee) we are able to voice your concerns and address issues directly with elected members and Education Officers.
- Please do not hesitate to contact the Forum if we can help with any queries, or for any further information.

## Empowering Schools Consultation



Scottish Government are asking for views on their proposed amendments to the Education Bill for Scotland, which have been drafted based on responses to a previous consultation about how funding should be allocated and how involved parents and Parent Councils should be with the running of their schools. Parents/carers are able to respond to please take the chance to have your say using the link below:

<https://consult.gov.scot/learning-directorate/education-scotland-bill/>

The following extract from overview on Scottish Government website is aimed to give you further insight into what information they are seeking:

“A Consultation on the Provisions of the Education (Scotland) Bill: The Education (Scotland) Bill that is being introduced later this parliamentary year is to create a school and teacher-led education system. The Bill will establish a Headteachers’ Charter which sets out the right and responsibilities of the headteachers, empowering them to be the leaders of learning in their schools. The Bill will also improve parental and community engagement in school life and in learning outside of school, and strengthen the voice of children and young people, by actively promoting and supporting pupil participation. In addition, the Bill will provide the legislative underpinning for the establishment of Regional Improvement Collaboratives which will provide professional learning and leadership, support in both curriculum and specific sectors, sharing of good practice, and peer to peer collaboration, among other responsibilities. The Bill will also enable registration of other educational professionals with the Education Workforce Council, taking on the responsibilities of the GTCS and Community Learning and Development Standards Council. This will establish professional standards for other education professionals within the workforce.”

### **Full Meeting Minutes:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/glg6vh3jz5wd2hr/20171120%20DGPCF%20Minutes%2020%20Nov%202017.pdf?dl=0>

## Presumption of Mainstreaming Consultation



Another Scottish Government consultation to consider responding to:  
<https://consult.gov.scot/supporting-learners/presumption-of-mainstreaming/>

Here your views are welcomed on how the current policy of assuming all children should be included in mainstream education settings is working.

As a Forum, we made the following comments that may help to kickstart conversations in your own Parent Forums:

- There is huge focus on inclusion, none on attainment
- There seems to be an underlying message of keeping the status quo but justifying it
- This is an ideal opportunity for ASL and ASN children and parents to have their say
- There is an assumption that mainstreaming is good for everyone, but it is not always good for the child with needs, or for the other children in that class
- Parents of children with no needs should also be involved as these issues affect all pupils in a class
- What the consultation could mean for D&G? What can parents say to make a difference? Is what we say going to be possible to implement?

As is often the case with Government consultations, the language used is complex and jargon-heavy. Try not to be discouraged! We hope to find a way to “translate” the information and questions presented and will send information if/when available.

You may like to follow this link to the Pupil Inclusion Network’s website and their information on this consultation:

<http://mailchi.mp/5dad84a9cfef/guidance-on-presumption-on-mainstreaming?e=0fc3e9327d>

From the Scottish Government website, the intention of this consultation is “to provide guidance on applying the presumption and looks to encourage a child centred approach to making decisions about placement.”