

797

Piaskowski K (Karen)

From: Rona
Sent: 06 June 2005 23:06
To: Parental Involvement Bill
Subject: 797

This email has been received from an external party and
has been swept for the presence of computer viruses.

Please find attached my response to
Making the Difference - Improving Parental Involvement in Schools.

Rona Cheyne

PLEASE NOTE: THE ABOVE MESSAGE WAS RECEIVED FROM THE INTERNET.

On entering the GSi, this email was scanned for viruses by the Government Secure Intranet (GSI) virus scanning service supplied exclusively by Energis in partnership with MessageLabs.

Please see <http://www.gsi.gov.uk/main/notices/information/gsi-003-2002.pdf> for further details.

In case of problems, please call your organisational IT helpdesk

Respondee information form

Please complete the details below and attach it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately:

Name: Rona Cheyne _____

Title of consultation: **MAKING THE DIFFERENCE –
INVOLVING PARENTS BETTER IN SCHOOLS**

1. Are you responding as:

- an individual? X
on behalf of a group or organisation?

2a. INDIVIDUALS:

Do you agree to your response being made public (in SE library and/or on SE website)?

- Yes X
No

2b. **Where confidentiality is not requested**, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (**please tick one** of the following boxes)

- Yes, make my response, name and address all available
Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address
Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address X

2c. ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:

Your name and address as respondees **will be** made available to the public (in the SE library and/or on SE website). Are you content for your response to be made available also?

- Yes
No

3. SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

We will share your response internally with other SE policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Executive to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

- Yes X
No

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

Subject: Making the Difference- improving Parental Involvement in Schools(DRAFT BILL)
Submitted by: Rona Cheyne

Introduction:

My name is Rona Cheyne and I worked for eleven years in Home School work in North and South Lanarkshire (Trained as a primary teacher). I have always worked in areas of disadvantage, with the remit to involve parents and teachers together in supporting children's learning and making schools more a centre of community life.

General points about the DRAFT Bill:

- * Delighted to read of the **Scottish Executive's** keenness to strengthen the **partnership with parents**.
- * **Functions.7 1a-f** has far reaching implications for **FUNDING and BUILDING SKILLS**.
They demand confident and skilled parents who have a willingness to commit beyond the interest and welfare of their own children.
In the areas I have been working a lot of work still needs to be done if parents are to engage in these functions and that has considerable funding implications (not mentioned in the Bill).
- * **Function 7.1.g** Stronger emphasis on **parents representing** other parents views than in School Board Legislation - not just reflect their own views as at present on School Boards.
- * **Head teachers** need to be part of the Parent Forum.
- * **Community Personnel**. It seems that this Bill does not reflect the development of the Community Schools and of Integrated Children's Services. Schools are now **CENTRES of EDUCATION** and School Education provides one part of the educational life of children and their families . Other professions provide education in and around the school and Parents Forum should reflect this.

The DRAFT BILL

I feel the Bill needs strengthened and to be more specific especially about functions and finance. It also needs to address the language used in places (not through out) which can be very contorted and incomprehensible in places. (and this is not just because of the legal jargon.)

The Draft Bill talks of partnership and recognition of parents but I am not sure it reflects effective power sharing or true partnership. When the chips are down the Scottish Ministers can change the functions of Forums - with consultation? Where are the structures in the BILL for it to happen? without consultation? Where is parental involvement then?

**MAKING THE DIFFERENCE – INVOLVING PARENTS BETTER IN
SCHOOLS**

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

Question 1: Do you agree with the placing of a new duty on education authorities to promote parental involvement?

Yes, but consultation needs to be two-way. Parents need to be active participants in the development of PI strategies at educational authority level and
At school level about schools arrangements for consultation between parents and teachers

What form of support would Education Authorities give? ie what structures would be put in place for this to happen and what role would parents play in deciding the structure?

Question 2: Do you agree that education authorities should be required to prepare new Strategies for Parental Involvement (SPIs)?

Yes but what structure will be put in place to consult with or involve all parents? This can't be left to parent volunteers!!!

An Annual Statement - ie Improvement Objectives - to the Executive will not be sufficient to make sure the Authorities and the schools are being true to the spirit of the BILL.

Do all School Development plans at the moment have a commitment to PI and how many parents are meaningfully involved in their development?

I think what I am saying is that structures are in place at the moment which could be used to develop more meaningfully PI but they are not utilised to do this in the main. Any new structures may be ineffective in delivering a more representative parent involvement unless very clear structures are established and with built in accountability at local authority and national/Executive level.

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

Question 3: Do you agree that incorporating these Strategies in existing Annual Statements of Education Improvement Objectives and School Development Plans (as set out in the 2000 Act) is the right way for education authorities to set out their intentions? Or should this be done in some other way?

If this is the present method used it does not appear very effective to me.

At present, are parents aware of the ANNUAL STATEMENT OF IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES and how these work? I don't think so.

I think we need an independent Figure /Forum to monitor the Executive's legislation & Local Authorities' implementation of these statutes. It is possible to have structures in place which are not implemented in the spirit they were set up.

As a Home School Worker attached to a school I found out from my Line Manager (twice removed) that I was part of the school's development plan. I was never informed of this by the school, consulted about my role and their view of my role in the plan or had the plan discussed with me by the school management team and..... I had a good working relationship with the head & staff at all levels. It was not seen as appropriate to involve me at that level.

This could well happen to Parents Forums unless structures are in place to make sure involvement is implemented.

Structures need to be in place which clearly identify all the stakeholders who should be involved in drawing up SPI's and how they will work together.

Question 4: Do you agree that the current system of parental representation i.e. School Boards should be replaced by a more flexible system of parent forum, as decided locally by the parents, in a way which best suits them and their school best?

School Boards do not represent the parents of a school. They represent their own views and are not representative of all parents. To represent all parents one needs to be able to have a structure which will deliver all parents' views, provide real opportunities for them to attend meetings, respond to information and involve themselves in the decision making process.

Most parents to date have been happy to leave it to the few on the School Boards where they exist.

I am not sure that it is the parents' role to involve other parents in the life of their school. It seems to me that it is the Authorities role, if the research on how children realise their potential to be believed (ie crucial importance of parents being involved in their child's life in school (Weikart, Head Start etc)

There needs to set up a structure in which parents are an integral part of the system not an add on or separate structure running in parallel I think this is the Authority's and Executive's role. Parents nationally could support this but I do not think at local level this is the role of parents .

How would parents be chosen to pick their way of devising their Parents Forum? Who would call the meeting? - The head teacher who has no inbuilt right rot be present? Would crèche be provided? Who would pay? The Bill is not clear enough on these points.

Parent representation requires research, information gathering and delivering, publicity to involve people, facilities to meet which are parent friendly. It requires time and expertise and the ability to access an overview from throughout the country. Needs more time than the average parent could devote to the task I submit. .

Parental Involvement on the other hand requires community development skills to involve parents who especially in areas of poverty find it difficult to become involved in the present system.

To do this effectively need community development skills , time from teaching staff and time, resources and space to engage the parents within the life of the school.

These skills can be acquired by parent but requires time and training and resources of a substantial nature – Not mentioned in the Bill.

It is involvement which affects attainment not representation - although they are interrelated.

And the Bill does not address either and is quite confusing.

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

Question 5: The Bill does not prescribe the means of appointment to the new forums (elections to Boards are mandatory) but provides for parents to decide this locally. Do you agree?

NO. Membership needs to be spelt out and whether teachers, community people will take part or not. There needs to be consistency of local forums and this is only possible if the basic format is universal. It is the nature of the School Boards appointments that are off putting not elections themselves which can be informal and democratic.

Question 6: Do you agree that education authorities should have a new duty to promote the establishment of a parent forum in each school and to support their operation?

Education Authorities should involve parents at EA level in the decision making process. They should have a duty to see that parents are integrated into the life of their schools with facilities for the parents to meet and be involved in the decision making processes at school level.

Each school forum should be able to meet and consult other forums and be represented at Education Authority level and National / Executive level.

Financial Resources are needed for these to be successfully achieved. Parents Forums will not be able to levy fees like the School Board Association did to support a National Organisation for training and information.

Will need more than clerical back up funding. !!

Parents Forums will need a substantial input from the Executive unlike the School Boards who were more or less self sufficient. There is no mention of this in the Bill

Question 7: Should the Bill provide for 'composite' parent forums where this is the preferred option of parents in each school in a combined school or cluster of schools?

Parents Forums should link in with each other in the clusters but each school should have it own parents involved in the decision making in their school. No parents forum should exist with only 1 member. All parents should be members and if the school is rural or isolated the Community personel should be included

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

Question 8: Do you agree with the proposal for the involvement of education authorities to get the initial parent forum off the ground? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

NO .There should be a National debate about Parent Forums. May be better to have an Independent Parents Forum which can monitor the work of schools in developing parental involvement and advise about structures and policy.

Through this national organisation it should be possible to research parents' views and establish networks which reflect the majority opinion.

This would address both involvement and representation separately.

Question 9: The draft Bill leaves the forum's 'constitution' to be determined locally, either by the parents or initially under the education authority scheme. Do you agree with this approach? If not, what alternative would you suggest and why?

No I think there should a Standard Constitution with room for local additions and flexibility but covering core elements.

Of course I assume there parents will be involved in deciding the format of the Standard document.

Question 10: Do you agree that membership of a parent forum should be confined to parents (the broad definition) of children attending the school or individuals co-opted by the parent forum? Should parents always be in the majority?

Parents should always be in the majority. Membership should be open to all parents , carers, significant adult (key worker, social worker) foster parents etc. All should be members. Committee to ru the Forum should be democratically elected or selected. – all laid down in the Bill.

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

Question 11: Do you have a view as to how the needs of looked-after children should be addressed and catered for in the Bill?

I believe that Looked after children's key worker should be seen as "Parent" and take part in the life of the school accordingly.

It may be that some changes will be necessary in organisation of establishments catering for Looked - after children. ie. making attendance at school functions a high priority on off duty rosters etc.

I had several children from a local home attending the school where I was the Home Link worker. When I tried to engage home staff in attending events in school in support of the children it was very difficult for them to come due to staffing and duty rosters. When they did come the children were delighted.

Question 12: Do you agree that the Bill should not result in parent forum members being subject to automatic disclosure checks but that members, like any other parent, should only be checked when engaging in activities defined under the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act

Yes. It would be too off putting and make getting parents even more difficult to engage.

Question 13: On balance, do you agree that 'rights of attendance' for certain non-members of a parent forum should not be a part of the new arrangements? In other words do you agree that non-members of the parent forum should attend only by invitation or do you believe the headteacher should have the right to attend, with the councillor or other individual by invitation?

If Parents Forums are to be recognised by professionals, have credibility it needs to be clearly linked with the school.

The head teacher should be present by right as a consultant.

I think that it might be important that parents' forums reflect the community round the school and so Community reps would be important.

I have worked for parents and teachers to work together since 1990 and I am disappointed that the Bill seems a retrograde step. We need to encourage engagement and cooperation of parents and teachers at every level possible.

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

Question 14: Do you consider these functions appropriate to parent forums? Would you suggest removing or adding any, or making some obligatory and others optional?

See 7.1.a-c How is this to be achieved. These sound like professional functions.

What structure is there for the parents to be informed about standards, quality assurance and to develop the personality, mental & physical abilities of children.

I am not sure that it is the parents' role to involve other parents in the life of their school. It seems to me that it is the Authorities role, if the research on how children realise their potential to be believed (ie crucial importance of parents being involved in their child's life in school (Weikart, Head Start etc)

There needs to be set up a structure in which parents are an integral part of the system not an add on or separate structure running in parallel I think this is the Authority's and Executive's role. Parents nationally could support this but I do not think at local level this is the role of parents .

Is this not why the children are in the school anyway so parents get professional input in areas they are not expert in?

What is the envisioned structure for this to take place? Not clear in the Bill

71.di)Make representations to EA. How will this be achieved? Needs clearer indication of how parents would achieve this

dii) Why would parents have a responsibility to make representation for what is going on in their area? What authority or mechanism is there in the Bill to establish these links? I am not sure parents would want to do it. It is difficult enough to get parents interested in life of their own child's school.

71.e) How is this contact to be achieved? If none of these people will be on the board unless parents want to invite them then making contact will need to be arranged in some other way. But how?

71.f) Acceptable

71.g) Acceptable Good to elicit views of parents on a range of issues.

71.h) This would require clerical back up

71.i) Acceptable

71.j) Acceptable

7.2. Acceptable

7.3 **"by Order"** rather negates the effect of the **Bill working in partnership**. I'm sure it is the legal jargon needed for legislation but the whole tone is inappropriate. One would hope this would be done in consultation and through proper decision making channels.

7.4-7.9 No comments.

Question 15: The Bill has been drafted to allow the parent forum to find out and report the views of parents in the school on any matters which are of interest or concern to them. Do you agree with this open-ended provision or would you suggest defining the areas of interest more restrictively?

Yes I think the parents should be free to discuss anything relevant to their child or family's interests which is related to the life of the school.

The lack of response of some parents is in some measure because they believe they cannot initiate change or have an impact on the system in place in the school.

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

Question 16: Do you agree that the Bill should designate parent forums as 'agents' of the education authority for the purpose of their dealings with third parties, and that the issue of insurance should be looked into further? Or do you take an alternative view?

yes

Question 17: Are these the appropriate obligations to place on education authorities in relation to their working with parent forums?

The EAs needs to be given clearer guide lines to implement the Bill.
Parents links with E A and the Executive and /or national level need to be clarified
Parents forums need to be linked to each other in clusters and also at Educational Authority level and national level.

Question 18: Do you agree with the provisions requiring education authorities to provide financial support or support in kind to parent forums or would you suggest alternative arrangements?

I feel the whole resources issue needs more discussion and clarification
Representation needs to be separated from Involvement and funded accordingly
Finance is needed for

1. Running the Forum and training in committee skills, clerical skills.
2. Support for representation – advertising the Forum, sending people on skills training eg on research skills and to attend other forums, attend EA level meetings and at National level. Travel and child care subsistence
3. Parental Involvement – Need teacher time, money, child care and resources to establish a PI programme especially in areas of poverty, to increase skills and confidence of parents through a Community Development model so they can represent themselves and their children and become involved.

Funding for Adult education, Creche care and curricular activities so interaction between parents and teachers can be developed establishing a partnership in care - parents, teachers, Community, Education Authority.
In certain areas professional staff dedicated to Parental Involvement and support to the forum may be needed .

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

Question 19: Do you agree with the proposed duty on education authorities to provide advice and information to individual parents on request, on matters relating to the education of their children?

No I think we need to get away from this model of giving parents information and advice

I think EAs need to look at a model which will involve parents in the decision making process in a much more inclusive way. Parents and educators at all levels should be Partners in Learning.

Parents need information and advice but so do teachers and if you just establish a structure which is one way only it is not going to achieve the involvement and commitment of parents to work with teachers.

The tone of the bill is still pitched at **allow, inform, advise** where it needs to be **agreement elicited through discussion, to listen and to be listened to, to receive advice and give it**. If we really believe parents are the prime educators of their children we must get away from the **instructional mode** and adopt into a **learning together model**.

Question 20: Do you agree that education authorities should be enabled to replace the current system of appointing headteachers and deputy headteachers with more modern, flexible processes and procedures?

I have too little info to make an informed decision.

If there are changes to be made then I think parents should be closely involved in the decision making re these changes as I understand they are involved in the selection at school level.

Question 21: If you do not agree that the principle of parental involvement should be retained by the involvement of parent forums in the new senior appointments processes, please give your reasons.

I believe that Parents should be Involved.

Question 22: Do you agree with the proposal to require education authorities to establish complaints procedures in relation to the way they exercise their functions under the Bill?

No I think the Executive should have established an independent parents monitoring group with teeth. ie independent of the Executive and the education authorities but properly funded.

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

Specific Points

- 1.1 "Promote involvement of parent" How is that to be implemented? What does "etc" refer to?
- 2.2 "Must seek and have regard to views" I suggest should be "must involve in the decision making"
- 2.2 c) "any other person" Who can this be?
- 4. How are Parent Forums represented at educational authority level and national level?
There is a requirement that an Independent monitoring system be established and pathways of contacts be delineated.
- 5.1 "may" I suggest should be "should"

The text of the Bill needs strengthened. It is too unspecific.

- 5.4 25% seems to me too high. Does that include 2 parents from each family or only one parent from each family or is it 25% of each year stage? Or is it a ¼ of pupils?
- 5.5 It would be important to include Nursery SCHOOLS where they exist.
- 5.11 No Forum can reflect parents and the community views of schools if comprising one member.
- 5.12 This section is meaningless to me.
- 6. "Parent" should include - significant adult in child's life ie carer or key worker in the case of Looked After Children
Head teachers should be on the Forum by right and selected community personnel by invitation.
- 7. 1-6 See appropriate questions - Response Form. - Question 14.
- 7.7 How can the Parents forum do this? What structures are in place for them to call an Authority to account in the BILL ?? Is this the climate we want to engender?
- 8 The Functions delineated need considerable resources if parents are to achieve the Parental Involvement implied and then the where- with- all to represent other parents points of view.
- 9. Education Authorities give advice. What about moneys, staff and resources??
- 9.2 Re "On giving information and advise" To have effective partnerships there needs to be 2 way communication. Authorities need to receive information and advice from parents
- 9.3c Money needs to be specified and sufficient to progress the functions of parental involvement
Moneys for work with parents need to be ring fenced. If parents and teachers are to work together then teachers need to be released to meet with parents.
There needs to be funding to develop Community skills especially in areas of poverty so parents can have an equal opportunity to communicate and work with teachers.
Childcare, parents' rooms, adult education are crucial if Forums are to be successful.
- 9.4 "may" I suggest should be "must"
- 9.5 I suggest Education Authorities should be "working in partnership with the Parents Forum" about school arrangements....
And the Forum "should be fully involved "concerning these arrangements.....

SUBMISSION - RONA CHEYNE

- 10.1 Duties should include also receiving as well as giving . – 2 way communication.
- 12 Complaints procedure should be built in at schools, Education Authority and Scottish Executive/National level which are independent and accountable.
- 12.3 Variations need to be developed in consultation with parents.
- 16.3 Should be done with full consultation with parents.

This DRAFT BILL needs to

- Have clearer wording so no doubt of its intentions.
- Be strengthened in specific roles of education authority and schools functions to safe guard parental involvement and representation.
- Be clearer about pathways of how parents forums can be involved at school education level and national level to deliver the functions.
- Have clear delineation of the funding available for each function - ring fenced for the purpose and sufficient so parents are not groomed to fail.

I am not convinced it is the **parents' role to raise standards and involve other parents**. It seems to me this is an **Executive's responsibility** to be delivered through Education Authorities and local school staff. I feel there is a downloading of functions without the commitment to research, training and resources to do the task effectively.

To raise standards and involve other parents are highly skilled tasks and needs trained staff & parents, available class teachers and funding to resource -

- clerical training
- research
- community capacity
- adult education
- child care
- curricular sharing with parents
- home learning resources
- networking at all levels
- teacher relief
- provision for parents within schools (**are we building schools with Parent Rooms, Creche rooms in our new schools?**)

All Parents can carry out these functions if TRAINED. The results I think will be disappointing because parents do not feel it is **their** role to involve other parents and there are no structures for them to raise standards. Parents representation does not in itself raise standards. The most effective way for parents to contribute to the raising of standards is to get involved in the life of their child's schooling. This can only happen if school open their doors and let them in (Weikart).

This needs not parents represented at the decision making levels but teachers committed to parental involvement and structures in place which have parents at the heart of their child's education.