

Plaskowski K (Karen)

From: Moffat, Gail [GMoffat@scotborders.gov.uk]
Sent: 07 June 2005 10:34
To: Parental Involvement Bill
Subject: 833



respondee_informa
tion_form_1.d...

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

Please find attached a response to the above Consultation from Glenn Rodger, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

<<respondee_information_form_1.doc>>

Gail Moffat
PA to Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Tel. 01835 825095 Fax. 01835 825091
gmoffat@scotborders.gov.uk

This email is privileged, confidential and subject to copyright. Any unauthorised use or disclosure of its content is prohibited. The views expressed in this communication may not necessarily be the views held by Scottish Borders Council. Please be aware that any email sent or received by the Council may require to be disclosed by the Council under the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Respondee information form

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

Name: __ Glenn Rodger, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning, Scottish Borders Council

Address: __ Council HQ, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD5 7OS

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

1. Are you responding as:

- an individual?
on behalf of a group or organisation? - **Scottish Borders Council**

2a. INDIVIDUALS:

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

- Yes
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

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
No

MAKING THE DIFFERENCE – INVOLVING PARENTS BETTER IN SCHOOLS

CONSULTATION QUESTION TEMPLATE [FOR PARENTZONE]

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

We wholeheartedly support the objectives behind the proposed Act and willingly accept the new duty.

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

As an education authority we agree that we should prepare strategies for parental involvement and plan to start this work this year, in advance of the Act coming into force.

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?

We support including reference to the strategies within Annual Statement of Improvement Objectives and School Development Plans but feel that our annual report on Standards & Qualities might be a more useful source of information for parents.

We will also be looking to host a section of our website to create a 'parent information zone' that will detail the strategies and in time provide a natural first source for interactive communications.

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?

We do not believe it is necessary to replace the current system of parental involvement which is undertaken on a statutory basis through School Boards and informally through Parent Teacher Associations and 'Friends of Schools.' The desired flexibility behind these proposals is already met by the various levels of parental involvement in schools.

Making this subject to local choice has the capacity and in fact likelihood to result in chaos and a logistics nightmare for authorities to support - nor will it facilitate meeting the wholly supportive objectives behind the proposals. There is a simple solution needed - revise and simplify the School Board Act.

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?

We do not agree with this.

As with Q4, without a consistent framework for nominations and membership of the parental forum, support by a local authority will be a logistics nightmare and could well hinder the flow of information from the authority. This cannot be achieved without an increase in staff numbers.

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?

We agree that the authority should have a duty to promote the establishment of a parent forum and support their operation **but** only if this can be undertaken on a consistent and appropriate basis.

This is already met by each authority's duty to promote and support School Boards.

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?

We would support 'composite' forums for small schools or local or regional clusters - with parental support. This would work just as well for a 'composite' School Board if the Act were to be amended.

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?

We cannot support this unless it is linked to a national framework covering forum's responsibilities, composition and management - albeit the framework should be flexible to accommodate local parental priorities. This can be met by simplifying the School Board Act.

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 we do not agree that this should be a local matter for parents. As answered in Q8 we think a national constitution is essential to avoid a logistics nightmare.

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?

No we do not agree that the membership of a parent forum should be confirmed to parents. Experience has shown that co-opted community members can make a valuable contribution to the school's life.

We would however support the view that parents should always be in the majority.

We would also support proposals to ensure that chairmanship of the forum should always be a parent role.

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?

The needs of looked after children are already met by the broad definition of parent - which can include foster parents or responsible social workers.

A consistent constitution that would enable appropriate record keeping by the authority would be able to capture data on 'responsible carers/parent' for looked after children.

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 2003?

We agreed with this point, it would add a layer of formality that is inconsistent with the objectives of the proposals.

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?*

We cannot agree with the question raised here - partly because we think the meaning behind the words is very unclear.

We think it absolutely essential that the headteacher has the right to attend the forum meetings if parental involvement is to mean anything. You cannot have parental involvement without the support, guidance and informed view of the headteacher.

We are less certain on the position for councillors and perhaps this need not be a right but by invitation.

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?*

We are satisfied that the functions are appropriate with the exception of the right to amend the forum's constitution.

As stated in answers to previous questions it is our professional view that this needs to be a national constitution so that everyone involved in the forums (parents, school staff, authorities and local communities) know where they stand and how things operate. It will be impossible to hold anyone to account for failing to reflect parental views without this common constitution - nor will you be able to judge the effectiveness of the new forums without a common baseline.

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?

We agree with this but its powers should be restricted by FOI and Data Protection rules.

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?

We would only agree with forums acting as an agent of the authority if they are based on a national constitution. The idea that a local forum can change its constitution without reference to anyone and still act as an agent of the authority is wholly unacceptable and could lead to both chaos and abuse.

We agree that insurance needs to be looked at.

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

We would only agree to the authorities obligations on the basis of a national constitution, although as detailed in the consultation these seem appropriate.

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?

As with school boards we agree that financial and in kind support should be provided by the local authority but only if this is based on a national constitution.

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?

Wholeheartedly agree with this request but for older pupils this must be tempered by the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

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?

We agree with this proposal. The current system is not consistent with the leadership requirements of headship but we would wish to ensure a role for parents in the new process.

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.

We agree that parental involvement in the process should be retained but that the decisions must be led by professional staff from the authority.

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?

We agree that a complaints procedure should be developed in consultation with parents and staff in school - this should go beyond the exercise of duties under the Act.

If you wish to reply electronically, please email your response by **Tuesday 7 June** to parentalinvolvementbill@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Or please return it to the following address:

Parental Involvement Bill

Schools Division

Area 2B

Victoria Quay

Edinburgh

EH6 6QQ