

9/5

**Piaskowski K (Karen)**

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**From:**  
**Sent:** 07 June 2005 17:12  
**To:** Parental Involvement Bill  
**Subject:** 915

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Hi there  
I've attached my response to the draft bill. Hope it reaches you in time. Please let me know that it does.

Linda Gibson

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**RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM: 9/5**

Please complete the details below and return it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

Name: Linda Gibson

- 1. Are you responding: (please tick one box)
  - (a) as an individual  go to Q2a/b and then Q4
  - (b) **on behalf** of a group/organisation  go to Q3 and then Q4

**INDIVIDUALS**

2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website)?

- Yes (go to 2b below)
- No, not at all  We will treat your response as confidential

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

**ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:**

3. The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website). Are you also content for your response to be made available?

- Yes
- No  We will treat your response as confidential

**SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT**

4. We will share your response internally with other Scottish Executive 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

<b>NAME of SCHOOL</b> <i>(School Response)</i>	
<b>STAFF NAME, DESIGNATION &amp; SCHOOL</b> <i>(individual response)</i>	<b>Linda Gibson</b>

### CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE TEMPLATE

*The questions refer to the sections in the consultation document*

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

- Yes, but what does parental 'involvement' mean? Does it mean representation or involvement?
- Some authorities and schools already have 'promote parental involvement' in their development plans – it's how it's done, promoted, and put into practice that needs to be emphasised.

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

- Yes, and these strategies should be based on consultation with as wide a range of 'stakeholders' as possible – ie parents, schools staff, community education, social work and health workers.

**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?**

This statement is very school-centric. In authorities where the education department is still separate from Community Education, Health and Social Work, then there needs to be some insistence that schools look to involve other professionals who work with parents.

***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, as they are at present, are not representative, and so need to be replaced. However, the research recommendations do not mention parent forums as being identified by parents as a way forward
- If parent forums are to be imposed on schools and local authorities, then real effort and resources need to be put into including **all** parents. It would be too easy, as the Bill stands now, for the usual parents to create the usual unrepresentative and exclusive groups.
- School forums also need to be tied into the wider community, perhaps through Community Planning Partnerships

***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?***

- If parents are to decide this locally, then this will work only if real effort and resources are put into including **all** parents in the consultation. To this effect, guidelines could be produced advising on how to ensure maximum participation – using, for example, Community Education approaches, principles and practice
- Improving involvement isn't as straightforward as simply creating parents' forums. That's only one small part of it. The much bigger job is to change the culture of non-participation **and** to acknowledge that 'involvement' isn't about *replicating school learning at home*.

**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?**

I think the duty should be to promote 'partnerships with parents', rather than specify parent forums. The form of partnership could then be decided by consulting, in a really meaningful way, with all parents.

**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?**

I think this would provide an 'opt-out' for schools and/or authorities who wanted to restrict involvement to the least number of parents (or to the 'usual' parents)

**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?**

Before trying to achieve a wider, more participative forum for parents, one which goes beyond present structures, lots of ground work needs to be done:-

- Identified staff and resources need to be dedicated to reaching and engaging **all** parents – especially the 'hard to reach' ones
- Promoting the idea that parents are equal partners in their children's learning needs to be addressed within schools as well as with parents
- Parents won't suddenly be turned onto the idea of parent forums anymore that they were about PTAs and School Boards. Lots of work needs to be done to ensure a broader appeal to all parents.

**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?**

Before deciding on such a formal device as 'constitution' and constituted groups (which is what puts off lots of parents), a lot of small scale work needs to be done, to build up parents' confidence, breaking down the barriers to participation and involvement identified in the research.

**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, and membership should be dictated by the needs of the forum at any particular time. Also, membership of forums would depend on the purpose of the forum, although there might be 'permanent' members representing schools staff and the local community.

**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?**

Representation of these children should be included on the forum – either by actively involving carers and/or social work services.

**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?**

Yes

**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 the parent forum was genuinely representative of all parents, and was democratically run by them, then a representative of the schools staff should attend as an equal partner. There should also be community representation, although not necessarily a councillor. The forum should decide, democratically, who needs to attend.

***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?***

I would include 'promoting contact between the school, current and prospective parents, the local community and other individuals or groups' in the first 4 key representational roles. The rest should be flexible.

***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?***

I agree with the open-ended research on what the views and concerns of parents are.

***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?***

I think this needs to be explored more, particularly in relation to rights and responsibilities of parents who get involved. It might put parents off becoming involved if they had to engage at this level. That's why a more flexible approach

would give parents the chance to become involved at different levels – that is if their involvement could be short term and for specific things.

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

I would like to see education authorities obliged to provide staff and resources dedicated to ensuring the participation of the maximum number of parents in this process.

**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?**

Yes, Education Authorities should provide financial or 'in kind' support to forums. More important, however, is to ensure financial and 'in-kind' support for the work necessary to ensure the participation of the maximum number of parents.

**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?**

Yes, if staff are given adequate time to deal with these. Otherwise, it will be resented.

**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?**

Yes, I think so, but I'm not sure that I know enough about this. There needs to be some explanation of what 'modern processes...' are.

**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.**

The principle of parental involvement should be retained.

**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?**

Yes

### **Other Comments**

- If improving parental involvement is about raising attainment, then surely it's about putting maximum effort into engaging those parents who are the least confident about their own education, who are least confident about and least likely to interact with the school.
- The children of some sections of society do better out of the education system because the world of home and school are similar. To raise the attainment of all children, the culture within schools needs to adapt to be less alien to the majority of children who 'fail'.
- Another aspect of raising attainment is to focus on engaging parents' interest and confidence in learning for themselves. This encourages a more positive attitude to learning at home, which has a positive effect on children's learning.
- The Bill could have insisted that all parents are automatically members of the forum. Then the onus would be on Local Authorities and schools to show how they were making real attempts to engage more parents – especially the 'hard to reach' ones.

If you wish to reply electronically, please email your response by **Tuesday 7 June** to [parentalinvolvementbill@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:parentalinvolvementbill@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

Or please return it to the following address:

Parental Involvement Bill

Schools Division

Area 2B

## **Confidentiality**

Copies of all responses received will be placed in the Executive library and will be available to the general public. Responses will also be made available to the public on the Scottish Executive website. The views expressed may be quoted or referred to in any future review of responses. **If you do not wish your responses to be made public, please ensure that you indicate clearly that all or part of your response is to be treated as confidential.** Confidentiality will be strictly respected. We will still count confidential responses in any statistical analysis and your views will of course be taken into account in the same way as for non-confidential responses.

## **Electronic publication and additional copies**

This publication and a summary leaflet designed for parents are available via the internet at [www.scotland.gov.uk/.....](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/.....)

Several copies of this consultation paper have sent to each school. Summary leaflets have also been sent to all schools for onward distribution to parents. If you would like additional copies or if you would like this document in another format or language or more copies please contact us on 0131 244 1860. We will try to accommodate your wishes.

## **The Scottish Executive Consultation Process**

Consultation is an essential and important aspect of Scottish Executive working methods. Given the wide-ranging areas of work of the Scottish Executive, there are many varied types of consultation. However, in general Scottish Executive consultation exercises aim to provide opportunities for all those who wish to express their opinions on a proposed area of work to do so in ways which will inform and enhance that work.

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body. Consultation exercises may involve seeking views in a number of different ways, such as public meetings, focus groups or questionnaire exercises.

Typically, Scottish Executive consultations involve a written paper inviting answers to specific questions or more general views about the material presented. Written papers are distributed to organisations and individuals with an interest in the area of consultation, and they are also placed on the Scottish Executive web site enabling a wider audience to access the paper and submit their responses<sup>1</sup>. Copies of all the responses received to consultation exercises (except those where the individual or organisation requested confidentiality) are placed in the Scottish Executive library at Saughton House, Edinburgh (K Spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD, telephone 0131 244 4552).

The views and suggestions detailed in consultation responses are analysed and used as part of the decision making process. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

If you have any comment about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to:

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