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Piaskowski K (Karen)

From: Ingrid [ingrid@gara.org.uk]
Sent: 07 June 2005 18:10
To: parentalinvolvementbill@scotland.gov.uk
Cc: Jatin Haria
Subject: 923

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Dear Scottish Executive Colleagues

Please find attached the response from the Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance Social Inclusion Partnership to the Scottish Executive's consultation on the subject of Improving Parents Involvement in schools. This response is formally going to a meeting of our Board this evening and in the event of any minor changes that they may (or may not) make we would appreciate it if we could send you the final version tomorrow morning. We hope that is acceptable.

Ingrid McClements

Policy Officer

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RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM: 923

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: Ingrid McClements

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- 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 We will treat your response as confidential
- No

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

Reference no - 923
Parental Involvement
Bill

THE GARA RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE SCOTTISH SCHOOLS (PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT BILL)

Introduction

The Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance is a thematic multi agency partnership which brings together young black people and a range of statutory and voluntary organisations to take a strategic approach to tackling racism in the city of Glasgow.

The Scottish Executive published in March 2005 - **Making a Difference – Improving Parents’ Involvement in Schools** - a consultation on a draft bill which aims to:

- Replace School Boards with more flexible and inclusive bodies to represent parents’ views – new parent forums
- Ensure schools and education authorities respond to requests from parents for advice and information about their children’s education.
- Ensure that Local Authorities strengthen and support parents’ involvement in their children’s learning and in schools by promoting and supporting the new parent forums, drawing up strategies for parental involvement in education and schools, and establishing a complaints procedure about the way they carry out their responsibilities under the Bill.
- Allow education authorities to modernise their appointment systems for headteachers and deputy headteachers while ensuring parents continue to be involved in the process.

The Implications for Black and Minority Ethnic Parents

In October 2000 black and minority ethnic (BME) parents held their first conference in Glasgow to discuss participation in the school life of their children, to explore the barriers to their participation and come forward with a set of proposals that would help build better links between schools in Glasgow and the black and minority ethnic communities. One of the key recommendations from the conference was that BME parents require much greater support than was then available in order for them to be empowered to become fully involved in the education of their children. Following the strongly expressed call for better support the Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance established the Black Parents Resource Centre to provide a platform for BME parents to discuss issues about their children’s education and promote the participation of BME parents in schools.

The Scottish Executive consultation makes no specific mention of the participation of particular groups of parents who may at present find it difficult to participate fully. This is an area which requires much more examination in any proposed change of policy which the draft Bill may outline.

The Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance makes the following points in relation to the content of the consultation on improving parental involvement in schools –

- In principle we welcome the replacement of School Boards with a more flexible system of parent forums because the present way many school boards operate limits parental involvement, is often overly bureaucratic and in practice sometimes lacks transparency and seems elitist to many parents.
- We consider that parent forums have the potential to open up a much wider level of participation but caution that this will not happen automatically without due thought given to how this is done so that the current limits on parental involvement are not replicated and the mechanisms simply renamed.
- We welcome the proposal that schools should be in a position to come up with solutions that suit their particular needs and that parents themselves should be able to determine what they deem appropriate. Local Authorities may present a model that they have devised for the establishment of a Parents Forum but we would like to see flexibility so that individual schools and groups of parents have the power to adapt any models as they see fit, and that this would not be frowned upon by schools and education authorities. We would like to see written into any guidance which may accompany the new arrangements that issues of race equality be specifically addressed by the arrangements adopted by Parents Forums.
- Any models for Parent Forums put forward nationally or locally by education authorities should specifically make reference to the steps needed to actively engage the participation of BME parents including accessible and appropriate information in a format which suits BME communities. Language support should be provided when necessary at parents meetings.
- Any models for Parent Forums should actively embrace the principles of the newly established National Standards for Community Engagement which have recently been produced for the Scottish Executive by the Scottish Centre for Community Development, with particular emphasis on equality issues underpinning practice.
- We consider that parents themselves should have ownership of the Parent Forums and of the agenda and practice of these new bodies rather than the subtle control by the headteacher or local officials which can sometimes occur. We consider it appropriate for the head teacher or local officials to attend at the invitation of the parents forum.
- We agree that education authorities should have a new legal obligation, as suggested, to promote parental involvement. We furthermore consider that inspection bodies should include reviewing this practice as part of their inspection processes, and that obligations under the Race Relations Amendment Act are an integral part of this.