

# Every child is included and supported: Getting it right in Glasgow, the Nurturing City Additional Support for Learning Network News



Education Services

December 2015 - Issue 11

Dear Parents and Carers

## **Welcome to the re-launched Glasgow Additional Support for Learning Parents' Network News.**

As you know it has been some time since we had a newsletter. Margaret McKinley who so very diligently pulled together the information for Network News, retired from her post in April of this year.

I took over as Education Officer for the NE of the City with a City remit for inclusion at the start of the new school term in August and have been finding my feet up until now!

I hope that we can get back to having regular editions of Network news on a termly basis.

If you have any specific items you would like to be covered in future editions of Network News please get in touch and let us know.

I have re-established our Additional Support for Learning parents forum and we have had two meetings of the group so far this session. I'll be discussing how we should best take Network News forward when we meet.

At these meetings we discuss - in a very informal way - any particular concerns or interests the parents/carers raise. On our recent agenda for the November meeting, we discussed Glasgow's Autism Strategy and Julie Steel one of Quality Improvement Officers talked about the strategy.

Moirra Hallett our Inclusion manager also then discussed the role of her small team in supporting inclusion across the City and her role specifically as inclusion manager.

We also discussed having an Additional Support for Learning parent conference at some point around Easter next year. If you have any specific thoughts on the content of the conference please get in touch.

The aims of Network News remain the same; we want to provide you with the opportunity to:

- get regular and reliable information about what Education Services are doing about additional support for learning
- link up and communicate with other parents whose children have additional support needs
- ask questions and receive answers about additional support in Glasgow
- Get news about national and local developments relating to additional support.

Please pass Network News on to anyone you think may be interested. We are also sending it out through schools and early years centres and we're going to put it online. If you don't see copies of Network News in the school your child attends, please ask the Headteacher to make it available to everyone.

You can access this and previous editions of Network News by downloading them from the Glasgow City Council website [www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=10276](http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=10276)

Contact details for core group parents/carers are also on the next page.

This issue of Network News is being sent to:

- all those parents already signed up to the Network
- all Glasgow schools, centres and services
- Psychological Services
- our partner agencies; health and Social Work Services
- voluntary organisations

Network News will only support parents/carers and families if it does the job you want it to do. Please let us know what you think about it. All our contact details are listed on the next page.

Yours,

**Colin Crawford**

Area Education Officer, Education Services, Glasgow City Council



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## PREVIOUSLY...

**In the last edition of Network News, Margaret outlined our Pathways process and we have been continuing to implement and review how our system is working.**

Our policy continues to reflect the statutory position in Scotland that all children and young people have the right to access mainstream education with appropriate supports in place.

In Glasgow, we are fortunate to have a range of provision specifically designed to meet support needs and we have been working over the last two years to extend and develop this provision in order to provide a continuum of support for children and young people. Most children and young people who have identified additional support needs are in their local schools, close to their family and community. Local schools identify, assess and plan to meet a wide range of additional support needs for many children and young people. The schools access support from a range of specialist services, including, English as an Additional Language, Dyslexia Support, Early Years Inclusion Support, Additional Support for Learning Technology and Hearing and Visual Impairment Support Services.

Children and Young people are also supported in local schools through collaborative working with colleagues in Health and in Social Work Services and through the work we do with a huge variety of partners and voluntary organisations.

All children and young people who have additional support needs in local schools should have a Wellbeing Assessment which is on-going.

If this assessment indicates that in one or more area of wellbeing, the child or young person needs a very high level of support, this becomes a Wellbeing Assessment and Plan. Schools and officers sometimes call this a “WAP”.

Parents and carers must be fully involved in the wellbeing assessment and in setting up the plan if one is needed.

They should also be involved in regular reviews of how the plan is supporting progress.

In many cases, the school’s link psychologist will also be supporting the school to meet the child’s or young person’s needs.

We also support children and young people in mainstream schools through the training that we provide for staff and through the networks of local support we are increasingly putting in place.

If a child or young person is not making good progress in their local school and if there are concerns about wellbeing, the school can firstly seek the professional opinion of colleagues by taking the case for discussion to a Staged Intervention and Inclusion Meeting or SIIM.

These meetings will usually include Additional Support for Learning Co-ordinators or Headteachers from each school plus one or two Educational Psychologists from the GPS (Glasgow Psychological Services), LIG Team (A LIG is a Local Improvement Group, i.e. a grouping of schools all sitting in the one Learning Community in the City), SIIMs allow us to share discussions about common issues at an early stage.

An outcome of these meetings may well then be that the decision to refer a child or young person to the Joint Support Team or JST is taken. Every Learning community has a JST. At the JST senior members of school staff work with colleagues in health and Social Work Services, as appropriate, to try to ensure that all the right supports are in place for a child or young person. The JST will often make a series of suggestions for the school to take forward.

You should always be part of the decision to refer your child to the JST and you should always be clear about the outcomes from the referral.

In a few cases a school, parents and Educational Psychologist and JST will come to the view that the current pathway of full-time attendance at the local school, is not effectively supporting progress for the child or young person.

In Glasgow, we aim always to meet a child's or young person's needs without restricting the opportunities and the curriculum on offer. If a child or young person needs to attend specialist provision, we will always carry on planning opportunities for links with mainstream because we know that this is very important for each child's or young person's development and wellbeing.

The JST, based on the assessment information the school has provided, may suggest that the child or young person is referred to the City Inclusion Group (CIG) to consider an alternative pathway. The school is responsible for this referral.

The school has to submit the following pieces of evidence:

- a PL1 form with factual information about the child or young person and with a clear recommendation about how the current pathway should be altered;
- the child's or young person's Wellbeing Assessment and Plan (WAP);
- minutes of the most recent review meeting held;
- any additional assessment information or reports they hold from other agencies;
- clear evidence that the parents/carers and, where appropriate, the child or young person have been consulted and have expressed their views;
- Clear evidence that this is the view of those principally involved in assessment - that is, the school staff and the link Educational Psychologist.

The CIG meets whenever it is necessary to consider submissions of this kind from schools. It is made up of the Area Education Officer, a representative Depute Psychologist from each area of the City, a Quality Improvement Officer, our Inclusion Manager and representative heads from schools and nurseries.

This group considers carefully the submissions made by schools and agrees an appropriate way forward. The CIG chair will confirm the decision of the CIG and ensure that parents/carers are quickly informed of the outcome.

We realise that this process sounds long and complicated, however the process seems to be working well. Each time we learn and share with each other and with schools as to how we can make the process even better.

We have been thinking very carefully about the pathways process.

What we are trying to achieve is:

- the opportunity for as many children and young people as possible to benefit, with appropriate support, from being educated in their local community;
- the opportunity to provide flexible support for children and young people in the environment best suited to their needs;
- the full involvement of parents and carers in the process of making decisions;
- good collaboration between professionals to ensure that the right decisions are made for children and young people;
- Decisions about pathways that are founded on strong assessment evidence.

We have produced a helpful leaflet for our schools to share with parents/carers:



# Current Developments

The 2nd of October saw our City Inclusion and Equalities conference being held in Celtic Park, Glasgow.

Four hundred school staff and invited guests attended the event to hear about and share good practice in the field of inclusion and equalities work more generally and to share the important messages around equality and inclusion for young people across the City. The keynote speaker, Ann Marie McGovern, Head of Service (South) gave an inspiring speech on inclusion in action and closing the gap. She spoke about how *"poverty is not a barrier to high standards and aspirations"* and told the audience very honest stories about her time in education, highlighting how important it is for children to feel listened to, valued and for staff to ensure they foster a true sense of belonging.

The event also saw the launch of the *'The cost of the school day'* report, summarising the extent of poverty within Scotland. This ground breaking report highlights how poverty can make a child or young person miss out on important school experiences and make them feel different, excluded and unhappy and gives very thought provoking statistics as to how much poverty affects our young people. The report urges local authorities and governments to ensure that low-income families are given the support needed for children and young people to be able to do their best at school.

The delegates split into three groups after the initial keynote presentation. One group heard about the cost of the school day report, the second group heard presentations about equality issues generally and in schools specifically and the third group participated in a practical session which focused on *"inclusion in action"* and which was presented by two Glasgow primary schools showcasing their work.

Thirteen senior pupils from across the City came along to the conference as full delegates. These young people are either affected by, passionate about, or campaign for, inclusion or equality related issues in their schools.

In addition, we were delighted to have some of our Malawi young leaders of learning present as *"roving reporters"* for the day.

Laura McGeorge and Conor Pritchard both from St Mungo's Academy, and Reece Wallace and Olivia Matthews from Eastbank Academy were our reporters for the event.

They went around the hall to capture how people were finding the day, and spoke, amongst others, to a teacher from Quarry Brae Primary School who said that *"the day was going exceptionally well"* with lots *"to take back and work on"*. They also caught up with an S6 pupil from Knightswood Secondary School, who told us how her school has just recently started an equality group, which is run by her drama department. They are focusing on LGBT rights and the acceptance and awareness within her school.

She described the group as being *"a varied group of people with the aim to merge two schools together"*. She told our report how the conference had given her a lot of useful information and contacts that she could use when she goes back to school. She also said that she planned to go back and share what she had learned thus supporting her group further to continue with their goal of promoting acceptance and equality within her school.

Overall the day was an amazing success, we were able to launch the updated Every Child is Included and Supported as well as helping teachers, children and young people and other staff who were able to attend the conference understand the real importance that we place in Glasgow of making our city, a caring city where young people can be who they are and who are not afraid to express themselves.

Our team of reporters said that the conference really opened their eyes to inequality issues and gain a real insight into some of the work going on across the City.

Finally, with the Festive season fast approaching, the following tips and hints may be useful for those of you with children who have autistic spectrum disorders (and indeed, many of these are potentially applicable to all children and young people).

# News and Information



## TIPS FOR HAVING AN AUTISM-FRIENDLY CHRISTMAS

Christmas is just around a corner so we've put together a list of tips for having an autism-friendly Christmas. Please let us know if it is helpful for you. Thanks to everyone on the forums, Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit who shared their thoughts, experiences and suggestions – we really appreciate it. We hope you have a merry Christmas!

### Preparation and routine

- Accept – and be relaxed about – a different sort of Christmas which might include things like only short visits to family
- Plan and discuss everything with your child in advance – “planned surprises” can work best
- Have a regular Christmas Day routine that you use every year
- One parent on Twitter suggests: *“Don’t have a big family gathering”*
- Have a countdown chart so your child can see exactly how long to wait for Christmas. Mark it with key events – the day the tree is going up, the day the tree is coming down, the day you open the presents, the day Grandma is coming etc.
- Ask people to phone ahead so there are no surprise visits on Christmas day
- For the day itself, produce an easy read schedule of events and schedule some quiet time
- Have a quiet room where your child can go to if they are feeling overwhelmed. If you are at someone else’s house, make sure there is a designated quiet room there too
- A person with autism on Reddit: *“My family usually had 3-5 smaller Christmas parties leading up to the big one, for family and friends who couldn’t make the big one. This cut down on people at the big one, and let me practice in a slightly less stressful alternatives”*
- A parent on Facebook: *“We let our daughter do things at her pace; we don’t get her up until she’s ready and then put an old familiar DVD on. We let her ‘ignore’ her presents until she chooses something she likes the look of - usually a clear tub/jar of sweets!”*

### Presents

- Buy your child presents related to their interests and encourage friends/family members also to do so
- Choose and wrap the presents together. No surprises means less anxiety. One parent remarks on Twitter: *“Took me years to realise my son hated surprises and needed to know exactly what he was getting”*
- Let your child choose the wrapping paper for their presents
- Noisy toys and wrapping paper can cause upset without warning
- Allow your child to open presents gradually over a few days. Don’t overwhelm them first thing on Christmas Day
- Wrap presents in easy to open (with little tape) coverings to avoid tactile sensitivity difficulties.
- A parent on Reddit: *“We don’t put out any presents until Christmas morning when we are going to open them, because it is just too much for him to see all the presents waiting and he can’t have them”*
- A parent on Facebook: *“Make sure the gift is ready to play. We’ve had many meltdowns due to no batteries!”*

## Decorations

- Allow your child to choose the decorations for the house and decorate the house with them
- If your child loves lights, put them on the ceiling instead of having a tree
- A parent on Twitter: *"My children love lights but the baubles on the tree upset my son; I think its the reflection that stresses him"*
- A parent on Reddit: *"My kids have their own 3 ft tall fake tree that we take out and decorate (often we decorate it once a day)"*
- A parent on Facebook: *"My sons have done the tree for years try to involve them as much as possible"*
- A parent on Facebook: *"My problems started as soon as the tree went up! They would assure me they would like a tree but then became agitated during the process of it going up. Also got upset when it was time for everything to come back down again. The solution was to bring the box with tree down from the loft a few days before. Then did the tree alone apart from if they wanted to add a few things themselves but never pressured them to so they didn't have to see the mess I cause during prep. Then I take decorations down over a period of few days and, hey presto, no tantrums last year."*

## Food

- Allow your child to choose what food will be served for Christmas dinner
- A parent on Twitter: *"I'm planning a special dinner for my daughter of all things she likes to avoid any trauma over the table"*
- A parent on the forums: *"After many upsetting family Christmas day lunches we now have a buffet. I prepare most of it the day before and keep topping it up all day"*
- When going to other people's home for dinner make sure they have dinner ready on time to prevent a meltdown

## Advice for people on the spectrum from people on the spectrum

- From Reddit: *"Create a Christmas kit to bring to parties. This should include small toys/stimming devices, some treats (if sensory, digestive or allergy issues limit party foods they can eat), a schedule outlining the party and expectations, thank you cards (helps prevent the 'she's ungrateful' reaction I get because my reactions aren't typical), hearing protection/sunglasses/small weighted blanket/other sensory devices, and instructions on what to do if it gets to be too much (escape route, signal to tell mom or dad you've had enough, etc.)"*
- From the forums: *"Advice I would give other people on the spectrum would be to take time out if you get overwhelmed, be prepared and have things organised, like food you like, earplugs for noisy relatives etc. (apologies to noisy relatives everywhere...) and also ask if there's anything you can do to help because that a) gives you something structured to do and b) gets you out of some of the socialising!"*
- From the forums: *"Due to previous experiences of feeling 'trapped' at Christmas events – particularly when public transport isn't running or is limited – my tip to fellow Aspies is to ensure that you have a place to escape to and a means by which to escape, regardless of the weather"*
- From the forums: *"Plan in advance how to say thank you for presents, even if they are not what you wanted."*
- From the forums: *"My parents had developed good mechanisms for helping me with Christmas from about age four or five. I really love Christmas as it's for family and stuff, but too much family at once has always been a big problem for me. I still get stressed with the fuss of rushing about Christmas morning, but when presents are done I retreat to the kitchen and I help my dad. I help buy and choose Christmas dinner too which helps. Having a place to retreat to is always good. Also, planning in advance, and teaching others we aren't meaning to be rude if we forget to be polite."*

**We know that Christmas can be a stressful time for people and families so, if you're looking for advice and support, our forums will be open and ready to help you.**

[www.talkaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.talkaboutautism.org.uk)

If you want to be added to the direct mailing list for Network News, please email Sandra McCormack – see Contacts list on Page 2.

**Next Edition - Planned for February 2016**