

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2015

I hope you all had an enjoyable and relaxing time over the summer holidays, even if the weather did leave something to be desired. Now that the new school term has started, it seems like an appropriate time to reflect on all the changes that our education system has undergone recently and to look forward to what needs to happen over the course of the year. Pupils, parents and schools have all dealt with a considerable amount of change, with new qualifications in the form of Nationals 1-4 and new Highers.

Exam results arrived on the 4th August, and we were delighted that so many learners achieved excellent results. However, some parents and pupils told us they felt confused and uncertain about their new qualifications, and they also raised concerns about the new exams. See below for details of the research we have undertaken on this issue. The Forum has been speaking to SG, SQA and ES about these issues to try and ensure that the lessons from this year are taken on board so that the next exam diet passes smoothly.

This will be the third year of the Nationals and the second year of the new Highers, with no more dual running of different qualifications. The last of the new qualifications, the Curriculum for Excellence Advanced Highers, will be introduced this year. We hope that parents and pupils feel that they are supported and sufficiently informed about the new courses, but we would be happy to hear from you if there is anything you would like to discuss.

As always, our network of representatives have been busy on parents' behalf. And there are many things to look forward to over the next few months. The Scottish Learning Festival takes place in September – be sure to come along and say hello to us if you are attending. Our annual conference is on 14th November and will be on the theme of attainment and what this means for parents – see below for details. Make sure to save the date in your diary, as we would love to see as many parents there as possible.

In the meantime, if you would like to find out more about all the work NPFS undertakes, learn about how you can get involved in your child's education or find out what's happening locally, do get in touch with either your [local NPFS rep](#) or contact Barbara or Gillian at the NPFS office (0131 313 8842 or office@npfs.org.uk) who will be happy to help.

Yours in partnership,

Iain Ellis, Chair

Contact Us

Join our database to receive this E News Update and other relevant information from the National

NPFS Annual Conference 2015

Save the date in your diary – the NPFS conference is taking place on Saturday 14th November. We have a very central location this year – Strathclyde University Technology and Innovation Centre near George Square, Glasgow. The theme of the conference is attainment and parents' crucially important role in helping to close the attainment gap and contribute to the best educational outcomes for all our young people. Delegates will be able to choose from a range of engaging and relevant workshops on this theme. You will also get to hear from leading figures in education and will have the chance to put your questions to them. There's no need to worry about childcare, as we offer a crèche for younger children and a programme of fun activities or trips for older children (depending on requirements). A programme will be available in due course. In the meantime, register interest by emailing Gillian at office@npfs.org.uk or give us a call on 0131 313 8842.

Scottish Learning Festival 2015

This year's Scottish Learning Festival is taking place from 23rd-24th September. NPFS will have a stall, so if you want to find out more about parental involvement or pick up some of our publications for parents, come along and say hello. Throughout the day, other organisations involved in working with parents will be dropping by to the stall - a programme with further details will be available soon. NPFS will also be running a workshop on parents' contribution to closing the attainment gap. Although the Learning Festival is open to all, our focus this year is on helping practitioners find out more about engaging with parents. Why not ask if your school and Parent Council are planning to attend. Parent Council funds can be used towards the cost of attending the Festival. For more information about the Festival, and details of how to register, visit [the SLF website](#).

New publications from NPFS

Recently, NPFS released two new publications looking at assessment - [Assessment in the Broad General Education](#) phase (early years to the end of S3) and [Assessment in the Senior Phase](#). The Nutshells provide a clear, concise summary of what parents and pupils can expect, and suggests questions for parents to ask in order to find out more about how their child is progressing. All of our publications can be downloaded for free from the NPFS website. Hard copies are available on request from the NPFS office - email office@npfs.org.uk or call 0131 313 8842.

Parent Forum by [emailing us your contact details](#).

Visit our [website](#). Follow us on Twitter and Facebook by clicking the icons at the top of this E Newsletter.

Vacancies

We currently have vacancies for representatives in the following areas: Argyll and Bute, East Ayrshire, Fife and Midlothian. Please contact us or your local authority for further information.

Contact your local NPFS rep

Would you like to get in touch with your local NPFS rep and find out more about what's happening in your area and how you can get involved? Is there an issue you would like to raise with the Forum? Or perhaps you have an event that you would like the Forum to support. If so, you can find the contact details of all our local reps [here](#).

Parents' guide to qualifications

If you'd like to know more about the broad range of qualifications available in Scotland, have a look at the updated version of the *Credit Where Credit's Due* leaflet for parents and carers. It covers everything from Modern Apprenticeships to wider achievement programmes such as the Outward Bound Trust's Adventure & Challenge Award and Youth Scotland's Dynamic Youth Awards. The leaflet can be downloaded from the [SCQF website](#). Hard copies can be requested by calling the SCQF Partnership Team on 0845 270 7371.

National Qualifications resources

If your child is studying for National qualifications, it's not too early to start getting organised for the year ahead. Have a look at the information and resources available from the SQA. [This page](#) contains links to study guides, information about coursework and exam preparation, as well as the wide range of awards available and the next steps after Nationals.

Report on parents' experiences of the new qualifications

In May this year NPFS held a focus group on parents' experiences of the new National and Higher qualifications. We were particularly interested in issues such as how well schools, teachers and pupils were adapting to the new qualifications, and whether the teething problems with Nationals 4 and 5 had been addressed. Parents raised a number of issues with us about the new Higher exam papers, further details of which are in the report. You can read the full report [here](#).

Children's Commissioner responds to ASL concerns NPFS hosted a roundtable discussion with organisations involved in additional support for learning in order to identify the key issues currently affecting children's education. Following on from this meeting, NPFS and others wrote to Tam Baillie, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, to express concern about the impacts that cuts in provision are having on the education of children with additional support needs and the inadequate implementation of existing legislation. The Commissioner has now [written](#) to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to raise these issues.

NPFS held an online survey on additional support for learning which received over 420 responses from parents. To find out more about the issues that were raised, read the [report](#).

Additional support for learning - resources

Parents' Guide to ASL

Enquire, the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning, have produced a concise and easy-to-read guide for parents about additional support for learning. If you're new to additional support for learning it explains – in simple language – your and your child's rights, the roles and responsibilities of staff involved with your child, what to expect at meetings and much more. The Guide is available [here](#).

Self-Directed Support: research report

A report of a research project looking at the information needs of parents and children and young people in relation to self-directed support has been published. 160 parents and carers were surveyed as part of the research, which was undertaken by Dr Susan Elsley and Children in Scotland. The full report, "I Want the Same as You", is available [here](#).

CALL Scotland 'wheel of apps'

CALL Scotland provides specialist expertise in technology

The Scottish Attainment Challenge

The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched in February 2015 to bring a greater sense of urgency and priority for everyone involved in Scottish education to focus efforts relentlessly, at all levels and in all sectors, on helping children and young people from the most deprived areas to achieve their full potential. You can find out more about the Scottish Attainment Challenge [here](#).

Read, Write, Count campaign

The Scottish Government has launched of the Read, Write, Count literacy and numeracy campaign for P1-P3 children and their parents, which builds on the success of the Play, Talk, Read campaign in the early years.

Every child in Scotland will have access to a library of suitable books and educational materials. Sessions to support parents will be run locally to build a bridge between school and home and there will be a particular focus on investment in our most deprived communities. We will be one of the key national partners for this important and exciting campaign.

Visit the [Read, Write, Count site](#) for more information.

Blog - Developing the Young Workforce

Have a look at the [latest blog](#) on the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) site. It's from Michael Cross, the Programme Director for DYW. He has written about his experiences of the workplace and why the ambitions of Education Working for All! remind him of the first jobs he had (in a supermarket and a bookkeepers) before starting in the Civil Service.

for children who have speech, communication and/or writing difficulties. They have recently produced posters featuring a 'wheel' of educational apps suitable for use on iPads - one for [learners who have dyslexia](#), and the other for [those with complex communication needs](#).

Useful Contacts

[Children in Scotland](#) is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland.

Education Scotland's [Parentzone](#) website provides you with up to date information about your child's education.

[Enquire](#) is the Scottish Advice Service for Additional Support for Learning

[My World of Work](#)

Scotland's national careers advice website. Find work, skills and learning opportunities.

The My World of Work [Parents' site](#) features useful resources such as a timeline of key dates in education; information about subject choices and advice on supporting young people through revision and exams.

[Parentline](#) helpline provides support and information for parent / carers and families on 0800 282233

[SQA](#) helps people to fulfil their potential and to achieve their ambitions by providing a wide range of high quality, internationally recognised qualifications and associated services.

Learning opportunities for parents

Children in Scotland currently have a range of learning opportunities available, all of which have special rates for parents and carers. Here's just a taste of the courses that are on offer, and you can view the whole booklet online [here](#).

[Mental health first aid: supporting young people](#) 14+28 September (Glasgow)

[There's more to tears and tantrums... supporting early years children through their distress](#)

24 September (Edinburgh)

[Meeting Scotland's Childcare Challenge: Tackling Inequalities Together](#)

With keynote speaker Naomi Eisenstadt, Scotland's Independent Poverty Adviser 30 September (Edinburgh)

Changes to early learning and childcare

Around 20,000 2 year olds will become eligible for 'free' early learning and childcare over the course of the year. The entitlement to 600 hours of annual funded early learning and childcare has been extended to two year olds from low income households. This comes in to effect from August and adds to the entitlement for all three and four year olds. As of August 2015, children whose 2nd birthday falls on or after 1 March 2015 are able to access the 'free' hours if they have a parent in receipt of:

- Child Tax Credit (not Working Tax Credit) and your income is less than £16,105*
- Both maximum Child Tax Credit and maximum Working Tax Credit and your income is under £6,420*
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit

*[The income thresholds for Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit can vary annually] To find out more, including the full eligibility criteria, please visit: <http://www.earlylearningandchildcare.scot/>

Parents and carers should contact their local authority to register for a place.

Year of Young People 2018 - Discussion Days for young people

The Scottish Government has decided to make 2018 the 'Year of Young People'. The Government wants to ensure Scotland's young people lead the planning for 2018 and have asked Children in Scotland, the Scottish Youth Parliament and Young Scot to support young people to help start the planning process. We are therefore seeking to recruit up to 16 people aged 8-25 to become an Initial Planning Group. If you know of child or young person who would like to take part, the details of the Discussion Days are as follows:

Parent National Improvement Framework

Do you want to find out more about the National Improvement Framework, which was recently announced by the Scottish Government? A series of engagement events are taking place across the country. Parents, teachers and local authorities are invited to come along and find out more about what the Framework will mean for pupils, schools and parents. There will be an opportunity to discuss the proposed standardised assessments will involve, and find out how can parents can get involved and have their say. Dates:

29 September, Edinburgh 10 am and 5:30pm; 5th October, Glasgow 10am and 5:30pm; 7th October, Inverness 10am and 5:30pm; 8th October, Aberdeen 10am and 5:30pm

Book online for all dates [here](#)

The National Parent Forum is also hosting discussion events for organisations working in the sector (education, parents, children and young people) and who are interested in having an opportunity to look at the proposals in greater detail. If you would like to take part, please contact Barbara Schuler, NPFS Policy Manager, for further information [policy%20manager@npfs.org.uk]policy manager@npfs.org.uk 0131 313 8841

- 16:00-19:00 on Thursday 1st October at North Inch Community Campus, Perth. [Register here for Perth.](#)
- 11:00-14:00 on Tuesday 10th November in Aberdeen (*Venue TBC*). [Register here for Aberdeen.](#)

A national event to present insights gathered and take additional feedback will take place on Wednesday 2nd December at Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh. [Register here for the Edinburgh event.](#) To register young people, or as a stakeholder, please visit the relevant web page. To ensure equal representation across Scotland, places will be confirmed subject to availability. Support for the travel of children and young people is available on request. There will also be other opportunities to participate online later this year. To be kept up-to-date, please [add your details to the newsletter list.](#)

Children Who are Unable to Attend School due to Ill Health

The Scottish Government has recently updated the [guidance](#) on the education of children who are unable to attend school due to ill health. The guidance is aimed at local authorities and other service providers such as hospitals, but parents may find it of interest. There is also a leaflet for children and young people on this topic available from [Enquire](#).