

REPORT TO EDUCATION, LEARNING & LEISURE COMMITTEE – 26 AUGUST 2010

ABERDEENSHIRE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY – ANALYSIS OF THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE AND NEXT STEPS

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report advises members of the committee about the results arising from the consultation on the Parental Involvement Strategy for Aberdeenshire, and makes recommendations for future progress.

2. Background

- 2.1 A consultation process was undertaken between March and May 2010. The consultation process was wide ranging, including parents, Education, Learning & Leisure (EL&L) staff, pupils and elected members. A summary of the respondees is outlined in Annex 1. The consultation questions, a summary of the responses along with key themes emerging and comment is provided in Annex 2.

3. Discussion

- 3.1 Two hundred and fifty-seven responses were received from stakeholders on the consultation. A number of these were group responses as detailed in Annex 1.

Overall the respondees praised the service for drawing up the strategy which they identified as being aspirational. The Parental Involvement Strategy was very well received by almost all respondents with the vast majority expressing their agreement with the proposals and positively acknowledging the intention of the service to engage parents beyond the terms of the Scottish Schools Parental Involvement Act 2006.

- 3.2 Across all respondents there was widespread agreement (88% to 96%) with the proposals contained within the following sections of the strategy:

- Aims of the strategy
- Encouraging, facilitating and supporting the establishment of Parent Councils in all schools
- Opening up opportunities and removing barriers to parental involvement
- Ensuring effective parental involvement and support for the most vulnerable children, young people and families
- Actively planning, supporting, encouraging and developing parents' involvement in their child's learning within service establishments and at home

- Establishing an effective communication framework with parents which facilitates communication with the whole service, within community networks, between schools and with individual schools
- Systematically planning and seeking parents' views on the service and schools in order to inform policy and how the service can best meet the needs of parents and families
- Involving parents directly in school senior management appointments
- Having a fully comprehensive compliments and complaints procedure in place which incorporates the rights of parents to complain about any failure of the authority to fulfil its duties under the Act
- Establishing effective monitoring and evaluation of procedures, activities and processes for parental involvement

3.3 The only area of concern related to key element seven – involving parents directly in school senior management appointment processes. There were concerns expressed regarding the guidance and training provided to parents and their input into questions asked at short leet interviews.

This issue will be progressed as part of the implementation plan in delivering the Parental Involvement Strategy for Aberdeenshire. Parents will be directly involved in a review of the existing training process.

3.4 Currently a number of aspects of the strategy are being implemented. For this reason and to ensure continuous improvement, stakeholders were asked to grade current performance. This has been useful in determining what requires to be prioritised in taking the strategy forward.

The following key element was graded as good:

- Encouraging, facilitating and supporting the establishment of Parent Councils in all schools.

The key elements listed below were all graded by stakeholders as being satisfactory:

- Aims of the strategy
- Opening up opportunities and removing barriers for parental involvement
- Ensuring effective parental involvement and support for the most vulnerable children, young people and families
- Actively planning, supporting, encouraging and developing parents' involvement in their child's learning within service establishments and at home
- Systematically planning and seeking parents' views on the service and schools in order to inform policy and how the service can best meet the needs of parents and families
- Involving parents directly in school senior management appointments
- Having a fully comprehensive compliments and complaints procedure in place which incorporates the rights of parents to complain about any failure of the authority to fulfil its duties under the Act
- Establishing effective monitoring and evaluation of procedures, activities and processes for parental involvement

One key element was graded as weak:

- Establishing an effective communication framework with parents which facilitates communication with the whole service, within community networks, between schools.

3.5 During the Consultation process comments were also raised regarding:

- Officer support and finance being available to implement the strategy
- Leadership in schools
- IT availability and GLOW access

3.6 The outcome of the consultations confirms that we are in a strong position to begin to implement the strategy.

In summary the Parental Involvement Strategy has provided the mechanism for ascertaining what the service requires to do to improve parental involvement. It provides both a planning and self-evaluation mechanism to ensure continuous improvement. All issues raised will be incorporated within the parental involvement planning for continuous improvement process.

3.7 The consultation process has provided assurance that the Parental Involvement Strategy framework ensures:

- All schools have a supported Parent Council
- Parents Councils have appropriate networking opportunities
- Children and young people have the best start in life
- Barriers to partnership working are removed
- Key information is available and easily accessible locally
- Parents are consulted on key issues relating to their children
- Parents are supported through transitions
- Agencies within communities continue to develop the Curriculum for Excellence
- Parents are communicated with using a variety of methods
- Parents be given the opportunity to be consulted on policy documents including the EL&L Service Plan
- That more clear guidance and training provided in relation to the recruitment process
- That the complaints and compliments procedure is available to all parents
- Aberdeenshire officers will continue to monitor and evaluate procedures, activities and processes for parental involvement

4. Area Implications

- 4.1 The results of the consultation will inform the strategy implementation plan and will be delivered consistently across the service and will impact on all schools and community learning and development activities. Officers will continue to support and monitor service and establishment progress in the implementation of a Parental Involvement Improvement Plan and advise schools on how to take the strategy forward. Feedback from parents will continue to influence practice and future improvement plans.

5. Staffing Implications

- 5.1 All staff will be informed about the recommendations arising from the consultation exercise. Staff are being encouraged to become more aware of the need for effective partnership working with parents. Headteachers should continue to plan and share across networks as delivery of the strategy continues.

6. Policy Implications

- 6.1 The service Parental Involvement Strategy constitutes a significant policy development for future engagement and partnership with parents in service policy developments and activities. It will deliver national requirements alongside local flexibility to ensure better outcomes for Aberdeenshire's children, young people and families.

Changes to policies emerging as a direct result of the Parental Involvement Strategy will be subject to separate reports.

In taking the strategy forward, Aberdeenshire Council will reflect national guidance from Scottish Government on engagement of parents.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The delivery of the Parental Involvement Strategy will be contained within the budget.

8. Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 There are no sustainability implications as a result of this report.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 The Head of Finance and the Monitoring Officer with Corporate Services, and Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development, have been consulted and are in agreement with the report.
- 9.2 The range of stakeholders in Aberdeenshire will continue to be part of the work relating to the delivery of Aberdeenshire's Parental Involvement Strategy.

10. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to instruct the Director to:-

- 10.1 use the Parental Involvement Strategy as the basis for developing future parental involvement policy and developments;**
- 10.2 ensure that all establishments commence the delivery of development within the strategy as they progress;**
- 10.3 regularly monitor and evaluate progress and report to future Committee on impact of the strategy; and**
- 10.4 bring forward a progress report to Committee in twelve months time.**

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Summary of Respondents

Parents/Carers

116 Individual Respondents and 42 Groups

EL&L – Staff

50 Individual Respondents and 3 Groups

Pupil Responses

40 Individual Respondents and 3 Groups

Other Respondents

1 Individual Respondent and 2 Groups

Summary of Consultation

The summary shows the percentage of respondents who agreed with the individual proposals outlined in the Parental Involvement Strategy. A summary of the responses along with the key themes emerging and comment is provided in Annex 2.