

Education Committee, 5 February 2019

**National Working Group: Guidance, training and support materials on parental involvement and engagement**

**22 January 2019, 3-5pm, St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh**

National Officer Jenny Kemp attended this, the second meeting of this Scottish Government convened working group, for the EIS. Other attendees were Eileen Prior (Connect), Terry Lanagan (ADES), Cheryl Burnett (NPFS), Beverley Ferguson (Education Scotland), and John Forsyth (Families Need Fathers). The civil servant chairing the group was David Leitch.

David updated on group membership; he was still waiting to hear from head teachers that he had contacted in December. Jenny reported that we had sought to find a member working in early years settings to join the group but that no one was available. ES suggested their new early years officer.

It should be noted that the agenda for the meeting was only circulated two hours in advance and no papers were circulated in advance, making the usefulness of the meeting limited.

***Timescales for reviewing statutory guidance***

There was a discussion about timescales, which seem very ambitious. (David explained that Mr Swinney will want to explain to Parliament what he has done in lieu of an Education reform Bill so there is pressure on SG to expedite the review of the statutory guidance). SG is keen to have updated statutory guidance on the Parental Involvement Act completed by April 2019, and launched by the start of the new academic year (e.g. by Aug 2019). The group discussed how realistic this is, and gave feedback on a proposed review plan, tabled at the meeting.

A request for dates for working group meetings to be scheduled soon was made, this having been made at the first meeting also. David agreed to circulate a doodle poll soon after the meeting.

David agreed to explore options for editing which would mean the group working from one central document rather than multiple versions with different edits.

***Workshopping – capturing ideas for development***

The group discussed some initial thoughts about what to include and take out of the existing statutory guidance. SG was urged to hold onto the purpose of the Act (more parental involvement with schools, and more engagement with their children's learning, although the Act does not use the term 'engagement') and to the DFM's commitment to *update* the guidance, meaning that the new guidance will have to be different and more useful than the existing document.

Jenny raised the importance of the class teacher being reflected; that perspective is missing from the current version. Jenny also raised tone issues– suggesting that the document needs to recognise that education is a collaborative endeavour and that teachers should not be directed to do certain things in a tone that fails to recognise their professional judgement. It was further suggested that the document should recognise how extensively informal engagement with parents/carers happens, and the investment of time by class teachers in contacting families, and should be less centred on formal structures such as Parent Councils.

### ***Development of training and support materials***

This was an agenda item but, the meeting having started late, and attendees having other commitments that evening, there was no time to discuss it.

### ***Other points arising***

- The group discussed whether incorporating UNCRC into domestic law will have implications for this work and will seek clarity from SG lawyers.
- The group discussed some grey areas around parental involvement especially as it applies to over 16s which will need to be reflected in the guidance.
- The need for alignment with 'Learning Together' (e.g. using the same definitions of involvement and engagement) was noted.
- The need to include content on ELC settings was noted.
- Separate materials on Parent Councils being developed was mooted by ES as an option, to be returned to.
- Jenny noted that the equalities section would need to align with the 2010 Equality Act, which was not extant at the time of the Parental Involvement Act being passed.
- It was agreed that complaints language would be better phrased in terms of 'raising concerns' or similar.
- The need to refer to non-teaching school staff in the guidance was noted.

### ***Date of next meeting***

Dates to be agreed by doodle poll; likely to be late February 2019.