Submission to the Education and Skills Committee, Scottish Parliament Children and Young People – Information Sharing Scotland Bill.

Parent Network Scotland is grateful to have the opportunity to comment on the Bill and as such will feed back responses from some of our parents. Whilst this is not indepth about the Bill and the COP it is about how the parents we have engaged with truly feel and their real concerns.

Parent Network Scotland have been delivering parenting support in Scotland for 26 years and believe that forming strong relationships with parents and building their skills and confidence has an impact on the way they parent their children. Our programme is based on the work of Haim Ginot who was a school teacher, a child psychologist and a parent educator. He pioneered techniques for conversing with children that are still taught today. Our work is solution focussed and as such believe parents, with support, do have the skills and the willingness to make life better for themselves and their children.

In our experience and communication with parents regarding the NPS it has always came down to trust and relationships. Many parents are unaware of the full impact of the NPS and as such there lies the gap. Proper full and understandable information is seen to be lacking and could have been given at an earlier stage with the input from parents helping to guide this Bill. Although we did involve some parents at the introduction of the NP many have been missed and a catch up is required to have any confidence in any Bill that impacts family life.

Most parents have good relationships with schools and their children thrive, most are happy that if anything should happen to their children whilst they are at school they trust an adult in charge will have the best interest of their child at heart. This is the way it should be and for the majority it has been. However, we also know that there are some relationship that would not withstand this NPS and parents and children would have their lives negatively impacted. We have spoken to parents who have relayed stories of those seen to be in charge overruling them and reminding them of their position! This must be tackled.

Those who will be placed in the role of the NP must have adequate training and support in relationships and understanding of parent’s issues that may well impact their children. Most parents by now are aware of GIRFEC and support it, but it’s the GIRFEP (getting it right for every parent) that’s the bridge between the NP and GIRFEC. With a light shining on ACE’s (adverse childhood experiences) in flavour at the moment we need to take into account the whole family. We need to know how ACE’s impact the parent’s ability to parent and support them through their own challenges. Whilst I am aware we are more focused on parents in this response it is because we believe that parents are the biggest role model in children’s lives so it’s crucial we get this part right. Do parents know they have the right to seek help or refuse it? Do they know what information can or cannot be shared? Do they have the confidence to do so? Do the professionals have the confidence to have those conversations with parents at a time of stress and anxiety?

Overall we support that the aims of GIRFEC and SHANARRI are in place to help support families have better the best families lives they can, we also recognise that some more work around the clarity of what is shared, when and to whom does not become too bureaucratic that it destroys the trust and leads to a breakdown of relationship in which those involved are all working to for the best interest of the child.

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