

## **Connect's statement on the Angela Morgan Review**

Connect is a long-standing independent parents' group and a registered charity which provides support to parents and carers all over Scotland. We provide membership services to individual Parent Councils and PTAs, as well as offering advice and information to individual parents who have concerns about any aspect of the education of their child, or the wider education system. We support education professionals in developing their skills and understanding around effective partnership working with families and the wider community.

Connect fully supports the recommendations in Angela Morgan's review of the implementation of additional support for learning legislation, and while we are glad to see the Scottish Government's acceptance of the majority of these we are disappointed that the response has been less than enthusiastic and notably tardy. We welcome the Government's Action Plan commitments to engaging with children and young people and their families.

We are however disappointed to see most of these actions will be reviewed in October 2021. We know things are challenging due to the pandemic, but the lived experience for children with additional support needs and their families during the pandemic makes this work even more critical.

How children and families will be actively engaged is a crucial factor in implementation of the plan: this needs radical and creative thinking on the part of Government and others across education, so that children and parents are respected and true partners. We would like to see much more detail about this and how they will be involved all levels in meaningful and clearly understood ways. Parents need informal but informed support in their local context, as they navigate the education system and advocate for their child.

Our lockdown surveys showed the levels of desperation some families faced: they told us they had been abandoned by the education and social care system. Specialist support in schools continues to be missing for many children with Additional Support Needs, and families continue to struggle. Arrangements must be made immediately, so schools and children receive the specialist input they need and families are not left to manage without support.

Angela Morgan's report made it crystal clear that one of the most intractable challenges for children and families are attitudes and values: unless these change, so all children are truly valued equally and their parents' role as advocates also valued, nothing will change in our schools. While resources are important, money does not change attitudes.

We would also like to see stronger commitments on career progression for teachers, to make Additional Support Needs an essential part of professional learning and teacher training as well as a valued career choice with opportunities for advancement, and on using the review to inform Audit Scotland's national performance audit on outcomes for children and young people with additional support needs.

Angela Morgan has carefully listened to children and young people, and their families: they have high hopes that their experiences will lead to change. At Connect, we pledge to campaign to make sure that improvements are made, so Scottish children have access to consistently high-quality services and support when they need this.

Unfortunately, over the years, we've seen other reports and reviews calling for urgent change and improvement published, only to then fall by the wayside. We will do everything we can to make sure this does not happen now. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill will confirm children's rights but action must be taken immediately on Angela Morgan's recommendations.

*Eileen Prior, Executive Director, 10 November 2020*

### **Connect pandemic surveys**

To date Connect has run three surveys on parent views on their family's experiences and needs during the pandemic:

- [1 to 30 April](#)
- [27 May to 30 June 2020](#)
- 14 September to 31 October (to be published)

These generated a valuable volume of parent comments, and we have included a sample here which highlight the experiences of many families with children with additional support needs during lockdown.

### **Lack of support during lockdown**

*'I'm worried about my P1 son learning to read. He was a bit behind before this started and trying to encourage him to read seems to be failing. We were told we would get a telephone call from his teacher over the Easter holidays, but it didn't happen. We are just worried that he will be further behind when he starts p2'*

*'A horrific amount of pressure on families from the Council. For ASN pupils, teachers have detailed forms to fill in on how IEP targets are being met. For parents with pupils with ASNs it can be very hard to get them to do the huge amount of work being expected'*

*'We are really really struggling; my son attends a SEN school and the pressure at home is almost unbearable'*

*'My daughter at high school gets extra help in classes so unfortunately she has not been able to get that support and some schoolwork is very confusing and hard for her and she feels she cannot attempt it'*

*'Angela Morgan's review of Additional Support for Learning had highlighted many of the things we have experienced in the last 13 weeks! It appears dependent on the skill and motivation of individual teachers as to the quality of the teaching. I have seen no leadership from our primary school. My son has autism and we have had*

*no contact from his teacher except to ask for a photo from P1 to celebrate them finishing primary school'.*

### **Lack of information**

*'My youngest child has ASD and we've had only 1 interaction with the ASN outreach team and 0 information on how my child will transition into P2'*

*'I am not anxious about the Coronavirus. I am anxious over the lack of information for ASN children in mainstream settings. We have had absolutely zero updates on how this will be handled'*

*'Lack of communication for families of children with ASN seems to be a widespread issue'*

*'My son with additional needs has no support put in place for starting school and the nursery has said this cant been sorted until term starts'*

### **Children without official diagnosis**

*'My child struggles with their maths and reading and could possibly be dyslexic so I'm concerned about catching up when the schools do go back'*

*'Son has medical issue we were in middle of investigations for and this has all stopped but he is still in pain which makes schoolwork difficult'*

*'I have ADHD and so do my kids (kids as yet undiagnosed), which makes home schooling very difficult'*

*'Assessment for ASN required but unsure if this will happen in current climate'*

*'CAMHS and SALT assessments not being able to be progressed'*

### **Difficulties engaging children in learning during lockdown**

*'My child is very reluctant to do any school work. Recently started seeing speech and language and starting dyslexia assessment. Feel like he is falling behind already due to being a single parent still at work and with a 1 year old he isn't getting the support needed to achieve.'*

*'My son is autistic and has done no home schooling as in his mind school work only gets done in school. I'm concerned he is going to fall behind.'*

*'My child has DCD and dyslexia and struggles not being in a school routine, we have achieved very little over the last few months and I worry about her anxiety on returning to school and managing social distancing.'*

*'My son has ASD and needs learning support in school. This makes it especially difficult home schooling as I am not sure how best to support him. He is struggling with change in routine to home schooling and to keep up with workload. It would be nice to speak to individual teachers as different subjects seem to pose different challenges to him.'*

## **Concerns about transitions**

*'My son was due to leave his special school and transition to college, which will be now very challenging to arrange.'*

*'My children both have additional support needs and have one to one support at school. I am worried about how the transition back to school will work for them and how they will be affected by the changes that will happen when they desperately need consistency.'*

*'My eldest daughter is autistic and was due to start an enhanced transition for S1 next year and this obviously has not started yet. This is something we are particularly concerned about. As my daughter is high functioning and poses little behavioural concerns at school, she flies under the radar and we commonly have to prompt the school for help. I've had to prompt them about this situation too and only because of that is she being given a visit to school next week in preparation to return as a P7 pupil after the holidays.'*

*'How are children with ASN withing a mainstream setting going to be supported no transition back to own class and then shorter week but longer hours? This will be stressful for my son never mind me as a single parent and feel this will be a very challenging time for us.'*

*'My daughter is adopted and experiences separation anxiety. School are not very understanding of her emotional difficulties so she is happier being schooled at home. I am very worried about changes at school creating more separation from her peers and how she will manage the transition away from me if the school continue to show lack of understanding of children's mental health & wellbeing in real life.'*

## **Effect on other children in family**

*'Distance based learning is very very difficult for children with learning disabilities. There is also a very negative impact on their siblings.'*

*'I have an 8-year-old girl who attends mainstream. She is normally great but I'm unable to give her 1 on 1 time as her older autistic brother needs my attention. She is struggling with online work.'*

*'It is very difficult- I am working full time and have 3 children at home, one of whom is autistic/ ADHD and dominates most of my time.'*

*'I think expectation to work at home with two primary school children requiring support with a pre-school child with ASN while trying to defer said child and bring put through a protracted and difficult process has had a detrimental impact on our family as a whole. We have what we need in terms of technology and resources but in terms of time it is difficult to home school and be available to work even with two of us at home. We are also expected to do speech therapy and other therapy with our son. It is impossible task and placing huge strain on our family yet I realise in many ways we are so fortunate to be able to feed them and support their learning.'*

## **Experiences on return to school**

*'Not having the physical contact with some of the PSAs required to pacify some anxieties (which were there before Covid)'*

*'She misses some of the staff and pupils she had been getting to know. Misses specialist support she had been getting from ASD outreach team. Dislikes that the same rule is not being applied to others fairly.'*

*'My sons Autistic and just started high school. and I feel that he would have benefited from a phased in back to school after lockdown as he is struggling quite a bit just now.'*

*'My son is in an ASN base. We've still had no homework since returning to school despite google drive/classroom being set up. He needs so much more support now with his education and I feel I could be providing small additional chunks at home to enhance this. I am not a teacher so without the guidance or being provided with any awareness of what is currently being taught at school just now, I'm a bit lost.'*

## **Positive comments**

*'Daughter is dyslexic and needs coaxing with some of her work - teacher is very supportive and has answered messages and phoned us to help.'*

*'We're doing ok. My daughter has dyslexia so is benefiting from one to one time - using methods that suit her better. So far so good. My problem is scheduling as I am working full time from home and it's difficult to balance my job with schooling.'*

*'Due to my child's ASN the school have been phoning each week and have sent home his individual project that he works on in school.'*