

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 27 APRIL 2000**

#### **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS : PARENTS FORUM**

##### **Report by Director of Education**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for establishment of a Special Educational Needs Parents Forum in East Ayrshire.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Parents are vitally important in the education of their children. Throughout schooling young people remain inextricably linked to their families. Parents and carers are the most important influences in their lives and on their learning. Partnership between the authority and parents is especially important when the young person has special educational needs.
- 2.2 In the SOEID report "Parents as Partners: Enhancing the Role of Parents in School Education" 1998, education authorities are encouraged to consider the establishment of arrangements which involve regular consultation with groups of parents.
- 2.3 In 1999 the charity organisation "Children in Scotland" set up a new national independent information and advice service for children and young people with Special Educational Needs. This is a Scottish Executive funded initiative launched by Sam Galbraith, MSP Minister for Children and Education. As part of this initiative Children in Scotland propose, in partnership with local authorities, to organise a series of seminars to provide an opportunity for parents and carers of young people with Special Educational Needs to explore relevant issues.
- 2.4 The "Sparky Project", a charity organisation concerned with disability and children's rights, working as agents for "Children in Scotland" has approached East Ayrshire to offer support in organising such a seminar.

### **3. PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 It is proposed to organise a morning seminar in June 2000 for both Education staff and parents of pupils with Special Educational Needs from both mainstream and special sectors. The main aims of the seminar would be as follows:
- to raise awareness of local and national SEN policy and provision

- to initiate dialogue with parents and carers of young people with Special Educational Needs
- to explain the possible functions of a SEN Parents Forum
- to describe the advantages it would provide
- to explore how it might operate

**3.2** The outcome of this seminar would be to establish a SEN Parents Forum in East Ayrshire with the following aims:

- to formalise the procedures for the authority partnership with the parents of young people with Special Educational Needs
- to provide a mechanism for consultation with parents on policy and practice within mainstream and special schools
- to provide opportunities for parents to meet and discuss issues with other parents who are facing the challenges and difficulties of having a special needs child
- to provide the opportunity for authority personnel concerned with special needs to listen and respond to parents view and concerns

**4. LIAISON WITH OTHER FORUMS**

- 4.1** It is recognised that there are a significant number of groups, both at local and national level, concerned with various types of disability. While it would be impossible to include in the Forum representatives from each, it would be the intention to establish partnerships with these groups and invite them to attend for specific purposes.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1** The costs for the venue, catering and publications for the initial seminar in June 2000 to establish the SEN Parents Forum would be met by Children in Scotland.
- 5.2** Any costs associated with the ongoing development of the Forum would be met from the Excellence Fund: Support for Parents.

**6. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1** Nil

**7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1** It is recommended that Members of the Education Committee:
- (i) agree to the Seminar planned for June 2000 on the basis of the details outlined in this paper;

- (ii) agree to the establishment of a Special Educational Needs Parents Forum;
- (iii) invite the Director to report on progress in due course; and
- (iv) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew  
Director of Education

GS/DL  
11 April 2000

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Depute Director of Education, Tel: (01563) 576089 or Muriel Reid, Quality Development Officer, Tel: (01563) 555650.

**AGENDA**