Scottish practitioners are used to embracing change

Hazel Whitters

I quickly downloaded this month’s publication by CELCIS as I was keen to read the views of the two contributors to the named person debate. Recent months have seen sporadic and intensive coverage from the media on behalf of Government, parents, professionals and interested public. The articles in CELCIS were presented as two sides of a discussion on this significant topic, however, as a reader I identified a great deal of common ground between the authors. I detected a shared passion, the same goals, and a sense of anxiety from Mike Burns and Maggie Mellon.

I have practised and studied for over 30 years in the field of child care and education. I am sure that both authors would agree that legislation has always directed practice; but learning which leads to development of service-users and service-providers occurs through localised implementation of statutes within an organisation, and in the context of a community. My experiences have taught me the importance of professionals and parents seeking, and sharing, knowledge and understanding, educating and being educated, accepting and questioning, respecting and responding – team skills in the parent-professional partnerships.

Scottish services have been challenged and ultimately enhanced by ‘new approaches’ in the last decade in the form of the Curriculum for Excellence, Pre-birth to Three, and our National Practice Model – Getting It Right for Every Child. Whether your role is strategic, operational or that of a service-user, or interested party, you will have experienced the negativity, confusion, miscommunications, stress, and positive outcomes associated with these examples.

I have to disagree with the comment by Mike Burns that the term GIRFEC is ‘obscure professional jargon’. The abbreviation GIRFEC in the context of daily practice has become synonymous with the optimum care of children and their families. The term GIRFEC is applied with pride in organisations as it encapsulates the ethos associated with pedagogy which regards each child as an individual – a unique human being whose interpretation and perception of his or her world is paramount to the responsive care by professionals and parents.

Maggie Mellon acknowledges that the responsibilities, as appointed to the ‘named person’, are incorporated within professional roles but she questions the lack of detail within the current guidance, and the necessity for legislation. Legislation is the foundation of knowledge and understanding which contributes to consistency of good practice throughout Scotland. Partnership working,
Scottish practitioners are used to embracing change. It makes our vocations exciting, stimulating, exacting, challenging and rewarding. I can assure both authors that despite any differences in opinions of this legislation, practitioners will continue to practice conscientiously, and reflectively in support of all children and families. I urge policy makers, professionals, parents, and the public to remember our shared goals and our passion. Please use your power and expertise to help the next generation to enjoy childhood and to become resilient, educated, and caring young adults.

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