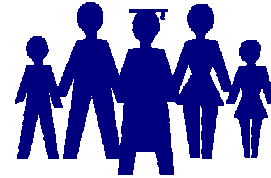


Backchat



SPTC Newsletter

Scottish Parent Teacher Council, the independent voice for parents, is a national organisation. It has been serving parents' groups in schools for 60 years.

September 2007
Issue 99

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“Bullying in Schools: Can parents help tackle it?”

This is the question we plan to address at our **Annual Conference on Saturday 10th November**.

The venue is the Holyrood Campus (Moray House) of Edinburgh University, and registration starts at 10.00 am. Andrew Mellor of the Anti-Bullying Network will run an interactive session in the morning and then, in the afternoon, there will be an open discussion on any issues of interest to PTAs or Parent Councils, and a chance to swap experiences with folk from other schools.

The cost is £7.50 for parents and teachers from member organisations - £5.00 each if more than one person comes. Places are still available but limited. Registration forms were sent out in September and can also be downloaded from our website, www.sptc.info

Parent Councils and Insurance

Parent Councils, like PTAs, need public liability insurance for their activities. We have been collecting information about what is happening in different authorities. The picture is almost complete and the following patterns are emerging.

1) Authorities using the SPTC Membership scheme

The following authorities have paid for all their Parent Councils to become part of SPTC's membership insurance scheme:-

Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll & Bute, Clackmananshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dumfries & Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, Fife, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland and South Lanarkshire. We have sent information to the headteachers of all schools in these authorities outlining the cover; this information is also available on our website. The cover for Parent Councils is exactly the same as for PTAs and includes such activities as school fetes, pony rides, the provision of home baking and school discos. We can also provide employers liability certificates where the Parent Council employs someone to carry out an activity for them.

2) Authorities providing group insurance other than the SPTC scheme

The following authorities have taken out a group scheme for all their Parent Councils, but not with SPTC:- Angus, Dundee, East Ayrshire, Edinburgh, Highland, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, Orkney, and Perth & Kinross.

HEALTH WARNING: We have not heard the details of each scheme but we have been told by ANGUS that their cover is “low level” and that anyone wanting to do anything active would need extra cover, whilst EAST AYRSHIRE covers the “legally agreed remit” of the Parent Council and specifically states that this does not include activities like quad bike racing, bouncy castle hire, disco evenings.

The message is clear: if you are in one of these authorities, you **cannot assume** that the Parent Council is covered for the same range of activities that the PTA was covered for under the SPTC scheme and you **must check**, if you plan to hold a social or fundraising event, that you have the necessary cover.

As we cannot double-insure Parent Councils, we can only offer cover to a Parent Council if it opts out of the authority scheme.

3) Authorities offering advice

The following authorities have not taken out any group cover for their Parent Councils. Instead they are providing information and urging Parent Councils to take out insurance for themselves. These are:- East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Moray, South Ayrshire, Stirling and West Lothian. Where a PTA has definitely disbanded within these authorities, we have transferred the cover across to the Parent Council. Parent Councils can also join our membership insurance scheme directly.

4) No information

We have no information about what the following authorities are doing:- Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire. You **must check**, if you plan to hold a social or fundraising event, that you have the necessary cover. Where a PTA has definitely disbanded within these authorities, we have transferred the cover across to the Parent Council and Parent Councils can join our membership insurance scheme directly.

CHILD PROTECTION

There is a great deal of confusion about child protection. What is a disclosure check? When is it needed? What is it for? Who should get it done?

A disclosure check involves a search through a person’s police record to see if there is any conviction or other evidence that they have done something that would suggest that they are a risk to children.

It is needed when someone is appointed to a **post** or position where the **normal** duties include childcare. It is illegal to have a check done on someone who does not satisfy the criteria.

It is a mechanism for ensuring that the person appointed is not on the list of those banned from working with children.

Those making the appointment are the ones who should organise the disclosure check. This means that, if it is a PTA or Parent Council position, then it is the PTA or Parent Council who must get the check, not the school.

However, the check is of limited value as it only tells you what is known about someone’s past. It does not tell you anything about things that have not come to light, nor does it tell you what someone might do in the future. In many respects **safe practice at events** offers a better safeguard both to children and to the adults running the events.



RUNNING A DISCO

ADVICE ON SAFE PRACTICE

We have therefore prepared a leaflet offering advice on safe practice when running a disco, but the

advice we provide applies to any activities that involve children. We are providing a copy of the leaflet with this *Backchat* but it is also available on our website (www.sptc.info) along with our full range of free advice leaflets.

Curriculum for Excellence – Continuity And Change

Based on an article by Gill Stewart, treasurer for Comely Park Primary School PTA and Depute Director of Qualifications with the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

“Continuity” and “change” are at the heart of the Curriculum for Excellence because whilst it brings a new approach to education in Scotland, it also builds on the many strengths of the existing system.

The major change is to look at education not just in terms of traditional school work but also in how it helps youngsters develop their potential so that they are able to move with confidence beyond school to further/higher education, training or employment as well as playing an active part in society. Central to this is the idea that the curriculum should develop what are known as “the four capacities” in young people. These are to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

The curriculum will be organised into eight areas: expressive arts, health and well-being, literacy and language, numeracy and maths, religious and moral education, science, social studies and technological studies. There need be no fears that knowledge and understanding have disappeared; rather Curriculum for Excellence should be viewed as Knowledge + with the “plus” being a whole range of skills and abilities that youngsters will find useful throughout their lives. Moreover, these “skills” will be built into the Curriculum so that they are a natural part of teaching in all the eight areas. For example, numeracy will not just be part of maths, it could also be taught in health and well-being when youngsters are asked to work out split times in a relay race or adjust recipe quantities for a smaller or larger cake. It is also intended that there will be more cross-curricular “experiences”. Youngsters could work on producing a “changing environment” newsletter which would involve science plus skills like working together, planning, ICT and literacy, with spelling and grammar being important too!

Another change - and one that is long overdue - is that the curriculum will move seamlessly from 3 to 18; gone are the separate chunks – pre-five, 5-14 and then the exam stages. There will still be stages, but they will follow on from each other without a break. The new stages are:

Stages in Curriculum for Excellence

Early	from nursery to the end of primary one
One	to the end of primary four
Two	end of primary seven
Three	end of first year of secondary school
Four	end of third year of secondary school
Senior	years four, five and six of secondary school

Qualifications are still part of the process and as, at present, will be a feature of the “senior” stage, or years four, five and six in the secondary school. Currently we have two sets of qualifications covering levels below Higher – Standard Grade and the Access and Intermediate National Qualification Courses (*see back page). However, the exact shape of the qualifications is likely to be changed so that there is a clearer relationship between the curriculum followed in primary & early secondary and the new qualifications system. There will be a government consultation on proposed changes sometime in 2008 and parents will have a chance to comment.

The aim of the Curriculum is to produce a simplified and more coherent education system that is easier to understand, meets the needs of a changing society and allows youngsters to develop fully. There is good reason to be optimistic.

Your Questions Answered

Our usual DJ can't do our Hallowe'en disco this year. My eldest son has offered to stand in; however he is only 13 years old. Is this OK?

Your public liability insurance which is part of your SPTC membership also covers people helping at events as they are acting on behalf of the PTA. So your 13 year old is perfectly OK to do "his thing"! However, you should be aware that it only covers children between the ages of 5 and 17 years and adults between 18 and 75 years.

Our PTA is now a sub-committee of the Parent Council but, as a PTA, we had insurance through SPTC and got an employer's liability certificate for the teacher who runs our language club. The certificate ran out at the end of August; would you please provide another one?

I notice that your school is in a local authority that is providing its own insurance for Parent Councils. This means that you no longer get insurance as part of your SPTC membership and therefore we cannot provide you with an updated certificate. You will have to contact your local authority about this.

We have just formed a Parent Council and we are struggling to work out what we do. Can you help?

We have a series of leaflets ranging from good practice in committee meetings, the role of office bearers to fundraising ideas and an easy guide to *National Qualifications which might help. They are available free of charge from the office or they can be downloaded from our website www.sptc.info

In Backchat 98 you said that if we provided or sold alcohol we needed to apply for a temporary permission from the licensing department. However, I was told it's OK if you provide the alcohol free of charge. Can you clarify this?

We have made careful inquiries of the Police and been told that if your welcome night for new parents (or similar event) is completely free, you do not need to get a license but, if there is any charge at the door or by sale of ticket, then you should get a temporary permission.

News from You

This is a new feature in Backchat where we highlight good practice and ideas from Scottish PTAs and Parent Councils.

Here is a fantastic idea from Auchterless Primary PTA in Aberdeenshire who wanted to let local parents know about all the various clubs and groups available for children in the area. The PTA put together a booklet based on recommendations from parents; each entry provided contact details and basic information (costs, age limits, etc) for each group. For more details, contact SPTC.

If you are thinking about setting up your own PTA/Parent Council website, then have a look at Bridge of Allan Primary. Their Parent Council is called "FAST" (Families and School Together) and their website (www.fastonline.org.uk) is amazing with news of fundraising events, minutes from meetings, school and education news and even a chance for parents/friends to email comments and feedback. Of course, not everyone is as computer-literate as this, but even so you may find some good ideas.

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