

## Helping young people get along in life

ProjectScotland (PS) helps young people get on in life through volunteering opportunities. This year they'll match over 600 people aged 16-30 with charities across Scotland, giving them life changing experiences.



PS work with all types of young people; graduates looking for experience, students' fresh out of school, those keen to break out of unemployment, the list goes on. If you know someone aged 16-30 who could benefit from work experience and new skills visit [www.projectscotland.co.uk](http://www.projectscotland.co.uk) for more information.

PS has 170 charity partners all across Scotland, creating diverse and valuable volunteering opportunities. Each one is designed to be 20-30 hours a week for a period of 3 months.

One of the features of PS is that the team spends time getting to know each volunteer so they find the right match based on what they want to do. Young people are also provided with a Mentor, who will help to guide them through the experience and offer invaluable support. Volunteers also benefit from ProjectScotland workshops on subjects such as CV writing, interview skills and how to use LinkedIn.

PS's model provides one-to-one support for young people to help them realise their potential - and it really works.

After a ProjectScotland placement, 78% of volunteers move onto work, education or training. 93% said the experience made them more ready for work. For more information about volunteer placements or becoming a Mentor visit [www.projectscotland.co.uk](http://www.projectscotland.co.uk)

Amy Gunn, Senior Marketing & Communications Manager, ProjectScotland

## Family Friendly Working Scotland

Greater flexibility and an improved work life balance are becoming increasingly important to employees. And for parents and carers long and inflexible working hours simply leave many unable to cope as they find themselves time poor, cash poor and often both.

Work really needs to work for all and that includes working parents, grandparents and carers.

Funded by the Scottish Government, the Family Friendly Working Scotland (FFWS) programme was established in 2014 to work with employers and employees to make Scotland more family friendly in the field of employment. The partners in the programme are Working Families, Fathers Network Scotland, Parenting Across Scotland and the Scottish Government.

The FFWS free Legal Helpline gives parents and carers advice on employment rights as well as helping them to negotiate the flexible hours they want.

The programme is establishing a Stakeholder Group and research will also be conducted to give greater insight into how we live and work in Scotland. This research will hopefully influence change. FFWS will also run a series of events throughout the year looking at hot topics such as Shared Parental Leave and embedding Flexible Working. To find out more please visit [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk) and visit the Scotland section.

Follow on twitter @ffworkscot

## Parentzone

Parentzone, Education Scotland's resource for parents, is up and running with fresh, reliable information for parents. With functions like 'My School' – a searchable directory where you can find links to every school in Scotland, and 'Learning at home' with resources to support your child's reading, writing and numbers, Parentzone is a valuable tool for parents. Visit the website here: <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone/learningathome/index.asp>

## A chance for your school to win £500!

The Church of Scotland has opened a competition celebrating pupils' work within the field of religious observance and education. The Stevenson Prize will be awarded to one primary school, a secondary school and a special needs school.

You can find out more about the Stevenson Prize, with how to enter and what judges are looking for on our website: <http://www.sptc.info/chance-to-win-500-prize-for-schools-in-scotland/>



Scottish Parent Teacher Council

Issue No. 136, February 2015

# backchat

## Working for parents and carers in Scottish schools

It may be freezing out there, but there's always a warm welcome at SPTC! And we've been doing a lot of welcoming recently – there has probably never been a busier time for parent calls and emails to our team, many of them with worries about what's happening in their school or local authority.

Shortages of teachers, education service cuts and queries about exams, 1+2 languages or additional support needs help: these are just some of the issues we've been responding to.

We always want to hear what's happening locally so we can highlight your issues to government and to MSPs – as we did recently when we were on a panel in front of the Education and Culture Committee at Parliament. We were one of a number of organisations asked to share what our parent members think about how education budgets are set and how well informed and involved parents are in the process.

In its findings, the Committee highlighted many of the points we made – and it also announced a new enquiry, looking into the reasons for the 'attainment gap': the fact our young people from advantaged homes do so much better than those from poorer households. The Committee is asking a lot of questions, including about the role of parents in helping improve outcomes for young people.

We'll be sending in responses to the Committee over the next few months – let us know what you think.

This is a packed issue of Backchat, with lots of news we hope you find interesting. Probably the biggest piece of news from us is our first Annual Lecture from Dr Joyce Epstein on 3 March. We're really excited to have such a great speaker who is absolutely passionate about parents being involved in their children's education. Our thanks to Skills Development Scotland for its support in making the lecture possible. We really hope members will come to hear Joyce and take part in the AGM: full detail elsewhere in Backchat.

**Hope to see you in March!**

## In this issue

- **Parents' Voice - we need you!**
- **New SPTC resources**
- **Lecture and AGM 2015**
- **Chance for your school to win £500**

**To save on paper we're now sending out Backchat by email – but members can still request a paper copy, just let us know at [sptc@sptc.info](mailto:sptc@sptc.info)**

## Work with us!

*We are always on the look-out for people to join our team of Regional Advisors who deliver our Information & Training sessions to Parent Councils and PTAs. If you enjoy meeting new people and are passionate about parental involvement then this could be the job for you! Get in touch with Eleanor (0131 474 6177 or [eleanor@sptc.info](mailto:eleanor@sptc.info)) for more information.*



Scottish Parent Teacher Council



parents\_sptc

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## There's a lot happening in the world of Scottish education at the moment – and your input is needed.

- The Education and Culture Committee at Scottish Parliament wants to find out more about how schools and parents can work together to support children's progress at school. So if you have a child at a Scottish school why don't you take part? The survey will take no more than two minutes to complete and closes on 7 March. <http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ParentsSurvey>
- The Education and Culture Committee is also involved in work around the attainment gap in education. The Committee will hold any evidence sessions on the following topics: implications for schools and teachers, the role of the third and private sector and finally how parents (including guardians) and schools can best work together to raise all pupils' attainment, particularly those whose attainment is lowest. The closing date for parents to submit evidence is 20 March – you can find out how to give evidence on the Scottish Parliament website <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/85488.aspx>
- The General Teaching Council for Scotland has opened a consultation on the possibility of increasing the numbers of secondary teachers who are fully registered in two subjects. This could be an advantage to both teachers and pupils – find out more on the GTCS website: <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/consultations>

Keep an eye on our website [www.sptc.info](http://www.sptc.info) and Twitter account @parents\_sptc where we post regularly about how parents can get involved and affect change. You can also read our responses to consultations and evidence on our website: <http://www.sptc.info/policy-reports/>

## Parents' Voice - we need you!

Parents' Voice is an online pool of parents who are willing to take part in our online surveys on a variety of topics. You won't receive more than one email a month and all responses help us to guide what we do and say.

Our last survey was on the subject of introduction of Curriculum for Excellence and the new National Exams. Many thanks to all who completed the questionnaire – you can read the response we had here <http://www.sptc.info/parents-voice-national-qualifications-and-curriculum-for-excellence-september-2014/>

Our next planned survey will be on the much discussed topic of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme. It's a few years since the old Disclosure system was changed with the introduction of the PVG membership scheme. At SPTC we were very involved with the Government when the new scheme was being developed, making sure that parents and parent groups were taken in to consideration.

The Government at that time were very clear that they wanted to make sure the new legislation would be 'proportionate' – in other words, that it would be used only where it is needed to keep children, and vulnerable adults, safe. The spirit of the legislation was clear: the new scheme would be used proportionately and not as routine for everyone who could possibly come into contact with children.

The Government particularly recognised that Parent Councils and other parent groups would only come under the legislation in certain circumstances, and certainly not routinely.

Some of you will have attended our PVG information session for parents, which we developed with the help of Disclosure Scotland, the government agency which manages the PVG scheme.

The legislation has now had time to settle in, and we continue to answer questions from parents – and teachers! – about how it works, so we thought it would be a good time to check with our Parents Voice group about your experiences of how PVG is working in your school or local authority.

We'll be sending out a survey in the next week or two – if you're not currently part of the PV group, you can sign up now on the website or by emailing us.

We look forward to hearing what you have to say!

## New SPTC resource and sessions

We have updated our leaflet on School Inspections following advice from Education Scotland. You can access this leaflet at: <http://www.sptc.info/leaflets/school-inspections/>

We've also added two new sessions to our programme of free Information & Training sessions for SPTC members. **Involving all Parents** not only addresses the barriers some parents may have in engaging with their child's school and how a Parent Council may help overcome these but also ways of involving more parents on your PC.

**Helping to Improve your School** looks at practical ways for parents to become involved in school improvement plans and evaluation. If you are interested in hosting or attending these new sessions please contact Eleanor Coner on 0131 474 6177 or email [eleanor@sptc.info](mailto:eleanor@sptc.info)

## We're working for you

SPTC staff and directors attend conferences, seminars, workshops and much more all over Scotland to ensure we are sharing your perspective with the organisations that work in Scottish education. We've created a new section on the website called 'On Your Behalf' – this lets you see how we're working for our members.

You can see this section on the homepage of our website [www.sptc.info](http://www.sptc.info) or read reports from events we've attended at

<http://www.sptc.info/policy-reports/>

## SPTC Lecture and AGM

### We're excited to announce the date of our first Annual Lecture, on 3 March!

It's happening at Glasgow Science Centre and features Doctor Joyce Epstein from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. She has worked for many years in the area of parental involvement and will talk about how partnership programmes between school and family can lead to improved educational outcomes. The lecture is supported by Skills Development Scotland.

It's absolutely free of charge so don't miss out and reserve your place here! Or get in touch and we can send you a booking form.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/edit?eid=15350694340>

### SPTC members - have your say at our AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will take place before the Lecture and is a chance for members to feedback to SPTC with anything that's on your mind and to hear about our plans.

You can also let us know if you support the new nominated directors – have a look on our website to find out more about the nominees

<http://www.sptc.info/director-nominations/>

Our AGM is free too but only available for SPTC members – book your place here <https://www.eventbrite.com/edit?eid=15350694340>

## My World of Work

Skills  
Development  
Scotland

My World of Work for parents is an easily accessible web service packed with accurate and reliable course, job and career-related information, advice and resources to help you support your child as they make decisions about their future.

The web service was developed by Skills Development Scotland (SDS), with the help of mums and dads, and has advice on everything from subject choices to Modern Apprenticeships. It works alongside My World of Work, which your child will be introduced to by their SDS Career Coach during face-to-face sessions as they move through secondary school.

Features on My World of Work for parents include:

- A key dates calendar which flags up big deadlines, like UCAS applications or exam results day
- Information for parents with children who have additional support needs
- Information on eligibility for funding
- Further information about the work of SDS in schools
- A regular newsletter to subscribe to that highlights upcoming key decision dates, with links to relevant content on the site
- Access to updates on social media sites
- Links to partner agencies including SQA, SAAS and Young Scot

There are a number of routes open to your child as they start to think about their life after school, and SDS knows you will be the first port of call for answers to any questions they may have as they make those choices. My World of Work for parents is here to help you feel confident about supporting them throughout this journey.

[parents.myworldofwork.co.uk](http://parents.myworldofwork.co.uk)

