



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Evaluation of Enquire, the Scottish Advice Service for Additional Support for Learning

Education





EVALUATION OF ENQUIRE, THE SCOTTISH ADVICE SERVICE FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

REPORT 1

REPORT TO THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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In conducting this research, we have received much support from the staff of Enquire and other providers of advice and information services, teachers and children in schools, parents of children with additional support needs and local authority staff. We would like to extend warmest thanks to all of these and also staff of the Scottish Executive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND

Since 1999, Children in Scotland has been funded by the Scottish Executive Education Department to provide Enquire, the national advice service for additional support for learning in Scotland. Since 2004, Enquire has been contracted:

- (1) To maintain and develop the telephone advice and information service for parents, families and carers of children and young people with ASN/SEN across Scotland and for children and young people themselves.
- (2) To develop and implement a vigorous and effective publicity programme to maintain and improve the profile of the service and to encourage increased use of the information service, particularly by children and young people.
- (3) To revise and expand the publications library to take account of recent and planned changes in additional support needs legislation and guidance.
- (4) To develop and implement a proactive outreach programme which ensures that children and young people have access to the necessary information and advice at a local level to make informed decisions about ASN/SEN.
- (5) To devise and implement management, monitoring and evaluation systems for the service.

In this report, we present findings from an evaluation of the services provided by Enquire. A second report includes an analysis of future options for the delivery of advice and information services in the light of the new Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, implemented from November 2005.

2. RESEARCH AIMS AND STRATEGY

2.1 Research Questions

The following questions were addressed:

- To what extent has Enquire met its objectives as specified in the 2004-2006 contract? These include maintaining and developing the telephone information and advice service; implementing an effective publicity programme to maintain and improve the profile of the service; revising and expanding the publications library to take account of the new ASL legislation; developing a pro-active outreach programme aimed at parents and children/young people; devising and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation systems.

- How is the current service perceived by a range of stakeholders, including parents and carers, children and young people, other voluntary sector providers, and other professionals?
- How effective is Enquire's management structure and how does it relate to the parent organisation, Children in Scotland?
- Is the service offering value for money and is it cost effective?
- What are the implications of the ASL legislation for the future provision of information and advice?
- What organisations are currently providing information and advice for children and young people and to what extent are overlaps apparent?
- What formats and modes of delivery are currently being used and what do particular groups of parents/carers, children and young people indicate would be the most effective form and content of future services?

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The following methods were used to address the above questions:

3.1 Key informant interviews

Face-to face interviews were conducted with members of the Enquire team, the Enquire management committee and the Director of Children in Scotland to examine how each aspect of the contracted work has been undertaken (i.e. provision of information and advice; implementing a publicity programme to improve the profile of the service; revising and expanding the publications library; developing a pro-active outreach programme aimed at parents and children/young people; devising and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation system). Evidence was examined in relation to pre-specified deliverables and outcomes. The nature of the evaluation data gathered routinely was examined and its use in service monitoring and development was considered. Ideas for the future development of the service were gathered from members of the Enquire team, Children in Scotland personnel and the management committee. These are referred to here, and dealt with in more depth in the Part 2 report. Interviews conducted with ENQUIRE and Children in Scotland staff were as follows:

Director, Children in Scotland
 Policy Officer, Children in Scotland
 Manager, Enquire
 Helpline Development Officer, Enquire
 Helpline Assistant, Enquire
 Management Committee member, Enquire
 Information and Development Officer, Enquire

Interviews were also conducted with two service managers in the Scottish Executive Education Department, and the officer with responsibility for the development of the Additional Support for Learning Tribunal.

A mixture of telephone and face-to-face interviews were conducted with a range of external stakeholders to gather their views on the effectiveness of existing services and ideas for future development. Overall, nineteen interviews were conducted with external key informants from the following organisations:

Organisation
Govan Law Centre
Disability Rights Commission
Sleep Scotland
Communication Aids for Language and Learning (CALL) Centre
West of Scotland Deaf Children's Society
Independent Special Education Advice Service
Centre for Education in Racial Equality in Scotland
Capability Scotland
Care Coordination Network UK
ENABLE
Parentline Scotland
Scottish Traveller Education Programme
Visual Impairment Scotland
Equity group
Highland Educational Psychology Service (2 interviews)
Fife Educational Psychology Service
North Lanarkshire Educational Psychology Service (2 interviews)

3.2 Analysis of Enquire's activities

Enquire has maintained records of enquiries made to the helpline, website hits, requests for publications and a log of publicity work including participants in conferences and outreach events. These records were analysed to examine the quality of data maintained for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation and the nature of the service delivered. Of interest were:

- The number, range and nature of queries annually.
- How the queries were dealt with.
- Whether the query was made by the child/young person, parent/carer or professional.
- The nature of the SEN/ASN dealt with in the query.
- The geographical location of the person making the enquiry.
- The school sector to which the query related.
- Onward referrals

The nature of publicity materials, publications and public events were also examined in order to assess the effectiveness of public information and outreach work. Enquire's success in disseminating information to those at risk of social exclusion was considered, including people with a range of disabilities, those living in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, travellers and those for whom English was not their first language.

3.3 Questionnaire survey to Enquire service users

A short questionnaire was sent to a sample of parents/carers, young people and professionals who had contacted the service. In accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, 200 questionnaires were sent out by Enquire, so that the research team did not have access to names and contact details. Forty questionnaires were returned using pre-paid envelopes (just under 20% response rate). Questionnaires were also distributed to service users at the four consultation events on the new parents' guide to Additional Support for Learning legislation, and 81 questionnaires were returned. The table below shows the breakdown of service users completing the questionnaire.

Table 1: Status of service users completing questionnaire

Parent/Carer	76	61%
Professional	32	26%
Not stated	16	13%
Total	124	100%

Note: A few users described themselves as both parents and professionals.
Total participants: 121

The questionnaire examined the type of service requested/enquiry made and the extent to which the individual was satisfied with the quality of information provided by Enquire. Of particular interest was the accessibility of information to people with a range of social characteristics in relation to ethnicity, disability, age, gender and geographical location. Views of preferred formats and modes of delivery were considered, for example, in what circumstances were people satisfied with telephone advice and when did they feel a more personalised and localised service is required? How comfortable were users with web-based information and e-mail based enquiry systems? Individuals were asked about the type of service they would like to have available in the future. Findings from the questionnaire survey were triangulated with the analysis of Enquire's archives. In this report, we focus on users' views of the telephone helpline, publications, service profile and outreach/training events. The Part 2 report deals with broader issues of people's future needs and expectations for advice and information services.

3.4 Consultation meetings with service users and interviews with individual parents

Enquire was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department to produce a Parent's Guide on Additional Support for Learning. A series of consultation meetings were organised in different parts of Scotland, and researchers attended four of these in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling and Scottish Borders. Following these meetings, follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with eleven parents who provided their details for further contact.

3.5 Questionnaire survey to local authority staff, other professionals and voluntary sector organisations

A short questionnaire survey was administered to the contact person in each local authority to gather perspectives on the effectiveness of the services provided by Enquire. The same questionnaire was sent to all principal educational psychologists. As with service users, professionals were asked about their perceptions of the services provided by Enquire in relation to content and format and their thoughts about the future direction of advice and information services in relation to additional support needs. Sixteen questionnaires were completed by local authority officers and ten by educational psychologists. Key informant interviews were also completed with five educational psychologists.

3.6 Views of children and young people

It was hoped to attend a number of the outreach events and surgeries organised by Enquire during the initial phase of the evaluation (August – October 2005). However, no events took place during this period. Permission has been sought to attend two events which will take place in November and December, and in addition two discussion groups have been arranged with young people with additional support needs in schools. For the purposes of this report, we refer to professionals' and parents' views of Enquire's work with young people and an evaluation of young people's views conducted by Enquire in 2004.

In reporting the findings from the different sources, we have tried to be clear about the basis of the evidence and whether the view expressed was held by a majority, a significant minority or by one or two individuals.

4. FINDINGS

The broad conclusion of the evaluation is that Enquire is providing an important and highly valued service which empowers parents and makes a positive contribution to the work of local authority staff, health professionals and the voluntary sector. In the light of radical changes in provision of services for children with additional support needs, access to accurate and reliable information and advice will be even more important in the foreseeable future.

There was general agreement amongst all groups that the advice and information provided by Enquire via the helpline was impartial, accurate and supportive. Parents were particularly enthusiastic in their endorsement of the support offered by the helpline, describing the knowledge gained from the service as fundamentally empowering. A few suggested that more local information would be helpful. Local authority staff and support organisations, whilst generally positive, were more likely to sound cautionary notes. Some local authority staff felt that enquiries about local matters should be referred back to them, since Enquire was a national service and was unlikely, therefore, to have enough insight into local authority policy and practice. It

was also suggested by local authority staff that Enquire might encourage parents to adopt an adversarial stance. Some support organisations also suggested that Enquire perhaps did not have enough local knowledge and argued that they should do more to build up contact with local and specialist support groups. Questions were also raised by a few organisations about whether Enquire, in endeavouring to provide an impartial service, failed to empathise sufficiently with individual parents. Some concerns were also expressed about the ability of the service to provide an adequate service for parents with communication difficulties or in very disadvantaged circumstances.

Whilst Enquire had clearly been making efforts to increase its public profile, there was a general view that amongst parents, local authorities and support organisations that there was insufficient knowledge of the service. Some parents felt that Enquire was a 'well kept secret', which many other parents could benefit from. They felt that parents needed to know about the service as soon as their child was diagnosed, underlining the need for close links with social workers and health professionals, as well as parents. Local authority staff felt that Enquire could do more to publicise the support available within education departments, and the name of the responsible officer should be communicated to parents as soon as an enquiry was made. Other support organisations felt that Enquire could do more to publicise their services generally, but should also alert parents to the complementary specialist services available elsewhere and should do a lot more cross-referral. Clearly, responsibility for alerting parents to the existence of the service does not lie with Enquire alone. There is a great deal which local authority staff, health professionals and support organisation workers can do to inform parents about the work of Enquire and the support which is available.

Like other aspects of Enquire's work, events and training activities were generally regarded very favourably by both parents/carers and local authority staff. It is clearly difficult to aim events at a very wide audience, and a few comments from local authority staff suggested they would prefer something tied slightly more closely to practitioner concerns. The outreach work with children and young people is at a relatively early stage of development compared with other aspects of Enquire's portfolio of activities, and it is evident that strong links with schools and other children's organisations take quite a long time to establish.

Publications were seen as a very important part of Enquire's work, and were used extensively by parents and professionals. Some local authority staff were distributing them routinely to all parents whose children's needs were being assessed, and were keen to explore joint publication with Enquire in the future. Other support organisations were also positive about Enquire's publications, but suggested there was a need for more information on (a) local provision and alternatives, (b) how to manage interaction with professionals successfully and (c) specific impairments. It was also suggested that the publications were often pitched at quite a high level of literacy, and easy-read publications were needed for some parents and children.

With regard to service management, there was evidence of good practice in terms of staff supervision and development arrangements. However, the view was expressed that, because of the competitive labour market in Edinburgh, high staff turnover was a problem, and some suggestions were made on steps which might be taken to address this, including better staff remuneration.

In the following section, we first draw some wider conclusions before sketching some recommendations arising from the evaluation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Parents, professionals and support organisations: specific standpoints

In considering the views expressed above, it is evident that the strongest endorsement for the service comes from parents, who feel that Enquire acts as a bulwark against local authorities which, they believe, are inclined to provide parents with only partial information. Local authority personnel, whilst generally positive, have some underlying reservations. In particular, there is concern that Enquire may encourage parents to question local authority decisions on placement and resourcing matters. Other support organisations have particular criticisms and concerns, which may arise, at least in part, as a result of the competitive funding environment in which they operate. In interpreting the views of different parties, it is important to bear in mind that some degree of tension is inevitable. In relation to tensions within the voluntary sector, the Scottish Executive might be able to play a positive role by encouraging organisations to recognise their complementary roles and organising funding streams to reflect this.

Overview of Enquire

Despite these different perspectives, there was general agreement that Enquire was offering an extremely useful and targeted service, which complemented the legal advice available from organisations such as the Govan Law Centre which was needed by a small number of parents who were considering taking action against the local authority. It was pointed out that, particularly in the light of new legislation which devolved considerable power to local authorities, there was a need for a clear and unambiguous statement of the legal position of parents and children and minimum standards of provision which users of educational services might expect. The specific challenges thrown up by the new legislation will be discussed further in the Part 2 report.

It should be noted that Enquire's services were not simply being used by parents and carers, but also by professionals and other support organisations. Whilst the helpline was mainly used by parents, other sources of information, such as publications, were used by a much wider group of people working in the area of additional support needs.

There was a general view that efforts should be made to increase Enquire's public profile, so that as soon as a child was identified as having additional support needs, parents were encouraged to contact an external agency for information and advice. Education, social work and health professionals, as well as other support organisations, have clear responsibilities here.

General or local information

There was some disagreement with regard to the extent to which Enquire should focus exclusively on the bigger picture with regard to rights and duties in relation to additional support needs. The Scottish Executive and Enquire staff felt that this was the key part of the remit, whereas parents and other support organisations believed that more information was needed about what was available on the ground. For example, there was a strong view that parents often had to rely on the knowledge imparted by the educational psychologist about possible placement options, but this might be either partial or biased. In order to provide really useful knowledge, general information about rights had to be accompanied by more specific information about widely conceived possibilities.

Parents and support organisations also stated that there was a need for advice about how to manage systems and processes effectively. Suggestions ranged from the provision of a checklist for parents to use in relation to the successful conduct of meetings, to the publication of the type of letter which might be appropriate in certain circumstances.

The boundary between impartiality and advocacy

An important theme arising from the interviews was the extent to which tension might arise between the provision of impartial advice and advocacy services. The majority of parents and professionals reported that Enquire staff were friendly and approachable, but some parents and support groups referred to the need of more one-to-one and ongoing support. This issue is discussed in more depth in the Part 2 report.

Meeting the needs of particular groups

It is evident that Enquire is endeavouring to meet the needs of diverse groups. Some aspects of the service are clearly targeted at one group or another, for example, training aimed at professionals, guides written for parents and videos aimed at children and young people. However, it is inevitable that sometimes a number of different groups are accessing the same service and as a result may find that it is pitched at the wrong level. Such comments were evident in relation to publications, training, events and the helpline. In relation to the latter service, different suggestions were made, ranging from a separate children's service to the greater use of text messaging.

In addition, it is evident that within groups there are likely to be very diverse needs. For example, some children and young people and parents may have

no difficulty in understanding quite detailed advice, whilst others may have great difficulty understanding verbal or written communication. Practitioners will also vary from volunteer workers in voluntary organisations to professionals with responsibility for service delivery.

Given the generally high levels of support for the service, Enquire is clearly meeting the needs of a wide range of service users, but it is also likely to be the case that some potential users are deterred by difficulties in accessing or understanding information.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Overarching recommendation

- There is general agreement amongst a range of interest groups that the advice and information service provided by Enquire is extremely valuable and that there is an ongoing need for such a service. The broad recommendation of the evaluation is, therefore, that the service should continue to be funded.

Telephone helpline

- Enquire's remit is to provide impartial and accurate information and advice. However, as a result of disability or disadvantage, some parents may need more intense one-to-one support. It is therefore necessary to consider to what extent the helpline can offer sufficient support, and when it may be necessary to put people in touch with advocacy services for additional support.
- Parents express the need for more in-depth information about local services. The extent to which Enquire is able to provide this information should be reviewed, whilst recognising that onward referral to local authorities and local support groups will also be necessary.
- A very low proportion of calls made to the helpline come from children and young people. The possibility of providing a separate children's helpline, or liaising more closely with Childline, could be explored.
- The range of organisations to which Enquire refers callers should be expanded.
- Enquire has extended the information it routinely collects in relation to callers. Information on the social background of callers to the helpline would be useful, and this could be obtained by asking for the first part of the caller's postcode.
- Enquire should continue to review strategies for publicising helpline services to ensure that all parents and others who might benefit are aware of its existence. Professionals working in a range of settings including local authorities, schools, family centres and hospitals also

have a great deal to contribute here in terms of encouraging parents to make full use of Enquire's services.

Public profile

- There is general agreement that Enquire's public profile needs to be higher. Continued efforts need to be made to advertise the service, including reminding local authorities that they have a duty to inform parents of additional support for learning services.
- Some local authorities are clearly keen to work much more closely with Enquire. The greater use of joint training, events and publications should be explored. The programme of visits to local authorities to establish links with key members of staff should be continued and extended.
- There is a need for even better two-way communication between Enquire, local authorities and educational psychology services to ensure that knowledge and information are passed in both directions.
- Better links with other support organisations are needed through websites and face to face communication. In addition, further advice on communication strategies should be sought from organisations supporting specific groups, e.g. the deaf and those with dual sensory impairment.

Outreach work

- Some professionals expressed criticisms of earlier training. Workshop content has already been reviewed, and ongoing efforts should be made to ensure that training offered is in line with local authority needs.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that parents are directly informed of local events, possibly making greater use of individual mailings or e-mail.
- Outreach work with children and young people is developing and some more thinking is needed about the most effective ways to target a wide range of groups and individuals with different needs.

Publications

- Publications are generally regarded as highly successful. There is a need to ensure that they are produced not only in different languages, but also at different levels to reflect differences in literacy and communication needs.
- The extent to which separate publications are needed for professionals and parents, as well as children and young people, should be considered.

Management and cost-effectiveness

- The service is effectively managed, although staff turnover is a problem. The possibility of enhancing pay to retain valuable staff should be considered.
- Whilst the general view is that Enquire is delivering a multi-faceted and cost effective service, it is important that all aspects of the service are kept under review, so that on-going adjustments may be made as appropriate.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

Since 1999, Children in Scotland has been funded by the Scottish Executive Education Department to provide Enquire, the national advice service for additional support for learning in Scotland. Since 2004, Enquire has been contracted:

1. To maintain and develop the telephone advice and information service for parents, families and carers of children and young people with ASN/SEN across Scotland and for children and young people themselves.
2. To develop and implement a vigorous and effective publicity programme to maintain and improve the profile of the service and to encourage increased use of the information service, particularly by children and young people.
3. To revise and expand the publications library to take account of recent and planned changes in additional support needs legislation and guidance.
4. To develop and implement a proactive outreach programme which ensures that children and young people have access to the necessary information and advice at a local level to make informed decisions about ASN/SEN.
5. To devise and implement management, monitoring and evaluation systems for the service.

The following staff are currently employed to deliver the range of services described below:

Full-time Senior Manager
Full-time Training and outreach Officer
Full-time Information and Development Officer (Children and Young People)
Full-time Senior Administrative Assistant
Helpline Development Officer (job-share)
Helpline information officer (job-share)
Helpline Assistants (2 FTE)

In this report, we present findings from an evaluation of the services provided by Enquire. A second report includes an analysis of future options for the delivery of advice and information services in the light of the new Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, implemented from November 2005.

SECTION 2: RESEARCH AIMS AND STRATEGY

2.1 Research Questions

As stated above, this report provides an evaluation of the provision of services by Enquire for the period 2004-2005. The following questions were addressed:

- To what extent has Enquire met its objectives as specified in the 2004-2006 contract? These include maintaining and developing the telephone information and advice service; implementing an effective publicity programme to maintain and improve the profile of the service; revising and expanding the publications library to take account of the new ASL legislation; developing a pro-active outreach programme aimed at parents and children/young people; devising and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation systems.
- How is the current service perceived by a range of stakeholders, including parents and carers, children and young people, other voluntary sector providers, and other professionals?
- How effective is Enquire's management structure and how does it relate to the parent organisation, Children in Scotland?
- Is the service offering value for money and is it cost effective?
- What are the implications of the ASL legislation for the future provision of information and advice?
- What organisations are currently providing information and advice for children and young people and to what extent are overlaps apparent?
- What formats and modes of delivery are currently being used and what do particular groups of parents/carers, children and young people indicate would be the most effective form and content of future services?

The following methods were used to address the above questions:

2.2 Key informant interviews

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with members of the Enquire team, the Enquire management committee and the Director of Children in Scotland to examine how each aspect of the contracted work has been undertaken (i.e. provision of information and advice; implementing a publicity programme to improve the profile of the service; revising and expanding the publications library; developing a pro-active outreach programme aimed at parents and children/young people; devising and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation system). Evidence was examined in relation to pre-specified deliverables and outcomes. The nature of the evaluation data gathered routinely was examined and its use in service monitoring and development was considered. Ideas for the future development of the service were gathered from members of the Enquire team, Children in Scotland personnel and the management committee. These are referred to here, and dealt with in more depth in the Part 2 report. Interviews conducted with ENQUIRE and Children in Scotland staff were as follows:

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- The number, range and nature of queries annually.
- How the queries were dealt with.

- Whether the query was made by the child/young person, parent/carer or professional.
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- The school sector to which the query related.
- Onward referrals

The nature of publicity materials, publications and public events were also examined in order to assess the effectiveness of public information and outreach work. Enquire’s success in disseminating information to those at risk of social exclusion was considered, including people with a range of disabilities, those living in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, travellers and those for whom English was not their first language.

2.4 Questionnaire survey to Enquire service users

A short questionnaire was sent to a sample of parents/carers, young people and professionals who had contacted the service. In accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, 200 questionnaires were sent out by Enquire, so that the research team did not have access to names and contact details. Forty questionnaires were returned using pre-paid envelopes (just under 20% response rate). Questionnaires were also distributed to service users at the four consultation events on the new parents’ guide to Additional Support for Learning legislation, and 81 questionnaires were returned. The table below shows the breakdown of service users completing the questionnaire.

Table 2.1: Status of service users completing questionnaire

Parent/Carer	76	61%
Professional	32	26%
Not stated	16	13%
Total	124	100%

Note: A few users described themselves as both parents and professionals.
Total participants: 121

The questionnaire examined the type of service requested/enquiry made and the extent to which the individual was satisfied with the quality of information provided by Enquire. Of particular interest was the accessibility of information to people with a range of social characteristics in relation to ethnicity, disability, age, gender and geographical location. Views of preferred formats and modes of delivery were considered, for example, in what circumstances were people satisfied with telephone advice and when did they feel a more personalised and localised service is required? How comfortable were users with web-based information and e-mail based enquiry systems? Individuals were asked about the type of service they would like to have available in the future. Findings from the questionnaire survey were triangulated with the analysis of Enquire’s archives. In this report, we focus on users’ views of the telephone helpline, publications, service profile and outreach/training events.

The Part 2 report deals with broader issues of people's future needs and expectations for advice and information services.

2.5 Consultation meetings with service users and interviews with individual parents

Enquire was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department to produce a Parent's Guide on Additional Support for Learning. A series of consultation meetings were organised in different parts of Scotland, and researchers attended four of these in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling and Scottish Borders. Following these meetings, follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with eleven parents who provided their details for further contact.

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2.7 Views of children and young people

It was hoped to attend a number of the outreach events and surgeries organised by Enquire during the initial phase of the evaluation (August – October 2005). However, no events took place during this period. Permission has been sought to attend two events which will take place in November and December, and in addition two discussion groups have been arranged with young people with additional support needs in schools. For the purposes of this report, we refer to professionals' and parents' views of Enquire's work with young people and an evaluation of young people's views conducted by Enquire in 2004.

In reporting the findings from the different sources, we have tried to be clear about the basis of the evidence and whether the view expressed was held by a majority, a significant minority or by one or two individuals.

SECTION 3: THE TELEPHONE HELPLINE

3.1 Introduction

In the following section, we first summarise information about the telephone helpline which was provided by Enquire for the year 2004-05. Subsequently, we present data from the questionnaire surveys of service users and professionals and interviews with members of the Enquire team, SEED staff and external key informants.

3.2 Call statistics

In the periods April 2004 – March 2005, Enquire received 3,034 calls to the telephone helpline. Details of 2,063 calls were recorded on the database, an average of 7.9 calls recorded on the database per working day. This represents an increase of 2.2% on 2003-2004. The remaining 971 calls related to publication requests, signposting to other agencies, publicity calls and other matters. Eighty seven e-mail and two letter enquiries were received. Two contacts were made via textphone. The average time from receiving an enquiry to getting a response back to the person making the enquiry was one hour and nine minutes, and for written queries was one hour. An onward referral was made in relation to 40 per cent of cases.

3.3 Status of caller

The vast majority of calls came from parents or carers, with professionals making up a much smaller group. Over the year, only three calls were made to the helpline by children and young people, although fourteen calls were made by child advocates. The table below provides a breakdown of callers.

Table 3.1: Status of caller to the telephone helpline

Caller	Number
Parent	879
Professional	78
Parent advocate	73
Other relative	43
Child Advocate	14
Carer	4
Child/Young Person	3
Named person	1
Unknown	24
Not applicable	86
Other	15
Not recorded	1

3.4 Subject matter of calls

The Enquire database records information on the nature of enquiries and the table below indicates the six areas where questions were asked.

Table 3.2: Nature of helpline enquiries

Enquiry	Number of issues	% of issues
SEN Provision – Support for learning	232	19.0
Identification/Assessment of SEN	165	13.5
Placing Request/Choosing a School	165	13.5
Other (such as health and safety, funding assistance, bullying, Post 16 provision, benefits, medical matters)	142	11.6
Record of Needs	102	8.4
Additional Support for Learning Act	79	6.5
Total	885	72.5

Note: Other calls were not categorised.

3.5 Geographical spread of calls

Enquire's annual report for 2004 – 05 includes information on the geographical spread of calls per 10,000 population aged 0-19. It appears that a high proportion of calls came from the cities (Dundee City, 10.0; Edinburgh, 13.3; Glasgow, 10.7; Stirling 11.8). Some rural areas also had high call rates (Aberdeenshire, 10.9; Highland, 13.5; Orkney, 12.8; Perth & Kinross, 15.1; Shetland, 10.4; Western Isles, 13.2). Areas with relatively few calls included urban areas on the west of the country (East Ayrshire, 3.7; East Renfrewshire, 5.1; North Lanarkshire, 4.4; North Ayrshire, 5.3; West Dunbartonshire, 3.4). It was suggested by Enquire that the prevalence of calls might reflect recent training activities which had raised awareness.

3.6 Referrals

In 39% of cases, callers were referred to other agencies. The Enquire annual report notes that efforts were made to refer people to a local point of contact, and 110 callers were referred to the local education officer. In addition to local authority services, referrals were also made to statutory or public bodies and voluntary organisations (see table below).

Table 3.3: Onward referrals

Sector	Agencies/Organisations	Number	
Local authority service	Education Officer	110	
	Educational Psychologist	56	
	Head Teacher	50	
	Education Department	22	
	Social Work Department	12	
	Parent Liaison Officer	10	
	Principal Educational Psychologist	7	
	Director of Education	6	
	Statutory/Public	MSP/Local Councillor	14
		Scottish Executive	13
Careers Scotland		8	
Scottish Qualifications Authority		8	
Disability Rights Commission		7	
Voluntary Sector	Princess Royal Carers Trust	67	
	SKILL	29	
	Scottish Society for Autism	22	
	Anti-Bullying Network	16	
	ADHD National Alliance	14	
	Dyslexia Scotland	13	
	Schoolhouse	11	
	Contact a Family	10	
	FAIR	10	
	National Autistic Society	9	
	ParentLine Scotland	9	
	Advocacy Services	9	
	VOCAL	8	
	Young Minds	8	
	Citizens Advice Bureau	8	
	Scottish Council for Independent Schools	8	
	Dyslexia Institute	7	
	Scottish Dyslexia Association	7	
	Home Education Advisory Service	7	
	Education Otherwise	7	
SNIP	6		
Funder Finder	6		
Parent to Parent Mediation	6		

3.7 Development of helpline staff

All staff recruited to work on the helpline undergo a training programme, which includes disability awareness training and an input from staff of the Govan Law Centre. Enquire is working towards Telephone Helpline Association accreditation.

3.8 Database development

The database is currently being developed to accommodate a more sophisticated system of monitoring contacts with Enquire. This includes a referrals database and a system for recording new calls, viewing outstanding calls, finding existing callers, recording sending out bulk publications and validating all data entry.

3.9 Views of Enquire/Children in Scotland staff

It was pointed out that the telephone helpline was an important component of a multi-faceted service. Although parents were by far the largest user group, local authority employees and voluntary organisation workers also used the service. Very few calls were made to the helpline by children, although there was an increased use by child advocates (although the reason for categorising a caller as a child advocate rather than a parent or a professional was not clear). There was an awareness that a Parliamentary Question had been asked about the number of calls made to the helpline. However, it was pointed out that the resource was intended to be tightly targeted, rather than a '999 type service', so that only people with a specific question about additional support needs would telephone. In the early days, a deliberate decision was made to begin the operation gradually and then to build up the volume of calls, to avoid the danger of 'trying to run before you can walk'. It was noted that whilst the use of the telephone helpline had increased relatively slowly, use of the Enquire website had increased much more rapidly and in future a decision would have to be made about the extent to which material could be web-based rather than conveyed via the telephone helpline.

The importance of the impartiality and accuracy of information conveyed on the telephone helpline was emphasised. It was noted that the information given to callers had never been found to be inaccurate, and this was important in terms of winning the confidence of local authorities which might initially have been sceptical of the service's value.

There had been internal discussions about the extent to which the helpline should offer more one-to-one support, which parents had indicated they might welcome. However, there were advantages in adopting an impartial position, and indeed advocacy was clearly not part of Enquire's existing remit. There was some disagreement among helpline assistants about the extent to which the transaction should be impersonal, as opposed to impartial. Some helpline assistants said that they never gave their name to callers, for fear of encouraging dependency, and this was in line with the Telephone Helpline Association's code of practice. Others said that they did give their name if requested.

A criticism made of the telephone helpline by an external organisation was that it was too impersonal. This organisation said they had plans to use conferencing facilities when speaking to people in distant locations, so that the caller could connect a face to the person who was giving them advice. A member of the management committee provided a slightly different angle on

this debate, suggesting that advice had to be both ‘emotionally supportive and comprehensible’. This was particularly the case for the most socially disadvantaged people, for whom picking up the telephone to ask for advice might be a major ordeal. Parents of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties were unlikely to call the helpline, and might need particular encouragement and empathy. As a general rule, the least socially enfranchised needed the highest degree of support. The management committee member pointed out that in order to gain real insight into the quality of the telephone helpline, it would be necessary to monitor the nature of the query and the quality of the response, and this was clearly beyond the remit of the evaluation.

3.10 Views of SEED staff

SEED staff also pointed out that the telephone helpline was only one aspect of Enquire’s activities. The helpline had a rather slow start, and efforts had been made over the years to increase the volume of calls. An out-of-hours service and a local call rate number had been introduced. The unit cost of calls was quite high, but this was something which had to be lived with. The great strength of the service was its independence and impartiality. It should be a supportive, but definitely not an advocacy service.

3.11 Views of service users

Service users were also asked about the frequency with which they used the telephone helpline, compared with other aspects of Enquire’s services. As expected, the telephone helpline was used less frequently than publications (see table below).

Table 3.4: Frequency of service use (service users)

Service	Frequently	Sometimes	Once	Never	No response	Total
Telephone helpline	5 (4.1%)	36 (29.8%)	25 (20.7%)	5 (4.1%)	50 (41.3%)	121 (100%)
Publications	25 (20.7%)	37 (30.6%)	4 (3.3%)	3 (2.5%)	52 (43%)	121 (100%)
Website	12 (9.9%)	21 (17.4%)	4 (3.3%)	7 (5.8%)	77 (63.6%)	121 (100%)
Events	7 (5.8%)	18 (14.9%)	11 (9.1%)	13 (10.7%)	72 (59.5%)	121 (100%)
Training	2 (1.7%)	13 (14.9%)	8 (9.1%)	19 (15.7%)	79 (65.3%)	121 (100%)
Outreach events for children/ young people	0	1 (0.8%)	4 (3.3%)	26 (21.5%)	90 (74.4%)	121 (100%)

The service user questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their views of the quality of the range of services provided by Enquire (see table below).

Table 3.5: The quality of services provided by Enquire (service users)

Service	Very good	Fairly good	Adequate	Fairly poor	Poor	No opinion	No response	Total
Telephone advice/helpline	47 (38.8%)	12 (10%)	5 (4.1%)	0	0	7 (5.8%)	50 (41.3%)	121 (100%)
Publications	47 (38.8%)	17 (14%)	4 (3.3%)	1 (0.8%)	0	4 (3.3%)	48 (39.8%)	121 (100%)
Website	22 (18.2%)	12 (10%)	6 (5%)	0	0	7 (5.7%)	74 (61.1%)	121 (100%)
Events	24 (19.9%)	8 (6.6%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.8%)	0	13 (10.7%)	73 (60.3%)	121 (100%)
Training	9 (7.4%)	8 (6.6%)	0	0	0	22 (18.2%)	82 (67.7%)	121 (100%)
Outreach events for children/young people	0	2 (1.6%)	1 (0.8%)	0	0	22 (18.2%)	96 (79.3%)	121 (100%)

Of those who expressed an opinion, a very high proportion considered the helpline to be very good or fairly good, although about 45% of respondents reported that they had no opinion or did not respond to the question. A higher proportion of parents (47.3%) compared with professionals (38.7%) rated the helpline as very good, reflecting the greater use of the helpline by the former. It is important to note that 63.5% of parents, and 51.6% of professionals, reported that the person dealing with their enquiry was friendly, and similar proportions felt they were knowledgeable, helpful and provided a response relevant to the query.

An analysis was conducted of the comments written on the questionnaires. Seven respondents commented on the importance of the service provided by Enquire, and indicated that they felt empowered by the knowledge gleaned. Comments were also made on the competence and friendliness of the staff, coupled with their objectivity.

- *After speaking to Enquire I felt stronger in approaching the head teacher about my son's rights and although I didn't get the result I wanted I felt empowered to change the situation and my son has moved school now.*
- *I phoned Enquire at a time when I really didn't know what to do. I was impressed that they took time to reassure me that I was right to be concerned and gave excellent advice as to what to try next with school management. They also made it clear that I was welcome to call back at anytime. Knowing that I had this support and knowledge behind me was invaluable.*
- *Very satisfied UNDERSTATES the help. Helped enormously in providing information and advice to help me deal with problems in my child's school.*
- *Very competent and friendly service*
- *I feel that Enquire has offered extremely valuable advice and help to my problems/questions.*

- *It was good to speak to someone with an overview but not involved in the particular case*
- *I found the service to be very efficient.*
- *I was very grateful to hear a friendly voice who was on my side when I was really up against the professionals involved with my son, they sent me out only relevant publications and encouraged me to phone back with follow-up info good or bad.*
- *Very good service/ accessible.*

Three respondents suggested that the helpline could be more efficient in distributing publications, and another commented that publications ordered via the helpline took a long time to be delivered.

The issue of co-operation with other organisations and local authorities was raised. It was suggested that helpline assistants should have access to up-to-date lists of local solicitors specialising in additional support needs, but should also be more willing to refer on to other organisations such as ISEA, family advisers and carers support groups (see above for list of Enquire's most frequent referrals). A few comments referred to the need for access to more in-depth information about educational provision and more direct intervention:

- *My specific enquiry, for a list of residential special needs schools could not be answered. I was specifically and helpfully supplied with a list of special needs schools throughout Scotland, and am having to trawl through each school to find out whether or not it is residential. It doesn't seem too big a task to interrogate the database in a number of different ways and it would be helpful if Enquire could supply this facility.*
- *A comprehensive checklist could be provided for parents looking at schools/nurseries. Parents don't know what to ask about to know how good the school would be for their child.*
- *Parents with children who have complex needs would benefit from a service where the enquiries are made on their behalf. I do not have time to make 10 phone calls to my local authority where one is passed from one person to another and no one seems able to deal with your issue.*
- *Enquire act on a neutral basis and reluctant to give direct advice. Parents sometime need more direct guidance on what steps to take or other agencies who can support your issue.*

In addition, one respondent suggested that there should be a separate Child Helpline.

3.12 Views of local authority staff

Findings from the local authority staff survey confirmed that, in line with evidence from Enquire's database, the telephone helpline was used less frequently by local authority staff than by parents/carers (see Table 3.6 below). Of those who responded to the question of the quality of the helpline, all said it was very good or fairly good. Almost two thirds of those who

completed the questionnaire ticked the no opinion box or did not respond, suggesting that local authority staff are not getting much feedback from parents on the quality of the helpline. This might indicate either a low level of use in respondents' local authorities, or a lack of dialogue with parents about sources of information and assistance.

Table 3.6: Frequency of service use (local authority staff)

Service	Frequently	Sometimes	Once	Never	No response	Total
Telephone advice/helpline	1 (3.8%)	4 (15.4%)	3 (11.5%)	8 (30.8%)	10 (38.5%)	26 (100%)
Publications	16 (61.5%)	8 (30.7%)	0	0	2 (7.7%)	26 (100%)
Website	1 (3.8%)	15 (57.7%)	2 (7.7%)	3 (11.5%)	5 (19.2%)	26 (100%)
Events	4 (15.4%)	13 (50%)	3 (11.5%)	1 (3.8%)	5 (19.2%)	26 (100%)
Training	4 (15.4%)	14 (53.8%)	2 (7.7%)	2 (7.7%)	4 (15.4%)	26 (100%)
Outreach events for children/young people	0	2 (7.7%)	1 (3.8%)	12 (46.2%)	11 (42.3%)	26 (100%)

Table 3.7: Quality of Enquire's services (local authority staff)

	Helpline	Publications	Website	Events	Training	Outreach
Very good	7 (26.9%)	17 (65.4%)	13 (50%)	8 (30.8%)	9 (34.6%)	2 (7.7%)
Fairly good	2 (7.7%)	6 (23.1%)	3 (11.5%)	9 (34.6%)	8 (30.8%)	0
Adequate	0	0	1 (3.8%)	1 (3.8%)	3 (11.5%)	0
Fairly poor	0	0	0	1 (3.8%)	0	0
Poor	0	0	0	0	1 (3.8%)	0
No opinion	5 (19.2%)	0	1 (3.8%)	0	1 (3.8%)	7 (26.9%)
No response	12 (46.2%)	3 (11.5%)	8 (30.8%)	7 (26.9%)	4 (15.4%)	17 (65.4%)
Total	26 (100%)	26 (100%)	26 (100%)	26 (100%)	26 (100%)	26 (100%)

Of those who responded to the question about experiences of the Enquire helpline, all said staff were friendly, knowledgeable, helpful and provided a response relevant to the question. About a third of local authority respondents said they had e-mailed Enquire, and were satisfied with the speed of response, indicating that this was another route which practitioners found useful.

Comments written on the questionnaire indicated local authority concerns about being cut out of the information loop and worries about problems escalating through the intervention of a third party.

- *Would be helpful when enquiry is made to Enquire, if you asked parents to contact the named person in the Council in the first instance.*
- *The current publications are very valuable for parents, carers and professionals alike.*
- *Any centrally based service can give only general advice to enquiries from different authorities. This based on the Act and the Code of Practice. Any enquiries regarding 'local' services and provision should be referred back to the local authority.*
- *We had a case this year where a parent with a low level concern approached Enquire, having not raised it at school locally, and was advised to make a Freedom of Information request and copy to MSPs. This may have been a rogue event but it was inappropriate advice.*
- *Any advice to parents should re-emphasise that for this to work we will all have to have strong partnerships. Given the number of formal complaints routes now it is vital to resolve matter as close to source as possible.*

Finally, there was a query about the accessibility of the service to children and young people:

- *Are you sure your service is known to children and young people? If you are contacted by mobile phone, can the reply to the enquiry be accessed by text message?*

3.13 Views of external key informants

A high proportion of interviewees said that they had not used the telephone helpline recently, and some had never used it at all. Their comments, therefore, tended to be based on what other people had told them. The overall impression from external key informants was that the information and advice provided by Enquire was useful and well-received, and that its impartiality and accuracy was important. It was also noted that, at a time when more responsibility was being devolved to schools, it was important that parents were told about minimum national standards and good practice. An educational psychologist commented:

We as a service have phoned the helpline. We also know of parents who have phoned for advice and we feel from our perspective the advice given was good, balanced and accurate.

However, the other four educational psychologists who were interviewed said that they had not used it themselves and neither had any of their colleagues as far as they were aware. They did not even know of any parents who had sought information and advice through the telephone helpline.

On the negative side, it was felt by a number of support organisations that, although Enquire was good at providing technically accurate information, they did not have enough up-to-date local knowledge to help parents penetrate local systems. In order to have accurate information about key contacts in local education and social work departments, health boards, voluntary organisations and advocacy groups, constant contact with those at the grassroots was necessary since changes amongst staff and voluntary groups were frequent. It was, however, acknowledged that this was likely to be very time-consuming.

One support organisation questioned whether Enquire spent enough time talking to parents about their problem to seek a constructive way forward, suggesting that mediation might be suggested at too early a point in the discussion:

They seem to push mediation, when this may not be the right way forward.

According to this support organisation,, parents often needed support over a longer period of time to identify an appropriate course of action. If mediation was suggested as an option before all other avenues were exhausted, this might delay, rather than facilitate, a satisfactory resolution. A principal educational psychologist also said that it was felt in his local authority that Enquire sometimes 'fanned the flames of discontent' rather than encouraging understanding of the local authority's position. Rather than 'propelling parents into a confrontational stance', Enquire should focus much more on dispute resolution, which was the local authority's preferred approach:

Parents can get locked into a dispute which is in no-one's interests and this uses up a lot of time and energy at the local authority end.

A support organisation for deaf children/young people and their parents suggested that parents of deaf children were unlikely to approach Enquire, but would use a specialist organisation as a first port of call. Some parents of deaf children were deaf themselves, and they might not be aware that a text phone service was available, unless this was very widely advertised. Experience suggested that unless text phones were used regularly, the service might not be known about in the deaf community and those operating the equipment might not use it competently through lack of practice and familiarity, even if they had been trained. In addition, parents of deaf children and others with additional support needs were extremely disadvantaged and might have low levels of literacy. They were unlikely to glean much from a one-off telephone conversation, and there was a need for 'a huge amount of assistance'.

The need for the specialist input of peripatetic staff was also underlined by a development worker in an organisation for visually impaired children:

I do not believe Enquire has the in-depth knowledge to give advice about the education of children with VI or deafness and in relation to

teachers in these areas. For example, looking at the Role of Professionals factsheet, there is only a small paragraph about what a Peri teacher does. If you ask any Peri teacher how they support parents and children at home, they will give a long list of services and skills. This information is not fully represented in their factsheets.

A development worker who had herself used the helpline said that her experience had varied. The person taking the call had often not been able to provide an instant response, but had returned the call reasonably quickly with a reply which was generally accurate, and this was to be welcomed. Useful back-up information, such as copies of relevant circulars, had been provided. Other parents known to the development worker, however, provided a mixed picture. A lot, she felt, depended on the attitude of the caller, the extent to which their question was clearly formulated and the experience of the person taking the call.

There was some discussion of what was meant by 'impartial' advice and whether this was desirable and achievable. An educational psychologist expressed the view that, in order for local authorities to continue to make referrals, it was essential to ensure impartiality. Two members of support organisations felt that impartiality was very difficult to maintain and, given the inequality of the parent/local authority power relationship, parents needed to feel that they were being listened to sympathetically and supported.

It was pointed out by a number of respondents that simply telling people what should happen in an ideal world might be of limited value. For example, if parents were told that they should be involved in the production of an IEP, but a local school was reluctant to facilitate their involvement, they needed help in working out ways of encouraging the school to adopt a more constructive attitude. In addition to information which was technically accurate, callers needed to be provided with insight into processes and strategic ways of interacting with local authorities.

Several informants suggested that the turnover of helpline assistants mitigated against building up really useful local knowledge. It was impossible to know what was happening on the ground without considerable experience of the education system, and changes in staffing meant that, whilst the information given might be accurate, the depth of understanding likely to be really helpful to parents might be lacking. This point was also made by a member of Enquire's advisory committee, who pointed out that a one day placement in a school was undertaken by all helpline assistants as part of their initial training, but greater knowledge of a range of educational settings would be helpful.

A respondent from a support organisation indicated that Enquire might deal with calls in a somewhat cursory manner. The organisation, which also provided a telephone advice service, believed that in order to answer a call accurately, it was necessary to take a full case history, going right back to the time of the original diagnosis and early interactions with the health board and local authority. In certain circumstances, it might be good practice to ask

parents to send in any official letters they had received to check that these had been accurately interpreted, and organise a face to face meeting with parents to discuss. For example, sometimes parents might assume that a local authority was acting in a hostile manner, whereas they might simply have misinterpreted the content or tone of a letter. Unless all relevant information was collated, there was a danger that a response to a specific question might be of limited value because a vital part of the context had been missed. This organisation also believed that follow-up calls or meetings were necessary to ensure that the matter had been satisfactorily resolved.

3.14 Summary

There was general agreement amongst all parties that the advice and information provided by Enquire via the helpline was impartial, accurate and supportive. Parents were particularly enthusiastic in their endorsement of the support offered by the helpline, describing the knowledge gained from the service as fundamentally empowering. A few suggested that more local information would be helpful. Local authority staff and support organisations, whilst generally positive, were more likely to sound cautionary notes. Some local authority staff felt that enquiries about local matters should be referred back to them, since Enquire was a national service and was unlikely, therefore, to have enough insight into local authority policy and practice. It was also suggested by local authority staff that Enquire might encourage parents to adopt an adversarial stance. Support organisations also suggested that Enquire perhaps did not have enough local knowledge and argued that they should do more to build up contact with local and specialist support groups. Support organisations also raised questions about whether Enquire, in endeavouring to provide an impartial service, failed to empathise sufficiently with individual parents. Concerns were also expressed about the ability of the service to provide an adequate service for parents with communication difficulties or in very disadvantaged circumstances.

SECTION 4: PUBLICITY PROGRAMME

4.1 Introduction

Enquire was using a number of different strategies to enhance its public profile. These are briefly described below, along with assessments of the effectiveness of these approaches.

4.2 Publicity

During 2004-05, Enquire carried out a number of Scotland-wide mailings. Publicity information was sent to 9,000 schools, educational professionals, libraries, health professionals, social workers, voluntary groups and individuals. Previously, a 'school bag drop' had been used to send a leaflet out to every child and family in Scotland.

4.3 Publicity aimed at black and minority ethnic groups

Particular efforts were made to disseminate information to black and minority ethnic groups. A mailing list was compiled of 400 agencies which might refer cases from black and minority ethnic community groups to Enquire and through which information could be distributed. It was noted in the annual report that, as a result of this exercise, contacts from black and minority ethnic groups increased slightly.

4.4 Advertising

Enquire's services were advertised in a number of different ways. Advertisements were paid for in a number of journals such as Scottish Primary Care magazine, Nursing Scotland and First Link for Parents. Service details were also advertised in Children in Scotland newsletter and other publications.

Free advertising was also provided via a multi-lingual Scottish radio station and in a number of directories, including those of the Princess Royal Carers Trust, the Telephone Helpline Association Trust helpline and other public and voluntary sector publications.

4.5 Website

In 2004, the young persons' website and the parents', carers' and practitioners' website were merged under one web address <http://www.enquire.org.uk>. The sites were upgraded to ensure that appropriate links were in place with local authorities, parent support groups and voluntary sector agencies. The following table provides statistics for website hits for 2004-05. It should be noted that there was no way of knowing whether hits to the children and young people's website were by children and young people or by adults.

Table 4.1: Website hits 2004-05

Pages	Page views
Parents, carers and practitioners	18,486
Children and young people	25,075
Other	4,779
Total	48,340

4.6 Views of Enquire staff

It was noted that, whilst it was extremely important to raise the profile of the service, it was not possible to run expensive TV and radio campaigns. In addition, it was important for the service to be very tightly targeted, and widespread advertising might lead to more wasted calls.

4.7 Views of SEED staff

SEED staff acknowledged the desirability of raising the service profile, but also conceded that there was a limit to the resources which could be devoted to this.

4.8 Views of service users

The service user questionnaire asked respondents about how they heard about Enquire's services. The table below summarises responses.

Table 4.2: Service users' accounts of how they heard about Enquire

Friend/family member	19	15.2%
Professional	50	40%
Leaflet/poster	20	16%
Website	11	8.8%
Other	20	16%
No response	5	4%
Total	125	100%

Note: Some people had heard of Enquire from more than one source. Total participants: 121

Overall, professionals were the most frequent source of information about Enquire, although parents were also likely to have heard about the service through word of mouth or via a leaflet.

Respondents were asked about their degree of familiarity with the work of Enquire. Since all those who completed the questionnaire were on the Enquire database or were attending an Enquire event, we expected they would all be familiar with Enquire's work. However, this was not the case (see table below).

Table 4.3: Familiarity with work of Enquire (service users)

Very familiar	18	15%
Quite Familiar	69	57%
Unfamiliar	29	24%
No response	5	4%
Total	121	100%

Twenty six per cent of parents, compared with 10% of professionals, said they were unfamiliar with Enquire’s work. About a quarter of parents and 10% of professionals who completed the questionnaire, said they had not used any of Enquire’s services. It may of course be the case that people do not consider that reading a leaflet or attending an event counts as using a service. However, if parents in touch with Enquire say that they do not know a great deal about what is on offer, this suggests that amongst the general population there may be fairly low levels of awareness.

Comments from parents written on the questionnaire strongly reinforced the view that much more publicity about the service was needed:

- *More publicity because I still don't know all of my son's rights. My son is in primary seven and I have to choose a high school to send to in August which has support for his Aspergers.*
- *The help and guidance given was great but I had no idea Enquire existed. You could do with a lot more publicity about your service. I have since passed on the telephone number to four other families in my area who had no idea you existed!*
- *In my case, my son's secondary school appears to have no knowledge of his rights to educational provision. He has been too ill to attend school since Nov 2004 and has had no education offered to date.*
- *Finding out about Enquire was by chance whilst undertaking professional studies in Special Education. If it hadn't been for this I'm not sure I would have been aware of Enquire in my role as a teacher of SEN.*
- *Make schools more aware of Enquire's existence and support services and encourage them to use services to learn about the needs of the children and how they should be treated. Ignorance of senior staff is still the biggest problem and this results in inappropriate exclusions etc for things the child cannot help or control because of this disability.*
- *Enquire provides a vital service to disabled children and their parents - yet we only became aware of its existence/service when our consultant referred us to SNIP who supplied publications. More must be done to 'sell' your services which is probably best done by running meetings with parents possibly in conjunction with charities like Barnardos who organise drop in mornings for parents of disabled children. Enquire seems to be better known/publicised in larger cities. Our consultant is in Edinburgh, yet little is known of them in our home town – Dundee.*

4.9 Views of local authority staff

Local authority staff were asked about their familiarity with the work of Enquire, and all who responded, apart from one individual, were very familiar or quite familiar. Almost all (apart from two) had used some aspects of Enquire’s services. However, it should be remembered that only a third of questionnaires sent out were returned. Those who did not return the questionnaire may simply have been too busy, or may have felt that they lacked sufficient knowledge to make a useful contribution.

Because the website is an important aspect of Enquire’s interface with the education community, local authority staff were asked about their experience of it (see table below).

Table 4.4: Quality of Enquire’s website (local authority staff)

	Clear	Informative	Practical	Relevant	Up to Date
Yes	13 (50%)	15 (57.7%)	11 (42.3%)	14 (53.8%)	13 (50%)
No opinion	2 (7.7%)	2 (7.7%)	3 (42.3%)	2 (7.7%)	2 (7.7%)
No	1 (3.8%)	1 (3.8%)	1 (3.8%)	0%	1 (3.8%)
No Response	10 (38.5%)	8 (30.8%)	11 (42.3%)	10 (38.5%)	10 (38.5%)
Total	26 (100%)	26 (100%)	26 (100%)	26 (100%)	26 (100%)

In general, participants rated the website as clear, informative, practical, relevant and up to date.

Some suggestions were made about ways of enhancing the service profile:

- *TV programme. TV ads – Scottish Executive slot at 6.30.*
- *Supermarkets, community resources.*
- *Touring bus/caravan visiting LAs*

4.10 Views of external key informants

There was a widespread view that Enquire needed to do more to increase its public profile. One respondent, for example, commented that in order to connect with black and minority ethnic groups, a very wide network was needed which had to be constantly updated to take account of the changing local scene. The respondent from the support organisation for deaf children also felt that more work was needed to alert parents to the specific service which Enquire could offer. A respondent from a support organisation for visually impaired children noted that, whilst he had referred children on to Enquire and Children in Scotland, his organisation had received no referrals from them. The organisation was not listed on their link page. An

organisation for visually impaired children was listed on the children's page, but the link was incorrect. By way of contrast, two organisations, the Disability Rights Commission and the Govan Law Centre, reported that cross-referral worked very well, and the complementary nature of the services they offered was recognised.

It was suggested by support organisations that local authorities could do a great deal more to let parents know about Enquire's existence, for example, by including a link on their web site and publishing information in their additional support needs policy.

Educational psychologists said that, whilst the Enquire parents' guide was routinely distributed to parents of children with additional support needs, they knew very little about the other services provided by Enquire. They felt that Enquire needed to build stronger bridges with local authorities, establishing personal contact with educational psychologists and ensuring that they had information about outreach events, training events and the telephone helpline. One principal educational psychologist stated that, until asked to respond to the interview schedule, he had not realised how little he knew about Enquire's services.

4.11 Summary

Whilst Enquire had clearly been making efforts to increase its public profile, there was a general view that amongst parents, local authorities and support organisations that there was insufficient knowledge of the service. Some parents felt that Enquire was a 'well kept secret', which many other parents could benefit from. They felt that parents needed to know about the service as soon as their child was diagnosed, underlining the need for close links with social workers and health professionals, as well as parents. Local authority staff felt that Enquire could do more to publicise the support available within education departments, and the name of the responsible officer should be communicated to parents as soon as an enquiry was made. Other support organisations felt that Enquire could do more to publicise their services generally, but should also alert parents to the complementary specialist services available elsewhere and should do a lot more cross-referral.

SECTION 5: TRAINING EVENTS AND OUTREACH PROGRAMME

5.1 Events aimed at parents, carers and practitioners

During the period 2004 – 05, Enquire undertook 22 information sessions or information stands. The majority of events were attended by parents, but education, social work and health professionals also participated, as well as voluntary sector workers. Many events were geared towards informing people about the Additional Support for Learning legislation. Focus groups, training events, consultation events and a national conference were also undertaken. Joint events were also organised in partnership with a wide range of organisations including the Scottish Executive, the Disability Rights Commission and voluntary organisations.

5.2 Events aimed at children and young people

Following an assessment of need, during the year 2004-05, Enquire developed an outreach strategy aimed at children and young people. Workshop materials and activities around the following four themes were developed:

What's Enquire – nature of the organisation and what it can provide to children and young people

Have your say - discussion around an Enquire video on rights and responsibilities to participate in decisions about schools and learning

Think big – choices, possibilities and people who can help

20 questions – surgery; an opportunity for young people to ask questions of Enquire staff

Up to April 2005, Enquire had delivered 20 events and was hoping to deliver 12 events and 8 surgeries in the following year.

5.3 Views of Enquire staff

It was noted that the outreach programme was pro-active and tried to anticipate what people's information needs were likely to be. Transition to post-16 was one area where more work might be needed in the future.

Outreach work with children and young people was recently developed as a separate strand of work, with the focus in 2003-04 on devising the video *Have Your Say*. Twenty workshops were carried out using the video. Subsequently, letters have been sent out to schools in different authorities asking if they will host an event. Sometimes, there are only a few responses to a wide mailing. Some work has been conducted with children in special settings, but one-off sessions with children with significant difficulties are

generally not successful. A much longer term approach is needed. Teachers also often ask for a fifty minute session, but this tends to be too short.

Other new ventures included plans to deliver an outreach event in Urdu in conjunction with Barnardo's.

5.4 Views of SEED staff

SEED staff felt that the training events organised by Enquire were of a high quality, and the Executive benefited from being able to draw on Enquire's expertise in the running of consultations with parents and carers and children and young people, which often had to be undertaken to a very tight timescale. Enquire had assisted SEED in consultation on the Additional Support for Learning legislation, and more recently on nationwide consultation on the Parents' Guide to Additional Support Needs.

5.5 Views of service users

As illustrated in Table 4.3, service users were much less familiar with events, training activities and outreach work with children and young people. Nonetheless, the vast majority of those who had attended such events said that they were very good or good. Comments included the following:

- *My experience varies too much to answer this – events have been very variable.*
- *The trades hall event (on the new parents' guide) was very helpful.*
- *Someone came to give a talk to a Glasgow support group – very informative.*
- *Events are very interesting as long as parents can access them.*
- *Need more events outwith the central belt of Scotland i.e. Inverness area.*
- *If someone has made contact and an event is due to happen, then to inform the carer by contacting them would be helpful.*
- *Training is far too expensive for parents on some events – many being well in excess of £100.*
- *More frequent and aimed at a professional audience.*

Some comments related directly to children and young people.

- *Make it well known to children and young people that you are there for them. My son and I don't know what services you offer to him.*
- *Need support for children and young people when they are trying to understand the implications of their disability.*
- *Need to speak directly to children and young people – they don't often read leaflets.*
- *Participation, consultation and evaluation involves young people – encourage them to know their rights, how to access them and feel empowered about accessing services and information.*

5.6 Views of local authority staff

In contrast to those who responded to the service user questionnaire, a high proportion of local authority respondents had participated in events and training. Sixty five per cent had attended events frequently or sometimes, and nearly 70% indicated that they had attended training events frequently or sometimes. Of those who attended, virtually all said they were very good or fairly good. Comments varied from the slightly critical to the extremely favourable:

- *I have attended a number of events – they varied in relevance and quality.*
- *A bit low level*
- *Costs for training local authorities seem rather high*
- *Events are often not aimed at practitioners. Our council has been involved with Enquire on a number of pilots and these have been mutually beneficial.*
- *The help and advice Enquire have offered in relation to multi-agency training and parents' events have been extremely helpful.*
- *Enquire has provided a very helpful facilitating role for Aberdeenshire Council to assist us in developing ASL awareness raising for local authority staff. It would be useful to have further information on how Enquire sees its role developing in the area of mediation, and working with local authorities in the implementation of the ASL Act.*

5.7 Views of external key informants

A majority of external key informants had not attended any of the training events organised by Enquire and knew very little of the events aimed specifically at children and young people. Of those who had attended training events, a mixed picture emerged. An educational psychologist who had attended an event on the ASL Act about a year ago said that she was 'not impressed with the presentation' and that the presenter had 'not got the information under their belt'. A support organisation worker commented that she often did not hear about the events until rather late, and they were too expensive for small voluntary organisations to attend. Another development worker in a support organisation said that she was completely unaware of Enquire's outreach and training activities. She surmised that information was included in general Children in Scotland mailing, but there was so much information that 'important things tend to get buried'. Another development worker who had attended a Parent Talk event was quite critical of the general tone. She felt that serious points raised by parents had been brushed aside by the SEED speaker in a somewhat cursory manner, and the workshops were patronising and had little useful content. She also noted that critical comments made on evaluations forms had been glossed over in the final report of the event.

Two respondents commented on the use of people's time in consultation events, with particular reference to recent consultations on the forthcoming

parents' guide to additional support for learning. It was felt by these parents that many people had given up time to attend these events, but it was unclear how parents' comments would feed into the production of the final document, partly as a result of the pressurised timetable to which Enquire was working. However, parents and facilitators attended such events on the understanding that their comments would make a difference, and it was dispiriting if it appeared that such consultations were tokenistic.

5.8 Summary

Like other aspects of Enquire's work, events and training activities were generally regarded very favourably by both parents/carers and local authority staff. It is clearly difficult to aim events at a very wide audience, and a few comments from local authority staff suggested they would prefer something tied slightly more closely to practitioner concerns. The outreach work with children and young people is at a relatively early stage of development compared with other aspects of Enquire's portfolio of activities, and it is evident that strong links with schools and other children's organisations take quite a long time to establish.

SECTION 6: PUBLICATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Publications represent a very important aspect of Enquire's information and advice work, since printed material is able to reach a very large number of people. During the financial year 2004-05, Enquire produced the following publications:

- Three issues of the Enquire Within bulletin, covering the new legislation, new resources for young people and service updates.
- Two factsheets on school attendance and early years
- Resources for young people including the *Have Your Say* video and the *Going to Secondary School?* Booklet.
- Re-designed service leaflet and poster incorporating new Enquire logo and strapline.

As recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality, service leaflets and posters were translated into five community languages (Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Cantonese and Urdu) and were sent out to 400 black and minority ethnic groups in January 2006. The following table indicates publications sent out by the helpline, the office and downloaded from Enquire websites.

Table 6.1 Publications sent out by the helpline, the office and downloaded from Enquire websites 2004-05

	Sent out (Helpline)	Sent out (office)	Downloaded from Enquire websites
Service leaflets			
English		8,992	n/a
Bengali		424	n/a
Cantonese		475	n/a
Hindi		424	n/a
Punjabi		425	n/a
Urdu		475	n/a
Parents' guides			
English	524	3,442	684
Arabic	7		n/a
Bengali			n/a
Cantonese	8		n/a
Gaelic			n/a
Hindi	7		n/a
Punjabi	7		n/a
Urdu	8		n/a
Audio	1		n/a
Enquire bulletins		4761	2256
Enquire Factsheets	1186	3520	3541
CiS Factsheets	11	55	1
Resolve factsheets	21		n/a
Children Act factsheets			3833

FNA leaflets	13	74	n/a
EPSEN report (HMI)	52		n/a
SSSA Guide	396	39	n/a
DRC Guide	143		n/a
ASL summary	104	828	n/a
ASL guide for parents	141	1,465	n/a
ASL newsletter 1		106	230
ASL newsletter 2		1,764	179
ASL newsletter 3		1	0
ASL newsletters (various)	22		
Other publications			96
YP guide 1		n/a	246
YP guide 2		n/a	133
YP guide 3		n/a	194
YP guide (all 3 guides)	16	419	n/a
Going to secondary school	13	1,610	17
Going to secondary school audio		26	n/a
Have your say video	5	380	n/a
Teachers' notes		52	n/a
People at school	n/a	n/a	59
Imap flyer	n/a	n/a	135
Training manual flyer		32	n/a
Enquire publication list	46	793	n/a
Total	2,731	30,670	11,604

6.2 Legal subscription service

Legislation updates and legal briefings were prepared for subscribers (about 11 in total). In 2005-06, Enquire planned to update the key contacts and solicitors lists and to re-launch the service in order to make it commercially viable.

6.3 Training materials

Training materials had been updated by Enquire and, as a result of evaluations of the Parent-Professional Partnership workshop, the content had also been updated. As a result of these actions, the workshop ratings had improved.

6.4 Views of Enquire staff

The importance of the publications produced by Enquire was underlined, since they were a vital way of extending information. In the future, there were plans to have more web-based publications. Enquire took a lot of advice on

accessible design and publications were reasonably priced. The production of publications in a range of community languages was part of Enquire's outreach work to minority ethnic groups and was part of its Race Relations Amendment Act compliance strategy.

6.5 Views of SEED staff

According to SEED staff, the publications produced by Enquire should be seen as 'the jewel in the crown'. They were consistently very accessible and of very high quality.

6.6 Views of service users

As noted in Table 3.4, service users were asked about the frequency with which they used different services provided by Enquire and it was evident that publications were used most frequently, far more often than the telephone helpline. Amongst service users, professionals were more likely to use publications than parents.

This is not a surprising finding, since it is likely that printed material will be referred to many times, and, if sufficiently clear, will obviate the need to seek further advice from a telephone helpline or a local authority. However, it underlines the importance of this part of Enquire's services. Comments appended to the questionnaire included the following:

- *Every school should be sent Enquire's publications and should have at least one staff member required to know the education laws.*
- *Need for bite-sized chunks of info and not all current knowledge on a specific area.*
- *I think a monthly newsletter sent to parents/carers would be a good idea so that we are kept up to date with everything.*
- *Distribute info/leaflets to parents through schools to be sent home as I don't know how Enquire could help us, what services do they offer*
- *Mailing information and advice to parents/carers on what outreach events for children/young people there are taking place.*
- *Information to be written as simply as possible.*
- *Publications must reach those who need them at the earliest possible stage.*
- *I think this guide (support for learning act) should be distributed to all parents of school age children along with school handbook and re-issued when it is reviewed.*
- *Prior to my child starting school I could not convince doctors/health visitors of a problem. When speaking with her head teacher later I was left with nowhere to turn - a simple leaflet or card in these offices would be beneficial.*
- *Bigger print, one factsheet.*
- *Basic leaflet/fact sheet on what the parents guide to additional support for learning publication can help you with.*

- *Publications should be made more available (libraries), events and training should be made more for parents.*
- *Publications should be made more readily available, events could be advertised perhaps in schools/nurseries.*
- *It would be very helpful if every child in this category was automatically sent Enquire's publications. They should be identified by their school, GP or relevant professional. The child's parents would then have access to very important information which every family with SEN should have.*
- *It would be helpful besides the pamphlets to read feedback from parents in similar situations. In our case, we needed information on how to appeal a decision stopping our child from attending a speech and language unit. Enquire advised that it could be difficult and time-consuming to prove an education department was wrong in their decision. In the end we did not need to go this route as the school helped us to win our appeal without the need to go before a committee. What I am saying is what we read in the pamphlet is probably fine, but it was very daunting for parents thinking they have to prove in law a committee has made the wrong decision. Sometimes there is another path parents can take which is easier.*

6.7 Views of local authority staff

Ninety six per cent of local authority staff who responded to the questionnaire had read some of Enquire's publications and around 90% described them as clear, informative, practical, relevant and up to date. Comments included the following:

- *Information on the ASL Act will be required for teachers, parents and young people. Would Enquire support local authorities in the developments of their own information?*
- *Leaflets/newsletters for pupils/students especially to help them deal with transition stages.*
- *I would like help and advice in how to involve children and young people in changes for ASL Act.*

6.8 External key informants

Generally, comments from external interviewees on Enquire's publications were very positive. One respondent described the factsheets as:

Very useful – a touchstone of how things should be.

As with the helpline, it was suggested that there was a need for written information about schools in particular areas and the services they offered:

There is a need for more detailed information about local provision. Enquire should have a list of special schools, both private and independent, with information about what each does. When a parent is looking for a school, they feel lost and there is no coherent source of

information. Some ed psychs simply say, 'This is what we have on offer' and do not attempt to think laterally. Parents also need information about the criteria for admission to particular schools, for example, being able to sit in a group and listen.

Another respondent felt that Enquire's publications needed to include more specific details about how to interact with a local authority:

Parents often don't have the faintest idea of how to approach an LA – they should be given sample letters they can use.

Some of this information, another interviewee suggested, might be delivered through the inclusion of frequently asked questions.

It was felt by one respondent that there was a need for publications aimed at adults and children with different types and levels of communication:

There needs to be different levels of publication aimed at people with different language skills – some people need publications which are basically bullet points.

Two respondents noted that Enquire's publications were deliberately general and did not provide information aimed at specific impairment groups. Sometimes, it was felt, this was good, for example, with regard to records of needs, the information was relevant to everybody. However, on occasion specific information was needed in relation to, for example, visual impairment or complex needs. Other organisations were providing specialist publications in these areas, but were not always funded to do so.

Educational psychologists who participated in interviews were generally positive about Enquire's publications, and said they were routinely given to parents whose children's needs were being assessed. Sometimes, parents were more willing to accept information from an independent external agency rather than the local authority. One local authority was keen to explore the possibility of jointly badging publications, to show parents that the information had both the local authority's and Enquire's seal of approval.

6.9 Summary

Publications were seen as a very important part of Enquire's work, and were used extensively by parents and professionals. Some local authority staff were distributing them routinely to all parents whose children's needs were being assessed, and were keen to explore joint publication with Enquire in the future. Other support organisations were also positive about Enquire's publications, but suggested there was a need for more information on (a) local provision and alternatives, (b) how to manage interaction with professionals successfully and (c) specific impairments. It was also suggested that the publications were often pitched at quite a high level of literacy, and easy-read publications were needed for some parents and children.

SECTION 7: OTHER ISSUES

7.1 Management of the service

Most interviewees who were asked about the management of the service were unable to respond to this question because they did not have sufficient knowledge.

Enquire respondents described in some detail the supervision arrangements and staff development which were in place. A member of the advisory committee noted the relatively high level of staff turnover, which was very costly in terms of staff training and the loss of accumulated experience. Given the number of policy-related jobs in Edinburgh, and the valuable experience gained by staff at Enquire, it was unsurprising that they were poached by other agencies. One possibility was to augment the pay of key members of staff in order to retain their services for a longer period of time.

7.2 Value for money

Respondents from the Scottish Executive believed Enquire was very cost effective because of the range of services it provided. In addition, its location within Children in Scotland was beneficial because of efficiencies arising as a result of using some of the larger organisation's infrastructure. This view was also expressed by Enquire respondents.

The majority of external interviewees were unable to answer this question because they were unsure of the exact level of funding which Enquire was receiving and the targets which they were expected to meet. An educational psychologist commented that Enquire appeared to offer good value for money in terms of the range of tasks undertaken and, in particular, the number and range of publications.

Three organisations providing some similar services said that they did not believe Enquire offered particularly good value for money. They felt that the volume of calls to the telephone helpline was rather low, although it was not clear exactly what the point of comparison was. It was felt that in order to increase the use of the helpline, greater efforts needed to be made to inform parents of its existence and to ensure that it was providing the type of support they required. There was resentment amongst some support organisations that some of the services undertaken by Enquire had not been put out to tender, and, they believed, better value for money might be obtained by drawing on a wider range of providers. These views need to be understood in the context of the competitive environment in which support organisations operate and the attendant insecurity over long-term funding. Efforts need to be made by SEED and the voluntary sector to ensure that, as far as possible, organisations are delivering complementary services so that a better climate of co-operation can develop.

SECTION 8: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Summary

The broad conclusion of the evaluation is that Enquire is providing an important and highly valued service which empowers parents and makes a positive contribution to the work of local authority staff, health professionals and the voluntary sector. In the light of radical changes in provision of services for children with additional support needs, access to accurate and reliable information and advice will be even more important in the foreseeable future.

There was general agreement amongst all groups that the advice and information provided by Enquire via the helpline was impartial, accurate and supportive. Parents were particularly enthusiastic in their endorsement of the support offered by the helpline, describing the knowledge gained from the service as fundamentally empowering. A few suggested that more local information would be helpful. Local authority staff and support organisations, whilst generally positive, were more likely to sound cautionary notes. Some local authority staff felt that enquiries about local matters should be referred back to them, since Enquire was a national service and was unlikely, therefore, to have enough insight into local authority policy and practice. It was also suggested by local authority staff that Enquire might encourage parents to adopt an adversarial stance. Some support organisations also suggested that Enquire perhaps did not have enough local knowledge and argued that they should do more to build up contact with local and specialist support groups. Questions were also raised by a few organisations about whether Enquire, in endeavouring to provide an impartial service, failed to empathise sufficiently with individual parents. Some concerns were also expressed about the ability of the service to provide an adequate service for parents with communication difficulties or in very disadvantaged circumstances.

Whilst Enquire had clearly been making efforts to increase its public profile, there was a general view that amongst parents, local authorities and support organisations that there was insufficient knowledge of the service. Some parents felt that Enquire was a 'well kept secret', which many other parents could benefit from. They felt that parents needed to know about the service as soon as their child was diagnosed, underlining the need for close links with social workers and health professionals, as well as parents. Local authority staff felt that Enquire could do more to publicise the support available within education departments, and the name of the responsible officer should be communicated to parents as soon as an enquiry was made. Other support organisations felt that Enquire could do more to publicise their services generally, but should also alert parents to the complementary specialist services available elsewhere and should do a lot more cross-referral. Clearly, responsibility for alerting parents to the existence of the service does not lie with Enquire alone. There is a great deal which local authority staff, health

professionals and support organisation workers can do to inform parents about the work of Enquire and the support which is available.

Like other aspects of Enquire's work, events and training activities were generally regarded very favourably by both parents/carers and local authority staff. It is clearly difficult to aim events at a very wide audience, and a few comments from local authority staff suggested they would prefer something tied slightly more closely to practitioner concerns. The outreach work with children and young people is at a relatively early stage of development compared with other aspects of Enquire's portfolio of activities, and it is evident that strong links with schools and other children's organisations take quite a long time to establish.

Publications were seen as a very important part of Enquire's work, and were used extensively by parents and professionals. Some local authority staff were distributing them routinely to all parents whose children's needs were being assessed, and were keen to explore joint publication with Enquire in the future. Other support organisations were also positive about Enquire's publications, but suggested there was a need for more information on (a) local provision and alternatives, (b) how to manage interaction with professionals successfully and (c) specific impairments. It was also suggested that the publications were often pitched at quite a high level of literacy, and easy-read publications were needed for some parents and children.

With regard to service management, there was evidence of good practice in terms of staff supervision and development arrangements. However, the view was expressed that, because of the competitive labour market in Edinburgh, high staff turnover was a problem, and some suggestions were made on steps which might be taken to address this, including better staff remuneration.

In the following section, we first draw some wider conclusions before sketching some recommendations arising from the evaluation.

8.2 Conclusions

Parents, professionals and support organisations: specific standpoints

In considering the views expressed above, it is evident that the strongest endorsement for the service comes from parents, who feel that Enquire acts as a bulwark against local authorities which, they believe, are inclined to provide parents with only partial information. Local authority personnel, whilst generally positive, have some underlying reservations and concerns. In particular, there is concern that Enquire may encourage parents to question local authority decisions on placement and resourcing matters. Other support organisations have particular criticisms and concerns, which may arise, at least in part, as a result of the competitive funding environment in which they operate. In interpreting the views of different parties, it is important to bear in mind that some degree of tension is inevitable. In relation to tensions within the voluntary sector, the Scottish Executive might be able to play a positive

role by encouraging organisations to recognise their complementary roles and organising funding streams to reflect this.

Overview of Enquire

Despite these different perspectives, there was general agreement that Enquire was offering an extremely useful and targeted service, which complemented the legal advice available which was needed by a small number of parents who were considering taking action against the local authority. It was pointed out that, particularly in the light of new legislation which devolved considerable power to local authorities, there was a need for a clear and unambiguous statement of the legal position of parents and children and minimum standards of provision which users of educational services might expect. The specific challenges thrown up by the new legislation will be discussed further in the Part 2 report.

It should be noted that Enquire's services were not simply being used by parents and carers, but also by professionals and other support organisations. Whilst the helpline was mainly used by parents, other sources of information, such as publications, were used by a much wider group of people working in the area of additional support needs.

There was a general view that efforts should be made to increase Enquire's public profile, so that as soon as a child was identified as having additional support needs, parents were encouraged to contact an external agency for information and advice. Education, social work and health professionals, as well as other support organisations, have clear responsibilities here.

General or local information

There was some disagreement with regard to the extent to which Enquire should focus exclusively on the bigger picture with regard to rights and duties in relation to additional support needs. The Scottish Executive and Enquire staff felt that this was the key part of the remit, whereas parents and other support organisations believed that more information was needed about what was available on the ground. For example, there was a strong view that parents often had to rely on the knowledge imparted by the educational psychologist about possible placement options, but this might be either partial or biased. In order to provide really useful knowledge, general information about rights had to be accompanied by more specific information about widely conceived possibilities.

Parents and support organisations also stated that there was a need for advice about how to manage systems and processes effectively. Suggestions ranged from the provision of a checklist for parents to use in relation to the successful conduct of meetings, to the publication of the type of letter which might be appropriate in certain circumstances.

The boundary between impartiality and advocacy

An important theme arising from the interviews was the extent to which tension might arise between the provision of impartial advice and advocacy services. The majority of parents and professionals reported that Enquire staff were friendly and approachable, but some parents and support groups referred to the need of more one-to-one and ongoing support. This issue is discussed in more depth in the Part 2 report.

Meeting the needs of particular groups

It is evident that Enquire is endeavouring to meet the needs of diverse groups. Some aspects of the service are clearly targeted at one group or another, for example, training aimed at professionals, guides written for parents and videos aimed at children and young people. However, it is inevitable that sometimes a number of different groups are accessing the same service and as a result may find that it is pitched at the wrong level. Such comments were evident in relation to publications, training, events and the helpline. In relation to the latter service, different suggestions were made, ranging from a separate children's service to the greater use of text messaging.

In addition, it is evident that within groups there are likely to be very diverse needs. For example, some children and young people and parents may have no difficulty in understanding quite detailed advice, whilst others may have great difficulty understanding verbal or written communication. Practitioners will also vary from volunteer workers in voluntary organisations to professionals with responsibility for service delivery.

Given the generally high levels of support for the service, Enquire is clearly meeting the needs of a wide range of service users, but it is also likely to be the case that some potential users are deterred by difficulties in accessing or understanding information.

8.3 Recommendations

Overarching recommendation

- There is general agreement amongst a range of interest groups that the advice and information service provided by Enquire is extremely valuable and that there is an ongoing need for such a service. The broad recommendation of the evaluation is, therefore, that the service should continue to be funded.

Telephone helpline

- Enquire's remit is to provide impartial and accurate information and advice. However, as a result of disability or disadvantage, some parents may need more intense one-to-one support. It is therefore

necessary to consider to what extent the helpline can offer sufficient support, and to refer on to local advocacy services where necessary.

- Parents express the need for more in-depth information about local services. The extent to which Enquire is able to provide this information should be reviewed, whilst recognising that onward referral to local authorities and local support groups will also be necessary.
- A very low proportion of calls made to the helpline come from children and young people. The possibility of providing a separate children's helpline, or liaising more closely with Childline, could be explored.
- The range of organisations to which Enquire refers callers should be expanded.
- Enquire has extended the information it routinely collects in relation to callers. Information on the social background of callers to the helpline would be useful, and this could be obtained by asking for the first part of the caller's postcode.
- Enquire should continue to review strategies for publicising helpline services to ensure that all parents and others who might benefit are aware of its existence. Professionals working in a range of settings including local authorities, schools, family centres and hospitals also have a great deal to contribute here in terms of encouraging parents to make full use of Enquire's services.

Public profile

- There is general agreement that Enquire's public profile needs to be higher. Continued efforts need to be made to advertise the service, including reminding local authorities that they have a duty to inform parents of additional support for learning services.
- Some local authorities are clearly keen to work much more closely with Enquire. The greater use of joint training, events and publications should be explored. The programme of visits to local authorities to establish links with key members of staff should be continued and extended.
- There is a need for even better two-way communication between Enquire, local authorities and educational psychology services to ensure that knowledge and information are passed in both directions.
- Better links with other support organisations are needed through websites and face to face communication. In addition, further advice on communication strategies should be sought from organisations supporting specific groups, e.g. the deaf and those with dual sensory impairment.

Outreach work

- Some professionals expressed criticisms of earlier training. Workshop content has already been reviewed, and ongoing efforts should be made to ensure that training offered is in line with local authority needs.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that parents are directly informed of local events, possibly making greater use of individual mailings or e-mail.
- Outreach work with children and young people is developing and some more thinking is needed about the most effective ways to target a wide range of groups and individuals with different needs.

Publications

- Publications are generally regarded as highly successful. There is a need to ensure that they are produced not only in different languages, but also at different levels to reflect differences in literacy and communication needs.
- The extent to which separate publications are needed for professionals and parents, as well as children and young people, should be considered.

Management and cost-effectiveness

- The service is effectively managed, although staff turnover is a problem. The possibility of enhancing pay to retain valuable staff should be considered.
- Whilst the general view is that Enquire is delivering a multi-faceted and cost effective service, it is important that all aspects of the service are kept under review, so that on-going adjustments to the profile of activities may be made as appropriate.

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