

Flexible Educational Arrangements: a case study in Fife

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Introduction



THE USE OF FLEXIBLE EDUCATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: EXPLORING PRACTICE IN FIFE

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This report presents key findings from a small-scale exploratory research project with young people, parents, education and third sector practitioners on the use of Flexible Educational Arrangements in Fife.

Background to research

Systems change

What are flexible educational arrangements?

Aims of the research

Explore young people's and their parents' views of flexible timetables

Explore practitioners' and educational representatives' perceptions and experiences for positive change

Identify opportunities

The research

This research explored the use of Flexible Educational Arrangements for young people in Fife between and November 2019. The findings are based on interviews with:

1. Five young people on flexible timetables.
2. Six parents (with total nine young people on flexible timetables).
3. Three educational representatives.

And reflective diaries with third sector practitioners.

“There will be a mix of formal and informal flexible educational arrangements in place across our schools. I think formal would be the child and the family are actively engaged in it, that there's a planning and review cycle in place. The informal arrangements, which I don't know that they exist, because they're informal, but I have heard from some families that there isn't a process in place.”
(Education interviewee)

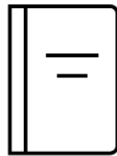
Why are flexible timetables used?

- Education staff said they were mainly used where a child isn't managing in school but should be used as a short-term measure only.
- Various reasons for flexible timetable however anxiety about an aspect of school was a significant factor.
- Bullying or negative experiences with peers was mentioned by several young people and parents.
- A few parents also identified behavioural related issues.

Young people's and parents' experiences

- Young people had mixed experiences
- Parents frustrated by perceived lack of communication from the school alongside challenges of managing the children's time at home
- Lack of clarity about key aspects of children's timetables (e.g. how often the timetable would be reviewed, lack of information in writing)
- Third sector practitioners played a key role in bridging the gap between schools and parents and supporting young people who were not following their timetable.

Case study



Carla described her flexible timetable as “useless”

“She didn't like it at all, she didn't like having to go down to school and everybody else is going early at the normal time.” (Parent)

“I’m behind. I’ve been put down from top classes to bottom.” (Carla)

Planning and reviewing

- Aim is to have a review meeting every six weeks including the young person and parent. Education representatives highlighted challenges of organising these meetings with families.
- Parents had mixed experienced communicating with school.
- Parents gave several examples of how communication from the school could be improved.

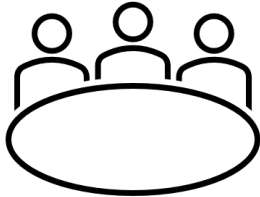
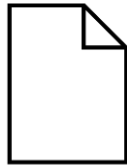
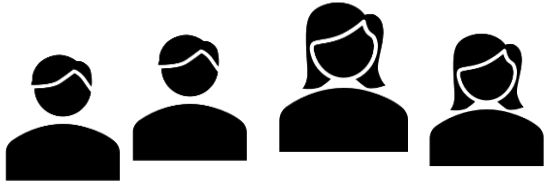
“Sometimes it’s difficult to get in touch with parents. So, it can make it quite difficult to get feedback from the parent as to what’s happening. Again, it just depends on the need of the pupil. ‘Cause some pupils that, even although they’re on a flexible package, don’t turn up, and trying to get in touch with parents can be very difficult.”
(Education P2)

Impacts of flexible timetables

- On the whole, education needs not met
- Stress on families (including financial impacts, digital access, managing childcare)

“Why don’t you go to school and save me all the grief? Because at the end of the day it’s me that’s getting it all. And it worries me because now that social work’s involved, purely because of their attendance which is really low.” (Parent 4)

Case study



"[Young person] had been given a choice to start back full day after the holidays on the Wednesday, and if she didn't, then that's like they gave her the choice, but I've not been made aware of that, through the school."

"because I'm a single parent, I was having to be there for him during school hours, which meant I couldn't attend job centre appointments and things like that, so I was getting sanctioned for this."

The support and information young people and families need

- Being creative about the learning experiences and activities provided to young people in and outside of school.
- Choice for young people.
- Providing a “safe environment to access support, information and advocacy around a range of areas”.
- 1:1 support for parents to liaise with schools and to provide emotional support.
- Providing written and accessible information on the young person’s timetable to parents and the process of reviewing it.

“Because some kids will not come in if they’ve got a certain subject it’s, “Well, I’m no’ coming in.” So, they’re missing all their other subjects as well. Whereas if we avoid that, we’re more likely to get them in for some subjects.” (Education interviewee)

Recommendations

1

Giving young people a voice and choice

- Providing support for young people to attend school meetings/ensure their views are included.
- Providing options to young people to help them maintain engagement in education.

2

Planning flexible timetables

- Clear information should be provided on key aspects of the timetable.
- Giving parents a single point of contact.
- Multi-agency support should be built in at the initial stages of planning.

3

Reviewing flexible timetables

- FEAs should be used as a short-term measure. Clear information should be on provided on how the timetable will be reviewed overtime.
- The option to return to school-time or mixture of alternatives should always remain open.

Do you work with young people on flexible timetables?

What is your experience and knowledge around this?

What are implications of Covid on flexible timetables?

Questions?

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For a link to the research report see

<https://www.povertyalliance.org/publications/>

