



Seasons for Growth Newsletter

Winter 18 / 19

Sustainable Seasons

Since 2005, West Dunbartonshire, in partnership with Choose Life and the Notre Dame Centre, has been committed to giving all children and young people in the Authority the opportunity to attend Seasons for Growth peer education groups in order to address issues of grief, change and loss. Key to this aim has been the development of a model of delivery which can be sustained and maintained despite ever changing circumstances. A major factor has been the Authority's own Seasons for Growth Trainer, who is able to deliver training to new Companions free of charge thanks to Choose Life funding. This compares with the fee of £295 per person usually charged. In 2009, Alison Gardner, Senior Educational Psychologist completed the Training for Trainers, and for the next 8 years, joined forces with Nicola Robertson from Falkirk Council to provide training in both Authorities. Joanna Moir, Educational Psychologist, has just qualified as a second Trainer for West Dunbartonshire, meaning that we are now independently sustainable.



Joanna joined the team as an Assistant Psychologist in 2012, and did her Companion Training in 2013. Joanna is passionate about meeting the needs of pupils who experience bereavement, separation and other losses, and recognises the enormous positive impact Seasons can have for so many children and families. She has been working through the comprehensive Trainer's pathway, including training Companions for the Children and Young People, Adult and Parent/Carer programmes. This Autumn Joanna completed her training and has been awarded her Trainer's Statement. She estimates that this took just under 100 hours. Joanna will continue to co-deliver Companion trainings with Alison and will be running the next Reconnector in February 2019.

Reconnectors

Thank you to all Companions who attend every year – Reconnectors form a critical part of the ongoing training and support that allow us to deliver such a high quality service to our children and young people.

The Reconnectors in 2019 will be:

Wednesday 13th February 2019 1.30 – 2.30 pm
Thursday 23rd May 2019 1.30 – 2.30 pm

Please let us know which one you would like to attend – Psoffice@west-dunbarton.gov.uk .
There is always space for everyone who wants to come, but we like advance notice so we can set the room out for the numbers we are expecting.

Dates for
the Diary:

Seasons Reviews with Alison Gardner, Seasons Trainer

Every year, I visit a number of schools and meet with the member of senior management who has responsibility for Seasons for Growth, and all of the Companions. Usually the school psychologist, who is often a Companion too, joins in. These Seasons Reviews give the opportunity to reflect on how each school is following the core guidance on running groups, but also how they have developed the programme as a result of their own skills and the needs of their pupils. During each review, we identify unique aspects of how Seasons is delivered in the particular school context. Earlier this term, five Companions met for such a review in St Eunan's Primary School: DHT Helen Lodhi; Learning Assistants Carolanne Carson and Lynne Farquhar; Educational Psychologists Iain Walker and Alison Gardner. I asked the school to write about how they run Seasons:



In St Eunan's Primary we run two Seasons for Growth groups each school year, organised and run by Learning Assistants, Lynne Farquhar and Caroleanne Carson. We run a group for pupils in P1 – P4 and children in P5 – P7 between January and Easter each year. Having been trained for a number of years and established and run many groups, we have been fortunate enough to be able to support a large number of young people through a wide variety of challenging life experiences.

Before each group begins we take time to speak with all parents to establish why they wish their child to participate, so that we are best placed to support the children. Time is taken to plan and gather resources. Following each session, Companions and Depute Head Teacher meet to ensure appropriate pastoral care for all participants.

Some evaluative comments from recent participants include:

Companions: “At the start of Seasons for Growth I see a lot of sad and bewildered faces, towards the end of the programme it is an absolute pleasure to know that myself and the programme have made a difference.”

Pupils: “I enjoyed telling my stories. I made good friends and if I am sad I know I can speak to Mrs Farquhar.” Kai - Age 7

“I loved Seasons for Growth because I could talk about my dad.” Jamie – Age 6

Parent: “Sophie can articulate her feelings more and she has a special relationship with Mrs Farquhar.”

Celebration is a very important part of the programme and we really go to town with this! The children are heavily involved in planning the experience, from choosing the menu right down to the colour of balloons they want and they are presented with a framed print of poetry they have created during the group. Our celebrations are well supported by families and parents and feedback has always been extremely positive.

Seasons for Growth fits perfectly with St Eunan's' nurturing school philosophy and promotes peer support under the guidance of experienced Companions. The opportunity to build emotional literacy and resilience amongst children struggling with grief and loss is a privilege and is something we are wholly committed to continuing.

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