

Agenda Item	15.
Report No	ACS/75/13

Additional Support Needs Review – Interim Report

Joint Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport and Director of Health and Social Care

Summary

As a means of providing a focus on policy, practice and outcomes in supporting pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN) in Highland, to identify where practice could be improved and also what practice is effective in meeting the current need, an ASN review was commenced in April 2013.

This report summarises the activity to date and provides information on key themes emerging from the review that will be taken forward in the coming session.

1. Background

- 1.1 In Highland, as in many other areas in Scotland, there has been a substantial growth in the number of children with very complex and demanding needs. Some of these needs require to be met by changes to provision in school; some require multi-agency interventions; and some can only be met in very specialised and very expensive, out of authority placements, which removes significant levels of resource which could otherwise be invested more locally. Although children and families with Additional Support Needs (ASN) and those affected by disability have always been seen as priority groups within the very explicit and statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority, the growth in need has meant that in the past, the best efforts to base resource allocation upon a rational assessment of needs has often been thwarted by demand-led, crisis-generated pressures.
- 1.2 Members will be aware of the decision to implement a resource allocation model agreed by the Adult and Children's Committee in September 2012. This has provided a means of equitably allocating additional support to pupils with ASN across Highland, with the same level of support being recommended on the basis of assessed need, consistent across Highland. For the first time this has provided a clear rationale for the allocation of support.
- 1.3 The changes in the political and legal context surrounding additional support for pupils in education has also lead to a rise in public and parental expectations, which can be difficult to reconcile within the reality of a constrained financial environment.
- 1.4 As a result, variation in provision and practice has developed. Both mainstream and specialist support services have developed and evolved to respond to identified need, locally, as it has arisen and these have not always been well planned or integrated into existing structures. Across each of the Areas in Highland, there is therefore a spread of provision, which is in itself not a bad thing. However, the management and review of provision has also been

variable and no central overview has been taken of provision and practice in relation to ASN in Highland since the Best Value Review of Support for Learning some years ago.

- 1.5 There are various policy and practice papers in place in Highland to support the needs of pupils with ASN, and there is evidence that where these are integrated and implemented within an overall inclusive ethos, they work well. Indeed, many of these are regarded as best practice models across Scotland. However, there remains a significant level of variation in practice across Highland schools that would indicate that there is more that can be done to more effectively meet the needs of all pupils.
- 1.6 Within Highland, the unique approach to Integrating Children's Services has created opportunities for better planning and integration of support for children and young people. The central thrust of the approach to service delivery, is about improving peoples' experience of services, whether it is as a pupil or a parent, and there is an improvement process across children's services, focused around *For Highland's Children 4* (FHC4), the integrated Children's Services Plan.
- 1.7 Over school session 2012-13, work had started on various support structures within ASN, including work on implementing the ASN allocation model; moderating and verifying the assessed level of need; a draft behaviour strategy - including a review of the role of offsite provision, the development of nurture groups and children on PT timetables; an ASN training strategy; ASN in the Early Years - including the work on identifying milestones at age 3 and 4 as part of the work within the Early Years Collaborative; the further embedding of the Highland Practice Model. However, no significant decisions have yet been taken around some of these issues and a single ASN review is an opportunity to better integrate all of this activity.
- 1.8 As part of the ASN Improvement Group agenda within FHC4, it was agreed to review the provisions and structures around the support for children and young people with ASN in Highland Schools, with the aim being: **"to identify the range of needs and then identify principles and structures that make the most effective and efficient use of resources to meet these needs and in doing so, achieve the best outcome for children and young people"**.
- 1.9 This review will provide an opportunity to consider the structures and supports across Highland from a range of views and to recommend any changes required to better meet the identified needs of children and young people with ASN:
 - To take an in-depth look at ASN across each stage - Early Years, Primary and Secondary.
 - To review provision supporting each level of need - within the Universal educational provision, including the roles and responsibilities of class and subject teachers; and within more specialist provision, both within Highland Council and out-with.
 - To review the specialist posts and strategic and management structures in Areas and within the central ASN Team, to ensure they are effective and fit for purpose.

2. Working Group

- 2.1 The format of the review has required a small working group to be established

and for the review to be undertaken in several phases, with the members of the working group taking responsibility for the engagement of other stakeholders in the process and for additional specific actions.

The working group consists of:

- Calum MacSween, Head of Education (Chair)
- Bernadette Cairns, Principal Officer ASL & Early Education
- Cllr Linda Munro, Children's Champion
- Linda Schubert, Quality Improvement Officer ASN
- Emma Slade, Principal Teacher Support for Learning, Nairn Academy
- Richard Hendry, Additional Support Needs Officer (West)
- Mairi MacDonald, Pupil Support Assistant, Kirkhill PS
- Marlyn Campbell, Development Officer, Disability

3. Action Plan

3.1

April – July 2013 (Phase 1)	Wide consultation with stakeholders and interested parties regarding areas of practice that work well and priority areas for development.
	The various consultations were undertaken using the same key questions to ensure a consistent process for data gathering.
July – August 2013	Analyse data from the consultation process and agree broad themes to look at in more detail.
August 2013	Interim report to Highland Council Adult & Children's Services Committee.
August – October 2013 (Phase 2)	Further data gathering and analysis of data from priority themes for improvement identified by Phase 1.
October – November 2013	Recommendations drawn from analyses of data in Phase 2.
November 2013	Report and recommendations presented to Highland Council Children and Adults Committee.
November 2013 – April 2014 (Phase 3)	Implementation of agreed recommendations.
April – June 2014 (Phase 4)	Initial evaluation of actions. Feedback to and from stakeholders.
June 2014	Final report on review to Highland Council Adult & Children's Services Committee.

4. PHASE 1 – Consultation with Stakeholders

- 4.1 Responses to the consultation phase have been provided by a range of individuals and groups of stakeholders. This consultation was wide ranging and covered a variety of groups and interests. The views of parents and pupils were particularly canvassed and both written and verbal responses were

received from parents and young people affected by a range of additional support needs from across Highland.

4.2 Detailed contributions were received from the following groups:

Head Teachers	Staff from 50 schools
Pre-school Teaching Services	Area Primary SfL teams
PT SfL Secondary	Educational Psychologists
H&SC Disability team	Integrated Services Officers
Elected Members	Area ASN Officers
Pupil Support Assistants from 3 primary schools	Central ASN Team and specialist services
Parents and children with visual impairment	Parents and pupils from an offsite SEBN provision
Foster parents	Parents from two ASGs
Pupils in an onsite ASN provision	Parents/pupils with CSPs (incl LAC)
Pupils with ASN from 6 Secondary schools	The Pupil Council from a Primary School
Extended ECS Management Team	Preschool staff in 4 ASGs

4.3 The consultation process has provided feedback on several areas of good practice that can be seen across Highland as working to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people with additional support needs and also those aspects of ASN support that should be retained in any new developments or structural changes. These included:

Structures and processes

- The views of parents/children and young people are now regularly sought, and there is evidence of an increasing number of consultation processes and greater levels of working with parents and young people.
- The establishment of processes at a School and an Area level, to review children and young people with the greatest need that supports detailed planning to ensure better outcomes across a whole school/Area.
- The Solution Focused Meeting process was recognised as an excellent model that integrates all the stakeholders' opinions and clearly finds next steps for all concerned.
- Integrated services have made it easier to work together to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.
- The roles of the Integrated Services Officers and Children's Services Workers have been critical to supporting pupils with home based issues and making the links between schools and Health & Social Care staff.
- The new Child's Plan format has provided greater consistency and there is now a more holistic approach to planning for children.

Policy and Practice

- There is a range of policy, practice documents and guidance available to staff, that is now available within the context of the Highland ASN Manual – accessed via the SfL website, to provide a context to staff requiring information to support them.
- Although transitions are generally seen as an area requiring considerable improvement in practice, there were some examples of

good practice in early identification and joint working between Health, Social Care and Education staff from preschool – school and also examples of social enterprise and skills development in preparation from school to post school – e.g. the learners programme at Drummond School, the DIGIT Programme in Easter Ross/Sutherland and the Social Enterprise Model in Ullapool.

Levels of Resourcing

- Many schools felt confident about meeting the need if current levels of resource were maintained or improved. However, they also noted the need for continued access to the wide range of training opportunities there are for staff and made a plea for more local training and/or access to this via IT.
- The needs of pupils with ASN are now central to the discussions around new schools and adaptations and there is an increasing level of access to our school buildings for pupils with a range of physical needs.

4.3 Several themes have so far emerged from the consultation process in Phase 1, as the priority areas that would merit further consideration in more depth. These are:

- **Statistical information – prevalence, predicted need and resource allocation.**
There is a need to ensure the data on pupils with ASN is robust enough for future planning.
There is a need to review the current ASN allocation model and to maintain an overview and moderation of the process of allocating support to pupils to ensure greater consistency over time.
- **Balancing parental expectations, meeting need and a finite budget.**
The ASN budget is finite and the expectations of parents are rising.
There is a need for transparency and greater levels of communication with parents to co-construct services for their children/young people.
- **Implications/pressure on families and other Highland Council services and budgets when pupil needs are not/cannot be met in school.**
Better integrating support from the earliest stages when need is identified will lead to parents experiencing a more holistic service.
- **Increasing inclusion – raising awareness; changing ethos; enhancing skills.**
Greater awareness of ASN and inclusive practices will lead to more children/young people having their needs met within their local schools and fewer demands for placements out of authority.
- **Staff training and developing an appropriate pedagogy.**
Increasing the understanding and knowledge base of staff will ensure more successful placements, with greater staff skill and confidence.
- **Provision and management of on-site and off-site provision, additional to mainstream schools.**
Ensuring a range of provision from universal to specialist, with opportunities for elaborating the curriculum, will enable needs to be met appropriately in a variety of provisions that are fit for purpose.

- **Transitions.**

Transitions at all levels need to be improved, to support better outcomes for children and young people. In some cases these are managed well and we need to understand what is going well and embed this practice more widely.

- **The role of the ASNO in the local management of ASN and their links to the Central ASN Team.**

The management structures for ASN in Highland need to be evaluated to ensure the most effective and efficient structure.

- **The role and structure of the Central ASN Team and specialist services.**

The roles and responsibilities of the specialist ASN teams in Highland need to be evaluated to ensure the most effective and efficient structure.

- **Greater consistency in the implementation of policy and good practice including the Highland Practice Model.**

Meeting the needs of pupils with ASN needs to be embedded into the Highland Practice Model and where good practice has been identified this needs to be more widely shared.

4.4 Although these themes are quite wide ranging, the structure of the consultation process has allowed participants to reflect on what actions may be taken to ensure progress and to lead to improved outcomes for children and young people if these issues were to be addressed. The issues raised (in parenthesis above), will be considered in more detail by members of the working group in Phase 2 of the ASN Review, with feedback provided to members in a further report.

5 Implications – Resource, Legal, Equalities, Climate Change and Risk

5.1 There are no additional **resource** implications from the review at this stage. The initial phases are exploratory in nature and any findings will be reported back to Committee over the coming session.

5.2 There are no **legal** implications to take into account in relation to the ASN Review, however the members of the Working Group are aware of the legal requirements upon the Council in terms of the legislative framework and will be minded of this in undertaking the further phases of the review.

5.3 The review has been established to ensure that the Council's equalities duties are fully met and to consider any relevant changes in relation to meeting additional support needs that would further ensure that any pupil, family member or staff member within a Highland school, who has a protected characteristic, will be treated equally and fairly. Any implications there may be for change will be based on **equality** implications that are positive. In terms of the ASN Review itself, parents and pupils were considered as equal partners in the process of consultation and groups of staff at all levels were asked to contribute, giving equal opportunity to influence any future changes.

5.4 There are no **climate change** implications attached to the review.

Recommendation

- Members are asked to note the review and the work undertaken so far.
- Members are asked to endorse the range of emerging themes to be further developed in phase 2 of the review.

Bill Alexander
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Hugh Fraser
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