ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	12th March 2020
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Supporting Children's Learning in an Empowered System
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/20/054
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Eleanor Sheppard & Craig McDermott
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1, 5 and 6

1.1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1.1 In November 2019 the Education Operational Delivery Committee instructed officers to work with staff in schools and Trade Unions to address the key themes highlighted in committee report OPE/19/415. Officers were instructed to report progress within 2 committee cycles. In January, Officers confirmed that the EIS Survey (commissioned in May 2019, which surveyed their members around instances of violence and aggression in schools) findings be taken into account as part of this work.

2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:-

2.1.1 Note the approach being taken and progress made to date;

2.1.2 Instruct the Programme Manager to Report on the programme within 3 committee cycles.

3.1 BACKGROUND

3.1.1 The report presented to Committee in November 2019 identified a comprehensive range of improvements necessary to build a stronger universal, targeted and specialist offer to children and young people.

3.1.2 The wide-ranging nature of the planned improvements led to the appointment of a seconded Programme Manager to oversee and coordinate improvements in January 2020.

3.1.3 In order to better understand current vulnerabilities in our local system the Programme Manager has undertaken a robust review of the data, and held a series of face-to-face structured interviews with staff across the Education Service, including Early Years Practitioner, Pupil Support Assistant, Teacher, Principal Teacher, Depute Head Teacher, and Head Teacher colleagues from Primary, Secondary and Special Schools/Services. Central Officers and the Educational Psychology Service were also consulted. To date, 51 interviews have taken place and this sphere of work is set to continue over the coming months.

3.1.4 National consultation events with parents and carers have been utilised to gain further qualitative data and there are plans in place to integrate children and young people, and parent/carer voice element into this consultation via ASG workshops. Work in this regard has started through the Parent Council Connect group who have piloted the parental questions.

3.1.5 It is anticipated that opportunities for consultation and engagement will be on-going throughout the lifetime of this programme. This approach will enable the Service to consistently learn and improve. This is leading to a 'live' Action Plan with fluid actions to take account of lines of enquiry (please see Appendix A).

3.2 DATA REVIEW

3.2.1 Over January the Programme Manager reviewed a variety of datasets; this data analysis will be on-going as new areas of enquiry become apparent.

3.2.2 A review of the city's learner profile took place in January 2020. The profile is based on live data, taken directly from schools, via SEEMiS. 31.9% of young people, across all learning provision, have a recorded additional support need. On average, 30.85% of young people per primary school have a recorded additional support need (ASN). 36.15% have a recorded need in secondary. The national average figure for ASN is 29% and we can conclude that, in general terms, schools are accurately recording the need for additional support.

3.2.3 THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

3.2.4 The most prevalent recorded needs across our schools are as follows:
- English as an Additional Language – 11.24% learners;
- Social/Emotional/Behavioural Needs – 6.61% learners;
- Moderate Learning Difficulty – 5.46% learners;
- Specific Learning Difficulty (other than dyslexia) – 3.98% learners;
- Family Issues – 3.18% learners;
- Language or Speech Disorder – 2.86% learners;
- Autistic Spectrum Condition – 2.73% learners.

3.2.5 It should be noted that many children and young people may have a number of additional support needs and therefore sit across a number of groups.

3.2.6 EXCLUSION AND ATTENDANCE DATA

3.2.7 Exclusion data from August to December 2019 evidences a number involving children and young people with an additional support need. Officers are currently reviewing our exclusion guidance to further clarify the legal position. In addition, Officers now monitor the exclusion rates of those with additional support needs/disability on a monthly basis to gain further insight in this area.

3.2.8 Data suggests children and young people with a Social/Emotional/Behavioural Need (SEBN) are at greatest risk of exclusion. This endorses the need to urgently review our approaches in this area and work is progressing to align provisions and resource across education and children's social work.

3.2.9 A review of attendance data shows a similar trend, with those with additional support needs having poorer levels of attendance than their peers. Officers intend to investigate this further – via monthly tracking and monitoring, and ongoing quality improvement activity – to understand the root cause before deciding on appropriate action.

3.2.10 ATTAINMENT AND DESTINATIONS DATA

3.2.11 INSIGHT (Scotland's benchmarking tool for the senior phase) data was used to generate four-year averages that relate to senior phase attainment of young people across Aberdeen City. The average difference in literacy attainment for young people with a recorded ASN – across Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 4-6 – in comparison with their peers is 19.57%. The biggest differential exists between SCQF 4 and 5 with attainment gaps of 12.78% and 24.33% respectively. The SCQF level 4-6 average gap for numeracy is 18.20% and, again, there are respective gaps of 15.36% and 23.3% for attainment at SCQF levels 4 and 5. It should be noted, however, that attainment across almost all literacy and numeracy measures for ASN young people sit above the Virtual Comparator (VC) with exception of level 4 literacy (-0.02%).

3.2.12 Our position compared to the Virtual Comparator is positive although it is important that we aspire to close the gap between those with a recognised additional support need and their peers wherever possible. Further analysis is currently being undertaken to understand the performance of individual groups to ensure that Officers have a clear picture of performance as this will help fully determine the impact of current approaches.

3.2.13 Aberdeen City's four-year average positive destination figure is 90.68% and 84.88% for ASN young people. The ASN figure sits below the VC (88.54%) and national average (89.17%). There is a need to look carefully at the learning pathways of children with additional support needs over S5 and S6 to ensure that we work effectively with Community Planning Partners to support young people into adulthood. This finding is mirrored by anecdotal evidence from parents and carers who report that their young person can feel unsupported and unprepared for life beyond school. This has to be a key consideration as we move forward.

3.2.14 DEMAND FOR SPECIALIST PROVISION

3.2.15 Specialist provision is available at Orchard Brae, Bucksburn ASN Wing and Mile End. The needs for such provision are assessed via transitions planning.

3.2.16 Transition planning has identified an increased need within specialist provision and additional capacity is being secured for the next academic session.

3.2.17 Data from schools and face-to-face engagement with staff confirms the complexity of need present within specialist provision (Orchard Brae, Mile End and Bucksburn) has increased over time due to both advances in medical science and wider societal changes. This impacts city-wide provision twofold:
1) The continuum of support is unlikely to remain multi-directional (i.e. learners returning to mainstream provision with support when success has been achieved) due to the complexity and severity of the learners' needs;
2) The level of need within mainstream provision has, as a result, increased whilst staffing shortages have reduced the level of Support for Learning.

3.2.18 STAFF EXPERIENCE

3.2.19 In May 2019 the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) commissioned a survey amongst its members in Aberdeen City. The survey concluded that 28.14% of all respondents – 660 members – had been physically assaulted by a child/young person during session 2018-2019 and 53.75% report being verbally abused. The respondents' comments also evidence the want and need for high-quality professional learning.

3.2.20 Professional learning themes highlighted by Education Staff in the 2019 Aberdeen City Council Education Survey include Social, Emotional & Mental Health / Behavioural Needs (such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autistic Spectrum Conditions, Anger Management, Challenging/Violent Behaviours), Nurturing approaches, Attachment theory, and the suggestion of de-escalation training for staff. The original consultation reported to Committee in November and discussions with stakeholders confirm this as a necessary programme of training with staff requesting support around information sharing and matching learners' needs to sources of support and resource, particularly in terms of increasing universal capacity and understanding targeted/specialist thresholds.

3.2.21 The views of parents/carers have been sought initially in the context of The National Parent Forum for Scotland's (NPFS) consultation around the national review of Additional Support for Learning. All parents who participated voiced the desire for mandatory professional learning about ASN, consistent with the professional learning programme listed above.

3.2.22 The EIS survey evidences the need for greater clarity and consistency around near miss/incident reporting and post-incident support: circa 50% of respondents report a lack of awareness around this procedure. This is supported by face-to-face engagement, and the ongoing review of Child's Plans, which further-evidence the need for additional professional learning

around the use of a Person-Centred Risk Assessment (PCRA) to proactively mitigate risk. The Health and Safety Team is currently consulting on a revised incident procedure.

3.2.23 The Programme Manager, a Health & Safety Advisor and EIS colleagues jointly reviewed Near Miss and Incident Report data. This highlighted themes that can further support our direction of travel:

De-escalation training is required in order to provide clarity and to support school staff to appropriately respond to, and mitigate against, instances of distressed young people becoming violent and/or aggressive;

Procedural training around the roles and responsibilities associated with, and use of, near miss/incident reporting and investigation, PCRA, and appropriate/proportionate post-incident support for all parties involved.

Additional joint meetings have been diarised in order to continue this process with the view of feeding this information back to the Supporting Learners Work Group (see 3.3.1) via a standing agenda item.

3.2.24 REQUESTING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND SPECIALIST SERVICES

3.2.25 There are currently several routes to obtaining support for children and young people from specialist services. Most staff highlighted the want for a single request procedure for **all** services and agreed the child's plan minimised bureaucracy as a request mechanism. Ongoing review of current process and face-to-face engagement with staff and parents/carers has confirmed the appropriateness of the use of a Plan to access support. However, a professional learning need exists around the development of robust plans (e.g. Individualised Education Programmes (IEPs), Child's Plans, and Coordinated Support Plans (CSPs)), which are inclusive of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) targets and PCRA categories as quality is variable. It is thought that the Microsoft work to streamline planning will greatly aid this work.

3.2.26 Face-to-face engagement with staff highlights the need (and desire) for streamlined/simple information sources that provide clear and succinct information about available services. Parents/Carers highlighted the need for this from a family's perspective and requested that consideration be given to the accessibility of information for families and clear signposting, for example to Enquire (The Scottish Advice Service for Additional Support for Learning). Officers have started to refresh the information contained in the Guide to Integrated Children and Family Services and the development of accessible information for families (please see Appendix B).

3.2.27 Ongoing review has identified transition planning, supported by robust and stringent timelines, as central to a future-proofed structure and system that can trend spot and, therefore, effectively meet the needs of learners. Transition planning (particularly around significant transitions such as pre-school to Primary 1, Primary 7 to Secondary 1, and Senior Phase to post-school) emerged as an area in which parents/carers would welcome increased focus

and multi-agency collaboration. The Leadership of Change Quality Improvement Officer is leading work in this area.

3.2.28 The analysis of data will continue as new lines of enquiry emerge. The principles of the recently published OECD approaches to evaluation will be adopted in future evaluations to provide a clear and consistent framework. These principles (Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability) aim to guide improvement activity, ensuring that systems align to provide resource-efficient and outcome-focused interventions.

3.3 Progress to Date – Developing a Stronger Universal Offer

3.3.1 A working group comprising senior leaders and trade unions has been established and Terms of Reference (please see Appendix C) have been agreed. This group will meet on a monthly basis, monitor progress and consider if any further short life working groups require to be established to support delivery of the programme: the Health & Safety sub-group is an example of this.

3.3.2 Many of the actions required to develop a strong universal offer were progressing prior to the Programme Manager being appointed. The Leadership of Change Improvement Group, with the support of the Building Capacity Team, have led work to address many of the recommendations including:
- Reviewing and streamlining our approaches to internal communication through the development and launch of a Sharepoint Site;
- Strengthening approaches to school and quality improvement;
- Facilitating National Improvement Framework (NIF) themed improvement events, of which evaluation is ongoing to establish the most impactful components and design future offers; and
- Delivering a high-quality professional learning offer as a result of evidence gathered during quality assurance/improvement activity.

3.3.3 A revised approach to Quality Improvement (QI) is currently being utilised to support improvement in learning, teaching and assessment. Initial feedback is extremely positive with some colleagues reporting that the refreshed approach more helpfully supports school improvement and delivery of a strong universal offer. The learning from the first QI visit exploring wellbeing, equality and inclusion is proving invaluable evidence to support improvement.

3.3.4 External resource funded by the National Lottery has been made available to support the function to reimagine how we can best support those with mental health needs through closer collaboration across education and children's social work; this external expertise comes at no cost to the Council. A multi-agency group, which includes head teacher colleagues, will start to progress the redesign in this area from February. A clear service model is anticipated by August 2020. The Service anticipates rolling out a comprehensive training package for all staff from March 2020 and would hope to report on progress in due course.

3.3.5 The Raising Attainment Leadership Group, under the leadership of the Quality Improvement Manager, has drafted an agreed Aberdeen City Learning,

Teaching and Assessment Standard. The digital interactive Standard will support all practitioners to fully understand and aspire to best practice and be supported by a professional learning offer to help build capacity and resilience amongst staff.

3.3.6 Leadership development is a key area for investment and leadership development is overseen by the Leadership of Change Improvement Group. A committee paper outlining plans is to be presented before Committee in March 2020.

3.3.7 Microsoft 365 is being used to support the development of professional learning in differentiation and we anticipate this opportunity being available in March. This will be the first fully digital training opportunity and the impact will be closely scrutinised to support next steps. Microsoft Teams is being rolled out across the Authority and this will further support digital collaboration and the sharing of best practice.

3.3.8 Pupil Support Assistant (PSA) allocations are being reviewed to ensure they incorporate: a universal element to account for every young person's entitlement to personalised support; a health and safety element to account for provision of first aid; and a targeted element that takes account of each school's pupil need profile, including the complexity of said need. Updated guidance for schools around the use of SEEMiS to record pupil need is in development to sharpen this process. This will provide greater clarity and consistency around the recording of additional support needs. This approach aims to promote equity across the system and the impact will be closely monitored.

3.3.9 Progress against the recommendations to build a strong universal offer are all in progress and the impact will be closely monitored as the improvements are fully implemented.

3.4 Progress to Date – Developing a Stronger Targeted Offer

3.4.1 Success in this area relies upon time investment and a robust understanding of a wide-ranging data set outlined in section 3.2. Work in this regard has started and an initial triangulation of evidence is underway to ensure that all parties share a common understanding of the vulnerabilities and support collaborative improvement.

3.4.2 The report presented to committee in January 2020, *Empowering the System* (OPE/20/004), outlines the service's plan in terms of reviewing the Devolved School Management (DSM) scheme thus building flexibility within schools with regards to using resource to meet the needs of learners. This aims to strengthen localised partnership working and build capacity and resilience at both school and locality levels. Support for Learning (SfL) Teacher allocations have been reviewed in order to further increase capacity. The review of DSM is on track to be presented to Committee in May following an extensive period of consultation with all stakeholders due to commence in March.

3.4.3 The experience and expertise within existing Support for Learning teams is being utilised to devise a programme of bespoke professional learning that

focuses on "The 5 Roles". This aims to promote equity across the system for both young people and staff and ensure that all schools have access to a higher level of expertise on site. Work is currently underway to design the programme and consider how to effectively ensure that all staff have the opportunity to start engaging with the programme by the end of this academic year, although difficulties recruiting staff may impact on delivery. Our approach will be kept under review to ensure maximum reach.

3.4.4 An updated *Partnership Forums' Guidance* has been co-designed with Community Learning and Development (CLD) and made available to schools in November 2019. It provides clear expectations and suggestions about effective partnership working and focuses on early intervention and primary prevention at local level. Face-to-face engagement highlighted strong practice in specific Associated School Groups (ASG) and this will be shared in order to promote greater consistency across the city. Joint working with CLD is ongoing to strengthen the partnership working element, which is central to the impact of Partnership Forums meeting learners' needs. A 'Meeting of Chairs' was convened in February to further influence the sharing of best practice.

3.4.5 The role and allocation of Education Social Work (ESW) is being aligned in order to build capacity and enable early intervention for families, as well as young people, at local level. The model aims to provide consistent and uninterrupted support for young people and their families through flexible locality allocations and supervision through Children's Social Work.

3.4.6 Coordinated Support Plan (CSP) guidance for schools has been developed and published in the new SharePoint site. Examples of strong and robust Child's Planning practice are being collated via transitions planning processes and ongoing QI procedures, and this will be used, in conjunction with data gathered from ongoing consultation, to provide professional learning opportunities for staff. A Microsoft solution that supports the creation of Individualised Education Programmes (IEPs) and Child's Plans is in development: this will support a reduction in bureaucracy whilst increasing consistency and is anticipated to be launched in early March 2020.

3.4.7 The recently-published *Autism Outreach – Support Guidance 2019* was highlighted as strong and desirable practice in terms of signposting and outlining a service offer. Officers are currently working to ensure that similar documents exist across all services alongside accessible information on how our local system works to support children and young people with additional support needs. More accessible information will support children, young people and families to better understand local systems.

3.4.8 A single request for additional/transition support, that encompasses all services, is being developed. A common procedure can be better tracked/monitored in terms of both identifying professional learning needs and looking at demand in the system enabling improved identification of gaps in provision as we move forward. This data led approach will help keep the provision of resource fluid and responsive to emerging needs.

3.4.9 Officers continue to await refreshed Scottish Government GIRFEC Operational Guidance. Publication will trigger a review of our locally agreed partnership arrangements.

3.4.10 The Early Years' Service is working closely with Children's Social Work to formalise an approach to Family Learning from 2020. This agreement will help to strengthen our universal and targeted offer to families.

3.5   Progress to Date – Developing a Stronger Specialist Offer

3.5.1 There is a need to rigorously analyse information regarding the changing needs of children and young people as advances in medical science and societal changes have significantly changed the range and scale of need being met in city schools. Initial data analysis highlights the significant increase in the number of children and young people with severe and complex needs, some of which are life limiting.

3.5.2 The lack of consistent provision of Support for Learning has impacted on the ability of schools to meet the needs of all learners and work is underway to rebuild this provision.

3.5.3 All Local Authorities have received Scottish Government funding to strengthen the provision of support staff in schools as part of the Additional Support for Learning implementation; this funding is intended for the provision of pupil support staff in schools. For this valuable resource to effectively support learners a range of skills and expertise are required around the area of trauma, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and relational approaches. Officers are in the process of developing a training programme to support this investment in our workforce to ensure that the additional finance is used to strengthen our local system.

3.5.4 Considerable work continues to be required in this area although the pressure on specialist placements requires to be addressed in the first instance. Officers seek permission to increase the number of enhanced provision places, within the funding envelope afforded to the service, in order to mitigate the risk identified.

4.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1   There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Any redesign will make use of existing budgets.

5.   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1   The Local Authority has many legal duties including those of:
- The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

The approach being taken to develop the programme of support outlined in this Report will assist the Council as Education Authority to fulfil these duties more effectively, and secure necessary and appropriate education and additional support for our children and young people.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	Risk of not having sufficient resource	L	Mitigated by realigning services to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City today.
Legal	Non-compliance with legislation, financial claims and legal challenge (tribunals)	M	Mitigated by services being realigned to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City and prevent escalation of need
Employee	Staff are overwhelmed which leads to low morale as staff feel unable to meet the needs of vulnerable young people.	L	Mitigated by offering high quality professional learning for staff to ensure that they meet their statutory duties under The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004
Customer	Risk of not achieving positive outcomes for children and young people.	L	Potential changes to our provision will enable primary prevention and early intervention thereby reducing potential risk.
Reputational	Risk of not effectively meeting the needs of all learners.	L	Services realigned to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City.

7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy	Ensuring the children and young people realise their potential will help achieve the two stretch aims:

	• 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026. • 90% of working age people in Living Wage employment by 2026.
Prosperous People	Four of the children's stretch aims are particularly relevant to this report: • 95% of children (0-5years) will reach their expected developmental milestones by the time of their child health reviews by 2026 • 85% of children and young people will report that they feel mentally well by 2026. • 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.
Prosperous Place	90% of the population in Aberdeen will feel environmentally and socially resilient in their communities by 2026.

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	The activities undertaken to date and the planned next steps promote an understanding of the circumstances of individual children and young people to ensure that personalised support is available to them.
Organisational Design	Improved use of resource in the system.
Governance	Overseen by Chief Officers and by the Education Operational Delivery Committee.
Workforce	On-going clarity of expectations and statutory duties.
Process Design	Monitoring arrangements ensure that any vulnerabilities in the system are quickly addressed.
Technology	The plan includes improvement in the use of technology to deliver the most effective service and makes use of wider partnership support when appropriate.
Partnerships and Alliances	Significant partnership work is key to addressing the needs of our learners and the team is committed to building on existing relationships.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not Required
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	Not Applicable

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Action Plan
Appendix B – Information for Parents
Appendix C – Supporting Learners Steering Group Terms of Reference

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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