

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	26 November 2020
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Senior Phase
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/20/222
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Eleanor Sheppard
REPORT AUTHOR	Alex Duncan
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to begin the reshape the partnership senior phase offering around a changing local economy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 notes the analysis of performance across the senior phase and how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on employability and training options for young people leaving school;
- 2.2 approves the proposed direction of travel to ensure that the partnership curriculum ideally supports school leavers into further, higher education or employment;
- 2.3 approves the education service framework in Appendix B:
- 2.4 instructs the Chief Education Officer to update the framework in Appendix B if updated national guidance is published; and
- 2.5 instructs the Chief Education Officer to report on progress within 3 Committee cycles.

3. BACKGROUND – The Senior Phase

- 3.1.1 Secondary schools operate two broad curriculum stages. A Broad General Education is provided for those in S1 and S3 with a more personalised Senior Phase offering made to young people from S4. In real terms secondary schools start to include an element of choice into the S3 curriculum to ensure that young people are well prepared for the Senior Phase.
- 3.1.2 Young people are able to choose from a range of courses at a range of stages. The breadth is influenced by the availability of subject specialists, City Campus/consortium arrangements and the choices of the young people based on interest, aspiration and knowledge of future opportunities.
- 3.1.3 The column structure across most schools allows 6 qualifications in S4, 5 in S5 and 4 in S6. There is flexibility within this.

3.1.4 Following a review of curriculum design in 18/19 young people can now gain a wider range of qualifications and achievements than those available through the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Awards include ASDAN, Crest Awards, Food and Hygiene (REHIS, Heritage Hero, JASS Awards, Saltire Awards, Young Enterprise Exam, Youth Achievement Awards, Dynamic Youth Awards, Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir. These alternative awards are not recorded centrally and are not reflected in Insight data.

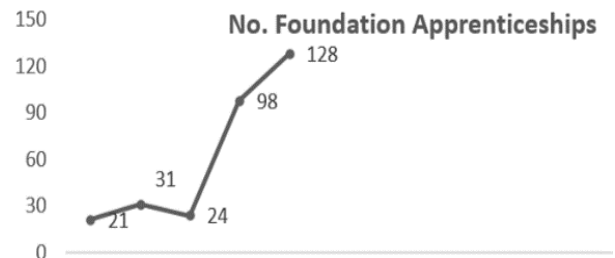
3.2 Curriculum Review

3.2.1 Over the last two years all secondary schools have undertaken a curriculum design review to ensure that opportunities are matched to the needs of their young people. Breath of opportunity is increasing year on year.



3.2.2 A focus on this area has realised a significant increase in the percentage of young people securing a positive destination in 18/19.

3.2.3 This has been a steady increase in the number of young people embarking on Foundation Apprenticeships.



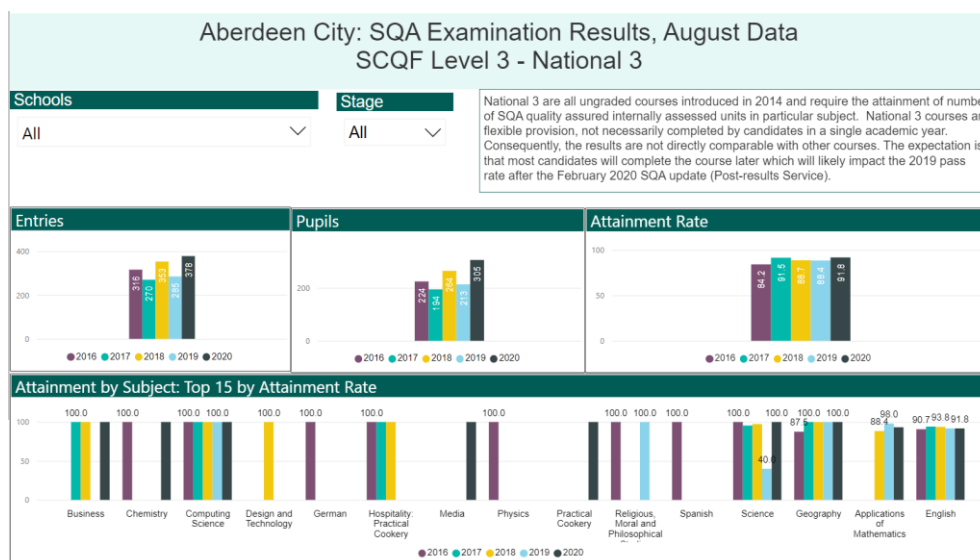
3.2.4 My World of Work is a digital portal which enables young people to better understand their skills progression. A significant rise in My World of Work registrations (from 63% in 2019 to 75% in 2020) and the shared promotion and use of the system by schools and Skills Development Scotland is helping young people have a better understanding of their skills and how to build a CV which demonstrates progression in attainment and achievement.

3.2.5 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the local economy. The opportunities available to young people in some sectors are now likely to be significantly reduced and changed. It is of critical importance that we proactively review our offer to ensure that our young people are well placed to secure a positive destination.

3.3 The current offer and performance

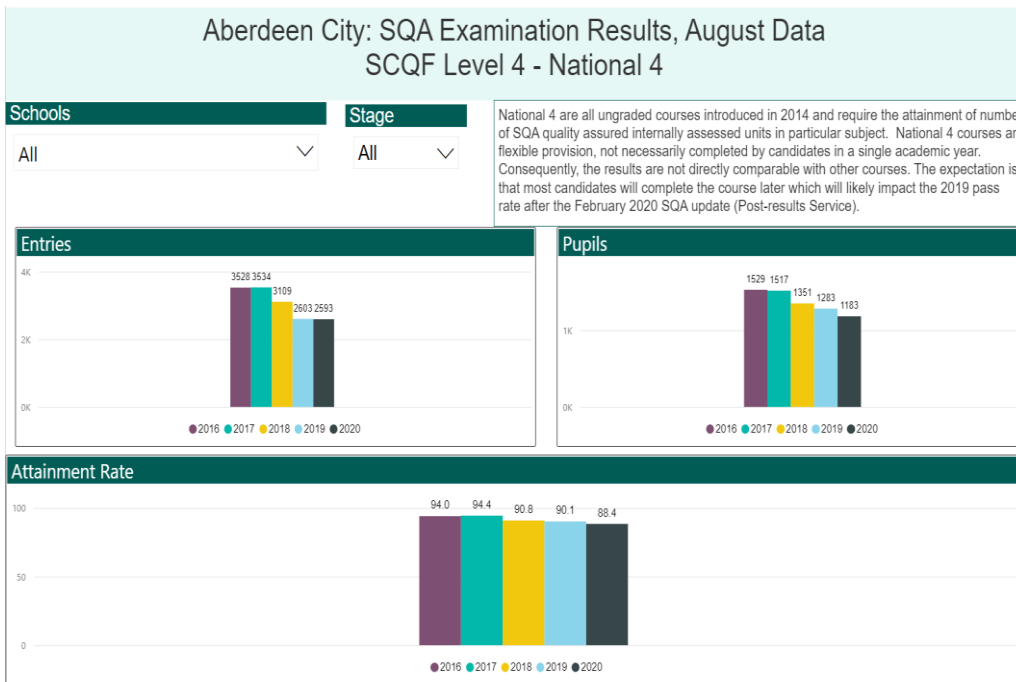
3.3.1 The amendment to SQA award methodology in August 2020 negatively impacted on the quality of data available for 19/20. For the purposes of this analysis pre-appeal SQA data has been used. It should be noted that strong appeals and subsequent awards are not included and improvement would have been anticipated based on data from previous years.

3.3.2 Eight National 2 courses were offered in 2019. The number of courses has remained reasonably consistent over the last 5 years although the number of entrants has dropped from 169 in 2016 to 73 in 2020. More young people now successfully complete the course than was the case previously. This suggests that the courses are broadly matched to need with a high number of entries from Special Schools. Most schools offer 1 or 2 courses at National 2.



3.3.3 21 courses at National 3 were offered in schools in 2019. The number of courses has dropped by 3 from 2016. In 2016, 316 young people engaged with the National 3 courses. The number of entries increased to 378 in 2019. A significant increase in pass rate is evident from 84% in 2016 to 92% in 2020. This suggests that the courses are well matched to need but could suggest that some young people entered for a National 3 course may have been able to achieve at National 4.

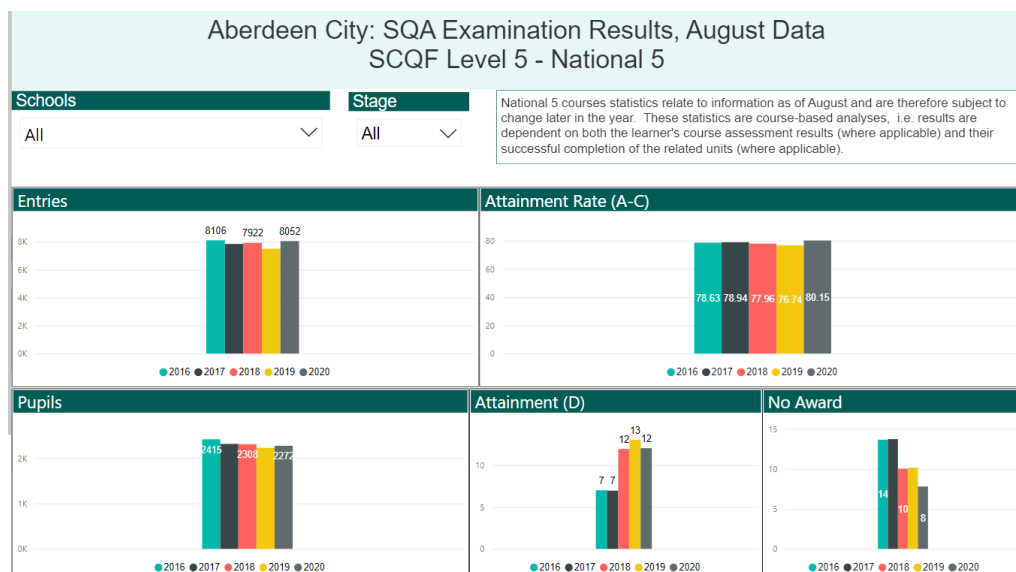
3.3.4 There is significant variation across schools in terms of the number of courses offered. Almost all schools offer 1 or 2 courses in key subject areas with others such as Dyce, Northfield and Bucksburn offering 6 courses at National 3. This is due to the curriculum being matched to the needs of pupils.



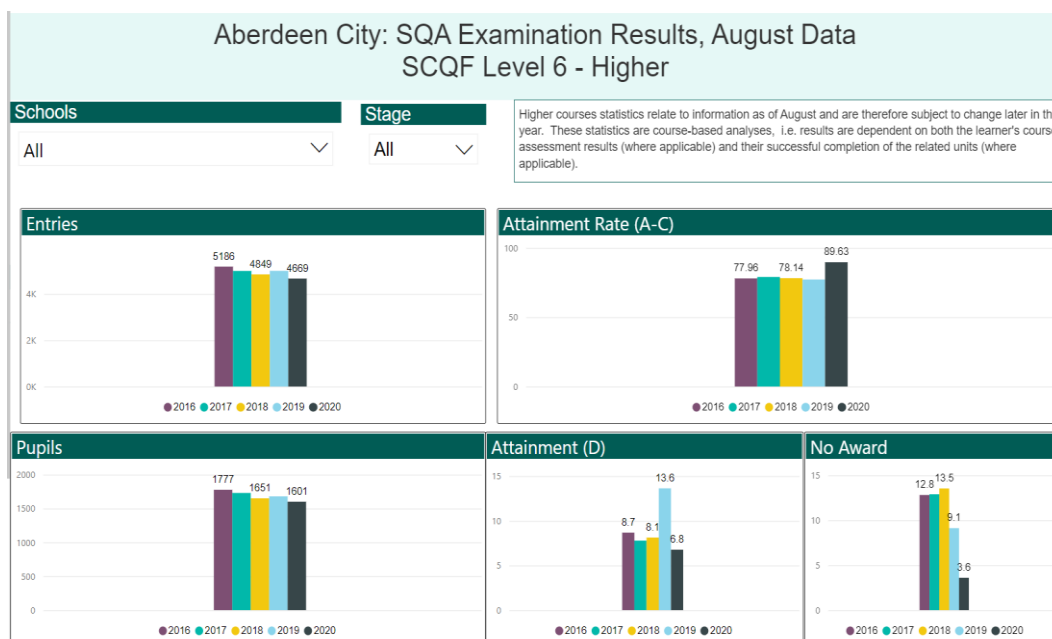
3.3.5 35 National 4 courses are offered, an increase of 1 from 2016. The number of young people being presented for a National 4 has decreased from 3528 in 2016 to 2593 in 2020 as young people access other qualification pathways. Attainment currently sits at 88% which is lower than the pass rate in 2016 which sat at 94%. This is potentially an areas to explore with partners to ensure that sufficient breadth of opportunity is offered and that there are appropriate progression pathways.

3.3.6 The 88% pass rate is thought to indicate that young people are reasonably matched to a National 4 course. 81 more young people were entered for National 4 awards than in 2019. The Skills for Work pass rate at National 4 increased by 35.19 percentage points.

3.3.7 Schools each offer between 14 and 24 courses at National 4. Attainment grades in almost all schools suggest a high level of consistency in moderation practices (attainment of 85%+) across all courses.

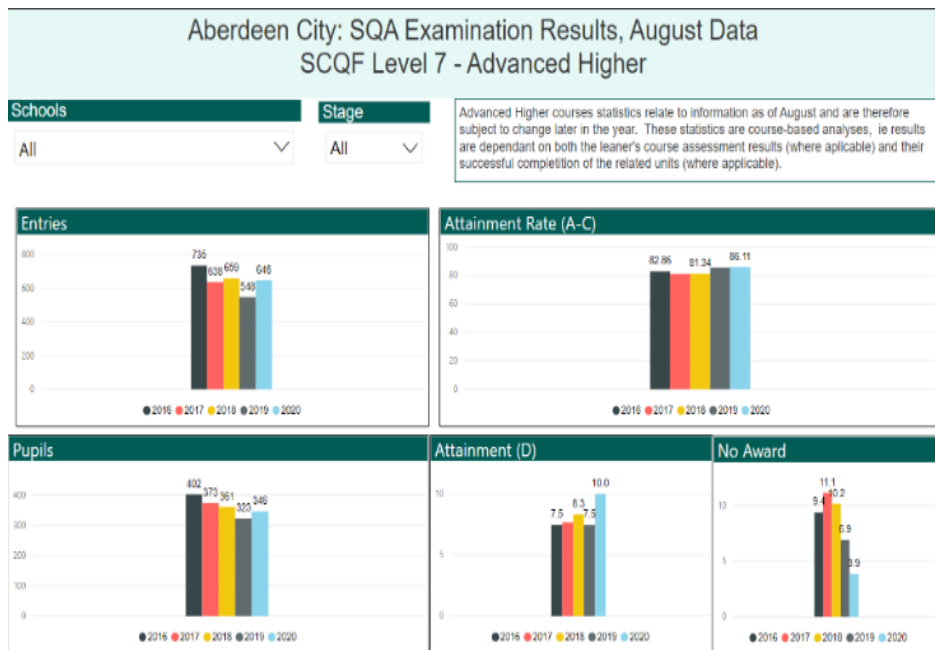


- 3.3.8 There has been an increase in presentations of young people at National 5 with 300 more presentations than in 2016.
- 3.3.9 The attainment rate of 91% suggests that young people are well matched to courses but that some may have been able to be presented earlier for courses at a higher level.
- 3.3.10 Schools offer between 19 and 26 courses at National 5. Attainment grades in almost all schools suggest a high level of consistency in moderation practices (attainment of 80%+) across all courses but there is some variability which will be addressed through Quality Improvement activity through the Quality Improvement Framework.
- 3.3.11 The quality of grades has improved with fewer no awards than in previous years. Analysis would suggest a higher proportion of D grades were awarded as a result of the SQA methodology.
- 3.3.12 The gap between local and national performance has been reduced.
- 3.3.13 There has been a slight reduction in the number of Higher and Advanced Higher courses available. There is evidence that an improved range of courses (National Progression Awards etc.) is improving attainment. We hope to confirm this improvement in subsequent Insight data releases.



- 3.3.14 The overall attainment rate in 2020 is higher than in 2019 with less young people awarded a no award. This is a steady and positive trend. The attainment rate for Higher is up by 3.53 percentage points and is the highest since 2015. This sits significantly higher than the attainment rate for Scotland at 78.9% Most candidates were in S5 but a small number of youngsters in earlier year groups were presented where appropriate.
- 3.3.15 Schools offer between 14 and 23 higher courses and there is evidence of consistent moderation practices (attainment of 85%+) in almost all

schools across all courses. Variation will be addressed through Quality Improvement activity.



3.3.16 There were 100 more entries than in 2019 with 648 entries made in 2020 for Advanced Higher courses. The attainment rate of 86.11% is the highest in last 5 years, with a three year improvement trend.

3.3.17 98% of entries for Advanced Higher courses in 2020 were from 6th year candidates. The city exceeds the attainment rate for Scotland. The city has strong and consistent performance at Advanced Higher.

3.3.18 Schools offer between 1 and 16 Advanced Higher courses with the number of young people accessing Advanced Higher courses ranging from 1 to 179 from school to school. Schools with low uptake benefit from the City Campus to ensure young people can access their course of choice. 218 pupils attended courses through the City Campus in 19/20, the number has steadily reduced over the last 4 years and currently sits at 159. This is to be investigated further to determine next steps.

3.3.19 A number of young people attend school link courses at college which, along with the City Campus and consortium arrangements, further enhances the range of options available to our young people and ensures flexible pathways. A total of 649 young people attended school link courses at the college in 2019. Higher Psychology was the most popular course available.

3.3.20 Geographical location does not impact upon the engagement of young people from schools across the city. Schools ensure that their timetable structure accommodates travel time for young people, thus allowing them to access college courses regardless of location. The numbers involved from each school is largely proportionate to the number of pupils that stay on through the senior phase.

3.3.21 Twelve young people are enrolled in a Foundation Apprenticeship with Bon Accord for the first time. The course is delivered in school which has helped to engage young people who may otherwise not have taken a Foundation Apprenticeship.

3.3.22 Aberlour offered 10 Foundation Apprenticeships in 19/20 and have increased that number to 12 for session 20/21. Courses are delivered in school.

3.4 What are the learning points from the data?

3.4.1 Pupils living in SIMD 9 and 10 attain better than others although there are early indications that the work to review the curriculum has realised improvement. Officers hope to confirm this when Insight data is published. It may be hard to accurately determine a positive trend due to the SQA methodology used in 19/20. Some schools buck this trend with young people living in lower deciles outperforming the virtual comparator and national trends and it is important that this best practice is shared.

3.4.2 Officers reviewed Local Government Benchmarking data. Comparing the 4 cities in Scotland paints an interesting picture.

3.4.2 Aberdeen City has seen higher attainment amongst pupils in the lowest 20% than the three other cities (apart from Edinburgh in 2018 and 2019). All four cities have been below the National picture. This suggests that urban local authorities have particular challenges and this is worthy of further exploration.

3.4.4 There is clear evidence of improvement in the quality of grades, this is thought to be as a result of the recent focus on quality and consistent standards. There is a significant improvement in the % of leavers in a positive destination rose from 90.84% in 16/17 to 93.74 in 18/19. This growth is more rapid than that of the national and virtual comparator.

3.4.6 Participation rates are improving but there is a need to closely monitor male students.

3.4.7 There has been an increase of 3.3% in the participation rates of persons that identify as disabled.

3.4.8 2019 saw the smallest gap in participation rates between the most and least deprived of only 5.2%. 2019 was also the year with the highest levels of participation amongst the most deprived of 90.5%.

3.4.9 When comparing 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2020, the gap between the most and least deprived has been in decline. The gap has gone from 17.3% to 13.9%.

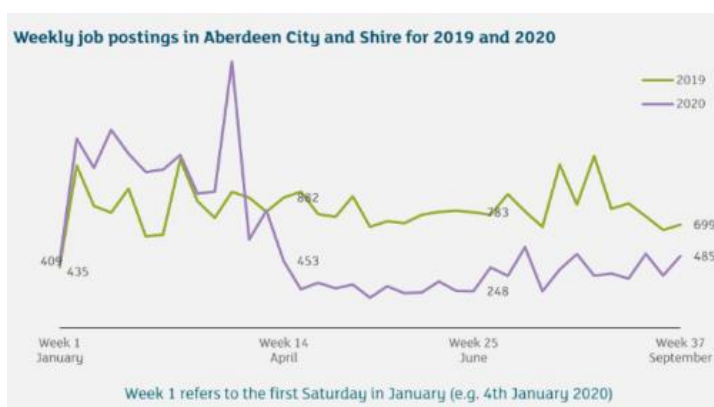
3.4.10 There is clear evidence that the work undertaken to date is positively impacting on young people. Variability should now be addressed at school level through our approach to Quality Improvement.

3.5 The impact of COVID-19

3.5.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted on the local opportunities available to young people in the city and placed a number of restrictions on school life. Schools are currently working within the restrictions to identify any loss of learning and support the wellbeing of young people as they come to terms with the current situation whilst building their resilience and adaptability.

3.5.2 Opportunities in many industries such as hospitality and Oil and Gas are less available to young people and it is critically important that we continue to review the employability pipeline over the coming months and years. This on-going analysis of the impact of the pandemic on opportunities will help the service ensure that our curriculum models offer the best access to local opportunities.

3.5.3 There has been a significant reduction in the number of weekly job postings in the city.



3.5.4 Youth unemployment (16-24) currently sits at 14.5% for Scotland.

3.5.5 There is widespread agreement that those who leave education over the next few years will be more negatively impacted than their peers who left school pre-lockdown. There are some groups of young people who will be impacted more than others. These include:

- Those who are disabled as a result of less extensive pathways being available to support transition and employment opportunities
- Girls who are most likely to leave school and take up relatively low skilled jobs in sectors which have diminished
- Those living in poverty as levels of poverty and all of the risk associated with living in poverty will have been exacerbated by the pandemic
- Those who are people from ethnic minority communities, including Gypsy/Travellers and European minorities – a community more likely to be unemployed, on zero hour contracts and occupying low paid and in 'at risk' roles
- Care Experienced Young People who are already at a disadvantage in accessing employment, training, etc and sustaining that. There is a risk that this group will be pushed further down the labour queues.

3.5.6 All research highlights that there will be a long lasting and extensive impact which already being felt in schools:

- A reduction in salaries for young people and those in low skilled roles (a young person in a low skilled role will be paid around 17% less that they would have been pre-COVID-19)
- A reduction in the number of apprenticeship opportunities due to a reduction in available opportunities and concerns around health and safety requirements

- A likely reduction in the number of physical opportunities for work experience
- Loss of opportunities in previously popular choices such as hospitality
- Increased number of young people who choose to stay on at school perceiving it to be the safest option
- Decreased opportunities due to decreases in recruitment (latest data suggests an 80% decrease)
- Young people feeling uncertain of their futures and requiring a high level of support to ensure positive mental wellbeing
- The curricular choices made previously may no longer equip young people with the skills they require.

3.5.7 There has been a significant change in the top employing industries and this is likely to continue to change as we move through the recovery stage. In the short-term demand is likely to be from:

- Health and Social Work
- Education, including Child Care
- Retail
- Food and Drink
- Digital
- Construction

3.5.8 In the medium-term term demand is more likely to be from:

- Tourism
- Digital and Green Energy
- Wholesale and Retail,
- Health and Social Care
- Life and Chemical Sciences
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Manufacturing and processing

3.5.9 The landscape is changing rapidly and it is imperative that Officers continue to work with Economic Development and Skills Development Scotland to keep abreast of emerging trends.

3.6 What can we do to give our young people the best possible chances in the future?

3.6.1 All of the research would suggest a need to:

- Review curriculum structure to continue to build opportunity for depth of learning to support progression into senior phase qualifications
- Increase the digital skills of all learners
- Review our curriculum offer in light of growth sectors such as Energy Transitions, Health and Social Care Sector and Life Sciences
- Prioritise energies around school leavers, but in doing so recognise that the younger age group (S3 and S4) will be impacted by the longer-term economic scarring effects and ensure that they are also appropriately supported
- Ensure the availability of and ease of access to mental health support, and early identification of indicators of difficulties being experienced

- Encourage young people to get involved in volunteering opportunities to build their skill set, and CV and make up for some of the work experience gaps
- Introduce Apprenticeship Pathway programmes for those finding Employer led programmes or employment difficult to find

3.6.2 There is a need to carefully monitor the skills required to support the local economy and ensure that young people build a strong profile and CV.

3.7 Next steps

3.7.1 Secondary Head Teachers will work with central officers to review the paper in Appendix A. This will enable colleagues to begin to answer the reflective questions and consider short, medium and longer term priorities which can be progressed as capacity allows.

3.7.2 All partners represented on the Attainment and Transitions to Adulthood Improvement Group (ATA) will undertake a similar process so that individual organisational perspectives are sought and that the Community Planning Partnership learns from each other.

3.7.3 The ATA will then come together to agree a shared position and plan which will help inform the refresh of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and guide our collective work around the senior phase.

3.7.4 The considerable pressure schools are currently operating in will have to be taken into account as we develop plans. Schools continue to support the wellbeing of young people and identify any learning loss so that programmes can be adjusted accordingly. Schools will continue to have to respond to a rapidly changing context with updated guidance triggering a regular review of COVID controls and senior leaders and the central officers continue to work together to make sense and implement changes in guidance at speed.

3.7.5. The service will continue to take full account of updated national guidance such as the recently published [Coronavirus](#) (COVID-19)' guidance on reducing the risks in schools. Swift interpretation of the guidance is critical to clarify expectations and this will continue to be prioritised and it is acknowledged that the need to prioritise the implementation of guidance will impact on our capacity for improvement across the senior phase. It is hoped that a short, medium and longer term plan will help us progress things as quickly as possible.

3.7.6 In order to streamline approaches when Levels of Protection change a visual has been developed to clarify the implications of the recently published guidance and is available in Appendix B. The visual illustrates how a change in Level of Protection will impact on the delivery of the Senior Phase and the service will ensure these potential scenarios are taken account of in their work to strengthen the senior phase. It will also help clarify changes required to school Covid controls to ensure compliance and the health and safety of staff and pupils.

3.7.7 With Elected Member approval the format in Appendix B will be adapted into a parent and carer version. Given the rapidly changing context we seek approval to update Appendix B in light of any changes to national guidance and circulate to members of this Committee by way of a Service Update.

3.7.7 It is proposed that the Chief Education Officer report progress of strengthening the senior phase within 3 committee cycles.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Local Authority has many legal duties including those of:

The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000

- Duty of education authority in providing school education
- Raising standards
- Requirement that education be provided in mainstream schools

The National Improvement Framework

- Education Authorities are under a duty to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of education of school education which is provided in the schools managed by them and to carry out the duty with a view to achieving the strategic priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

- Duties with regard to meeting the needs of children and young people with additional support needs.

The Equality Act 2010

- Duty to ensure we are not discriminating disabled learners

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	N/A	N/A	N/A
Compliance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Operational	Risk of not having capacity in all subject areas to deliver on the curriculum.	L	Mitigated by sharing expertise across schools and partner providers. Collaborative working will be key.

	Risk of not achieving positive outcomes for all young people.	M	Mitigated by using data to inform curriculum offer and working to ensure courses on offer reflect the demands of the local economy in terms of skill set.
Financial	Risk of not having sufficient resource	L	Mitigated by realigning services to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City. Working with partner providers and supporting the continued collaboration between schools to maximise available resources.
Reputational	Risk of not effectively meeting the needs of all learners by not ensuring equity in terms of access to a suitable curriculum.	M	Ensuring appropriate planning, tracking and monitoring to enable all young people to make informed choices in regard to subject choices and pathways.
Environmental / Climate	N/A	N/A	N/A

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Ensuring a curriculum that is fit for purpose, by providing flexible pathways and considering the local economy, will contribute towards an increase in employment.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Working with partner providers to develop a senior phase that meets the needs of all learners will help to support our young people into positive sustainable destinations.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Underpinning the work of all schools in Aberdeen City is achieving excellence and equity for all.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duties with regard to meeting the needs of children and young people with additional support needs.

	<p>The Equality Act 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty to ensure we are not discriminating disabled learners <p>The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty of education authority in providing school education • Raising standards • Requirement that education be provided in mainstream schools <p>The National Improvement Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Authorities are under a duty to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of education of school education which is provided in the schools managed by them and to carry out the duty with a view to achieving the strategic priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework.
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8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Strengthening the Senior Phase
Appendix B – Education Service framework

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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