

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE	23 February 2012
DIRECTOR	Annette Bruton
TITLE OF REPORT	Review of Inclusion: Pupil Support Assistant (PSA) Impact Survey
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/12//012

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report advises the Committee of an impact survey undertaken with respect to the Priority Based Budget (PBB) decision to reduce PSA hours in primary and secondary schools for the session August 2011/12. The management information gathered has been analysed and this analysis represents an initial evaluation of the impact of the PBB decision given that we are only part way through the school session. The information will also be used as part of the review of inclusion programme (a Bulletin item on this programme was available to Members at the last meeting in November) which will include work to reconsider the nature of the PSA role.

A copy of the survey is attached as Annex 1

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) note the outcome of the impact survey
- b) note that further information on the longitudinal impact of staffing allocations will be produced as part of the on-going review of inclusion

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant direct financial implications.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

This report supports the Council's commitment to the principles of inclusion and equality in relation to pupil access to schools, best value when considering the distribution of resources and the provision of the

highest quality of service delivery. Aberdeen City Council is committed to providing the best possible education for all our children, which is essential if we are to ensure that Aberdeen and its citizens have a prosperous future.

We must therefore:

- Ensure expenditure on education delivers maximum benefit to pupils
- Continue to involve parents and pupils in their schools
- Continue to improve attainment across city schools
- Ensure education is appropriate to pupils' needs and ensure pupils leave school with skills essential for living
- Review best teaching practice and trial projects in Aberdeen and beyond to identify the best ways of delivering an even higher quality education to all pupils.
- Allocate resources to support for learning, targeted to areas of greatest need.
- Continue work to raise the achievement of vulnerable children and close the attainment gap across the City.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 In February 2011 the Council agreed a number of options to reduce revenue expenditure as part of the on-going PBB programme. Options E22 and E24 concerned a proposal to reduce PSA expenditure in primary and secondary schools respectively from August 2011. Committee will know that there had been a previous reduction in the PSA staff group for the school session 2008/9.

5.2 For the most recent change the Council agreed to reduce expenditure on PSAs by 33% which realises a full year saving of £2.5 millions. The reduction in staff was managed without compulsory redundancy through a combination of retirement, staff securing other jobs and voluntary reduction in hours by staff in schools.

5.3 A short-life working group was set up, including head teacher and trade union representation to consider implementation of the Council decision. This involved some technical adjustments to the formula used to distribute PSA hours to each school and schools were advised by the Easter break of their allocations for August 2011. The spreadsheet at Annex 2 sets out those allocations and also for the previous three school sessions. In a response to this report, Unison commented that they felt that Annex 2 was 'misleading' because it shows the reductions as FTEs (full time equivalents) over recent years. However, we also included the equivalent hours in the Annex and therefore full information has been presented.

5.4 Decisions about PSA budget realignments in recent years have been partly informed by comparisons with other councils' expenditure on similar

support staff. For example, Annex 3 compares expenditure on similar support staffs between Aberdeen City and a comparator urban council.

5.5 Head Teachers have delegated responsibility to manage their PSA allocations according to their own circumstances and needs of their school populations. However, within that delegated responsibility all schools are expected to prioritise support to the most vulnerable with additional support needs (ASN). As part of the impact survey (see Annex 1) we have gathered information about how schools' senior management teams made decisions and how the resources were prioritised.

5.6 By the deadline for responses from schools we had received 55% of impact survey forms from schools: 48% from primary schools and 83% secondary schools.

5.7 Head Teachers were asked to break down their allocation decisions into the main tasks and functions commonly performed by PSA staff (and as set out in their job descriptions) which are:

- Support to individual pupils (including any specific care duties)
- Support to groups of pupils
- Supervision of pupils during breaks/lunchtime
- Support to teaching staff eg. preparation of resources, etc

The table below provides an overview of responses against each task/function:

Tasks/functions	Hours allocated		Hours allocated as a % of total PSA hours	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Support to individual pupils (including any specific care duties)	949.70	597.00	29.94	36.09
Support to groups of pupils	1174.00	614.60	37.01	37.15
Supervision of pupils during breaks/lunchtime	766.03	51.20	24.50	3.10
Support to teaching staff eg. preparation of resources, etc	240.65	62.10	7.59	3.75
Other: please specify	42.15	323	1.33	19

5.8 Whilst inevitably there is some variation, schools are deploying most of their PSA hours to support the learning of children with additional support needs, whether individually or in groups. This is to be expected given the prime purpose of the role and our philosophy of inclusive practice.

5.9 Within the deployment mentioned in the above paragraph, PSA hours to support children in bases are prioritised. This is to be expected as the formula

used to distribute the PSA hours, in effect, ring-fences the resources for the bases. Notwithstanding this, there is evidence that in some secondary schools' management decisions have resulted in focussing on support in mainstream classes rather than in the base.

5.10 Overall the information from the impact survey indicates that schools feel that there is less support for other children outwith the base. Some have indicated that this means that there is less adult support for early intervention and, in some secondary schools, for supporting individual children across their timetables.

5.11 There appears to be a much more focussed set of tasks undertaken than may have been the case previously where PSAs may have been involved more in additional tasks such as helping out with school trips, resource management (eg. cataloguing; stock-taking; distributing resources; etc), general administrative tasks and so forth. However, there are examples provided of other tasks still undertaken by PSAs eg. a Healthy Tuck Shop Initiative at one school is run by PSAs.

Acting as a first aider is cited in most schools as a role undertaken by PSAs and is seen as a high priority and one secondary states the impact as:

“The fact that First Aid duties have to be carried out by PSAs has been the biggest strain on our PSAs as a resource, as a team and as individuals”

and the a made by several schools is that, given the overall reduction in PSA hours, this can then disrupt support for other children when a first aid need arises because of reduced flexibility. Committee will be aware that the first aider role is not exclusively a role that we expect PSAs to perform. All staff (whether teaching or support staff) may perform/volunteer to fulfil this role.

In terms of the returns, allocations to the first aid role along with time spend managing and giving medication represented the largest proportion of time listed in the “Other” tasks category.

5.12 Whilst the above paragraphs highlight some common themes emerging from the survey for both primary and secondary schools, an interesting difference between the two sectors relates to supervision of pupils during breaks/lunchtime. Generally primary schools deploy around a quarter of the available hours to this function whereas in secondary schools PSAs do not generally appear to be used for this purpose. This reflects the differing responsibilities for supervision (and health and safety) of pupils at break/lunchtimes between the two sectors. The formula we use to allocate PSA hours includes a specific element for supervision.

5.13 The above summary so far arises from survey questions asking about the school management decisions made to allocate the PSA hours. Whilst across schools and sectors there are some common features, there are some notable differences in terms of decision making. The decision to delegate management decisions to school level has meant that there will be local

variations. For example, below is information about how four schools (two from each sector) made management decisions about prioritising their PSA hours:

Primary A	Primary B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Step 1 was to allocate 2.0 fte Pupil Support time to work alongside a reduced teaching staff within our additional support needs Base. ▪ Step 2 was, where possible, to group together children with needs to specific classes and target PSA support to these classes. ▪ Step 3 involved dividing up time left and allocating, where possible a little time to classes which had received no support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The supervision over break times & lunchtimes were allocated first ▪ Our highest priority pupils: those with significant social and emotional problems; physically disabled; other needs support to ensure her health & safety. ▪ The remaining time was allocated to support for learning to work with targeted groups.

Secondary A	Secondary B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First Aid and Health and Safety related to the needs of individuals ▪ Additional Assessment Arrangements ▪ Particular needs of Base pupils ▪ Needs of particular groups or classes ▪ Supporting literacy and numeracy ▪ Assisting with the support of pupils in practical subjects ▪ Supplementing the support for English as a second language pupils ▪ Supporting the senior management team, Principal Teachers (PT) Guidance and the PT Support for Learning with filing and typing minutes ▪ Stock-taking and ordering First Aid supplies 	<p>Priority 1. Physically disabled pupils who need 1-1 support to get around the physical environment of the school and who need support to access the classroom and specialised equipment. They also may need toileting support</p> <p>Priority 2. Additional support needs/Mainstreaming integration of children on the autistic spectrum pupils who are accessing mainstream classes. This can either be in groups or individually</p> <p>Priority 3. Pupils with specific learning difficulties who may need additional support in some areas of the curriculum</p> <p>Priority 4. Classes where there are behaviour issues and where through Early Intervention Group a PSA has been requested</p> <p>Priority 5. Support for additional support needs/Mainstreaming integration of children on the autistic spectrum pupils/Behaviour</p>

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| ▪ Assisting on school trips | staff/school staff |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|

This difference in approach to managing the impact of the change in schools is to be expected as schools' populations are not homogeneous.

5.14 Support to teaching staff eg. preparation of resources, etc seems to be an area where generally schools have decided to allocate fewer PSA hours than previously.

5.15 Schools were asked to provide information about any impact of the budget decision on other areas:

- Quality of teaching and learning
- Level of exclusions
- Different and/or innovative change to classroom practice
- Changes to school/class organisation
- Management of pupil behaviour

5.16 A key area where officers were seeking evidence of impact was to do with teaching and learning. Schools have emphasised in their returns that the quality of teaching and learning remains the highest priority and has been maintained. However, they also point out (primary schools especially) that the impact of doing so has meant that more management time has had to be devoted to manage behavioural issues.

Some primary schools have reported that they feel that they now have less flexibility to support some children with less pronounced additional support needs through, for example, additional/consolidation work on literacy and numeracy. Others have highlighted impacts on aspects of classroom practice:

"It is more difficult to support differentiated tasks within class without PSA support which could impact upon pace and challenge"

Some schools have reported the impact as not being able to continue with initiatives to support learning eg.

"We ran a behaviour support group in previous years – unable to continue"

"We ran a parent support group and unable to continue"

Other schools have reported different types of impact for example

"In terms of time to liaise with teachers, colleagues and access suitable training this is severely limited. We also lack the capacity to hold team PSA meetings this year (where ongoing needs can be addressed and communicated) because the way in which the PSA timetables are allocated (to ensure essential full day coverage across the school in order to provide the required cover to support specific pupil needs)"

“We have had to reduce the opportunities that had been made available for children to undertake active learning experiences and outdoor learning”
Some secondary schools highlight similar impacts:

“We have withdrawn all PSA support to teaching staff in the preparation of resources. In the past we were able to use specialist expertise of our PSAs to create or support the learning and teaching and this was of considerable help to both pupils and staff”

However, some schools set out the ways that they are trying to ameliorate impacts:

“Quality of learning and teaching continues to be good because we are flexible in the use of PSAs in the classroom. Our PSAs are also highly trained and effective in the classroom. PSAs who are supporting individual pupils will also be helping to support others who may be finding parts of the lesson difficult. Regular meetings take place with support staff. They alert us to pupils who they feel are either not working well in class or are struggling with the work given. Due to the decline in numbers of Support for Learning teachers in school, PSAs have had to take a more active approach in the classroom. If there were to be further cutbacks in the number of PSAs in schools there would be a significant impact on the learning and teaching of pupils with additional support needs as we are only just managing at present”

As mentioned above, a response to this report was received from Unison. That response highlighted a number of issues and one issue was about learning. Unison expressed the view that some pupils may see an impact upon their achievement and that the *‘cuts have been too far and too quick’*. We will continue to monitor the impact of changes to PSA hours through a number of means including, for example, visits to schools by QIOs (Quality Improvement Officers) and report back through the Inclusion Review.

5.17 In undertaking the survey, we were also interested in identifying any impact upon the level of exclusions. Many of the returns did not make a specific reference to exclusions despite being asked to do so. Overall head teachers seem to be reporting limited change in exclusions. However, this needs to be seen in the context of the ethos of our schools which try very hard to avoid exclusions. Furthermore, the evidence from the survey indicates that despite the limited change to date on level of exclusions, behaviour management is highlighted as a theme and posing challenges for staff as a result of the reduction.

5.18 In addition senior management staff in schools are spending a greater proportion of their time on behavioural issues and with the need to undertake more risk assessments.

6. OTHER KEY ISSUES

6.1 The impact survey also attempted to capture issues related to PSA skills, knowledge and experience. It is important to assess any impact of the change

given that a number of experienced PSA staff retired or took up opportunities elsewhere.

6.2 Some schools reported having to employ new staff as a result of the change who they felt were less skilled and experienced than staff who had retired or otherwise left. This created additional challenges in implementing the change.

6.3 Schools use a variety of mechanisms to identify the training needs of PSA staff such as appraisal and practice observation by teachers followed by feedback.

6.4 Schools were asked to identify developmental issues and some of the key issues mentioned were:

- Strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour at all levels, physically handling children who display challenging behaviour (CALM physical intervention)
- Developing counselling skills training; conflict resolution, positive behaviour strategies
- Information to aid understanding of conditions children in ASN bases may have such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, Aspergers, hearing loss, sign language, etc.
- Supporting EAL (English as an additional language) pupils successfully; supporting bereaved pupils; understanding attachment disorders
- ICT training to support pupils in the classroom ie. using the interactive whiteboard and word processing skills.
- E1 training; child protection; critical skills thinking
- First aid and manual handling refresher training; Evac chair/hoist and sling training; drugs awareness training; food hygiene awareness training
- Effective questioning, profiling, Solution Orientated Practices, observation skills, communication skills, standards and conduct, knowledge of the curriculum, CfE assessment, emotional literacy, bringing learning outdoors, positive playtimes, active learning strategies, supporting (entertaining) pupils in the playground/playground games; motor skills development
- Some schools reported the need to enhance literacy and numeracy skills amongst some PSA staff.

- There were suggestions for the need for a tiered training system for PSAs.

There are no areas highlighted that are new and many of these needs have formed part of training both at the level of school and at the Authority level. For example, last year we held a very successful event at the AECC. As part of the review of inclusion training needs and capacity building is seen as an important dimension and the development needs of PSAs is part of that work.

7. NEXT STEPS

7.1 The initial analysis summarised in this report provides management information that will be used to inform on-going discussion about improving learning and meeting needs of our most vulnerable children with additional support needs. As mentioned, the impact survey will be used as part of the review of inclusion and in particular it provides important information for the work to consider the future role of PSA and the skills set required.

The current impact survey was aimed at schools and we recognise the need to capture the views of parents as well. This will form part of the next steps and officers will discuss this directly with a group of parents of children with additional support needs who have been working with the Service on enhancing communications.

In their response to this report, Unison suggested that their members were unaware of this impact survey. Whilst we have not had similar feedback from others, Committee should be aware that the survey was raised at a Head Teachers' meeting and the importance of consulting with appropriate staff highlighted. As part of future work on evaluation of impact, we will consider how best to engage staff.

Further updates will be provided to Committee as part of the review of inclusion programme.

8. IMPACT

Corporate:

This report fits within the first and second of the six key priorities of the five year business plan:

- Provide for the needs of the most vulnerable people;
- Help to ensure that all schoolchildren reach their potential

People:

Systems and Technology:

There are no systems and technology implications

Property:

There are no property implications if the recommendations of this report are agreed and implemented.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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ANNEX 1: PUPIL SUPPORT ASSISTANT (PSA) SURVEY

NAME OF SCHOOL:

Issue 1: tasks/functions performed

Please indicate which tasks/functions are carried out currently in your school by those staff contracted as PSAs for the current session:

Tasks/functions	Hours allocated	Hours allocated as a % of total PSA hours
Support to individual pupils (including any specific care duties)		
Support to groups of pupils		
Supervision of pupils during breaks/lunchtime		
Support to teaching staff eg. preparation of resources, etc		
Other: please specify		

Issue 2: management decisions

- i. Given the above information, please clarify how you decided upon the particular deployment of PSAs to tasks/functions ie. your priorities:

- ii. Please clarify any tasks/functions you chose not to prioritise:

- iii. In making the management decisions you have, what have been the consequences so far this session? Please address the following issues and any others you deem relevant:
 - Quality of teaching and learning
 - Level of exclusions
 - Different and/or innovative change to classroom practice
 - Changes to school/class organisation
 - Management of pupil behaviour
 - PSA deployment to Bases

- Other areas: please specify and comment

Issue 3: development of PSA skills/knowledge

i. Please explain how the school has identified the skills/knowledge of PSA staff

ii. Please outline the in-school strategies to address identified training issues:

ii. From any analysis of skills/knowledge, please identify the key areas for training:

Issue 4: other comments

Head Teacher:

Date:

ANNEX 2: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PSA ALLOCATIONS FOR THE LAST 3 YEARS

School	Entitlement August 2011 hrs/week	Full time equivalences 2011	Entitlement August 2009 and August 2010 hrs/week	Full time equivalences 2009 and 2010	Allocation 2008/2009 hrs/wk	Full time equivalences 2008
Abbotswell	64.99	1.52	172.70	4.04	318.75	7.46
Airyhall	93.22	2.18	119.98	2.81	208.50	4.88
Ashley Road	123.03	2.88	159.37	3.73	294.56	6.89
Braehead	54.56	1.28	82.99	1.94	200.00	4.68
Bramble Brae	170.51	3.99	301.58	7.05	139.58	3.26
Broomhill	101.33	2.37	144.58	3.38	137.50	3.22
Bucksburn	101.79	2.38	106.61	2.49	194.50	4.55
Charleston	74.68	1.75	104.22	2.44	226.25	5.29
Cornhill	127.45	2.98	252.65	5.91	367.00	8.58
Culter	92.10	2.15	189.88	4.44	325.17	7.61
Cults	186.30	4.36	405.03	9.47	662.50	15.50
Danestone	64.53	1.51	118.61	2.77	249.50	5.84
Dyce	153.65	3.59	171.49	4.01	201.25	4.71
Fernielea	141.65	3.31	159.63	3.73	300.00	7.02
Ferryhill	114.54	2.68	161.52	3.78	132.50	3.10
Forehill	66.45	1.55	98.77	2.31	126.42	2.96
Gilcomstoun	156.64	3.66	199.79	4.67	275.51	6.44
Glashieburn	131.59	3.08	156.14	3.65	299.50	7.00
Greenbrae	54.33	1.27	83.36	1.95	130.50	3.05
Hanover Street	89.74	2.10	128.47	3.00	135.00	3.16
Hazlehead	101.99	2.39	119.01	2.78	169.50	3.96
Heatheryburn	173.33	4.05	264.06	6.18	514.25	12.03
Holy Family RC	97.49	2.28	104.74	2.45	224.08	5.24
Kaimhill	188.40	4.41	245.99	5.75	254.50	5.95
Kingsford	122.76	2.87	201.84	4.72	335.25	7.84
Kingswells	119.76	2.80	216.05	5.05	338.00	7.91

Kirkhill	130.03	3.04	238.30	5.57	431.25	10.09
Kittybrewster	133.33	3.12	187.80	4.39	144.00	3.37
Loirston	152.03	3.56	273.01	6.39	391.45	9.16
Manor Park	306.21	7.16	365.13	8.54	445.00	10.41
Middleton Park	57.17	1.34	73.64	1.72	112.00	2.62
Mile End	122.75	2.87	155.10	3.63	207.63	4.86
Milltimber	73.99	1.73	100.65	2.35	127.50	2.98
Muirfield	192.54	4.50	279.22	6.53	379.50	8.88
Newhills	63.09	1.48	156.16	3.65	309.00	7.23
Quarryhill	155.95	3.65	214.24	5.01	346.97	8.12
Riverbank	312.54	7.31	462.23	10.81	399.00	9.33
Scotstown	120.90	2.83	134.01	3.13	214.50	5.02
Seaton	181.56	4.25	253.29	5.92	225.00	5.26
Skene Square	144.45	3.38	173.66	4.06	214.50	5.02
St Josephs	118.20	2.76	141.63	3.31	149.50	3.50
St Peters Rc	139.14	3.25	185.21	4.33	79.00	1.85
Stoneywood	48.47	1.13	67.37	1.58	157.25	3.68
Sunnybank	213.05	4.98	296.00	6.92	270.75	6.33
Tullos	325.00	7.60	477.27	11.16	291.25	6.81
Walker Road	340.33	7.96	566.60	13.25	507.50	11.87
Westpark	144.81	3.39	227.51	5.32	307.00	7.18
Woodside	282.24	6.60	392.56	9.18	305.75	7.15
TOTALS	6,724.58	157.28	9,889.65	231.31	12,775.37	298.80
School	Entitlement August 2011 hrs/wk	Full time equivalences August 2011 hrs/wk	Entitlement August 2009 and August 2010 hrs/wk	Full time equivalences	Allocation 2008/2009 hrs /wk	Full time equivalences August 2008
Ab. Grammar	83.39	1.95	160.00	3.74	190	4.44
Bucksburn	170.97	4.00	182.53	4.27	313	7.32
B of Don	232.20	5.43	262.52	6.14	431	10.08
Cults	68.85	1.61	160.81	3.76	273	6.39

Dyce	168.84	3.95	219.58	5.14	253.5	5.93
Harlaw	168.87	3.95	270.01	6.32	384.8	9.00
Hazlehead	248.27	5.81	313.96	7.34	378.8	8.86
Kincorth	116.26	2.72	245.57	5.74	408.5	9.55
Northfield	197.75	4.63	339.72	7.95	407.3	9.53
Oldmachar	126.22	2.95	181.02	4.23	319.5	7.47
St. Machar	238.48	5.58	430.00	10.06	298.3	6.98
Torry	188.96	4.42	291.53	6.82	280.5	6.56
Total	2,009.06	46.99	3,057.25	71.51	3938.2	92.11

ANNEX 3: PSA EXPENDITURE COMPARISON

Pupil Support Assistant (PSA) expenditure comparison between Aberdeen and comparator authority 2010/2011 and 2011/2012					
The tables below represent relative overall expenditure on Pupil Support Assistant provision					
In the comparator authority the generic post of PSA either does not exist or is not the only type of post. The expenditure figures are therefore inclusive of the constituent parts that comprise the generic post of PSA in Aberdeen. (classroom assistants, lunchtime/playground assistants and ASN auxiliaries) Any centrally held budgets are also included.					
	Aberdeen	Council 1	Aberdeen	Council 1	Council 1
2010/ 2011	Budget (£)	Budget (£)	Pupils Sept 2010	Pupils Sept 2010	Pupils Sept 2010
Primary*	5,647,463	7,379,938	11,900	24,618	24,618
Secondary	2,054,304	3,338,008	9,354	18,961	18,961
Special	797,047	1,571,356	152	703	703
Total	8,498,814	12,289,302	21,406	44,282	44,282
Spend per pupil	397	278			
Potential Aberdeen budget if based on Council 1 PSA cost per pupil					
	5,940,671				
2011/ 2012					
	Budget (£)	Budget (£)	Pupils Sept 2010	Pupils Sept 2010	Pupils Sept 2010
Primary*	4,503,231	7,379,938	11,900	24,618	24,618
Secondary	1,605,361	3,338,008	9,354	18,961	18,961
Special	792,347	1,571,356	152	703	703
Total	6,900,939	12,289,302	21,406	44,282	44,282
Spend per pupil	322	278			
Potential Aberdeen budget if based on comparator authority PSA cost per pupil					
	5,940,671				
*Includes pre school spend on PSA provision where applicable					

