

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services
DATE	17 November 2016
DIRECTOR	Gayle Gorman
TITLE OF REPORT	Update on progress towards implementing the recommendations of the Inclusion Review
REPORT NUMBER	ECS/16/063
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Committee on progress made towards implementing the recommendations of the Inclusion Review which was endorsed by Committee in December 2014.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Note the content of this report
- (ii) Note the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Inclusion Review

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional financial implications associated with this report. All costs are being met from existing Inclusion Service budgets.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Officers continue to work closely with Legal Services to ensure account is taken of the legislative rights of children, parents and carers.

A range of professional learning opportunities continue to be offered and extended and are aligned with both the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) Professional Standards and guidance from Education Scotland. Authority policies are being followed where service redesign necessitates the redeployment of staff.

Steps continue to be taken to ensure accessibility across the school estate. Some modifications have already been undertaken to ensure appropriate spaces are available to meet a wider range of needs across establishments in the City.

Risk assessment procedures have been aligned with individual child's planning arrangements to reduce bureaucracy and ensure the needs of staff and pupils are met more efficiently.

A more flexible continuum of provision will increase our sustainability and enable schools to be more responsive to the ever-changing needs of the school community.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Background to the Inclusion Review

In 2014 Officers, supported by independent consultants, concluded an extensive review of inclusive practices across schools and services in Aberdeen City. The reviewers considered the extent to which the service complied with both legislation and best practice, thus establishing the extent to which the Council supports social justice through inclusive educational practices.

Key legislative considerations included how the City had moved towards a presumption of mainstreaming in line with the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act (2000). Considered also were how well the City adhered to the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 which recognised wider groups of learners as being in need of additional support and also how routinely 'reasonable adjustments' were made in keeping with the Equality Act (2010).

The independent consultants visited schools, interviewed Elected Members, parents, pupils, colleagues in central functions within the Education Service, practitioners and managers.

The reviewers provided the Council with 16 recommendations. The recommendations were endorsed by the Education and Children's Services Committee in December 2014.

The full recommendations are outlined in Appendix 1.

5.2 Implement a presumption of mainstreaming

The high number of specialist provisions and cumbersome referral processes resulted in many children travelling long distances to access appropriate support. There was a clear lack of consistency in the offer of support available in our mainstream schools because some schools were funded to provide enhanced levels of support within a separate staffed area in their school (Base provision)

In August 2014 officers analysed data which showed that 5% of children and young people accessed a specialist provision either in a special school setting or within an on-site 'Base' provision. The national figure at that time was 2%.

Progress

A framework for staged interventions was developed to support schools to identify appropriate levels of intervention needed to meet the needs of a wide range of learners; to identify those children requiring a specialist provision; and to identify what additional resources might be required to meet needs within a mainstream setting. The framework is central to the completion of an establishment wide audit of need to support a new admissions process. This led to:

- a revised admissions process and based on single child's plan;
- a clarification of criteria for admission to specialist provision including special schools ;
- Identification of gaps in mainstream resourcing in schools with no enhanced provision for children with additional support needs;
- the extension of outreach services
- bespoke training to support professional development;
- access to therapeutic support through a pathway planning process;
- the development of Support Hubs to support children and young people in need of short term intensive support;
- collaboration with schools to guide more flexible use of resource;
- Support and training across ECS teams and the wider multi agency partnership to make the reasonable adjustments required by legislation to curriculum, building and learning and teaching strategies in respect of individual pupils.

The move towards implementing a presumption of mainstream is incremental therefore children already established within individual enhanced 'Base' provision remain there. Base resource allocated to schools remains in place.

Officers have engaged widely with partners across Aberdeen City to ensure that our move towards a presumption of mainstreaming is well understood. Children and young people have been routinely involved in the development of our approaches. Where services have been realigned, service users have been fully involved in helping shape our plans.

School leaders have been engaged in the process through membership of the Inclusion Implementation Group, Co-Design Events, workshops and consultation exercises.

Parents and carers have had the opportunity to inform our ways of working through attendance at the ASN Parent's Forum. We plan to widen our engagement with parents through more regular attendance at the City Wide Parent Forum.

The key focus for change in 15/16 was children transitioning from either pre-school into primary 1 or primary 7 into S1. This resulted in approximately 60 children in P1 and S1 enrolling in their local school rather than being transported to another setting across the city in order to have their support needs met.

5.3 Supporting children and young people with severe and complex needs

Nationally around 1% of pupils attend a stand-alone special school. The Aberdeen City figure is in keeping with this national average and there has been no change to the capacity of our stand-alone special school provision as steps are taken to plan for the Centre of Excellence.

Progress

Officers have been working with parents, carers and partners to plan for the provision of the Centre of Excellence from August 2017. As well as providing education for children with the most severe and complex needs, the Centre will be a 'one stop shop' for families and will be used by colleagues across the partnership. It will also provide a base for some of our outreach services.

Officers have used special school expertise to build capacity across the city in anticipation of new ways of working.

Following successful interview a preferred candidate has been identified and will take up post as the Head Teacher of the Centre of Excellence by the end of November. The preferred candidate will lead the merger of Woodlands, Hazelwood and the Pre school ASN provisions.

5.4 Improving the outcomes of our Looked After Children

A Virtual School Head Teacher (VSHT) was appointed to help improve outcomes for Looked After children. The VSHT works in partnership with colleagues in schools to ensure appropriately challenging curriculum pathways are in place. Training for Designated Managers for Looked After Children has improved understanding of the very particular needs of this vulnerable group.

Officers continue to work with Children's Social Work to improve processes and reduce Out of Authority Placements through the development of shared protocols focussed on improving outcomes. A separate paper has been produced on this.

5.5 Review of how the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) supports schools

Following a successful validated Self Evaluation (VSE) the Educational Psychology Service has been working with stakeholders to review how best to support schools to develop their universal provision. This will limit the numbers of children and young people escalating through the staged procedure and ensure effective primary prevention and early intervention in schools.

Progress:

- the production of literature to share changes in working practices with key stakeholders;
- the development of distributed leadership in order to maximise impact;
- supporting schools identified as part of The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC)
- reviewing the structure and balance of the EPS working week;
- more involvement at a strategic level; and
- refining the Aberdeen City Support Manual.

5.6 Improvements in Partnership Working

Colleagues in schools and across the Partnership have collaborated to review and streamline processes and practices. Reviewed ways of working have been supported by a range of highly evaluated professional learning opportunities.

Progress:

- alignment of planning arrangements with Additional Support Needs (ASN) processes to reduce duplication;
- establishment of a network to support partnership working;
- review of partnership approaches to maximise the impact on learners;
- preparation for the roll out of ASG Partnership Forums;
- collaboration with partners to deliver training and produce supporting resources
- support in place for the roll out of the SEEMiS Wellbeing Module to bring about further efficiencies

Officers are currently working with colleagues in schools and partners to develop a locality based forum to make best use of available resource and expertise. The Associated School Group (ASG) Partnership Forum will address agreed local needs through multi-agency working. We anticipate Forums being operational early in 2017.

5.7 Allocation of resource

In order to support schools through this transformational change, staffing resources remain in place and staffing levels have been enhanced where necessary.

The Pupil Support Service has been restructured to streamline systems and to help prevent unnecessary delays in accessing specialist support for children and young people who require additional help..

A yearly audit of need is used to ensure that the support staff resource is fairly distributed.

Partnership are now planning how they can share resources within a locality to maximise impact of skills and expertise.

5.8 Quality professional learning opportunities

A wider range of professional learning opportunities have been delivered including:

- a series of on-line Learning Together Guides covering areas such as Autism and Dyslexia have been put in place;
- a range of prepared courses available for leaders to use to support best practice in schools;
- an Aberdeen City Support Manual to bring together best practice and current legislation to help plan effective interventions for children and young people;
- over 45 face to face training events to support and promote inclusion held over session 15/16. A similarly comprehensive calendar is available for session 16/17 which includes certificated Autism training for each school.
- an Inclusion Abernet page has been established to support communication and share resources and best practice; and
- the Learning Festival brought 1100 colleagues together to hear about effective inclusive practice.

Officers work with the Professional Learning team to plan professional learning based on the needs of schools. Our Education Support Officers (ESOs) provide bespoke training to schools upon request including training for Pupil Support Assistants.

5.9 Improving our use of data

A data collection system has been created to inform planning and ensure consistency across the Directorate. A range of data is shared across the service and with key individuals such as the Virtual School Head Teacher and Quality Improvement Officer team. The data is being used to ascertain the pace of change to ensure that we take forward the recommendations at a steady but manageable pace. Analysis of data is helping to target resources, review the impact of our work and help guide the pace of change.

6. IMPACT

6.1 Improving Customer Experience

Significant progress has been made in taking forward this incremental change and more local children now access their local schools.

More children can now have their needs met in their local mainstream school with their peers and siblings. See table below.

Year	ACC Children with ASN accessing their local school	% of all ACC children educated out with their own community	% of ACC children with ASN educated out with their own community	% of children accessing on and off site provision
13/14	1954	3.5%	28%	5%
14/15	1910	3.4%	28.5%	4.9%

15/16	2387*	3.1%	20.3%	2.1%
16/17	2637	2.8%	19%	1.9%

As parents and carers have become more confident that individual needs will be met in the local school we have seen a reduction in placing requests. In 13/14 there were 1531 placing requests compared to 1024 for session 16/17.

An improved understanding of additional support needs has led to an increase in those being identified as being in need of some additional support. In 13/14 only 12.5% of children and young people were identified as being in need of additional support. This has increased to 16% in 15/16.

The quality of planning for children is improving and is now consistently focussed on improved outcomes for our children and young people.

6.2 Improving Staff Experience

An extensive range of professional learning opportunities has built the capacity of over 6000 members of staff based in our schools and over 700 from across the Partnership. Evaluations evidence the positive impact of training and are used to inform future plans. These positive evaluations are contributing to an increased demand for further professional learning. This training has included:

- 45 face to face professional learning sessions
- Making a range of training tools available on Abernet which attracted over 4500 visits over 6 months

The Integrated Children's Service website is being refreshed and will be launched before the end of this academic year. This will streamline how staff access advice and guidance on effective partnership working.

Our partnership Operational Guidance and associated resources for staff have been updated in light of feedback from staff.

Demand for professional learning in session 16/17 has increased and a programme including more advanced training in areas such as Autism Spectrum Disorder has been shared.

A city wide inclusion Teacher Learning Community (TLC) will launch in November 2016. We anticipate that this TLC will become an invaluable means of sharing effective systems and processes across schools.

A range of Co-Design events were extremely well received by colleagues across the Directorate. We plan to continue to make use of this approach.

6.3 Improving our use of Resources

The number of children being transported has reduced from 761 in 13/14 to 623 in 16/17. We anticipate that this decrease will continue over coming years.

Continued use of the Audit of need helps ensure that levels of resource available to schools is more equitable.

The roll out of ASG Partnership Forums from January 2017 will pool resource and expertise from across the Council and wider partnership to ensure best value and support both primary prevention and early intervention.

Outreach services have been extended and have benefited greater numbers of staff and learners. These will continue to be enhanced.

6.4 Corporate

Our work clearly aligns with the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

1. Children have the best start in life – children in Aberdeen City are healthy, happy and safe, and enjoy the best possible childhood
2. Children are safe and responsible – children and young people are safe from all forms of harm
3. Children are respected, included and achieving – children and young people are listened to, respected, valued and involved in the decision-making process
4. Data - Work collectively to develop and implement a common, data-driven approach to decision-making that will both protect communities and enable prosperity.

Aberdeen City's Council's ambition to support every child, irrespective of their circumstances, to grow, develop and reach their full potential will be partially realised by the on-going implementation of the recommendations of the Inclusion Review. Equity of access and opportunity is central to this development.

6.5 Public

This report is likely to be of some interest to the public.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

As Aberdeen City Council continues to implement a 'presumption of mainstreaming' it is imperative that quality professional learning opportunities and outreach services continue to be available to build capacity.

We continue to consider how best to support schools in light of staff shortages and use budgets flexibly and responsively to mitigate these risks.

The Service continues to work closely with Health and Safety officers.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Eleanor Sheppard, Transformation and Improvement Manager
E-mail – esheppard@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel 01224 522707