ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	17 September 2020
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Supporting Learners
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/20/126
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Eleanor Sheppard
REPORT AUTHOR	Craig McDermott
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek approval to align the findings of All our Children and All their Potential recommendations with the work of the ACC Supporting Learners Workstream and implement changes to our operating systems in light of restrictions necessary during the recovery phase.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:-

2.1 approves the amended Supporting Learners Programme Plan (Appendix B), which takes account of the recommendations from the national 'Support for Learning: All Our Children and All Their Potential' Report (Appendix A); and

2.2 endorses the agile approach being taken to ensure ongoing provision of support for learners.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1.1 A review of the implementation of additional support for learning in schools was instructed by the Scottish Government in January 2019. Angela Morgan was appointed as the independent Chair of the review and the Report of the review entitled 'Support for Learning: All our Children and All their Potential' was published in June 2020 ("the Report").

3.1.2 The remit of the Review was to consider the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning legislation and specifically:
- how additional support for learning works in practice across early learning and childcare centres, primary, secondary and special schools (including enhanced provision, services and units);
- where children and young people learn within the balance of the provision set out above, recognising that not all local authority areas have all of those provisions;

- the quality of learning and support, including overall achievement and positive destinations achieved postschool;
- the different approaches to planning and assessment to meet the needs of children and young people;
- the roles and responsibilities of support staff, teaching staff, leadership roles;
- education authorities and national agencies; and
- the areas of practice that could be further enhanced through better use of current resources to support practice, staffing or other aspects of provision.

3.1.3 The Education Service has a Supporting Learners Workstream and the progress of the Workstream is routinely reported to Elected Members at the Education Operational Delivery Committee. It is proposed that the recommendations of the Report be built into the work of this Workstream in advance of any national instruction to implement to ensure that we proactively respond to this report.

3.2 **All our Children and All their Potential Recommendations**

3.2.1 The findings of the national Report are wide ranging with recommendations made for a range of partners across the wider education system. The author concludes that, "tweaking" systems and provision will be insufficient to ensure that children are seen as individuals rather than children in need of 'additional' support. For this reason, The Education Service propose to be proactive in our response.

3.2.2 The Report recommends that the interlinked and co-dependent recommendations are not a quick fix and that a more significant change in culture led by visible senior leaders is required. Adaptability and flexibility are noted as being of crucial importance. This aligns closely with the findings of the Supporting Learners Workstream. The Report also reiterates the need to move away from deficit language of old.

3.2.3 The gap between intention and reality are highlighted in the Report. Our work to become a Child Friendly City will be of critical importance as we implement the recommendation to ensure an effective feedback loop is established to support the design and delivery of services for children.

3.2.4 The use of data is often referred to in the Report with recommendations made to ensure that the whole system, including national and local government, uses more appropriate measures of success and less reliance on overly traditional Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) results for example. This complements our work to broaden the range of learning pathways available and move away from the more traditional qualification routes.

3.2.5 The need to measure the impact of investment in Support Staff is highlighted and this chimes with the work being progressed across the Local Authority. The Report goes on to recommend some national guidance in terms of how teachers and support staff should work together to improve outcomes for learners.

3.2.6 Reference is made to the need to ensure that particular consideration is given to those with additional support needs during strategic planning at Local Authority level with active and productive engagement across Community Planning Partners. It is proposed that our Supporting Learners Workstream be a consistent feature of our work over the coming years to ensure this is a continued focus of improvement.

3.2.7 Recommendations are made about the extent to which Initial Teacher Education prepares new staff to work with children with additional support needs. It goes on to promote high quality professional learning as key in keeping with our current programme. Of particular interest is the recommendation to nationally promote the role of those with a more enhanced levels of skill in Support for Learning roles.

3.2.8 In keeping with our local findings, the quality of transitions has been raised alongside a need to foster positive relationships and ensure that families are more actively included in the development of key guidance. This recommendation will be built into the working practices of the Supporting Learners Workstream as will the recommendation to further promote mediation.

3.2.9 The Review notes the preparation required to plan for the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); this aligns with our work to become a Child Friendly City.

3.2.10 The service welcomes a recommendation that the Scottish Government consider the interface between the different levels of planning for children and young people and the relationship between the Local Authority and other partners such as health in supporting children with additional support needs.

3.2.11 The review noted the importance of accessible information and work is progressing at pace to address this area with much already achieved. In keeping with the national recommendation, quality assurance mechanisms will be amended to reflect these findings. It is proposed that quality improvement activity planned from August to December centre around these findings.

3.3 Local Authority action to address the published Recommendations

3.3.1 The Report contains numerous recommendations to Scottish Ministers and COSLA. These recommendations are grouped under nine themes and, should they be accepted, the report indicates the national Additional Support for Learning Implementation Group will oversee progress made against them. Recommendation 9.1 proposes an annual progress report is developed for the purposes of quality assurance and scrutiny. Given the close alignment to the work of the Supporting Learners Workstream, it is prudent to proactively subsume the recommendations into the ongoing improvement activity and plan of the Supporting Learners Workstream.

3.3.2 In order to show clear alignment a refreshed Supporting Learners Programme Plan is available for approval in Appendix B.

3.3.3 The Community Planning partnership Child Friendly City Plan features corresponding recommendations and the service will ensure that the work of the Supporting Learners Workstream complements but does not replicate ongoing work to become a Child Friendly City.

3.4 Supporting Learners during the Recovery Phase

3.4.1 COVID-19 school closures led to a significant and rapid change in our operating environment. This necessitated a quick review of systems and processes to ensure that Aberdeen City Council could effectively support the education and wellbeing of children and young people in a digital environment.

3.4.2 All schools worked hard to ensure that children, young people and families were familiar with Google Classroom and started to identify families without access to a suitable device and connectivity. Schools were asked to identify and plan appropriate support for children and young people identified as vulnerable.

3.4.3 The Education Staged Intervention Framework was refreshed to guide practice and provide minimum expectations around the level of support to be afforded to families. This was extended as Multi-Agency Operational Guidance for practitioners across the partnership to clarify how GIRFEC should be delivered.

3.4.4 As the Service re-opens school buildings there is a need to consider how support services operate whilst unable to visit children and young people in situ. Our plans must take account of what we have learned over the past 5 months and be kept under review as physical distancing constraints are amended.

3.5 How have the needs of learners changed?

3.5.1 A system that enabled staff across Children and Family Services to make a request for assistance was established upon the closure of school buildings on 20 March 2020. The Emergency Support Forum (ESF) – comprising Education, Social Work and Community Learning Officers – was established to review requests and allocate proportionate support based on emerging vulnerability. This included: Locality Hub support, increased targeted intervention from Education and/or Social Work, and/or input from Family Learning, Healthy Minds and Youth Work.

3.5.2 Data gathered aligned with national guidance, was cognisant of agreed vulnerability markers, and a weekly report was generated as a means of robustly tracking, monitoring and responding to the data, which indicated the changing needs of children/young people and their families.

3.5.3 An average of 18.1 requests for assistance were received per week in the period April – June 2020: 54.0% of requests pertained to children/young people entitled to free school meals, 22.6% to children/young people with additional support needs, and 20.4% to children/young people subject to ongoing child protection investigation/registration. 12.8% of requests involved children/young people looked after at home.

3.5.4 Escalating need with regards to family circumstances/the family home was noted in the majority of requests, with violence in the home featuring regularly. 27.2% of requests noted substance misuse as an emerging or enduring need, and 48.5% similarly identified the mental health needs of families.

3.5.5 A regular review of Hub placements took place to ensure the intervention was correctly matched to the needs of the child/young person and their family. Evidence gathered suggests risk mitigation and maintenance was successful in most cases. Anecdotal evidence suggests the multi-agency approach enabled families to access the right support at the right time. An independent Education Scotland evaluation endorsed the approach being taken to support these children/young people.

3.5.6 Evidence gathered from those requesting assistance suggests the systems and processes adopted were positively received, particularly the timeous turn-around and feedback time.

3.5.7 National and local evidence tells us that the trauma experienced by children/young people and their families is significant and that this type of support will be required during recovery and beyond, particularly given the uncertainty surrounding virus resurgence and further localised restrictions. The recommendations highlight the importance of cohesive multi-agency working, in-line with GIRFEC, such as that provided by the Emergency Support Forum and Locality Hubs.

3.6   How will physically distanced support be provided?

3.6.1 Staff across the education service began a programme of remote digital delivery when school buildings closed on 20 March 2020. Consultation with children/young people, parents/carers, and staff endorsed our direction of travel, particularly in terms of the use of Google Suite for Education (G:Suite).

3.6.2 The Digital Learning Hub was established as a go-to place for learners, parents/carers, and staff. The Hub includes various sources of professional learning for staff to ensure confidence in this area remains high. Peer (1:1) support is available to staff from colleagues who have undertaken Google's Certified Educator programme.

3.6.3 Children/Young people, parents/carers, and staff make increasing use of Google Meet (and Microsoft Teams) in lieu of face-to-face meetings, and for remote learning and teaching. This practice quickly became the 'new normal' at a time when restrictions limited the scope of face-to-face interaction.

3.6.4 Various steps have been taken by the Education Service to mitigate against digital poverty, including: the use of Scottish Government funding to ensure all learners in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) vigintiles 1-3 (who have not already been issued with one) have access to a device; ensuring young people studying SQA courses have access to a device; and proportionate allocations to primary schools.

3.6.5 Given the significant advances made over the last few months, it is prudent the Education Service continue to build on this in order to maximise scope and capacity across all services. This is particularly important at a time when movement between educational settings is not possible, but the need to ensure the right support is available to children/young people at the right time is paramount.

3.7 What will this mean for individual services?

3.7.1 In-keeping with feedback from staff, a new, electronic support request mechanism has been developed. In consultation with the Team Around the Child, staff will access one digital form for seeking support for a child/young person. It is hoped this will remove the bureaucracy associated with previous practices. The use of a single mechanism supports greater consistency with regards to tracking and monitoring across the system, thus ensuring our direction of travel can remain responsive to need, ensuring no child/young person is left behind.

3.7.2 Current Scottish Government guidance prohibits staff working across multiple education settings as a mitigation against COVID-19 spread. Teachers and Pupil Support Assistants working in peripatetic services have, temporarily, been reallocated to schools as part of core staffing:

Service	FTE Reallocated to Primary		FTE Reallocated to Secondary		FTE Reallocated to Special	
	Teacher	PSA	Teacher	PSA	Teacher	PSA
English as an Additional Language Service	10.3	2.8	6.4			
Hearing Support Service	2.8		0.6		1.6	
Vision Support Service	1.0		1.6		0.2	
ASPIRE Service			2.0		2.4	
Specialist Early Intervention Team (SEIT) Service	1.3	1.9	3.0	1.5		

It should be noted that, in some instances, staff have been based in a school to ensure continuity of support for children/young people with specific needs (e.g. visual impairment, hearing impairment): this FTE is omitted above.

3.7.3 The following proposal is based on the 'I do, We do, You do' principle of collegiate working to 'get it right' for children and young people. Similarly, it mirrors the '5 Roles of Support for Learning' and the '5 Core Functions of the Educational Psychology Service'.

Service	Proposed Universal Support (applicable to all Services)	Proposed Targeted Support

Education Psychology Service	**Aberdeen City's Support Services Build Capacity in the Team Around the Child to Get it Right for the Individual Child/Young Person**
	
	Consultancy
	➢ Online consultation with requesting member(s) of staff to offer initial advice and support.
	
	➢ Maintenance of an online hub (website), which can be readily accessed by children/young people, parents/carers, and staff e.g. 'First Port of Call for All Services for Everyone in the Team Around the Child'.
	
	Multi-Agency Working
	➢ Attendance at planning meeting(s) with 'Team Around the Child' to support wider planning and target setting.
		▪ Direct input with an individual learner or a group of learners:
		  o change and loss;
		  o emotional intelligence;
		  o nurture;
		  o play and communication.
		  o resilience.
		▪ Further, bespoke assessment to inform Individualised Education Programme (IEP)/Child's Plan/Coordinated Support Plan (CSP) targets and targeted inputs.
		▪ Specialist planning input to support the delivery of educational outcomes for an individual learner e.g. environmental adaptation, curriculum adaptation, solution-focused approaches.
		▪ Transitions support.
		▪ Family engagement (including supporting the capture of parent and learner voice).
		▪ Education Psychology Service (EPS) Helpline and Hub.

Autism Outreach Service	**Contribution to Continuous Lifelong Professional Learning (CLPL) & Staff Development**
	➢ Sign-posting of resources to support implementation of universal learning and teaching strategies.
	
	➢ Offer of CLPL (delivered digitally or face-to-face) to support implementation of universal learning and teaching strategies (inc. modelling of best practice and environmental adaptation).
		▪ Direct or cooperative input with children/young people supporting the:
		  o development of individualised work systems, curricula and timetables;
		  o development of social skills;
		  o emotional regulation and literacy;
		  o impact of diagnosis;
		  o transitions;
		  o understanding of sensory sensitivities.

	Identification & Assessment	
	Identification & Assessment ➢ Assessment (via observation, further consultation, review of learning materials etc.) to inform CLPL needs, planning, and universal support.	▪ Training for practitioners in the use of the Autism Toolbox and the Autism Classroom Checklist. ▪ Family engagement (including supporting the capture of parent and learner voice).
English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service		▪ Direct and cooperative (digital and face-to-face) input for Level 1 and 2 learners (and/or staff supporting the teaching of these learners). ▪ Direct delivery of Scottish and Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF) 3-6 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the Senior Phase. ▪ Family engagement (including supporting the capture of parent and learner voice).
ASIPRE Service		▪ Further, bespoke assessment to inform IEP/Child's Plan/CSP targets and targeted inputs (by school staff). ▪ Direct (digital and face-to-face) input with children and young people to support Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs. ▪ Family engagement (including supporting the capture of parent and learner voice).
Specialist Early Intervention Team (SEIT) Service		▪ Further, bespoke assessment to inform IEP/Child's Plan/CSP targets and targeted inputs (by school staff). ▪ Direct (digital and face-to-face) input with children and young people to support Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs. ▪ Family engagement (including supporting the capture of parent and learner voice).
Hearing Support Service (HSS)		▪ Direct (digital or face-to-face) cyclical consultation with children/young people with hearing impairment.

		- Direct and cooperative support for children/young people with significant hearing loss (inc. comorbid conditions). - Transitions support. - Direct input with children at Aberdeen School for the Deaf. - Family engagement (including supporting the capture of parent and learner voice).
Vision Support Service (VSS)		- Direct (digital or face-to-face) cyclical consultation with children/young people with visual impairment. - Direct and cooperative support for children/young people with significant sight loss (inc. comorbid conditions). - Transitions support. - Family engagement (including supporting the capture of parent and learner voice).
Language Support Provision Service		- Further, bespoke assessment to inform IEP/Child's Plan/CSP targets and targeted inputs (by school staff). - Training for practitioners in administration of bespoke assessment and specialist teaching programmes. - Direct (digital and face-to-face) input with children as part of the Language Support Provision (LSP). - Family engagement (including supporting the capture of parent and learner voice).
Dyslexia Support Service		- Further, bespoke assessment to inform IEP/Child's Plan/CSP targets and targeted inputs (by school staff). - Training for practitioners in administration of bespoke assessment and specialist teaching programmes (inc. use of the Dyslexia Toolkit).

| | | | ▪ Direct and cooperative (digital and face-to-face) input with children/young people.
▪ Family engagement (including supporting the capture of parent and learner voice). |

3.7.4 The approach to service delivery and reshape – Universal and Targeted – will remain cognisant of, and responsive to, data received via the request for assistance mechanism: our direction of travel will be needs-led. This agile approach will enable services, and the Team Around the Child, to best-meet the needs of children/young people and their families.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Any re-design 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
Strategic Risk	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.
Compliance	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.
Operational	Staff are overwhelmed which leads to low morale as staff feel unable to meet the needs of	L	Mitigated by offering high quality professional learning for staff to ensure that they meet their statutory duties under The Education

	vulnerable young people.		(Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010.
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.
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.
Environment / Climate	Risk of environmental factors inhibiting positive outcomes for learners	L	Service realignment will strengthen universal/targeted support and sharing of best practice, thus preventing escalation of need through strengthened practice and reasonable adjustment.

7. OUTCOMES

COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	This report outlines proposals to realign education support services to ensure children/young people (their families) and staff can access timeous support for the purposes of securing positive outcomes for learners. Realignment will be proactively undertaken within the context of the 'Support for Learning: All Our Children and All Their Potential' Report. In particular, this report links to the Policy Statement in relation to People, 7: 'Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city'.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcomes 1 and 6. Continued judicious use of funding and appropriate targeting of additional resources will ensure that children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are fully accessing education and more likely to achieve their potential and contribute to the economy. Specific links: Stretch outcome 1 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors y 2026 Stretch outcome 6 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals in this report seek to ensure the best use of resource in the system, promoting an understanding of the circumstances of individual children and young people to ensure that appropriate and timely personalised support is available to them. Effective use of all resources and allowing each school community full control of these resources will help to ensure all initiatives and interventions are selected and implemented based on the needs of each school community and planned effectively to impact positively on all children and young people and are particularly targeted at those who are adversely affected by poverty.

	Specific links to: Stretch Outcome 4 90% of children and young people will report that they feel mentally well by 2026 Stretch Outcome 6 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026, Stretch Outcome 7 Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Underpinning the work of all schools in Aberdeen City is reducing the poverty related attainment gap and achieving excellence and equity for all.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as amended (and associated Code of Practice) Equality Act 2010

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES

A *Support for Learning: All Our Children and All Their Potential* (Report from Independent review)
B Updated Supporting Learners Programme Plan (Version 2.0 – August 2020)

11.   REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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