

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	24 January 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Supporting Learners
REPORT NUMBER	CFS/23/021
DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne
REPORT AUTHOR	Craig McDermott
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks to update Committee members on the progress of the work undertaken to support learners in Aberdeen City.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 note approaches being taken and the progress made to date; and
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Education Officer to report on-going progress through National Improvement Framework reporting.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Supporting Learners workstream is a multi-strand programme designed to continuously improve systems surrounding learners based on emerging data. Overall, the programme seeks to secure a stronger provision of support for learners across the universal, targeted and specialist continuum. This sits within the context of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC). The workstream has been in existence since late 2019 and the progress of the programme has been frequently reported to Committee (see Section 10 – “Background Papers”). The programme has made use of sub-groups who have overseen areas such as: professional learning, data and policy review, and service redesign.
- 3.2 With Committee approval (see *Supporting Learners* (OPE/20/126)), the workstream proactively subsumed the recommendations of Angela Morgan's report *All Our Children and All Their Potential* (2020) into the programme (see Appendix A for a broad overview of how the two correlate). This was done against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated, emerging data about the impacts on children, young people and their families.

- 3.3 Frequent review of COVID-19 data (alongside other datasets such as ScotXed census, health & safety, school attendance, Request for Assistance etc.) highlighted the need to gear local systems towards that of greater flexibility so they are better positioned to respond to agile, data-led decision making. This led to a redesign of education additional support needs (“ASN”) services whereby teams were brought together under the leadership and management of a single Head Teacher.

The ASN & Outreach Service (“the Service”)

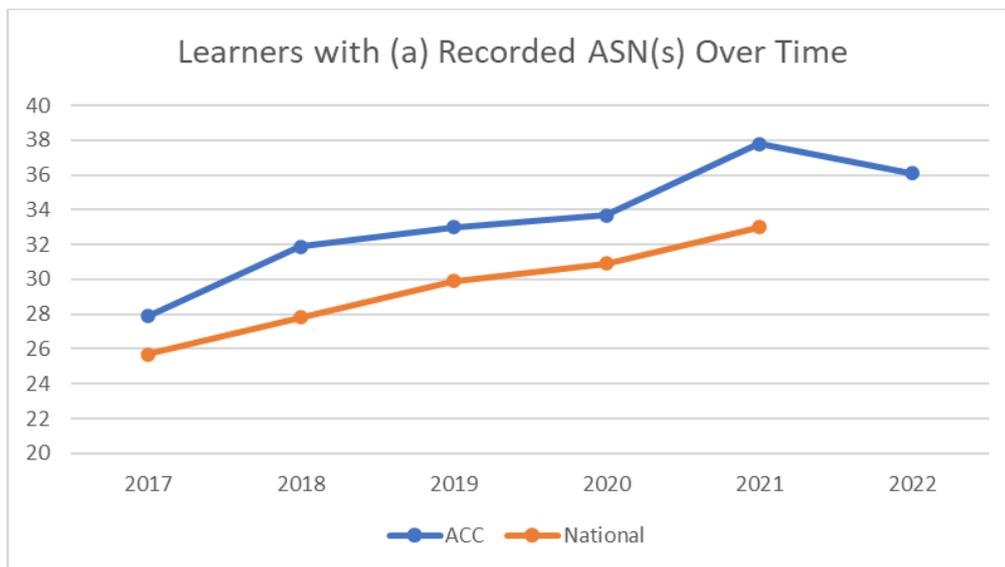
- 3.4 Service redesign was formally implemented in August 2021, which saw Hearing Support (including Aberdeen School for the Deaf), Vision Support, English as an Additional Language (“EAL”), Dyslexia Outreach, Child Planning Support, Links Early Learning and Childcare Hub, and the Wellbeing Team come together under the leadership and management of one Senior Leadership Team. Recruitment to leadership and management posts across the Service took place throughout session 2021-2022 with successful, high-quality candidates aligned to all posts by April 2022. Since then, the Head Teacher has worked with Senior Leaders to implement a governance structure and framework that focuses on distributed responsibility for quality improvement both across and within teams. The structure seeks to continuously develop and nurture specialism within teams (e.g. Hearing Support; Vision Support; Dyslexia Outreach) whilst using nationally recognised core areas for improvement (e.g. Learning, Teaching and Assessment; Leadership of Learning; Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion) to drive whole-service collaboration and practice sharing.
- 3.5 The Head Teacher reviewed approaches to improvement planning to engender greater coherence across the Service. A new format was launched in August 2022, which links directly to the quality improvement framework outlined above. Ultimately, it seeks to ensure all high-level priorities are derived from, and linked to, data associated with the impact of interventions on learners. The impact of new approaches to service improvement planning is being closely monitored through the Service’s Standards, Quality and Improvement Plan (SQulP).
- 3.6 The Vision, Values and Aims of the Service were refreshed in May 2022 following consultation involving learners, families and staff. These provide the foundations for the aligned Service’s work and will remain under ongoing review to ensure they continue to best-meet the needs of all stakeholders. Positively, ‘Achievement’, ‘Equity’, ‘Inclusion’ and ‘Uniqueness’ emerged consistently across consultees and have been adopted as Service values.
- 3.7 The Service has established a Parents’ and Carers’ Group to support the development of its work. The group seeks to fulfil functions similar to that of a parent council with the aim of embedding the voice of families in improvement activity. Members established a Group Charter, which sets out agreed aims and ways of working: this is available to all stakeholders via the Service’s website. The development of a rolling calendar/programme of meetings for 2023 is (at the time of writing, December 2022) under development with a refresh planned for January 2023. The Head Teacher attends every meeting with other members of the Service’s Senior Leadership Team attending on a

rota basis. When practicable, a member of the group links with / attends the Aberdeen Parent Council Forum (APCF).

- 3.8 Following stakeholder feedback about the accessibility of information in the arena of additional support needs, the Service launched a new [website](#) in early 2022. This 'information hub' contains (amongst other things): information about each Service area (including their offer to learners, families and staff); a dedicated area for parents/carers; and useful links to partner services (including third sector). The site includes information mandated by the *Supporting Children's Learning: Statutory Guidance on the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2004 (as amended) Code of Practice (Third Edition) (2017)* such as Enquire, SACRO ASN Mediation Service, and Govan Law Centre. Upon its launch, feedback was sought from parents/carers and staff across education and partner services as an initial way of ensuring the website meets the needs of stakeholders. The site is continually updated and the contents reviewed regularly.
- 3.9 The ASN & Outreach Service has made good in-roads in terms of evaluating, re-designing and/or adapting approaches to/programmes of personalised support in response to emerging data. A key focus for session 2022-2023 is piloting a refreshed tracking and monitoring system, which is designed to ensure the impact of improvements are always linked to learners' wellbeing, progress and achievement. This builds on the existing good practice of teams within the Service and feeds directly into the use of data to inform flexible offers of personalised support across the five roles of support for learning ("the 5 Roles"): Consultancy; Multi-Agency Working; Provision of Professional Learning; Direct Teaching; and Cooperative Teaching.

Data-informed Responses to Support Learners' Needs

- 3.10 Improvements to systems and consistency in the recording of data has enabled the Education Service to better understand the overall need of learners across Aberdeen City schools. Analysis of the most recent ScotXed data snapshot (September 2022) from SEEMiS (schools' information management system) evidences 36.1% of school-aged children/young people in Aberdeen City are recording as having (an) additional support need(s) as recognised by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended. Please note that, at the time of writing, 2022 census figures are still undergoing quality assurance checks, which may account for future discrepancies when data is formally published in March 2023. The following graph presents both Aberdeen City and National figures over the last six / five years respectively:



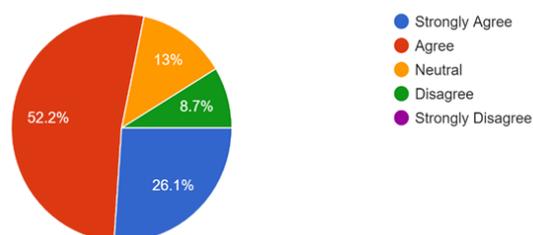
The steeper increase noted in Aberdeen City's 2017 → 2018 data may be attributed to ongoing work to engender greater consistency in the recording of ASNs in SEEMiS. Thereafter, the more significant jump noted 2020 → 2021 is attributed to the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which we know (from data) acutely impacted children/young people with additional support needs; this is echoed – to some extent – in the National data. This sharp increase triggered, and coincided with, improvements to systems and processes outlined in this report.

- 3.11 The Request for Assistance (“RfA”) system was launched in October 2020. This is utilised by the Team Around a Child when they wish to seek advice and support from a partner service and/or agency e.g. Children’s Social Work, Teams within the ASN & Outreach Service, Autism Outreach, Educational Psychology Service. Unlike previous systems, RfA produces a single data source, which provides further, live information about the needs of children, young people and families in Aberdeen City.
- 3.12 At the time of writing, 2900 requests have been submitted since the system went live, which equates to an (approximate) average of 1160 requests per annum across all services captured by the RfA. This represents a small increase from the figure reported in January 2021, which correlates with the increased level of additional support needs noted in 3.10.
- 3.13 Pupil Need Categories are designated nationally and recorded by schools in SEEMiS from drop-down menus. It should be noted that children/young people can have multiple needs assigned to them. 3.2% of Aberdeen City’s learners are recorded as having an Autistic Spectrum Condition (“ASC”). Approximately 30% of RfA pertain to a child/young person recorded as having an ASC and 26.8% of requests for Outreach Support were submitted to the Autism Outreach Service. As a result, the Autism Outreach Service have reviewed their model of support, which is founded on an evidence-based, building confidence and capacity teaching framework of three steps: I Do, We Do, You Do. Since the full implementation of the new model (in late 2021), feedback from schools highlights the importance of maintaining consistency, but also the value of

targeted training, sharing resources and strategies, modelling approaches, building staff confidence, and being easily reachable. Feedback also demonstrates schools' value of the engagement with parents, a multiagency approach, and working in collaboration to promote consistency.

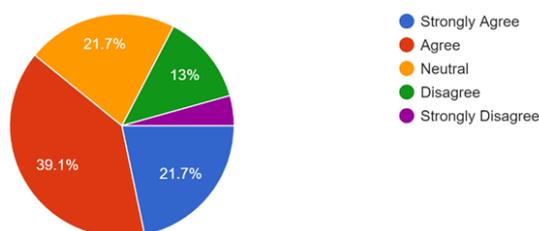
The involvement of the Autism Outreach Service in your Nursery/School has increased confidence in staff, helping them to develop sound autism pedagogies.

23 responses



The level, type and consistency of support, interventions, resources, strategies, advice and training given have been appropriate and relevant, implemented in a way that has improved outcomes for all.

23 responses



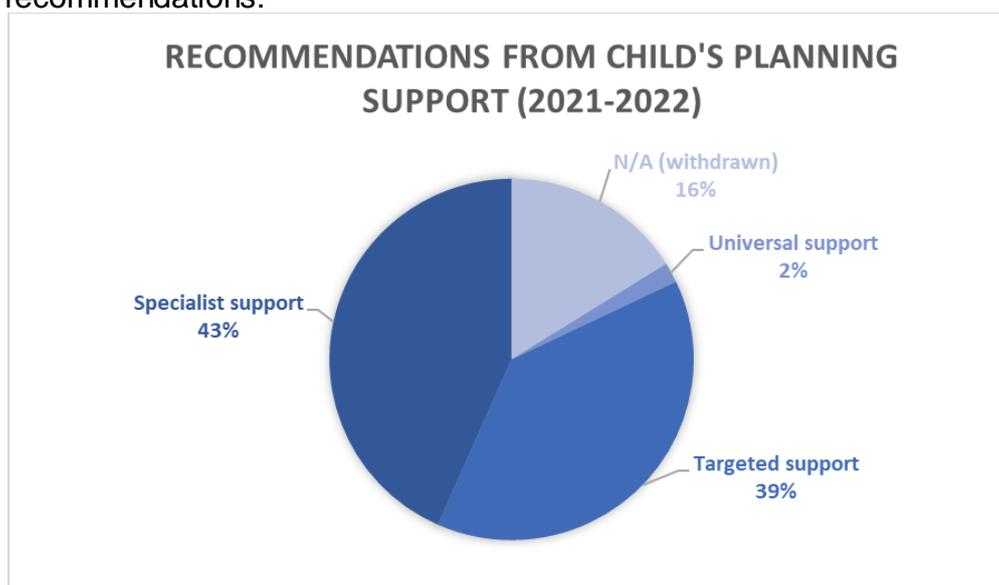
Feedback has highlighted key next steps for the Autism Outreach Service, which include: regular Q and A sessions for staff, frequent support groups for parents, and the creation of a central bank of resources aligned to specific topics. All seek to promote consistency and, ultimately, positive outcomes for autistic children / young people across the City.

- 3.14 English as an Additional Language continues to be the highest-recorded Pupil Need Category with 13.7% of learners designated as such in the September 2022 SEEMiS data snapshot. 42.2% of all outreach requests are directed towards the EAL Team: 78% of these pertain to learners who are 'New to English' (Level 1) or 'Early Acquisition' (Level 2) when assessed against the *Learning in 2+ Languages* guidance. Over the last 14 months, Aberdeen City has welcomed New Scot children/young people and families from Afghanistan and Ukraine, which may partially account for the high levels of RfA in this area. As a result, the Team are currently reviewing their models of support to maximise reach and impact across "the 5 Roles". The Service are carefully tracking and monitoring the impact of changes to ensure they are driven by improvements in learners' language acquisition, and their overall progress and achievement. In addition, the Team are continuously developing resources and professional learning designed to better-support the universal level for learners who are 'Developing Confidence' (Level 3) to 'Fluent' (Level 5).

- 3.15 43.9% of RfA pertain to children/young people recorded as having a Social, Emotional, Mental Health Need (“SEMHN”). This triangulates against SEEMiS data, whereby 8.0% of learners in Aberdeen City are recorded as such, the second most prolific Pupil Need Category. Several approaches have been adopted to strengthen the Education Service’s universal offer to children and families impacted by a SEMHN. Compassionate Connected Communities (CCC) training has been rolled out to over 80 members of staff across city schools. This provides training at individual school level designed to enhance the consistency in approaches to understanding the wellbeing needs of a school’s community and building a greater number of trauma informed staff within the system. A pilot with Penumbra continues to deliver Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) training in six secondary schools. This has increased from two as part of the initial pilot and supports school staff to immediately respond to learners facing distress; this dovetails directly with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) supports if required. Counselling in schools has continued to see an increase in young people reporting high levels of anxiety: as of October 2022, 266 young people were receiving counselling support with 100% of young people reporting the intervention as having a positive impact. 20 full-time equivalent (FTE) counsellors work across schools to support children aged 10+. A pilot is planned in four primary schools, which will focus on support for children aged 3+. Low Intensity Anxiety Management (LIAM) and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) continue to be offered as training supports for staff.
- 3.16 Partnership Forums support associated schools’ groups (ASGs) to develop a collaborative, universal offer based on the unique context of the community. All schools (primary and secondary) in each ASG participate alongside partners including NHS Grampian, Children’s Social Work, Community Learning and Development, Police Scotland, and Active Schools. The work of a Partnership Forum is rooted in early intervention informed by gathering and analysing data at local level. Interventions are planned, commissioned, and monitored on this basis. Each Partnership Forum has a Youth Work and Family Learning allocation, which can be directed by the Forum to target identified gaps in learners’ wellbeing.
- 3.17 30.7% of all RfA are directed towards the Fit Like? Family Wellbeing Service, which represents a collaboration between Education, Social Work, Health, Community Learning and Development, Children 1st, and other 3rd sector partners. Fit Like? provides early-intervention, universal/targeted support to children/young people in the context of their family, particularly those impacted by SEMHN.
- 3.18 The ASN & Outreach Service’s Wellbeing Team provide personalised SEMHN support across universal, targeted and specialist continuum. In response to data presented in 3.15, greater flexibility is being built into processes and responses to SEMHN-related RfA in-keeping with the Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) mantra of ‘right support, right person, right time’. Learning from adaptations and approaches being taken by other Teams within the Service (such as EAL and Dyslexia) are being used to better evidence the impact interventions have on outcomes for learners, particularly improvements in their wellbeing. The Service has increased the Wellbeing Team’s capacity to deliver

outdoor learning interventions akin to that of Forest Schools. Early evidence demonstrates a positive impact on learners' skills development and confidence to engage with the school environment. The most recent data snapshot evidences the number of children / young people recorded as 'Risk of Exclusion' has reduced by 10.9% between September 2021 and September 2022.

- 3.19 Child Planning Support is sought by the Team Around the Child when further targeted or specialist-level intervention is deemed necessary to meet learning and/or wellbeing needs. The Child Plan is used by the Team Around the Child to outline the nature of the child's strengths, needs and the multi-agency interventions employed to meet them. The multi-agency forum reviews the information provided by the Team Around the Child to endorse planning and intervention and/or to offer further support. Plans reviewed during 2021-2022 evidence a range of multiple and complex needs, with a large proportion of cases presenting social and communication difficulties (including, but not limited to, those associated with ASC), physical and/or medical needs. Child Plans evidence that learning is planned and accessed via Pre-Early Milestones and/or the Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence. The chart below illustrates the proportion of requests discussed in relation to the resultant forum recommendations:



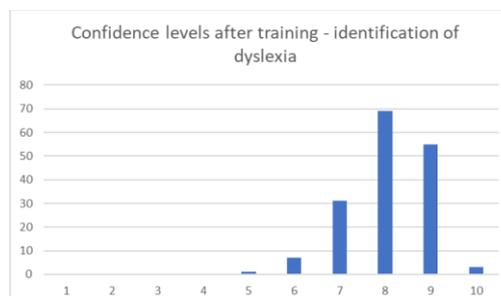
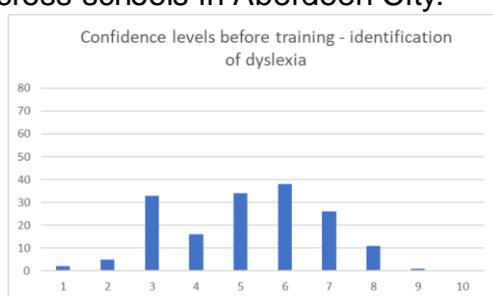
In response to themes emerging from Child Planning Support, the Service is expanding the support available to Schools/ELC settings by engaging in targeted professional learning opportunities such as Autism Awareness and CALM Theory. In addition, the Education Service continues to review and refresh professional learning programmes available to staff; details are provided in the paragraphs that follow.

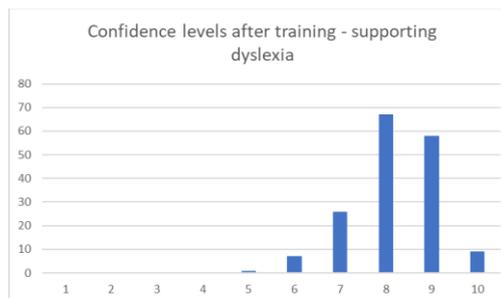
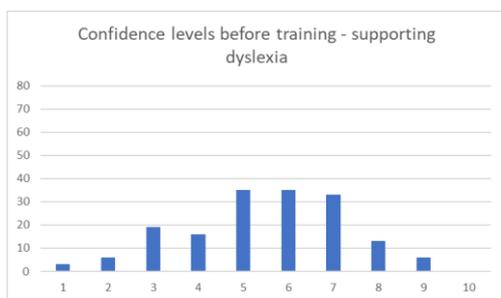
- 3.20 'Child Inclusion Research into Curriculum, Learning and Education' (CIRCLE) is a research-based approach to universal support for all children and young people. Following the identification of a 'CIRCLE Lead' in each ELC, Primary and Secondary setting, professional networks are being established and benefitting from input from partner agencies such as NHS Grampian. The approaches advocated by the CIRCLE Framework are being utilised to support

settings to implement strategies with a focus on flexible application. Implementation is led by the needs of the individual setting and their unique context, and it is designed to afford consistency across Aberdeen City whilst leaving school-level autonomy. Support for staff is available via CIRCLE Surgeries and bespoke Microsoft Teams (virtual) channels. These are providing valuable opportunities for sharing experiences, practice, and reflections as the impact of the CIRCLE Framework is monitored.

3.21 The Supporting Learners Professional Learning Framework was originally developed by Support for Learning (SfL) practitioners from across Aberdeen: it was launched in August/September 2020 and highlighted by Education Scotland via the National Improvement Hub as an example of best practice. In response to data analysis, a refreshed/revised Framework was launched in September 2022. It sets out progressive professional learning pathways across four key levels, namely: 'Key Skills'; 'Informed'; 'Skilled'; and 'Enhanced'. Pathways offer progression both 'vertically' in terms of a particular focus (such as ASC, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Trauma-informed Practice) and 'horizontally' in terms of the pathway level. The Framework may be a useful tool for supporting the staff Professional Review and Development (PRD) process as it fits well with the ethos of the General Teaching Council for Scotland's refreshed Standards for Full Registration. The Framework is continuously reviewed based on a range of data to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to learner and practitioner need.

3.22 Early in its inception, the RfA system demonstrated a need to review approaches to supporting children/young people identified as dyslexic: data evidenced an under-confidence in staff with regards to the identification and assessment of dyslexia, and a training need around associated universal supports and targeted interventions. The greater flexibility afforded by service redesign has enabled the Service to increase capacity within the Dyslexia Outreach Team. Staff have responded directly to gaps identified via RfA data by devising two, core models of support, both of which are rooted in Dyslexia Scotland's National Identification Pathway: 1) Dyslexia Champions; and 2) the Whole School Dyslexia Modelling Programme. Now into their second year, evaluative data evidences both programmes are positively impacting practice across schools in Aberdeen City:





Other Teams within the Service are learning from the good practice developed and shared by the Dyslexia Outreach Team who continue to adapt and respond to live RfA data.

3.23 **Conclusion**

Considerable progress has been made in the development of ASN and Outreach Services. A recent Quality Improvement visit evidenced the considerable gains made in the agility of the service, quality of offer and strength of leadership. Highly effective mechanisms are in place to drive on-going self-evaluation and it is proposed that the data being gleaned by the service now be more fully mainstreamed into National Improvement Framework Planning and reporting.

4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications resulting from the information provided in this report. All work is being progressed using existing budgets.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Local Authority has many legal duties including those of:
- The Education (Scotland) Act 1980
 - The Children (Scotland) Act 1995
 - The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000
 - The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended
 - The Requirements for Teachers (Scotland) Regulations 2005
 - 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. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Nil.

7. **RISK**

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified	Changes to our provision and service delivery will enable primary prevention and early intervention thereby reducing potential risk.	Low	Yes
Compliance	Non-compliance with legislation, financial claims and legal challenge (tribunals).	Mitigated by services being realigned to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City and prevent escalation of need.	Medium	Yes
Operational	Staff are overwhelmed, which leads to low morale as staff feel unable to meet the needs of vulnerable young people. This may trigger an increase in incidents/near miss.	Mitigated by offering high quality professional learning for staff to ensure that they meet their statutory duties under The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010.	Low	Yes
Financial	Risk of not having sufficient resource.	Mitigated by realigning service delivery to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City today.	Low	Yes
Reputational	Risk of not effectively meeting the needs of all learners. Risk of staff feeling overwhelmed.	Data scrutiny drives flexible approach to service delivery to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City.	Low	Yes

Environment / Climate	Risk of environmental factors inhibiting positive outcomes for learners	Service realignment will strengthen universal/targeted support and sharing of best practice, thus preventing escalation of need through strengthened practice and reasonable adjustment.	Low	Yes
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8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2023</u>	
Impact of Report	
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></p>	<p>This report outlines the ongoing programme of improvement activity to strengthen the education authority's position with regards to securing positive outcomes for all learners, whilst meeting statutory requirements associated with additional support needs and equality. The programme proactively subsumed the recommendations of the 'Support for Learning: All Our Children and All Their Potential' Report. In particular, this report links to the Delivery Plan Statement in relation to People, 6: 'Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city'.</p>
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
<p>Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Specific links:</p> <p>Stretch outcome 1 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors 2026</p> <p>Stretch outcome 6 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.</p>
<p>Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals in this report seek to ensure the best use of resource in the system, promoting an</p>

	<p>understanding of the circumstances of individual children and young people to ensure that appropriate and timely personalised support is available to them.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Specific links to:</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 4 90% of children and young people will report that they feel mentally well by 2026</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 6 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026,</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 7 Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026</p>
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.
Regional and City Strategies	This proposal aligns with the wider direction of travel for the Education Service, as outlined in the National Improvement Framework Plan, and Children's Service's Plan. It aligns with national and local work directed towards securing children's rights under the UNCRC.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	N/A
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 *Supporting Learners* (OPE/22/010) – Education Operational Delivery Committee, 26 January 2022
- 10.2 *Supporting Learners* (OPE/21/132) – Education Operational Delivery Committee, 3 June 2021
- 10.3 *Supporting Learners Data Capture* (OPE/21/008) – Education Operational Delivery Committee, 20 January 2021
- 10.4 *Supporting Learners Update* (OPE/20/219) – Education Operational Delivery Committee, 26 November 2020
- 10.5 *Supporting Learners* (OPE/20/126) – Education Operational Delivery Committee, 17 September 2020
- 10.6 *Supporting Children’s Learning in an Empowered System* (OPE/20/054) – Education Operational Delivery Committee, 12 March 2020
- 10.7 *Supporting Children’s Learning in an Empowered System* (OPE/19/415) – Education Operational Delivery Committee, 12 November 2019

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A – *Summary on Activity to Implement the Recommendations of the Morgan Review (2020)*

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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