

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education & Children's Services
DATE	29 April 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Early Intervention Service
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/25/074
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne
REPORT AUTHOR	Emma Powell/Elaine Thomson
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1,1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present a proposed operating model for a cost neutral time limited Early Intervention service, to be based at Riverbank School for up to 10 primary children and to share a summary of progress against the recommendations from 'Support for Learning: All our Children and Their Potential' (Angela Morgan, 2020) known as the Morgan Review.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee

- 2.1 Instructs the Chief Officer Education & Lifelong Learning to progress with a time limited (12 months) Early Intervention Service Test of Change at Riverbank School for younger primary school pupils, operational August 2025;
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer Education & Lifelong Learning to report back on progress in 2 committee cycles from commencement of service; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer Education & Lifelong Learning to report a full evaluation of the Test of Change within 4 committee cycles from commencement of service.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 As outlined in [F&C/24/322](#), the rise in complexity of pupil need, at times triggered by recent world events, requires consideration of different working practices. Our Exploration of Learners' Needs ([F&C/24/322](#)) data showed us that effective systems and approaches are already in place across education settings in Aberdeen. The most effective systems give school staff meaningful involvement within the system and have strong supportive leadership at its core. Within these systems, strengths and learner-centred approaches are prioritised. The Exploration of Learners' needs also showed us that that multiple examples of good practice exist within education that can be built upon, that school staff, families, trade union representatives, and associated

educational professionals were all keen to work together in regards to the increased complexity of learners. Continuing and greater partnership working came through as a strong theme – between professionals who work to support schools, but also within Associated School Groups, between schools and partner agencies, and between schools and families. The opportunities for schools and school staff to work more closely alongside specialist services and external partners to build capacity and provide supportive collaborative working around a learner emerged as a key theme and an area that could be further developed. Increased transparency and signposting to parents was highlighted. The importance of a sense of belonging, and adults that care about them, to learners was key and rated positively by most learners who took part.

- 3.2 Committee instructed that an Early Intervention Provision, which mirrors arrangements in our Language Support Provisions and supports the positive return to mainstream school following a period of intensive support, be developed for younger children and presented to Committee for approval. Since the instruction Audit Scotland have carried out a review of Additional Support for Learning and called for recommendations at both national government and local authority level. We welcome the recommendations of Audit Scotland's review of Additional Support for Learning, and feel they align to our own direction of travel in terms of reinforcing our data gathering and scrutiny; enhancing our learning, teaching, and assessment; further developing our mainstream universal support and professional learning offers; creating a proposal for an innovative early intervention support building on existing good practice and utilising our range of Additional Support Needs & Outreach Services to try and address the growth in complexity of Additional Support for Learning; and remain adaptive and responsive to policy and guidance from Scottish Government & COSLA.
- 3.3 Officers have engaged with a range of key stakeholders to help co-design the proposals presented to Members for approval, this has included engagement with representative parents and carers, school staff, trade unions, and critically with learners.

LEARNING FROM WHAT OUR LEARNERS TOLD US

- 3.4 The Educational Psychology Service liaised with learners currently accessing Language Support Provisions (Appendix A). This was felt to be important as Language Support Provision learners are away from their mainstream home school for a period of time so have a similar experience to that being replicated through the proposed Test of Change.
- 3.5 Key components that make up a sense of belonging were highlighted by learners, alongside the success and enjoyment the learners had in their provisions. Learners told us that the following things are important to them:
- Opportunities to play – access to a wide range of appropriate (for their developmental stage) play opportunities - this could be imaginative, symbolic, sensory, arts and crafts, pretend, construction or toys
 - Opportunities for success in their learning

- Their successes being recognised and acknowledged – e.g. displayed visibly or listened to, and/or rewarded with feedback and positive attention
- A learning space that supports their needs, with accessible work, shared targets and activities, and visible supports and help, including key adults to help them
- Connections are important to them
 - with key adults, including (for some) teachers from their mainstream home-schools
 - to have friends – access to appropriate peers matter to them
 - to have access to spaces that support these connections, outdoor spaces, and play outside, alongside spaces internal to schools with friendly adults, e.g. dinner hall
- The opportunities for ‘social snack’ and food within their learning environment

3.6 These critical insights built on learners voice within the Exploration of Learners’ Needs ([F&C/24/322](#) which showed us the importance of key staff, and the sense of belonging learners’ mostly had across Aberdeen City. from learners have been built into our proposed Operating Model. On-going and longer-term engagement with Aberdeen City learners who have previously attended a Language Support Provision and transitioned back to their home school will continue to guide our work. It is evident through the feedback from those accessing the Language Support Provisions that careful consideration of how the mainstream home schools stay connected to the learners when they are accessing the Early Intervention Service is essential.

LEARNING FROM WHAT OUR STAFF TOLD US

- 3.7 26 Primary school Head Teachers were consulted and Request for Assistance data was scrutinised. This combined data helped identify three key groups of learners thought to be a priority for the Early Intervention Service (children with a high-level of dysregulated behaviour; children with experiences of trauma; children with neurodivergence).
- 3.8 It is recognised that there is much interaction between the three groups. There already exists the Autism Outreach Service to support schools to support neurodivergent learners within mainstream settings. It is important that any new service provides a different model to the current outreach service. Clear identifiers are required to provide clarity for all stakeholders on who would access the new Early Intervention Service and when. One of the key pieces of learning from the previous Exploration of Learners' Needs ([F&C/24/322](#)) was the need for training and support for school staff, working alongside and with them over a period of time. This will be built into the Test of Change model.

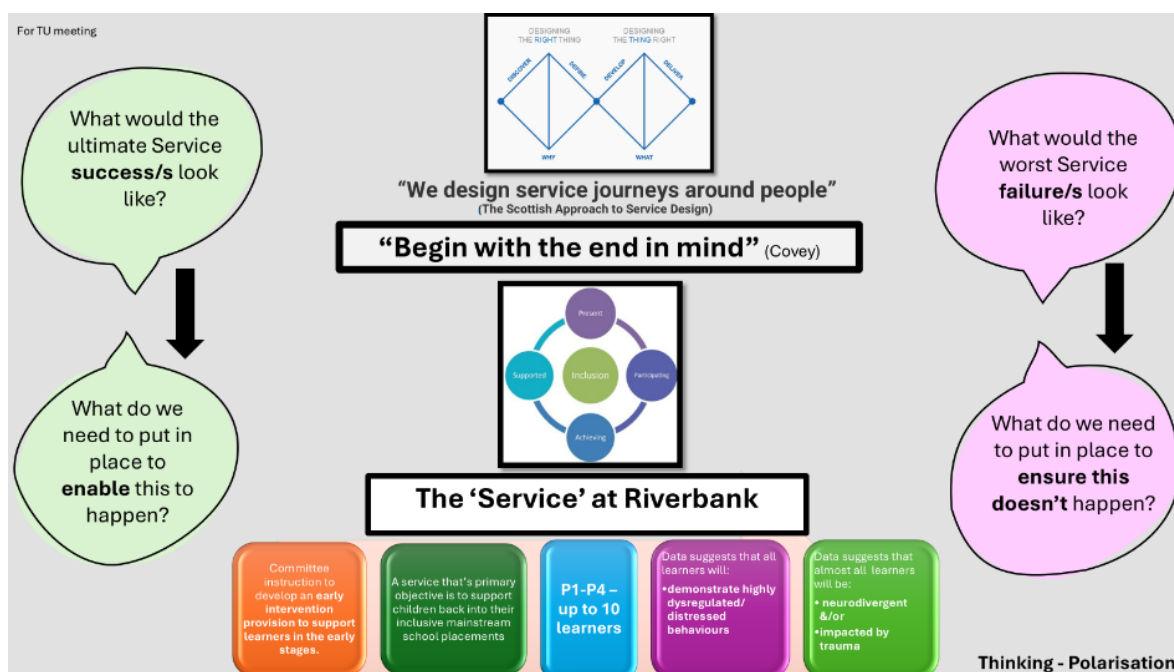
LEARNING FROM WHAT PARENTS AND CARERS TOLD US.

- 3.9 During the Exploration of Learners' Needs ([F&C/24/322](#)) parents and carers told us that the most effective experiences were when there was clear partnership working between parent/carers & school; and also between schools & external agencies; when communication was effective and transparent; when universal supports were embedded; with increased capacity building of school staff; with the learner at the centre of it all. To build on this learning, presentations and consultations have taken place with parent and carer representatives to consider "What would the ultimate service success look like?" and "What would we need to put in place to allow that to happen?". These were then considered in contrast to "What would the worst service failures look like?" and "What would we need to put in place to ensure this would not happen?". This was all considered using the Four Pillars of Inclusion model with further information available in Appendix B.
- 3.10 The top 3 themes that arose through the parental consultation were:
- Personal growth for each pupil – experiencing success
 - Provide resources and training for staff/service/parents
 - Recognition of success and 'feeling' it
- 3.11 In addition to this parents shared that their must haves were:
- Consistency
 - Structure – familiarity
- 3.12 Parents and carers felt the following values must be at the root of the service to ensure the best outcomes for the young people :
- Community – togetherness & belonging
 - Honesty
 - Safe
 - Happy
 - Valued for being themselves
 - Cared for

3.13 These important insights have been built into the proposed model.

LEARNING FROM WHAT TRADE UNION COLLEAGUES TOLD US

3.14 Consultation with Trade Union partners was based around the Four Pillars of Inclusion model. As can be seen below, one of the key questions asked of this group was, “What would you consider the essential values of this new service?”



3.15 The main themes emerging from this session have been built into plans and were:

- All Trade Union colleagues were pleased and acknowledged that this service was a step in the right direction.
- All Trade Union colleagues agreed that the personalised approach for individual pupils was positive
- All Trade Union Colleagues appreciated that pupils would be assessed on an individual basis to reduce barriers to the service.
- Health and Safety concerns were raised; however, this was addressed through the planned provision of training, support and supervision, which are all included in the design principles.

THE PROPOSED MODEL

3.16 Appendix C details the proposed Operating Model for the test of change project. The proposed Early Intervention Service at Riverbank is based around Education Scotland’s Pillars of Inclusion, as seen below:



- 3.17 The Early Intervention Service, to be known as "The Bridge" ("bridging the gap to sustainable participation") is proposed to work on a 12 week + model. A learner will spend 12 weeks with the service, and then further time provided from the service to support the embedding of interventions and support in the learner's mainstream home school. At the heart of the proposed Early Intervention Service is the learner and their experiences, and appropriate success for them is integral. This means that if there is a learner requiring a little more time than the 12-week model, there will be flexibility to do this.
- 3.18 Supporting the mainstream home school for a successful transition back from the Early Intervention Service is a key tenet of the proposed service. There will be timetabled time each week for the Bridge team to work with staff from the home school. One of the themes that came through the Exploration of Learners' Needs ([F&C/24/322](#)) was the importance of staff being supported in a range of ways, including working alongside others to learn and be supported by them.
- 3.19 Evaluating the impact of this Test of Change will be key and a few different evaluation tools will be utilised, with a particular focus on transition points. These include self-evaluation measures for the home school staff, but also objective measures. The Educational Psychology Service have identified a tool that supports evaluation of learning experiences, support, and environment for children with experiences of trauma. This tool will be used with individual learners in their home school and in the Bridge at Riverbank and will be used to help shape the general learning environment. Evaluation will be led by the Educational Psychology Service. Metrics of attendance and reported incidents in their home school setting will also be used to track impact on the learners and settings accessing the Bridge. Feedback from stakeholders will also feed into the evaluation of this Test of Change.
- 3.20 **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**
- In parallel with the development of The Bridge Test of Change, work has progressed to continually improve the professional learning offer to all staff across the Service in keeping with the recommendations from the Morgan Review. As outlined earlier, the need for high quality professional learning came through the previous exploration of learners' needs ([F&C/24/322](#)).
- 3.21 An Additional Support Needs Learning Festival took place on the February Inservice days, and 167 Pupil Support Assistants attended. A range of workshops were delivered by the wider ASN & Wellbeing Team comprising of the ASN and Outreach Service, Orchard Brae School, Orchard Brae Complex

ASN Service and the Educational Psychology Service. Topics covered included Sensory Needs, Planning for Support, Gathering Learners Voice to meaningfully include them in planning, Emotion Coaching and Emotional Based School Non-Attendance. Short-term impact evaluations have been positive, and services involved have received follow-up enquiries regarding topics covered, suggesting longer-term implementation of supports provided through the inputs. Longer-term follow-up is planned by the Education Support Officer co-ordinating the event.

- 3.22 The Early Learning & Childcare Service have a full day event for Early Years Practitioners planned for May 2025. In addition, dates have been identified and shared with Head Teachers for Local Authority INSET days next year. The impact of professional learning will continue to be monitored.
- 3.23 Trade Unions have been consulted on a draft model for staff, which follows the Scottish Government Framework of “Informed, Skilled & Enhanced” and will be utilised to help build the capacity and capability of all newly appointed Pupil Support Assistants to meet the demands of their work in learning settings. Consultation with other local authorities to build on their learning in this area has taken place, to enhance and develop local plans.
- 3.24 The induction framework, following final consultation and adjustments will be launched for the beginning of next academic year, to ensure all new starts will be accessing this. Evaluative feedback will be sought, including longer-term impact data from both Pupil Support Assistants and their senior leaders.

CONCLUSION

- 3.25 Further consultation with key stakeholders has added to our previously held data from the Exploration of Learners Needs ([F&C/24/322](#)). This further data supports and has shaped the development of The Bridge, an Early Intervention Service to be located at Riverbank School.
- 3.26 This service will have a clear focus on time limited but ongoing practical support for up to 10 learners who require a different approach. This approach will be wrap around in terms of involving the learner’s mainstream home school, parents and carers. Identifying what helps the learner, and what can be put in place within their mainstream home school, to ensure ongoing successes for them.
- 3.27 A key theme from both learner and parental consultation was the need for learners to have experiences of success, and for those successes to be recognised. A need for community and a sense of belonging also came through both parental and learner consultation, and how this is delivered in both the Bridge and in the mainstream home-school remains a key focus.
- 3.28 Opportunities for developmentally appropriate play, developmentally appropriate learning experiences, success in their learning, and creating healthy connections to adults and their mainstream home school will all be prioritised in line with what was shared through our learner consultation process.

- 3.29 These proposals are fully in keeping with the recommendations from the Morgan Review. An update of local and national progress against the Morgan Review recommendations is available in Appendix D. We have also carefully considered the local resources and practices against the Audit Scotland Review recommendations to ensure these are aligned to the needs of the service and Aberdeen's learners. The proposals in this report are fully in line with the Audit Scotland Review of Additional Support for Learning recommendations.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 every education authority must make adequate and efficient provision for the additional support required by each child or young person having additional needs and monitor and review that support. This Report addresses how these duties can be fulfilled more effectively.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) <small>*taking into account controls/control actions</small>	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of young people not being appropriately supported and unable to achieve positive destinations	Training for staff and appropriate supports in place for young people. Test of change will reduce potential risk	L	Yes
Compliance	Risk of not complying with legislation and legal challenge (tribunals)	Mitigated by young people receiving the appropriate level of support	M	Yes
Operational	Staff feeling overwhelmed leading to low morale	Mitigated by offering high quality professional learning to ensure staff can meet their statutory	L	Yes

		duties under The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010.		
Financial	Risk of not having sufficient resource	Mitigated by realigning current services to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City today.	L	Yes
Reputational	Risk of not effectively meeting the needs of all learners	Services realigned to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	Risk of environmental factors inhibiting positive outcomes for learners	Single service realignment will strengthen universal/targeted support and sharing of best practice, thus preventing escalation of need through strengthened practice and reasonable adjustment.	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>Council Delivery Plan 2024</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following ACC Priorities:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise attainment and achievement • Support improvement in the health and wellbeing of children and young people • Maximise the impact Of Early Learning and Childcare
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 3 - 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27-30 month review by 2026. Through offering support to all parents and sharing parenting opportunities we will create networks of support for families of children with additional support needs.</p> <p>The proposals within this report also support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 6 – 95% of children living in our</p>

	<p>priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026. Through developing partnerships and working with families to ensure all young people have access to a positive destination</p> <p>The proposals within this report also support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 8– 100% of children with Additional Support Needs /Disabilities will experience a positive destination by 2026. Through developing partnerships and working with families to ensure all young people have access to a positive destination. Through improving support for parents and supporting young people with an early intervention model.</p>
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>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.</p> <p>Effective use of resources will help to ensure all initiatives and interventions 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 report they feel listened to all of the time 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 83.5% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026.</p>
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	<p>Underpinning the work of all schools in Aberdeen City is reducing the poverty related attainment gap and achieving excellence and equity for all.</p>
Community Empowerment Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 16 – 50% of people report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026.</p> <p>There will be consultation with parents as part of the process for allocating additional support through the early intervention setting</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	
Other	

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Behaviour Action Plan, -[F&C/24/322](#)

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A Consultation with Language Support Provisions
Appendix B Consultation with Parents
Appendix C Operational Guidance for Proposed Early Intervention Service
Appendix D Progress against the Morgan Review

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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