



MINUTES

A&B - Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Wednesday 15 January 2014 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillors:

V Wishart	G Smith
P Campbell	G Cleaver
B Fox	A Manson
G Robinson	D Sandison
M Stout	

Religious Representatives:

T Macintyre	R MacKay
M Tregonning	

Also:

S Coutts	R Henderson
T Smith	

Apologies:

F Robertson

In Attendance:

H Budge, Director of Children's Services
C Horrix, Executive Manager – Early Years and Additional Support Needs
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
K Johnston, Solicitor
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Ms Wishart, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

None

Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes of (i) the meeting held on 13 November 2013, (ii) the special meeting held on 20 November 2013 and (iii) the special meeting held on 10 December 2013.

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Early Years and Additional Support Needs (Report No: CS-01-14-F), which presented the Additional Support Needs Action Plan, outlining how the recommendations in the Additional Support Needs Review would be taken forward by Children's Services.

The Executive Manager – Early Years and Additional Support Needs (ASN) summarised the main terms of the report, advising that many of the recommendations in the Action Plan had no financial cost, other than that of the staff time required to plan and implement them. Most of the recommendations were planned for completion by August 2015. It was aimed to build on current services and to make the best use of the resources that were already available to help advance the Council's commitment to meeting the needs of all children and young people on the basis of inclusion and equality.

She went on to say that overall recurring savings of £977,699 had been made in the ASN staffing budget since 2012, and the proposals in the Action Plan were estimated to achieve around £400,000 in addition to these savings. The cost of the proposed ASN Manager post would be met from efficiencies within the ASN staffing budget, and this post would focus on the management of resources related to ASN. The Council's audit system and allocation formula would be evaluated to ensure that the allocation of ASN teachers and auxiliary staff was fair and equitable. Job remits would also be revisited, and structures would be revised to bring staff together in one location.

It was also intended to deliver training to schools on key responsibilities relating to the Equality Act, and to produce a quality assurance framework for all schools in line with the Council's policies on inclusion.

Training for ASN teaching staff and Head Teachers would also be prioritised to ensure staff were able to deliver across all roles. ICT would also be used where appropriate to decrease the need for auxiliary time spent on more routine tasks. The importance of post-school provision and outreach services was recognised, and would be regularly audited.

The Executive Manager – Early Years and Additional Support Needs, the Director of Children's Services and the Solicitor then responded to queries from Members, and Members noted the following:

- One of the main aims of the Action Plan was to make sure that the delivery of services was equitable and was prioritised according to need. ASN teaching staff were currently allocated to schools according to the school roll, but ASN auxiliary staff were allocated on the basis of the level of needs of pupils. It was intended to tighten up audit procedures in order to assess where the need was, and to then focus on meeting these needs in a more equitable way.
- ASN support staff were used in schools when pupils' needs were at the higher end, but ASN teaching staff were used to support all children who had short or long-term additional support needs in the broadest sense. The allocation of ASN teaching staff was something that would be considered as there was no formula for it at present, and it was intended to better allocate staff so that all needs were being met.
- Practice in schools was becoming more inclusive, and this was partly as a result of the new curriculum.

- Any changes proposed took full account of the legislative and statutory duties of the Council, and the needs of service users would continue to be met.
- There were concerns in the community regarding the level of youth work that was available, but the Bridges Project had not been asked to make the same level of savings as other services. It was difficult to estimate the savings that would be achieved by merging it with the Additional Support Base at the Bruce Hostel, but it was estimated that around £40,000 could be achieved in efficiency savings.
- Any further recommendations that were outwith budget, but that were classed as 'spend to save', would come back before the Committee for approval.
- If the Action Plan was approved, progress would be monitored through the performance monitoring report that was presented to Members, as well as being monitored internally within Children's Services.
- The group looking at ICT requirements would be the ICT Strategy Group which was part of the wider Strategy for Secondary Education. Additional expertise would be invited into this group as and when appropriate. Currently there was a budget for ICT resources for ASN pupils, and the Scottish Government expected statutory obligations to be met using the budget allocated. Consideration could be given to seeking external funding if appropriate. The focus of the group would be to consider how education could be better provided using different ICT methods.
- Every local authority managed their ASN services differently, so direct comparisons could not be made. However it made sense to co-locate services so that they could be managed as a cohesive group. The Council had a duty to consult with and inform parents about arrangements that would affect their child.
- Whilst the Educational Psychologist was responsible for taking forward the recommendation to "Establish a single gateway for all Additional Support Needs referrals", the actual referral system would operate through the "Getting It Right for Every Child" (GIRFEC) process. The GIRFEC process and referral system involved a number of people across agencies that could identify a child's particular needs and work with them, including staff in schools, so it would not be the sole responsibility of the Educational Psychologist. There was a greater emphasis on the ability of all professionals to be part of this process and referral system, as there may be several professionals working with one child. The GIRFEC model should help speed up the process.
- All children and young people had a right to mainstream education, and this presumption had been in place for a number of years. It was only when education could not be delivered in a mainstream setting that other settings were considered. This may just be for particular subjects, or a child's whole education. There were no indications that the Scottish Government would be changing this presumption.
- As well as higher level needs, additional support needs could be lower-level needs which only lasted a short-period of time. The identification of this in schools would rest with the Head Teacher and ASN teaching staff. Complex needs would require a co-ordinated support plan, which may require significant

input from other agencies. GIRFEC was currently not a legal requirement, but was being introduced into legislation, and a named person would hold responsibility for co-ordinating support for the child. Although detailed guidance was not yet available, it was likely that during the pre-school phase this responsibility would lie with the NHS, and then it would become the responsibility of the local authority once the child was in primary education. If a child had needs that might also be outwith the school and they did not meet statutory guidance for a co-ordinated support plan, they might have a GIRFEC plan. The approach would be through multi-agency engagement, led by a lead professional.

- The Council had a legal duty to provide ASN pupils with support to enable them to access and participate in education. But the needs of the rest of the class had to be taken into account. If a child's behaviour could not be managed safely in a mainstream setting, the school would also have to take the health and safety of all pupils in the class into account.
- Teachers had an obligation to undertake Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as part of their registration requirements, and it was also part of the terms and conditions of employment for some posts. The Council had an obligation to ensure that staff members undertaking roles relevant to ASN were appropriately trained. Although the training it was proposed to undertake had been described as "compulsory" CPD in the Action Plan, this would be checked to ensure it could be described as such.

Members commented that they had found the introduction from the Executive Manager – Early Years and Additional Support Needs very useful, and she agreed to circulate a copy to Members of the Committee. It was also commented that it was important to get the message across that it was structural changes that were being proposed, and that this would not adversely affect the level of service.

Ms Wishart moved that the Committee approve the recommendations contained within the report, and Reverend McIntyre seconded.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Council resolve to approve the action plan, in order to take forward the recommendations of the Additional Support Needs Review, and to note that implementation will be monitored by the Education and Families Committee through the Planning and Performance Framework mechanism.

The meeting concluded at 11.00am.

.....
Chair