

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer****Educational Services Committee: 12th June 2024**

Subject: Services for Children, Young People and Families Update Report**1. Purpose****1.1** The purpose of this report is:

- a) to inform Educational Services Committee of progress on supports to children, young people and families.

2. Recommendations**2.1** Members of the Educational Services Committee are asked to:

- a) Note progress on plans to continue developing and improving supports.

3. Background**3.1** In January 2019 a national review of the implementation of Additional Support for Learning began. The subsequent report and action plan had nine key themes which set standards nationally, locally and at establishment level.**3.2** The national report recommends that local authorities must take account of the findings of the report to review and align their quality assurance processes. This must drive improvements in processes, practice and outcomes at all levels in the system.**3.3** West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC) is committed to ensuring all children and young people are enabled to progress through Early Learning and School with the support they need.

When this support is more or different to what is generally provided for children and young people of the same age, then the child or young person is said to have additional needs.

3.4 The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009 lists four interrelated factors which individually or jointly impact on ability to learn:

- Learning Environment
- Family Circumstances
- Disability or Health
- Social or Emotional Factors

Additional support may be required throughout a child or young person's educational journey: others may only require additional support for a short

period.

- 3.5** It is recognised that children, young people and families are best supported through effective multi-agency planning and delivery of services. Educational Services work in collaboration with a range of council, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and third sector colleagues to support our families. This work is being developed via the Whole Family Wellbeing (WFW) planning, led by Educational Services on behalf of the Community Planning Partnership.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** There are currently 12, 226 school pupils in West Dunbartonshire Council. 5281 Pupils have Additional Support Needs (ASN), supported mainly in mainstream schools. Approximately 241 pupils are supported in our specialist settings as they require a more specific learning environment. We also have a small percentage of our children and young people with additional support needs supported by day or residential providers in external placements. These often involve young people separated from their peers and their community and can be expensive in comparison to supporting in-house. These costs have increased significantly over the past few years due to increased salaries and increased charges from partner providers for the range of specialist supports offered. This has resulted in budget overspends and it is anticipated that there might be mitigation of these to some extent by the ASN strategy implementation.

The trajectory of ASN needs in WDC has increased over time (from 36.9% in 2013 to 43.2% in 2023) and been supported by the investment in our ASN estate expansion. Over the past four years this has resulted in the availability of 78 additional places in specialist settings.

- 4.2** In preparation for transition to school session 2024-2025 there has been a significant increase in numbers of children's cases considered by the Joint Review Panel (JRP) which allocates specialist places. This is reflective of local and national ASN statistics and increases post pandemic. 53 children who had cases heard at the Joint Review Panel (JRP) were identified as having needs which would require additional support when transitioning to primary school. 31 of the group were identified as having the most complex needs and allocated places in our Specialist Settings. 9 children were identified as having needs which would be able to be supported in mainstream establishments within the existing ranges of support planning by team around the child processes, and a further group of 13 were identified, who would require enhanced support in mainstream establishments.

No child considered at JRP this year has a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP). To meet the criteria for a CSP, the child requires significant and ongoing support from another agency, other than education, to meet their educational targets and this does not currently apply to this cohort.

- 4.3** In line with National Guidance, we have a presumption to mainstream and most children with additional support needs have them successfully met in mainstream settings (95.4% of all pupils with ASN).

Our ASN Strategy identifies and addresses these issues with a focus on the four pillars of inclusive education in Scotland which are: present, participating, achieving and supported, in order that children meet their full potential. Mainstreaming is the 'central pillar' to this approach.

Our strategy is successfully upskilling staff and building on consistent approaches to meeting learner needs across all settings, ensuring our legal obligations are being met.

- 4.4** In order to provide this enhanced support, a Local Learning Community (LLC) model has been established. This model builds on inclusive practices and our processes of moving towards a 'new normal', where the expectation will be a presumption to mainstream schooling for all children, with child's planning, support, and professional learning for staff key to this. In this phase (session 2024-25), additional staffing capacity and support will be provided to 3 identified schools; Linnvale, Knoxland and Levenvale, to support the transition and approaches to meeting learners' needs. The 13 identified pupils have been offered places in the school closest to them and to date final acceptance numbers are not clear. A group of Central Officers and Educational Psychologists have produced an action plan and associated tasks to be undertaken to ensure that staff are appropriately trained and supported; that school environments meet the requirements of children attending and that the team around the child works with parents to ensure the transition and supports in place will support a settled start in P.1.

- 4.5** Development of an Enhanced Model of Support in Mainstream Schools using a LLC Model

The new model will be introduced to support delivery of inclusive environments which meet the needs of all learners and makes best use of resources. Through this we will support the 13 children identified this year as requiring enhanced support, with a local learning community approach, as well as improving abilities to respond to future need.

This year, the model will enable three schools to manage the needs of children who require significant additional support in a responsive manner via a blended mix of access to mainstream and enhanced supports. Each LLC will be allocated an additional class teacher and a learning assistant who will work in collaboration with existing school staff to plan and support children identified as requiring enhanced support, with access to their curriculum and associated care.

This team of staff will be trained and supported to develop their skills and expertise in a range of ways and will be supervised and managed as part of the Collaborative Support Service (CSS). They will work in collaboration with other members of the team to identify the most appropriate and relevant approaches to support and allocation of the wider CSS, Educational Psychology and Early Years team support.

This model will ensure capacity building in our school staff, developing our approaches towards a 'new normal', with a workforce skilled in meeting the severe and complex learning needs of children across our establishments.

The model will consider and prioritise support at different times in the academic year to support identification and transition planning, starting the new term and preparing for changes across the year.

Parents of the children involved will be invited to meetings which will explain the model, confirm the details of the school, and outline the support offered for their child and the ways in which staff will deliver the enhanced transition processes to meet their needs.

The ambition of the model is to: support children with a curriculum and experience which meets their needs and to build capacity in mainstream schools to plan and meet the range of learners' needs across our Council. Mainstream schools need to reflect that almost half the pupils in attendance have additional support needs.

In line with the introduction of this model, further review of the JRP processes and timings of these will take place. This will include continued training for our Early Years staff, Educational Psychology staff and school staff in Getting it Right for Every Child and (GIRFEC) and approaches to inclusive practices.

- 4.6** Education Leaders have collaborated to identify key areas of development and focus for Year 4 of the Additional Support Needs (ASN) Strategy. Work streams will continue to be underpinned by the National Improvement Framework and focus on developing the capacity of all staff to best meet the needs of individual children and young people. We recognise from our survey of parents that they too need help supporting their children. Planned work with our partners in HSCP will enhance the programme of parenting supports being established.
- 4.7** Notable progress has been as follows:
- Year 3 of the implementation of the Child Inclusion Research into Curriculum Learning Education (CIRCLE) has been completed and monitoring via school improvement visits and in dialogue with school

leaders and Champions, informs us this is supporting inclusive practices and improving learners' experiences.

- The Professional Learning team are currently revising and reviewing the forthcoming professional learning programme for session 2024-25, in collaboration with a range of central staff, to ensure a range of professional learning opportunities aimed at continuing implementation and support of inclusive practices.
- The implementation of social communication, emotional regulation, transactional supports (SCERTS) in all specialist settings has ensured consistent approaches to using the SCERTS framework with parents/carers at review points for their children. Aligned with work developing parent understanding of the programme, this has enabled practical strategies to supporting home school collaboration and provided a basis to build upon vital communication skills developed in each setting.
- A May Conference enabled staff from all settings the opportunity to learn from each other and share good practice of P1- S3 class case studies, demonstrating impact on learners' abilities and experiences and building upon shared planning and learning which has taken places across the year.
- We continue to develop approaches to supporting our care experienced children and young people in a range of ways such as specific tracking of attendance and attainment with targeted interventions to address gaps. In addition, a Principal Teacher and class teacher from the Collaborative Support Service will continue to develop our interrogation of data and progress of looked after children and young people through the implementation of cyclical approaches to monitoring progress and delivering of interventions to support the narrowing of gaps in attendance and attainment.

4.8 The Children's Rights Officer has continued to develop Council wide approaches to ensuring the Rights of the Child are understood and upheld. The Rights Advisory Board comprising of a representative group of young people across the Council, had its inaugural meeting in April 2024. The group will review and feedback on service areas approaches to UNCRC and support the formulation of our UNCRC annual report.

4.9 Work continues centrally and across all establishments, to support improved school attendance rates. This term, the focus will be on a programme of communications across the Council area aimed at supporting changes in behaviour patterns with regards to condoning non-attendance. In addition, Central Officers will work in partnership with schools to focus on the pupils who are most at risk of being classed as 'persistent non-attenders'. These are pupils who have attendance of 80% or less and for whom the risk of a negative impact on outcomes increases greatly.

4.10 Our programme of Child Protection Training has been revised and further developed to mirror that of other Children's Services partners. In addition to a Universal Training model which all employees must undertake, a further enhanced programme has been developed to ensure staff who are in a

position of leadership within establishments have enhanced training on a two-yearly cycle, which provides more detailed supports, knowledge and skills development. By June 2024 all Child Protection Coordinators, Senior Leadership teams and Pastoral Care teams will have undertaken this.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no people implications as a direct result of this report. However, it should be noted that in line with the recommendations in the ASN Review we must ensure we have a well-trained, high-quality workforce who are equipped to support the range of needs and rights of our children and young people.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** The projected additional funding required for the learning estate expansion has been approved and planned for in current and future budgets.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** If the Council is unable to ensure appropriate support to children and young people, we will not be meeting their needs under the terms of the Children and Young People Act 2014 (Equalities Act 2010).
- 7.2** If the Council is unable to ensure appropriate support for all children, young people and staff this could result in reputational damage.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** As noted in the previously produced Equalities Impact Assessment, the ASN strategy and subsequent supports and guidance developed will enhance the quality of the service provided to all children, young people and staff and therefore can be seen to have a positive impact in terms of the equalities.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** Legal Services and the Section 95 Officer have been consulted in relation to the content of this report.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** This report reflects the Council's aspiration to reduce inequalities for the people of West Dunbartonshire.

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Wards Affected:

All Wards

