

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer****Educational Services Committee: 23 September 2020**

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**Subject: Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement in West Dunbartonshire****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to update the Educational Services Committee on service recovery planning for the Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement and the Scottish Attainment Challenge in line Scottish Government's: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#) and [excellent-equity-during-covid-19-pandemic-strategic-framework-reopening-schools-early-learning-childcare-provision-scotland/](#)

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** The Educational Services Committee is recommended to endorse:
- (a) the contents of this report and the recovery planning to support the Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement to deliver Excellence and Equity in West Dunbartonshire.

**3. Background**

- 3.1** In line with the Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement the Committee receives a regular report outlining progress against this strategic priority.
- 3.2** Government Attainment Challenge funding has been devolved to West Dunbartonshire since 2015. Funding to ensure every child, young person has the same opportunity to succeed focussing particularly on closing the poverty related attainment gap. Allocation for 2020/2, £2,043,815.
- 3.3** To support national recovery planning Scottish Government advised local authorities in April 2020 that there is flexibility to adjust Scottish Attainment Challenge funded plans. However, decisions should remain consistent with the overarching principles of the Attainment Scotland Fund: to achieve equity in education and ensure every child has the same opportunity to succeed. Accordingly, the timeline for the local Attainment Challenge project has been adapted for academic session 2020/21. This is recorded in the Service Recovery Plan and was reported to committee in the Elected Member Briefing Notes, June 2020.

**3.4** The Scottish Government advice for school re openings published in July provides clear direction on the key areas of priority with health and safety of primordial importance. In meetings with all headteachers in early August the Chief Education Officer discussed the critical key priorities for schools re-opening highlighting the importance of rigorous application of health and safety guidance, risk assessments, clear communication, detailed planning and consultation.

#### **4. Main Issues**

**4.1** Short term and long term impact of COVID on mental health and well being of our communities impacting on equity outcomes for our children, young people and families.

**4.2** Maintaining high rates of progress for attainment and equity at a time of uncertainty and significant change.

**4.3** Financial impact of COVID on children, families and service delivery.

#### **4.4 Recovery Planning for Equity**

**4.4.1** To support the recovery of any loss of learning during the pandemic we will work closely with our schools to provide guidance and direction and identify areas requiring support. The Attainment Challenge Funding will be used to deliver on a set of key recovery priorities for equity in West Dunbartonshire :

- Maintain robust contingency planning for equity
- Evaluate the impact of lockdown on equity and excellence outcomes
- Mitigate the risk of any increased gaps in learning and difficulties to re-engage in school / ELCC.
- Provide targeted and intensive support for more vulnerable learners and any families experiencing loss or trauma.

Guidance on recovery planning for curriculum, assessment and equity have been distributed to headteachers. We are adopting a strengths based approach focusing on what children and young people 'can do' not on what they 'can't do' or 'have missed'. In this first phase we are working to promote strong re-engagement and re-establishment of relationships with children and young people as they begin the new school year. A progress report will be provided at a future committee.

**4.4.2** As part of the Scottish Government recovery planning additional funding for staff has been made available to local authorities to support recovery:

Government devolved funding to West Dunbartonshire for additional teachers £892,584 for commitment between 2020 and 2022 (£595,056 in 2020-21), and (£297,528 in 2021-22). Funding for additional support staff £99,176 for commitment between 2020 and 2022 (£66,117 in 2020-21) and (£33,059 in 2021-22).The funding for session 2020 -21 equates to approximately 15-18

additional teachers (dependent on salary point) and approximately 3-6 learning assistants.

In West Dunbartonshire we will deploy the additional staff to:

- Provide contingency in the event of staff absence due to COVID.
- Close the new and 'widened' equity gaps
- Support children and young people finding difficulty with re engaging

#### **4.4.3 Digital Inclusion**

West Dunbartonshire secured funding of £418,000 from the Scottish Government to tackle digital exclusion amongst children and young people in West Dunbartonshire. The funding will provide 2084 additional Chromebook devices and provide 230 households with internet connectivity. The criteria used to determine allocation is based on children entitled to free school meals and families with three or more children sharing a single device at home. This increased provision will reduce the need to share devices, giving benefit to approximately 3600 children and young people. We were also successful in securing an innovation fund of £30,000 to enhance our virtual school environment and to introduce a new senior phase skills development project for Chromebook device maintenance and repair.

- 4.4.4** The next phase of our digital learning is the full launch of our virtual learning provision "[Campus@WDC](#)". It has been produced to provide live and recorded learning if a blended learning model is required but also with the purpose of providing schools and teachers with lessons and materials they can use in their classrooms. A team of our staff have produced over 250 different teaching videos for use in this first term of schools re-opening. This builds on the progress made with remote digital learning during 'lockdown' but also provides an exciting platform for the sharing of lessons and activities produced by our teachers and accessible for all to use in their classroom, for independent learning or home learning.

[Campus@WDCsite](#) provides literacy and numeracy lessons covering the key stages of the Broad General Education and we have developed a learning context for all schools to use called "West Dunbartonshire Back to the Future 2020". This focusses on the children's experience of lockdown and the 'new' ways of life as a result of COVID. They will be given opportunity to reflect on the positive and negative impact of the global pandemic on our local, national and global communities. They will be invited to consider what they wish to see change and develop as the local 'change makers' in West Dunbartonshire and as young citizens of the world. The project will culminate next year in a West Dunbartonshire Showcase led by our young people sharing their hopes and aspirations for the future.

#### **4.5 Health and Safety**

The Service has been supported by colleagues across the Council in particular colleagues from Asset Management, Procurement and Health and Safety to ensure our schools and ELCC's were able to return safely with appropriate measures and PPE in place. The education policy guidance on

health and safety was updated for COVID 19 with provision of generic risk assessments and accessible links to public health and national health advice. Materials were disseminated for staff and pupils covering infection control, and building safety protocols. Communications for parents and pupils were also provided on the new safety protocols for the August openings. Weekly meetings were also scheduled over the summer with the local Trade Unions and they continue on a fortnightly basis.

## **5. People Implications**

- 5.1** Scottish Government confirmed that the additional funding for teaching and support staff as part of the national recovery planning is not ring-fenced to a specific group of teachers. It was agreed through local negotiations to open the recruitment to both newly qualified teachers and teachers registered for supply teaching in the authority. This ensured a fair recruitment process with the opportunities available to all qualified teachers.
- 5.2** The Scottish Attainment Challenge funding from Scottish Government has supported the secondment of officers and teachers assigned to raise attainment and narrow the poverty related attainment gap. Exit strategies are being developed for the Scottish Attainment Challenge funded posts in the event that funding ends in March 2021.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implication**

- 6.1** The first claim for 2020/21 is due at the end of September. For primary Challenge projects it is anticipated that we will claim part year costs of £0.442m. For secondary challenge projects it is anticipated that we will claim part year costs of £0.580m.
- 6.2** It is anticipated that the full award of £2.043m for 2020/21 will be spent.
- 6.3** There are no procurement implications arising from this report

## **7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** Impact of the ongoing uncertainty and possible services disruption during the pandemic could impact on delivery of strategic outcomes.
- 7.2** Failure to implement an authority-wide strategy to raise attainment and secure improvement will disadvantage our young people and may become a reputational risk to the Council.
- 7.3** The Committee will be provided with regular update reports advising of progress.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

**8.1** There was no requirement to undertake an EIA for the purposes of this report as it is providing an update to Committee.

## **9. Consultation**

**9.1** In developing these plans there has been consultation with Education Scotland, the Scottish Government, local Trade Unions, parent councils and heads of establishment.

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

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

**10.1** Strong governance and contingency planning in place for the education recovery plan.

**10.2** This reports reflects the Council's 2017-2022 overarching priority to reduce inequalities for the people of West Dunbartonshire which supports improved outcomes for all learners in our community.

Laura Mason  
Chief Education Officer  
September 2020

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**Appendix:** None

**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** All wards

