

To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 18 August 2022

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Renfrewshire Inclusion Strategy

1. Summary

- 1.1. On 18 January 2018, the Education and Children's Services Policy Board agreed that a strategic review of educational provision and approaches in Renfrewshire to support children and young people with additional support needs would be undertaken. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the Lessons Learned from the Additional Support Needs (ASN) Review (appendix 1) and on how we will use these lessons to improve the wellbeing and learning of children and young people with additional support needs in mainstream school settings.
- 1.2. The Scottish government strategy for closing the poverty related attainment gap *delivering excellence and equity in Scottish education* provides a clear focus for social justice by ensuring that education promotes and supports the rights and needs of all children and young people no matter what their background.
- 1.3. We also use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as a framework to ensure that we consider children's rights whenever we take decisions, and to help provide every child with a good start in life and a safe, healthy and happy childhood. It forms the basis of the national approach for supporting children, Getting it Right for every Child (GIRFEC) which is being refreshed nationally. Fulfilling children's rights is also critical to our commitment to Keep the Promise.

- 1.4. Research increasingly demonstrates that “human potential is not predictable, that children’s futures are unknowable, and that education has the power to enhance the lives of all¹.” As such, the way we ensure our approaches to supporting learning must recognise the value of an inclusive approach for all children and young people. Significant research has been conducted over many years highlighting flawed perceptions of a deterministic view of ability. In particular, Hart² highlights the effects on pupil achievement of such views and the increased likelihood of adverse outcomes for children with recognised additional support needs.
 - 1.5. Being a Teacher in Scotland – the General Teaching Council (Scotland) GTCS Professional Standards 2021 include a new section “Being a teacher in Scotland” which highlights the professional values of social justice, trust and respect and integrity as central to what it means to be a teacher in Scotland. This strong focus on professional values helps teachers develop their professional identity and underpins the deep commitment to all learners’ cognitive, social and emotional growth and wellbeing and it is vital that our policies for inclusion reflect this.
 - 1.6. It is crucial that our strategy for supporting all children and young people takes account of the principles of social justice, ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap and building social capital.
 - 1.7. Since the inception of the ASN review, important work has taken place across our specialist provision to ensure that more children can be supported within their own communities. This has included re-aligning of staff resources where appropriate and staff professional development. This work will be built on during session 2022-23.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Education and Children’s Services Policy Board is asked to note the update provided on the Lessons Learned from the Additional Support Needs (ASN) Review (appendix 1) and on how we will use these lessons to improve the wellbeing and learning of children and young people with additional support needs in mainstream school settings.
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3. Background

- 3.1. Across Scotland there is an increasing number of children and young people being identified with additional support needs. A similar increase is being experienced in Renfrewshire. The needs of these children and young people can be complex and they may require a range of different supports and interventions to help them make the best of their education experiences.

¹ Mandy Swan, et al “Creating Learning without Limits” (Open University Press, 2012)

² Susan Hart, et al “Learning without Limits” (McGraw-Hill, 2004)

- 3.2. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 changed the way in which support for pupils with additional support needs was managed and widened the definition of additional support needs. The local authority is required to have a range of supports and services to meet each child's educational needs by addressing barriers to learning within mainstream by making reasonable adjustments unless certain exceptions apply.
- 3.3. The presumption of mainstreaming means that parents have the right for their child to be educated in a mainstream school environment.
- 3.4. In 2019, the Scottish Government published updated guidance on the presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting. This revised guidance states

“Inclusive education in Scotland starts from the belief that education is a human right and the foundation for a more just society.

An inclusive approach, with an appreciation of diversity and an ambition for all to achieve to their full potential, is essential to getting it right for every child and raising attainment for all. Inclusion is the cornerstone to help us achieve equity and excellence in education for all of our children and young people.”

- 3.5. In 2020, the Scottish Government published a report on the national review of additional support for learning, “Support for learning: all our children and all their potential”. This report contains a number of interlinked and co-dependent recommendations across nine high level themes. The overarching theme is of children and young people participation, in line with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- 3.6. One of the key messages from the national review was that children and young people want to be included in their schools and communities. This view was echoed by our children and young people, whose views were captured during our stakeholder engagement, which took place at the beginning of the review and again more recently in June 2022.
- 3.7. Another key message from the national report is that the concept of "mainstream" needs to be redefined and repositioned for the profile of children and young people as they are now and are projected to be in the future, not as they were in the past. Nationally there are examples of mainstream education settings that have stretched and adapted their culture and environments to the benefit of all children and young people. There are also very good examples of this in Renfrewshire where schools are providing responsive personalised adjustments for individual children and young people. Whilst this matters for all it is vital to include those with additional support needs (Support for learning; All our children and all their potential, Scottish Government 2020).
- 3.6. Although the presumption of mainstream means that, wherever possible, children with additional support needs are educated in their local school, Renfrewshire has a range of specialist supports for children with additional support needs and the two ASN schools - Riverbrae and Mary Russell schools.

- 3.7. Riverbrae and Mary Russell staff can also provide key support to their mainstream colleagues through experience of a range of highly personalised approaches including personalised learning, behavioural strategies and tailored support which may be beneficial for all pupils.
- 3.8. Capacity to deliver inclusion is an important focus across education. Working with partners to deliver joint training and approaches builds capacity of those in schools and other services.
- 3.9. The lessons learned from our ASN Review have paved the way forward and informs the development of the refreshed strategic approach to inclusion in Renfrewshire and will ensure that our resources are aligned in the best way possible to meet the needs of all children and young people. We will also build on our excellent leadership and professional learning commitments to ensure that we build capacity across our workforce.
- 3.10. There are also currently a number of additional support needs bases for children across Renfrewshire schools each of which was developed to provide support for specific specialised needs.
- 3.11 It has been recognised nationally that categorising young people for support according to a particular need is not helpful, and we must ensure that holistic assessment of a child or young person's needs mean that the support they require can be provided in a way that will suit their needs, rather than the child having to adapt to a particular environment. This work is ongoing and is ensuring that our bases provide equity of support to a child or young person no matter where they live in Renfrewshire.
- 3.12. To destigmatise our provision, we have worked to ensure that each of these bases which we refer to as "Flexible Learning Spaces", are staffed by a range of staff with the right skills and experience to meet the specific and changing needs of our children and young people. This allows us to better meet the needs of learners by providing a flexible learning provision.
- 3.13. Flexible learning provision can be:
 - Where a pupil attends a mainstream school and a flexible learning space within another school or learning establishment which is based within their community.
 - Where a pupil attends Mary Russell or Riverbrae and also have some time in mainstream setting
 - Where an older pupil attends school and college as part of a full timetable
 - Where an older pupil attends school and also benefits from vocational opportunities as part of their full time-education

This list is not exhaustive as a flexible learning provision is tailored to the individual circumstances, needs and strengths of each child and young person.

- 3.14. The current model of deploying additional support for children and young people in Renfrewshire education establishments is based on centralised deployment of resource. This approach is overseen by a central team based

on a staged intervention model which focuses on meeting additional support for learning legislation (ASL) and getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) principles. We want to strengthen our approach to further support school and community empowerment. Therefore, through a refreshed GIRFEC approach, our staged intervention processes will be improved, and the deployment of resources to meet the needs of our children and young people, will be on a locality basis to empower schools, families and communities.

3.15. The key principles of our strategy are detailed below, and these are grounded in Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Promise Plan 21-24 and the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Review (2020).

- to strengthen the presumption of mainstream and take a children's rights approach to build on the social and educational capital to which all children and young people are entitled
- to build capacity to meet the needs of our learners with additional support needs within early years establishments and schools, so that there is a coherent framework which places the child/young person's needs at the centre of decision making
- to ensure best use of available resource to meet the needs of all children and young people with additional support needs in Renfrewshire, while empowering local school and early years leaders to make decisions about the allocation of this resource
- to review the roles and responsibilities of all centrally funded teaching and support staff to provide a streamlined model which provides career progression for staff and the opportunity for professional development and sharing of expertise
- to provide, where possible, the requisite support for a child or young person to be educated in their own community rather than moving them to where support is located
- to build capacity within mainstream schools and the locality teams to support the needs of children and young people with additional support needs.
- each and every child and young person should be involved in their own education and have a voice to shape their experience. They should be provided with the support they need to reach their full learning potential.

3.16. Part of our ongoing work is to ensure that we are future proofing our resource to meet the needs of the growing number of children with additional support needs in Renfrewshire. See Appendix 1

3.17. The needs of the majority of these children can be met in mainstream schools with the appropriate level of support and as such we do not wish to limit a child's trajectory by assuming that they will not thrive in a mainstream school. Therefore, unless a child has severe and complex needs³ we will always presume mainstream with appropriate and planned support. Thus, ensuring that our children with additional support needs will have the same access to the range of peers and experiences as mainstream children.

³ The term severe and complex support needs can be used to describe children and young people with multiple barriers to learning such as communication, cognition, sensory (vision & hearing) and physical. The population of individuals with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) are also often included with the "complex needs" description (Call Scotland – Communication, Access, Literacy and Learning, the University of Edinburgh)

- 3.18. In order to ensure equity of provision and opportunity, we will no longer place children outwith their mainstream environment for support on a full time, permanent basis unless one of three circumstances set out in Section 15 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 applies.
- 3.19. A decision to provide education out with mainstream will be subject to regular review and children will have the opportunity to move to mainstream when and if it is appropriate for them to do so whilst considering the views of both the child and the child's parents as part of the planning and review cycle. Going forward this process of identification and provision of appropriate support, together with regular reviews, should mean that a long-term ASN school setting will occur under this condition in only a very limited number of cases.

Implications of this report

1. Financial

All proposed changes will be implemented within the overall budget allocation for the service.

2. HR and Organisational Development

A revised career pathway will be developed for local government employees.

3. Council Planning

Renfrewshire's new Council Plan is currently being developed and will be presented to Elected Members after summer recess. The Plan will identify high-level strategic outcomes the Council intends to achieve over the next five years and the action needed to deliver on these. For now, actions are grouped under the following four themes: Place; People; Sustainability and Living our values.

The matters referred to in this report align and contribute to all high-level strategic outcomes. Incorporating the learning and feedback from the review into the development of the inclusion strategy will ensure resources are directed to children, young people and their families within the context of their needs and respective communities. This people and place-based approach also evidences the Councils approach to working fairly and collaboratively to deliver better services.

4. Legal

None.

5. Property/Assets

None.

6. Information Technology

None.

7. Equality and Human Rights

No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required, prior to implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of

the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health and Safety**
None.
9. **Procurement**
None.
10. **Risk**
None.
11. **Privacy Impact**
None.
12. **Cosla Policy Position**
None.
13. **Climate Risk**
None.

List of Background Papers

[Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\)](#)

[The Promise Scotland](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[General Teaching Council Scotland - Professional Standards](#)

[Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004 - notes](#)

[Presumption to provide education in mainstream setting](#)

[Support for Learning: All our Children and all their Potential](#)

Children's Services

T McGillivray/KO 26/07/22

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Lessons Learned from Renfrewshire’s ASN Review and the Way Ahead

The Additional Support Needs Review in Renfrewshire was interrupted by the Global Pandemic however, those involved in the review ensured there was extensive engagement with parents, staff and pupils from across Renfrewshire in order to gain an understanding of what works and what needs to be improved. Since the start of the ASN review there have been other key policy drivers within Scottish Education including [Support for Learning: All our Children and all their Potential](#), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the conclusion of the Independent Care Review resulting in [The Promise](#), all of which brought important recommendations and guidance to improve outcomes for all of our children.

The lessons that we have learned from the ASN Review along with the recommendations from each of these policies have enabled us to shape our strategy for inclusion. We see inclusion as the yardstick of recovery from the effects of the global pandemic, and we appreciate that all of our children are special and unique, and we recognise diversity as a pillar for making our communities more cohesive and just.

Lessons from ASN Review

We need to:

- work better together to streamline access to information for our schools, families and communities;
- continue to work together to achieve identified, sustainable improvements in our approach to inclusion, better meeting the needs of learners in order to provide a high-quality education for all children and young people;
- bring together the expertise and knowledge of our teachers and support staff from all parts of our system to share ideas, challenges and opportunities;
- better communicate the need to secure improvements in our services in order to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people and make their lives better – now and in the future. This starts with our leadership – values driven leadership will ensure an open and robust culture of communication, support and challenged underpinned by trust, respect and positive relationships;
- find better ways of responding to diversity – live with and learn from difference. We need to become better at the identification and removal of barriers for our children. There has to be a relentless focus on the four pillars of inclusion – present, participating, success and support. Being present in a mainstream school will not be the primary marker of successful inclusion; and
- there must be continued **significant, ongoing, and persistent commitment** to ending poverty and mitigating its impacts for Renfrewshire’s children, families and communities.

The way forward is CLEAR

C	Improve Communication and collaboration ensuring the rights of the child are front and centre
L	Meet the wellbeing & learning needs of all of our children and young people.
E	Ensure we provide excellent Children’s Services support services using a robust quality improvement framework
A	Invest in & develop all of our people to improve outcomes for children
R	Manage our resources effectively and equitably as close to the child as possible

Summary of Actions – What we will do

<p>Action 1 GIRFEC Refresh Update and refresh the staged intervention framework through a shared vision & improved integrated working across all services including education, health, social work, voluntary sector & employment, and training.</p>	
<p>Action 2 Supported by the Education Psychologist (EP) Service (EPS) we will implement a holistic assessment Framework that will enable practitioners to better identify barriers to learning and to strengthen decision making around staged intervention.</p>	<p>Action 7 We will better support establishments in understanding the policies that underpin inclusion with relevant supports e.g., capturing the young person’s voice; transition planning; parental engagement. <i>Linked to REN 10 Plan Our help where you need it: All Children’s Services partnership staff understand and are committed to the value of supporting the established relationships around children, young people, and families to enhance wellbeing and inclusion.</i> <i>Links to Promise Education Plan – All Care Experienced Children will have a right to education.</i></p>
<p>Action 3 The creation of a suite of interventions to ensure children and families are supported appropriately which are allocated equitably through a Request for Assistance mechanism. <i>Link to Ren 10 Plan Our help will meet different needs of populations represented locally.</i></p>	<p>Action 8 Through the implementation of a locality and staged intervention model, EPS along with the GIRFEC team will gather data and local information to develop a greater understanding of the professional learning (PL) needs in each locality which will inform service delivery, targeted professional learning and enhance collaborative working practices across establishments.</p>
<p>Action 4 Focus on improving early and effective interventions and targeted transitions at all levels <i>Links to Promise Education Plan – All Care Experienced Children will have a right to education.</i></p>	<p>Action 9 <u>Our Workforce</u> Review practice and procedures within Mary Russell and Riverbrae to ensure better joint working and sharing of learning with mainstream schools, and to provide a flexible learning approach for young people where appropriate Developing the role of pupil support assistant and advanced pupil support assistant and ensuring all staff are appropriately trained and supported to meet the needs of all pupils Ensuring that each locality has a team of specialist staff to add value to the flexible support packages which are put in place by schools to support children and young people with ASN</p>
<p>Action 5 Working with all stakeholders including professional associations to design a locality model to provide a framework for inclusion.</p>	
<p>Action 6 Mapping of workforce roles & responsibilities across locality including specialist resources</p>	

These actions will ensure that we will:

- improve outcomes and the delivery of excellence and equity for all children and young people
- meet the learning needs of all of our children and young people
- adopt an inclusive approach which identifies and addresses barriers to learning for all children
- empower children and young people, parents and carers, teachers, practitioners and communities