

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	EDU/03/20

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Education Committee

**Date:** 27 February 2020

**Report Title:** Additional Support Needs (ASN)

**Report By:** Chief Executive

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This is an interim report to update Committee on the progress of the review of the ASN allocation model in order to ensure the Council has a delivery model in place which is agile and flexible to meeting the needs of young people.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Note the contents of the report.
  - ii. Note that a Members workshop will take place to continue engagement in developing the new ASN model.
  - iii. Note that consultation on the preferred model will take place between now and mid-April
  - iv. Note that a final report will be presented to the Education Committee, on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020, to agree the final ASN model.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – The current model reports year-on-year increases in spend with 2018/19 spend exceeding £38m, 26% higher than when it was first implemented. Savings approved by The Highland Council in February 2019 for 19/20 are due to be delivered. It is anticipated that future savings will be delivered by a combination of ongoing effective financial governance and Workforce Planning, through considered application of accumulated savings and additional income.
- 3.2 Legal – Equality impact assessment to be considered.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) – The approach to meeting the needs of children and young people with ASN is a significant element of the Council's inclusion agenda, enabling young people to remain in their communities and access mainstream education.

- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – None
- 3.5 Risk – The Council must ensure that it demonstrates Best Value in the use of Council Resources and in delivering high quality services to some of Highland's most vulnerable young people.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The original ASN allocation model was agreed at the Adult and Children's Services Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2012 (full report can be found [here](#)). This model focused on a set number of hours per week allocated to schools and pupils, dependent upon several varying factors (see Appendix 1).
- 4.2 The Education, Children and Adult Services Committee on 18th May 2016 (full report can be found [here](#) at item 7) agreed to refocus the allocation model to provide appropriate support for those pupils with greatest need (levels 3 and 4). Pupils with lower levels of identified needs (at levels 1 and 2) would continue to be appropriately supported within the classroom by the class teacher, who will use differentiated materials or a range of other identified strategies to make learning accessible.
- 4.3 In Highland, the latest data available reports that there are 966 PSAs. This is 7.1% (second highest in Scotland) of the total Pupil Support Assistants (PSA) in Scotland. Highland has 4.4% of the total pupils in Scotland. The average number of pupils in Scotland per PSA is 50.8, with the Council's Family Grouping reporting a ratio of 1 to 43.5, in Highland it is 1 for every 31.8 pupils.
- 4.4 ASN spend has increased year-on-year since the ASN allocation model was first introduced.

#### **5. Engagement, Research and Emerging Findings**

- 5.1 The Education Change Team were appointed to take forward specific projects, one of which being a review of the current ASN model with a view to implementing a revised allocation model from August 20. Extensive engagement with key stakeholders was undertaken between September 2019 and January 2020. The engagement sessions, led by the Professional Lead and the Project Manager for this transformation project, were held across the 29 associated school groups, involving parents, school staff and pupils with additional support needs. 233 pupils, 983 staff and 712 parents attended these sessions.
- 5.2 In addition to the face to face sessions, an online survey was undertaken receiving more than 3,500 responses from staff, pupils and parents. Schools were initially advised by the administrator that engagement with the surveys was optional. The number of responses are shown below:

Primary Parent – 1,261  
Secondary Parent - 335  
Staff ASN – 785  
Primary Pupil – 587  
Secondary Pupil – 575

### 5.3 Engagement and research looked to:

- Gather views regarding the current model
- Investigate guiding practice in other areas and potential new approaches
- Review the effectiveness and consistency of the current GIRFEC paperwork including Child Plans
- Review current learning and teaching practice to further improve experiences and outcomes for Highland pupils.

5.4 This work is ongoing at present and remains with the current Education Improvement Team as well as the lead officer involved in commencing this work.

5.5 The emerging themes from the engagement established to date indicate that:

- The current allocation does not fully take account of the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs (SEBN)
- Current provision is ensuring the needs of pupils identified at highest levels of ASN are being met. However, concern was raised that additional resource may be required for pupils with lower level of needs.
- The current allocation model is inflexible to changing needs across the Highland Council area overall
- The current allocation model is overly complex, not fully understood and not universally applied across all schools
- The current processes and overall bureaucracy pertaining to Child Plans and the paperwork associated with GIRFEC is considered frustrating and appears beset with delay
- There are concerns about the transformation of ASN, and the speed of change, as regards the risks it can have in respect of pupils' achievement, attainment and life chances
- Defining roles of PSAs to ensure consistency in practice across all education centres, and ensuring that remits are appropriate and equitable, taking account of staff wellbeing
- Implementing change can be challenging and requires provision of effective support wherever possible and affordable
- There needs to be ongoing engagement with stakeholders including an impact assessment on any future models, featuring outward looking practice to other Local Authorities.

Some quotes from the engagement sessions:

*“Will the physical environment of schools be taken into account in the revised allocation model, such as if a school was full and if there was breakout space available?”*

*“Children moving into the area requires to be considered in the new model”*

*“Will the model be tested and assessed to see if it is working?”*

*“Absences need to be considered as part of the new allocations model”*

*“A sustainable and consistent model is needed”*

5.6 The key messages arising from the survey include:

- 76% of school staff agreed that children and young people are provided with experiences which meet their learning needs.
- 75% of primary parents and 57% of secondary parents agreed that children receive the help they need to do well.
- 93% of primary pupils and 87% of secondary pupils responded that there was someone to help them if the work was too difficult.
- 66% of school staff agreed that the school has effective strategies to support children and young people with their learning, including those requiring additional support.

5.7 Extensive engagement has taken place across a range of stakeholders. All stakeholders have evidenced a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people. Many have expressed concern and anxiety about the level of support in school and in their communities ability to be responsive and agile to the level required. This is set out in Appendix 2. The Council is confident that the feedback is recognised in section 5.5 of this report and that the work identified in section 6.1 and Appendix 2 of this report takes the feedback into account so that issues are addressed.

5.8 There are a number of ASN allocation models across Scotland including roll-related; roll-related including reflection of deprivation, and combinations of approaches based upon pupils with the lowest attainment. Some authorities also have contingency and exceptionality arrangements in place to allow flexibility for additional pupils with significant needs that arrive during the school year. Further work with members and stakeholders on arriving at a new model will be a necessary part of continued engagement. Highland’s Council current model is detailed at Appendix 1.

## **6. Wellbeing and Inclusion**

6.1 As a result of the engagement and in line with The Highland Council Educational Priorities for 2020-21, wellbeing and inclusion will be a major priority. To improve the wellbeing of our young people the Council will:

- Develop nurture provision for schools across the Highland area
- Provide CPD opportunities that will empower the workforce to focus on the wellbeing agenda
- Collaborate with all partners to support counselling in schools
- Consider wellbeing of staff; healthy staff makes for healthy young people

6.2 To support the inclusion agenda, the Council will:

- Share good learning and teaching practice
- Develop an inclusive approach that meets the needs of all learners within the Highlands

- 6.3 The Council is ambitious for all young people and staff across the Highland Council. The Council's major focus will be to create sustainable approaches whilst ensuring equity and excellence through connected relationships. The restructure of Health and Social Care will see a greater focus on "prevention" and "early intervention" with children, young people and families. Prevention and early intervention are both crucial and more effective in promoting the welfare of children, preventing further problems from arising and reducing the likelihood of services reacting to crisis later.
- 6.4 Prevention and early intervention is not about a specific service. It is a collaborative Whole Systems Approach (WSA), from communities, universal services, through to all agencies and partners who work with children, young people and families.
- 6.5 Prevention and Early Intervention enables families to build on their strengths, promotes resilience, maintain what is working well and sustain positive changes that have been made when needed. Prevention and Early Intervention seeks to build on families understanding of their needs, identifying their own support through existing networks including family, friends and within their communities, alongside support from universal services.
- 6.6 Where necessary, prevention and early intervention seeks to use time limited targeted interventions, either through universal services or specialist workers, designed to prevent problems from escalating further.

## 7. Finance

- 7.1 ASN spend has increased by year-on-year since the ASN allocation model was first introduced, with 2018/19 spend exceeding **£38m**. This is an increase of **26%** since the model was implemented.
- 7.2 In February 2019, ASN savings of £4.6m were approved for 19/20 and are on schedule to be delivered. Savings for 2020/21 (£2.7m) and 2021-22 (£2.65m) were approved by Members in 2019.
- 7.3 The Scottish Government notified that new annual recurring funding of £0.667m to support the delivery of ASN services will be provided from 2019/20.
- 7.4 Additional funding for Counselling services from the Scottish Government of £0.754m is also to be provided for 2019/20, increasing to £1.022m from 2020/21.
- 7.5 In 2020/21 ASN spend will be brought in on budget with the revised saving of £1.7m delivered, the earmarked 19/20 monies used to support the transition and continued action to address some of the overspends within this area of the service. Stability in staffing will be maintained as the approach to ASN develops and improves in relation to the feedback gathered and reported in section 5.5 and Appendix 2 of this report. The Council will continue to aim to make this area of service provision efficient and in-line with benchmarking of resource in comparator local authorities but more time has been created to make the range of changes required.

7.8 It is important to note that the additional PSA monies received from the Scottish Government (into the base budget) will be used to fund the targeted contingency approach in localities across the Highlands .This is a new strategy that fulfils the criteria of additionality and locally determined interventions (agreed by COSLA early in 2020) and is in response to the issues raised by stakeholders. The resources linked to Counselling currently available in the Highlands will be assessed alongside the additionality resource to ensure that a tiered approach to wellbeing enables interventions to have the greatest impact for families and demonstrate a best value approach .

## **8. Future Plans and Best Practice**

8.1 Going forward the Council will continue to listen and engage with parents and staff to ensure that solutions are sustainable and robust for the future. The current model shows inconsistency in the distribution of resources and any future model needs to address this imbalance with a strategy for delivery which needs to be agile and flexible to meet the needs of all young people.

8.2 The Council will continue to seek out best practice engaging with other Councils and discussions will take place to better understand their allocation models and identify best practice to inform the Highland model which has to be sustainable, equitable and manageable.

8.3 From the feedback received from engagement so far it is important that our discussions (including with other local authorities) focus on an overall strategy for delivery which includes nurture, inclusion and wider learning and teaching focus on ASN pupils. We need to identify our own good practice in supporting young people with complex needs in the classroom and ensure skills are transferred across Highland.

8.4 A session with Members will be arranged to support and inform the development of the final model and report to ensure all views and research have been considered prior to concluding this work.

The final preferred model will be subject to consultation with stakeholders until mid-April 2020, which will inform the final report.

8.5 Recognising the complexities of the task to deliver a new model for ASN it should be noted additional staff resource has been required in order to maintain the pace of change required and ensure that the principles of GIRFEC are met and we continue to listen and engage with all stakeholders. It is intended that a final report on recommendations of a new ASN model will be presented to this Committee in May 2020.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 24 February 2020

Author: Nicky Grant, Interim Head of Education

Background Papers: See links

## Appendix 1

### Current ASN Budget Allocation Model

#### Providing support on the basis of identified and predicted need

##### 1. Allocation of Resource for Generic Support

- a. Providing an allocation in primary schools of generic support equivalent to 2 hours per week for every 20 pupils.
- b. Gaelic Medium education - an additional 2 hours per week for every 10 primary pupils.
- c. Small schools (primary schools < 70 pupils/secondary school with < 120 pupils) -an additional 2 hours generic support to each small school.

##### 2. Allocation of Resource for High Level Need

It is reasonable to assume that pupils with level 3 and 4 needs will require additional SfL teaching and/or PSA support to access the curriculum and to provide personal support and/or intimate care. In addition, all pupils at these levels will have a child's plan and for many, these plans will be multi-agency and complex. This will require additional time to coordinate, meet with parents and other professionals etc.

It is proposed that on average a child with level 3 needs will require,

- 10 hours PSA support per week
- for every 10 pupils with this level of need 1FTE teacher will be required to provide support (0.11 FTE per pupil with level 3 needs)

It is proposed that on average a child with level 4 needs will require,

- 15 hours PSA support per week
- for every 6 pupils with this level of need 1FTE teacher will be required to provide support (0.17 FTE per pupil with level 4 needs)

##### 3. Allocation of Resource for Predicted Lower Level Need

It can be predicted that at any point in time 20% of the school population will present with additional support needs. It is therefore proposed to allocate approximately 5 hours PSA support and 5 hours SfL (0.15 FTE) teaching support for each group of 20 pupils with this level of need (i.e. predicted on 20% of the overall roll).

##### 4. Allocation of Resource for Need Associated with Deprivation

Language and learning difficulties and challenging behaviour are correlated highly with indices of deprivation. Using the Free School Meal Entitlement data as an indication of the level of deprivation it is therefore proposed to allocate an average of 5 hours PSA support and 5 hours SfL (0.15 FTE) teaching support for every 20 pupils entitled to free school meals.

###### *Strengths of this Model*

- *Clearly identifies need and allocates support on the basis of this identified need.*
- *Links the level of support provided in mainstream environments to that provided in special school settings, thus providing more equity of provision regardless of access to special school.*
- *Provides a guide for ECS Managers and Head Teachers about the level of support a pupil may require.*
- *Support within a school/ASG can be flexible to move to where the need is as the school population changes.*

###### *Possible difficulties with this Model*

- *If the need rises over time, the requests for additional support will also rise and budget may not be available to meet this demand.*
- *ECS Managers and Head Teachers may not implement this model flexibly and so pupils requiring additional support to that allocated in the model may not have their needs fully met.*

*Support within a school will have to be flexible to move to where the need is as the school population*

## Appendix 2

### Key Findings and next steps from extensive engagement activities

<p><b>Innovation</b></p> <p>There is clear evidence of innovative and creative approaches to promoting an inclusive culture in our schools. Staff are working collaboratively and flexibly to support pupils with the greatest level of need within our schools.</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Build on this by sharing good learning and teaching practice and enabling schools and practitioners to meet to extend this collaborative working across schools and areas. Consider working time agreement – work closely with all staff and trade unions to support.</p> <p>Workstream priority for Education Improvement Team Establish regular meetings for both PSAs and ASN teachers, to enable them to discuss and develop practice, take part in training, share ideas and solutions and also develop team working links.</p> <p>Identify areas of exceptional practice with Highland Schools, with particular but certainly not exclusive reference to ASN, and promote them not only within Highland schools but also outwith the authority to rebuild confidence and trust in Highland Council Education.</p> <p>Introduce a mandatory training programme for all PSAs focus on consistency; programme which includes the five main PSA competencies established in the West which could be used rolled to ensure support for all PSAs. Work with union reps to identify roles and responsibilities</p>
<p><b>Pace of Change</b></p> <p>There is some anxiety about the proposed ASN redesign. A number of parents, staff and pupils have expressed concerns about the impact that any reduced staff will have on their children's achievement, attainment and life chances</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Key priority for all young people across the Highland Council to raise attainment and achievement – workstream priority for Education.</p> <p>Review the proposed implementation timetable of ASN redesign taking into account pace of change to ensure that parents, staff and pupils are confident that Highland Council will deliver excellent education which will ensure that pupils meet their potential. ASN redesign to progress at a manageable speed and current changes to embed.</p>
<p><b>Level 1 and 2 incidents</b></p> <p>Perceived levels of violence and aggression rising for young people with level 1 and 2 need</p>	<p><b>Potential Next Steps</b></p> <p>Re-establish nurture rooms and spaces across schools. "A nurturing approach has been promoted as a key approach to supporting behaviour, wellbeing, attainment and achievement in Scottish schools." (Ed Scot. 2017 p.6) There are a number of Education Scotland publications which offer practical ideas and can support this work including</p>



<p>Schools reported an increase in Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC), mental health needs and social, emotional and behavioural needs. (SEBN)</p>	<p>“Applying Nurture as a Whole School Approach” and “The Compassionate and Connected Classroom” suite of resources.”</p> <p>Collaborate with partners to upskill our workforce in level 1 counselling skills, enhancing our workforce and supporting key PSA competencies. Collaborate with partners to support counselling services already established in schools</p> <p>Investigate opportunities that will empower the workforce to focus on the wellbeing agenda - including prevention and early intervention strategies</p> <p>Workstream priority for Education</p>
<p><b>GIRFEC Processes</b> There are widespread concerns regarding paperwork and bureaucracy surrounding ASN including Child Plans, Form 1s and other paperwork and their effectiveness. Parents, staff and pupils report the need to review our current GIRFEC paperwork</p>	<p><b>Potential Next Steps</b> Review and refresh the GIRFEC process to ensure that it is meeting the needs of our staff, parents and pupils. This should be undertaken through a multi agency working group which has balanced representation from schools who complete the majority of Child Plans and includes parent and pupil representation.</p> <p>Review the Child Plan process, including meetings, and paperwork to ensure that it is child centred and not bureaucracy heavy.</p>
<p><b>ASN Model</b> There is a widespread sense that the current ASN allocation model is not equitable, transparent or consistent. It is also not fully implemented causing confusion and muddled expectations.</p>	<p><b>Potential Next Steps</b> Apply design principles that suit the needs of all young people across the Highland Council to ensure equity and excellence. Design principles could include; school roll, level of deprivation, rurality and ASG allocation Impact assessment must be applied before models are shared Outward practice to other local authorities required Include all key stakeholders in the engagement/consultation process, consider pace of change and contingency for schools. Quality Assurance processes must be agreed</p> <p>Workstream priority</p>

## Appendix 3

### Glossary of Terms

**Allocation Model:** The model through which resources for ASN are allocated to schools.

**ASN:** Additional Support Needs. This is an umbrella term which accounts for various needs a child or young person may have. These can range from physical disabilities, diagnosed learning needs (such as dyslexia), social, emotional and behavioural needs, or a combination of these.

**CPD:** Continual Professional Development.

**GIRFEC:** Getting it Right for Every Child. Guidance from Scottish Government on meeting the needs of every child.

**Inclusion:** The philosophy that every child has a right to be included, and needs must be met to achieve this. In Scotland, there is the 'presumption of mainstream education' for every child and young person, and this is only altered with careful consideration and planning of resources to best meet needs.

**Nurture:** Practice is Nurture is a compassionate approach to meeting the holistic needs of the child or young person, working closely with identified pupils to support their wellbeing, inclusion and learning. Staff can be trained in delivering Nurture Groups and setting up Nurture Bases in schools for targeted interventions. Whole staff training can also be delivered so that nurturing approaches are adopted by all staff working with pupils, aimed at providing consistency in relationships with pupils across school settings.

**PSA:** Pupil Support Assistant.

**SEBN:** Social, Emotional, Behavioural Needs. For example, a student who struggles to attend classes due to raised levels of anxiety.

**Wellbeing:** The holistic over view of a child's health.