North Ayrshire Council, Education and Youth Employment have a number of strategies in place for supporting the achievement and attainment of pupils with Sensory Impairments.

In line with Getting it Right for Every Child the individual needs of all learners are identified and met through a process of Staged Intervention and appropriate levels of support provided. This process is carried out in consultation with the child, young person, parent and partner agencies and is subject to regular review and scrutiny through established internal and authority wide monitoring and evaluation systems. North Ayrshire Education and Youth Employment are currently piloting the introduction of the SEEMiS Planning for Pupils. In line with Staged Intervention all pupils with a Sensory Impairment will have individualised Childs Plan taking all eight Wellbeing indicators into account when assessing ongoing need and levels of support.

**North Ayrshire support for pupils with a Hearing Impairment.**

The Hearing Impairment Service is a pan-Ayrshire provision which aims to provide effective and appropriate educational support to children/young persons and their parents/carers, from diagnosis through to school-leaving, according to each individual’s identified needs. In recognition of the distinctive spectrum of learning needs of hearing impaired children, the three local authorities support specialist training for all staff members. The Service is based at Crosshouse Campus, East Ayrshire with a mainstream primary provision within North Ayrshire and mainstream secondary provision within East Ayrshire. Across the three authorities, provision for deaf and hearing impaired children benefits from the close working relationship established between the HI Service and Ayrshire and Arran Health Board. Local families and voluntary associations acknowledge the effectiveness of the three local authorities maintaining a pan-Ayrshire provision and it has been highlighted positively at national level. (Riddell Report, 2003. Doran Review, 2012,)

As of April 2015, the Service supports 57 deaf young people in North Ayrshire.

The Visiting Service team consists of:

- Co-ordinator full-time, Pan Ayrshire – responsible for overall service management.
- Teaching Staff – 9 full-time Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) – each authority employs 3 directly.
- Sign Language Assistant full-time – a deaf adult role model who facilitates the development of all signed communication.
- Part-time clerical support – undertakes clerical duties for the service.

A 2013 Pan Ayrshire of the review of the Hearing Impairment Service identified that to support deaf pupils in mainstream the following should be in place:

- Qualified teachers of the deaf to provide a support service which meets the distinctive range of learning needs.
- Classroom assistants/communication support workers to work with mainstream staff and teachers of the deaf.
- Continuous use of flexible support strategies and good interpersonal skills.
- TOD requires to provide support across a wide range of Hearing Impaired children and must be well informed in mainstream/specialist developments in curriculum issues.
- Regularly updated in-service.
- Development of a range of different communication approaches.
- Establishment of a professional local/national support network.
- Close working partnerships with families, colleagues and other agencies.
- Deaf awareness within the school and extended community.
- A whole school approach for meeting the deaf child’s needs (the children are valued contributors).
- Adaptation of acoustic environment to facilitate optimum listening conditions.
- Effective liaison and clear role definition of professional agencies.

Priorities for further developments:

- Listening conditions in Educational establishments require assessment. Thought must be given to creating good acoustic conditions for listening.
- Staff development provision regarding the implications of universal new born hearing screening (deaf babies will be identified by three months).
- Deaf awareness raising for mainstream staff.
- Acknowledgement of need to maintain specialist qualification.
Future plans for the Service

- Maintain level of teaching support. From a recent audit of the Service, evidence shows that direct teaching support is valued by families and colleagues. This can only be sustained within the Service delivery so that we can provide a diverse range of skills to meet the specific needs of deaf children.

- Because of the complexity of needs of deaf children and their families, succession planning must remain a priority with a view to staff completing teacher of the deaf training and accessing the skills and knowledge within the team.

- Stronger links and sharing of all resources across the 3 Service providers within Ayrshire, the Peripatetic Service, Elderbank Primary Resource Base and Grange Academy Secondary Resource Base would benefit all the professionals involved, the deaf pupils and their families. The local authorities could benefit from more flexibility of staffing resources while the teachers would be given the opportunity to experience working within wider range of provision for the deaf. The ultimate aim would be to share best practice and further develop professional skills.

- Due to the low incidence of hearing impaired children, parents have limited access to each other and while their children have all been supported in the early years by the peripatetic service, with three different types of provision, they become fragmented.

- Continue to raise profile of Service by providing deaf-awareness training within the wider community.

- Promote positive attitudes to deafness.

- Consider a social worker with a dedicated remit for the deaf.

The Pan Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Co-ordinator, Fiona Smith, contributed to the call for evidence submission made by the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf, as noted below.

**Response on behalf of BATOD (Scotland).**

There is a national shortage and aging profile of qualified Teachers of the Deaf. These teachers have a deep knowledge and understanding of a child or young person’s level of deafness and the implications for their social and emotional wellbeing and educational needs. They provide vital support to children and families from diagnosis to school leaving age and assist parents to manage equipment and develop good communication skills with their children from the earliest stages.

In order to raise attainment we must increase the number of qualified staff in all areas of Scotland to ensure equity for deaf children and young people across the country.

The government can support this in the following ways:

- Provide ring-fenced budgets for training teachers of the deaf (ToDs).
• Ensure children and young people with ALL levels of deafness (mild to profound and those who have a cochlear implant) have access to a qualified teacher of the deaf throughout their education.
• Increase the number of teachers of the deaf to allow an increase in contact time deaf children have with the teacher.
• Ensure more and better liaison between Health and Education regarding sharing information.
• Provide funding for training teachers of the deaf and support staff in BSL to a high level. (Currently all courses, even at university level, are self-funded.)
• Regulate qualifications and pay scales for Communication Support Workers.
• Encourage the training and use of electronic note takers in schools.
• Encourage SQA to develop BSL national qualifications to a ‘Higher’ level as an option for BSL users.
• Ensure all new build schools comply with current acoustic guidelines. (Not open plan.)
• Ensure an acoustician is employed to check compliance and to advise on new builds.
• Increase the number of resource bases in schools for those who require a high level of support and/or alternative communication and peer support.
• Provide funding to purchase appropriate technology.
• Advise that all those managing a service should have appropriate training to understand the issues affecting deaf children and young people.
• Ensure all tertiary education students have access to Disabled Student Allowance. (Currently provided for university students but not college students.)
• Increase teacher of the deaf and suitably qualified support staff input at 0-3 years as early intervention is proven to make a difference.
• Introduce input from ToDs for deaf young people, 16-18 years old, in college as many drop out of courses due to lack of support.
• All sectors of education to have mandatory Deaf Awareness training on a regular basis. (Perhaps delivered by a 3rd Sector organisation.)

North Ayrshire support for pupils with a Sensory Impairment

Within North Ayrshire, pupils with a visual impairment are supported by the pupil Support Service, Visual Impairment team. The team is managed by a Pupil Support Service principal teacher and consists of 3 FTE teachers and 1.4 Classroom assistants. As of April 2015, the Service supports 70 visually impaired young people in North Ayrshire.
Visual Impairment Attainment

- NAC provides experienced and qualified teaching cover for VI pupils; all teachers have completed or are working towards Post Graduate Dip. All teachers are also Braille competent.

- Pupils who are registered blind receive daily teaching support from the VI Service. This is either in class or outwith to concentrate on specialist areas, i.e. Braille.

- The central VI magnification service provides adapted materials for pupils in all recognised formats, digital, enlarged print, Braille.

- The VI Service provides ongoing liaison with class teachers. They are involved in the Child’s planning and in setting targets for pupils to ensure that they are fulfilling their potential.

- The Service provides CLPL opportunities for schools and individual teachers.

- The VI teachers are involved in co-ordinating transition plans for pupils. They liaise with schools and the habilitation service to ensure that pupils have the correct equipment, environment and skills set to make a positive start in their new surroundings.

- The VI teachers are involved in early intervention work, CVI.

- There has always been recognition within NAC that VI pupils should have access to the most current technology. Our CALL Centre contract allows for assessments and up to date requests for equipment for pupils.

Suggestions

- Provision of appropriate technology, e.g. iPads; laptops; screen magnifiers; Braille Note and ongoing training for teachers and support staff so they know how to use this technology. They need to be aware of what is new to the market. This could be centrally organised via learning events across Scotland.

- Consideration should be given to the workload demands placed on pupils in secondary school. It may be necessary to drop a subject from the timetable (often technical) to allow study time within the school day.

- Depending on the needs of the individual, it may be advisable to focus on fewer National 5/ Higher subjects in one academic year. This might assist some pupils with regards to achievement and attainment.

- Emotional support: in our experience, some young people need significant emotional support to help them cope with their loss of vision. At present, mental health services for young people are under increasing pressure and the support for young people is limited. Improving the emotional wellbeing of students would have a direct impact on their ability to learn and achieve.

- Improved liaison with other professionals working within the field of visual impairment, e.g. closer links with social services; health professionals; psychological services. Multi agency events would be helpful.
• SQA have been accommodating with requirements for pupils through their concessions team. This allows pupils to participate fully with the exam diet. VI pupils should have access to the full range of subjects available. This could be enhanced with a direct contact with responsibility and experience of Visual Impairment.

• Securing a positive destination for VI pupils is part of the ongoing transition process. There should be an SDS advisor specifically for VI/ sensory impaired pupils, someone who has experience and knowledge of detailed requirements and what is available. They should be working in partnerships with local employers to encourage opportunities for VI pupils.

• Colleges should also be aware of the needs of VI pupils, and should play a larger part in the transition process. They need to be able to provide experienced support to students.