

PE1704/J

East Ayrshire Council submission of 31 October 2018

Education Perspective:

We welcome the proposed targets and outcomes listed below, however there are implication pressures within the proposed 2021 timescale and although the *Ayrshire and Arran Autism Strategy 2015- 2025* outlines key priority areas in relation to practice, training and support for children and adults with autism, the planned outcomes, within this document, stretch beyond 2021.

- *That every person in Scotland going through an autism diagnostic procedure will be assessed within a calendar year and receive a statutory services assessment from a qualified social worker as an integral part of this process, within twelve months from the date of their initial referral.*

We would welcome a consistent multi-agency approach across Scotland as this would assist service delivery and planning with our colleagues within health and social care.

- *That children with autism in mainstream schools will have their assessed needs for classroom support met by an ASL assistant with a recognised autism qualification as part of a mandatory registration process for ASL professionals.*

We would support the proposal for training opportunities to focus on autism, however if a mandatory qualification is introduced, there would need to be clear guidelines and access to appropriate training to enable the present workforce to develop at a suitable pace. There are also funding implications.

The *Ayrshire and Arran Autism Strategy 2015-2025* highlights multi-agency training as a key opportunity to share good practice across departments, agencies and localities.

Key Priorities:

- Develop and deliver a shared ASD Training Plan in conjunction with Community Planning Partners.
 - Provide awareness training for all staff dealing with the public across statutory services - including the three councils, NHS, criminal justice services and others (and including commissioned services).
 - Establish service areas where ASD training should be mandatory (e.g. primary healthcare providers; teachers/classroom assistants; pre-school providers; social work...).
 - Support training/awareness raising for local businesses and organisations.
 - Support regular public awareness events across Ayrshire.
 - Explore the use of online training opportunities, for example ASK Autism15.
 - Explore the role of people with autism and carers in the delivery of training.
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- *That young adults with autism will have a statutory right to specialist support from their local authority up to the age of 25.*

We would welcome this support in principle, however it has funding and service implications.

- *That an Autism Act will be in place within the next 5 years to enshrine specific rights and services for autistic people in our legal system.*

Once more the idea of consistency across Scotland would be welcomed, however service re-delivery and design would need to reflect the expectations of an Autism Act and cognisance taken of the training and investment that would need to be undertaken to ensure that the terms of new legislation can be fairly and legitimately delivered.

The *Ayrshire and Arran Autism Strategy 2015-2025* highlights the following key points which are notable:

“A key challenge in Ayrshire, and across Scotland, is ensuring we have the necessary strategic leadership in place to take forward the autism agenda. Given the wide range of service providers supporting people with autism (health, social care, education, children’s services etc.) and the absence of dedicated autism teams at the local authority level, it has been challenging historically to identify officers with a clear lead responsibility for autism. As such, it is important that we put in place structures that will provide strategic leadership around autism.

We have begun this process during the development of this strategy by setting-up the multi-agency Ayrshire Autism Partnership. This partnership recognises that a wide range of partners are responsible for supporting people with autism in Ayrshire and that they need to work together to deliver a more joined-up, strategic approach. The Partnership, will lead the development of joint strategic planning and stronger local policy to support people with autism and their carers.”

The following extract from the strategy offers an insight into the current support for children within East Ayrshire.

EDUCATION - EAST AYRSHIRE

Crosshouse Communication Centre

The Communication Centre is based within Crosshouse Primary School, consists of five classes situated across the school, and aims to provide small group teaching and learning experiences, targeted approaches to meet social communication and language needs for children from P1-P7. This Centre provides a mainstream curriculum, differentiated as appropriate, with flexible opportunities for inclusion and integration planned and reviewed on an individual basis. Speech and Language Therapy staff are involved in supporting the pupils' plans within a team approach with education staff.

Loudoun Communication Centre

The Communication Centre is based within Loudoun Academy, and aims to provide support to young people with autism, and related communication difficulties, to access a mainstream secondary education in as successful a way as possible, utilising a combination of small group teaching and learning experiences, targeted approaches to meet social communication needs, and support into mainstream classes and activities as appropriate. This Centre provides a flexible approach to inclusion and integration, planned and reviewed on an individual basis.

Communication Outreach Service

East Ayrshire operate an outreach service to establishments working with children and young people with communication difficulties, including autism. The role of the service can include staff development and training, consultation to teaching and non-teaching staff regarding individual support planning, and also direct work with young people if assessed to be required. Additional provision for children and young people with autism and related communication needs is also provided across mainstream establishments, potentially utilising support via the Outreach Service when and where required.

Within East Ayrshire there are three special schools and four Supported Learning Centres that meet the educational needs of children and young people with autism and with a variety of other additional support needs.

East Ayrshire's Supported Learning Centres provide education for children and young people with significant additional support needs within a mainstream school environment, allowing for flexible inclusion opportunities dependent upon the individual strengths and needs of each pupil.

- Patna Supported Learning Centre
- Barshare Supported Learning Centre
- Cumnock Supported Learning Centre
- Doon Supported Learning Centre

East Ayrshire's three special schools provide education for children with significant additional support needs, including those with severe and/or complex needs.

- Hillside School
- Willowbank School
- Park School

Educational Psychology

Educational psychologists promote learning, wellbeing and development of children and young people from birth to young adulthood. They work with staff, pupils, parents and other professionals to help identify educational needs and strategies to meet those needs. They also carry out research and help develop policy and practice.

Each school and early years' establishment has an assigned psychologist. Where there are concerns for a young person, the psychologist may:

- consult with young people, parents and teachers about learning and behaviour;
- gather information across different contexts in which the child functions, including family, community and educational setting via, for example, dialogue and observation
- identify strengths and areas where help is required;
- link with parents and other professions as part of the collaborative process;
- advise parents and others about support needs.

Educational psychology services also provide training on the full range of additional support needs including autism spectrum disorders.

Educational psychology services also provide targeted training on additional support needs that affect a minority of pupils including autism spectrum disorders.

There is an appetite in Ayrshire and across Scotland for a more consistent approach to support children and young adults with autism. The *Ayrshire and Arran Autism Strategy 2015-2025* sets out our clear direction of travel regarding multi-agency partnerships; future planning and training aspirations. Extending the support to children and young adults through an improved and consistent service across Scotland, via the named targets and outcomes within the petition, is a positive proposal but there are potential financial implications at local level that would need to be considered.