

Shetland Islands Council

Inclusion Service response to Education, Children and Young People Committee Questions - December 2023

1) Details on what parts of Additional Support for Learning provision are working well and what are not, and any reasons they can provide which might help to explain why aspects are working well or not.

a) Working well:

- i) Improved understanding of the range of needs children and young people (cyp) have and working to accommodate these in class;
- ii) Principles of Presumption of Mainstreaming;
- iii) Increase in understanding that inclusion is responsibility of all;
- iv) Access to training, including framework for pupil support assistants;
- v) Improvements in technology to remove barriers to learning;
- vi) Uptake of CIRCLE training across schools and ELC settings to improve the universal offer;
- vii) Creativity, inclusiveness and overall ethos of some schools and settings that embrace all their children and young people for who they are;
- viii) Plans for Enhanced Provision schools to tackle some of our difficulties as below.

b) Not working well:

- i) Financial and personnel costs of presumption of mainstreaming;
- ii) Availability of options during transition to adulthood – still very much dependent on service led provision due to availability of personnel for Personal Assistant work – meaning pupils remain at school for longer than they may wish;
- iii) Lack of devices to ensure technological advances can be taken up by all that could benefit – device per child instead of shared devices across the class;
- iv) Increase in levels of distressed behaviours, anxiety and dysregulation;
- v) Increase in diagnoses of ASD and AHDH in particular;
- vi) Level of social and communication difficulties across our younger learners and those in ELC – pandemic related?
- vii) Staffing and resourcing difficulties of a small rural local authority – children with complex and severe needs being educated in some of our very small, rural and remote schools due to the distances and travel arrangements required to do this differently within current provision.

2) What are the barriers to supporting this provision?

- Hearts and minds – where we have these on board, provision works well but recent national discussions regarding 'behaviour summits' for example do not help and can polarise views – such as 'we can't meet their needs here';
- Finance – presumption of mainstreaming needs to be financed appropriately;
- Availability of staffing – Shetland currently has more jobs than people to do them and thus we are unable to fully staff our provision – specialist, teaching and support staff;

3) how does the authority support good relationships with parents and young people, especially where there are disagreements around the provision of additional support for learning and reach collaborative agreement

Schools are awarded an annual allocation of ASN teaching and support staffing hours through an annual audit that is designed to support equity across the local authority. This does help with the process as does our generous allocation of support

staff. However, we receive a number of complaints regarding support from parents that we try to work through with school leaders to arrive at a collective understanding of what any allocated support is there for, often through the GIRFEC process and aligning support to agreed outcomes. This is most certainly an area in which complaints have increased over the last two years and which causes increased workload at all levels.

4) How many placing requests have been made over the last 5 years by parents or carers wishing that their children be educated in a specialist Additional Support Needs (ASN) unit or school.

We have no special schools in Shetland. We have enhanced provision – special units in two of our schools. We have had less than 5 for each in any of these 5 years.

And how many placing requests have been made by parents or carers wishing their children to be educated in a mainstream setting as opposed to a specialist ASN setting. The Committee would be grateful for the total numbers, along with the numbers of requests refused and agreed.

None – with none refused.

5) How does the authority ensure that parents and young people are aware of the rights to various remedies under the 2004 Act?

Information on the Council's website with links to Enquire, Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance and Scottish Child Law among others

6) The Committee is aware that there can be variations in approaches to identification of ASN across local authorities and between primary and secondary schools. The Committee would be grateful if you could briefly set out how you ensure that children's additional support needs are identified and Seemis records are updated to ensure accuracy of the data.

Our Stages of Intervention document clearly lays out to staff the processes and procedures. These are linked to our New Authority items and ASN tabs on SEEMiS and support our allocation of staffing.

7) How does the authority ensure staff have adequate training on Additional Support for Learning provision?

We work very closely with our colleagues in workforce development to ensure that our training plan is meeting the needs of our pupils and our staff supporting them. We have regular ASN teacher development days to bring these staff together for training input along with networking opportunities. Support staff also have training days and input during in-service linked to feedback they have given regarding what would be most useful.

The group missing is the classroom teachers – this is the group that need training but we find it very difficult to reach them as they have other aspects of their development that they prioritise over ASL

8) If parents/carers have a concern about the ASN provision in a mainstream school, what process can they follow to try and get it resolved?

They can contact the head teacher of the school although some come directly to our Central Inclusion Team. This may be resolved very quickly, for example an early review of a Child's plan may be called. If it is not resolved through this, it would then be dealt with through our Complaints Procedures firstly at front-line stage and if still unresolved at Stage 2 with an independent investigation.

9) Where the provision of ASN is not working in specific cases in schools, what can teachers do about that? Is there support that can be accessed? What happens if the matter cannot be resolved?

Support is available through our Central Inclusion Team – a QIM, ESO and 4 FTE teachers (although some of these posts are currently vacant) who provide in-class or in-school support to build capacity, training, support with assessments, and model good practice as well as fill gaps where long term absence is impacting on the school's ability to complete tasks such as dyslexia assessments, review of child's plans, etc.