

**ASN SERVICE PROVISION 2023**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Additional Support Needs of children and young people across Scotland have notably increased over recent years, with the Covid-19 pandemic compounding existing needs with a range of complex pressures on mental health and wellbeing. This increase in need can be seen within Argyll and Bute specifically, with the Education Service committed to making improvements to existing provision in order to more effectively offer a consistent level of support to all children and young people.
- 1.2 During early 2022, the Education Service carried out a consultation on ASN Provision across the education estate, which included gathering the views of children and young people, their parents and carers and staff working in our schools. The views gathered led to the development of a set of proposals for service improvement. These improvements are in line with the Additional Support for Learning Act (2004).
- 1.3 As part of the Council's set priorities, a commitment to increase the equity of specialist provision to all children and young people was agreed. Similarly, a commitment to reduce the number of children and young people having to travel outwith Argyll and Bute to access specialist education provision was also accepted.
- 1.4 This paper outlines proposals for service improvement in line with the above and recommends that Community Services Committee:-
- 1.4.1 Acknowledges the growth in the number of children with a recognised Additional Support Need at a national level, and specifically within Argyll and Bute.
  - 1.4.2 Agrees that lobbying of the Scottish Government, in collaboration with other Scottish local authorities to address the funding gap facing local

authorities in meeting the needs of our children and young people effectively should be pursued, in the first instance through COSLA.

- 1.4.3 Accepts the professional advice from the Education Service in regard to how to best address the issues set out in this paper within Argyll and Bute, and deliver on Council priorities set for Education.
- 1.4.4 Agrees to support funding of the revenue and capital required to implement the proposals, and notes that the revenue savings which have been identified within existing Education Service resources, could otherwise be put towards the Council's ongoing revenue funding gap, and therefore recommends to the Council that they:
  - 1.4.4.1 Approve virement of the phase 1 capital costs of £1,255,000 from within the Education Service as set out in Appendix 1.
  - 1.4.4.2 Approve virement of the phase 1 revenue costs of £495,560 as appropriate, up to £495,560, from within the Education Service as set out in Appendix 1.
  - 1.4.4.3 Agree in principle the viring of revenue and capital funding within the Education Service, in accordance with the Council's Financial Security Regulations paragraphs 3.14 to 3.16, for phase 2 of the proposals, with the necessary report(s) being submitted to Council at the appropriate time and subject to the Councils overall financial position at that time.

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update in regards to the review of ASN services within Argyll and Bute, and to propose a number of measures to address the growing and increasingly complex needs of our children and young people.

2.2 The growth in the number of children with a recognised Additional Support Need is reflected across the country, but is compounded by the geography of Argyll and Bute and the inequitable spread of appropriate resource.

2.3 The report presents the Education Service's response to these issues for consideration by Members in regard to the identified areas of potential improvement which are in line with two of the Council priorities, set for the Education Service:

- Working to improve and secure equity of specialist provision across Argyll and Bute by addressing gaps where they exist across the education estate.
- Reducing the number of children and young people who have to travel to outwith the area to access services by enhancing provision where gaps currently exist.

2.4 In taking forward the suggested proposals, the Council will be creating high-quality provision to serve all four localities of Argyll and Bute in a more equitable manner.

2.5 Significant legislative change and recent key publications and policy should also be taken into consideration when evaluating the impact of ASN provision and these include:

- Adoption of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots Law (2021)
- Publication of The Morgan Review ( Additional Support for Learning Implementation Review 2020)
- The Promise Scotland (Implementation Plan 2021-2024)

- 2.6 Recommendations made herewith are done so in line with the guiding principles of the above noted publications as well as the statutory legislation as noted herewith.
- 2.7 Lobbying of the Scottish Government is suggested as a next step, in collaboration with our colleagues from across Scottish local authorities to address the funding gap facing local authorities in meeting the needs of our children and young people effectively. Despite the well evidenced growth in complex needs, there are no additional funding streams on the horizon in order to support our work at local level.
- 2.8 The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) have documented the importance of 'Alternative Curricula' or modes of provision for learners with complex needs. A paper collated by the EIS also outlines the various models in place across the country and exemplifies the response to a growing level of need across our educational establishments. The proposals herewith are in line with the practice elsewhere in Scotland. [18 - 2022 AGM Motion - Alternative Curricula.pdf](#)
- 2.9 There is a significant budget pressure continuing to develop around meeting the needs of our most complex learners within the current provision across Argyll and Bute. This budget pressure includes the need for specialist teaching and support staff being dispensed into schools as well as the continued need for pupils to travel outwith Argyll and Bute to access specialist day provision.
- 2.10 In taking forward the proposals as outlined herewith, the service anticipates that over time, this budget pressure could be more adequately addressed, with targeted resources streamlining the need for support being dispensed with a far greater impact on our learners facing the most significant challenges to their progress.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- 3.1.1 Acknowledges the growth in the number of children with a recognised Additional Support Need at a national level, and specifically within Argyll and Bute.
- 3.1.2 Agrees that lobbying of the Scottish Government, in collaboration with other Scottish local authorities to address the funding gap facing local authorities in meeting the needs of our children and young people effectively should be pursued, in the first instance through COSLA.
- 3.1.3 Accepts the professional advice from the Education Service in regard to how to best address the issues set out in this paper within Argyll and Bute, and deliver on Council priorities set for Education.
- 3.1.4 Agrees to support funding of the revenue and capital required to implement the proposals, and notes that the revenue savings which have been

identified within existing Education Service resources, could otherwise be put towards the Council's ongoing revenue funding gap, and therefore recommends to the Council that they:

- 3.1.4.1 Approve virement of the phase 1 capital costs of £1,255,000 from within the Education Service as set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.1.4.2 Approve virement of the phase 1 revenue costs of £495,560 as appropriate, up to £495,560, from within the Education Service as set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.1.4.3 Agree in principle the viring of revenue and capital funding within the Education Service, in accordance with the Council's Financial Security Regulations paragraphs 3.14 to 3.16, for phase 2 of the proposals, with the necessary report(s) being submitted to Council at the appropriate time and subject to the Councils overall financial position at that time.

## 4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Meeting the needs of children and young people identified as having an additional support need (ASN) is a key area of focus within Scottish education governed by a number of statutes and practice guidance. The main statutory basis for ASN derives from the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 and the subsequent 2009 Act which strengthened and clarified certain duties of Education authorities. The Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 section 1 defines Additional Support Needs (ASN) as:-

"A child or young person has **additional support** needs for the purposes of this Act where, for whatever reason, the child or young person is, or is likely to be, unable without the provision of **additional** support to benefit from school education provided or to be provided for the child or young person".

- 4.2 Sections 4 and 5 of the 2004 Act place a legal duty on local authorities to meet these additional support needs. These are;

Section 4 Duties of education authority in relation to children and young persons for whom they are responsible:-

- (1) Every education authority must—in relation to each child and young person having additional support needs for whose school education the authority are responsible, make adequate and efficient provision for such additional support as is required by that child or young person, and make appropriate arrangements for keeping under consideration—

(2)

- (i) the additional support needs of, and
- (ii) the adequacy of the additional support provided for, each such child and young person.

(3) Subsection (1)(a) does not require an education authority to do anything which—

- (a) they do not otherwise have power to do, or
- (b) would result in unreasonable public expenditure being incurred.

4.3 A code of practice for professionals and parents/carers is in place to support the effective implementation of the above duties. This is now in the third edition (2017) and can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-education-additional-support-learning-scotland/>. The Act also confers certain rights of redress on parents and created paths of resolution including mediation and Tribunal.

4.4 Children or young people may require additional support for a variety of reasons and may include those who:

- have motor or sensory impairments
- are being bullied
- are particularly able or talented
- have experienced a bereavement
- are interrupted learners
- have a learning disability
- are looked after by a local authority
- have a learning difficulty, such as dyslexia
- are living with parents who are abusing substances
- are living with parents who have mental health problems
- have English as an additional language
- are not attending school regularly
- have emotional or social difficulties
- are on the child protection register
- are young carers.

4.5 This list is not exhaustive nor should it be assumed that inclusion in the list inevitably implies that additional support will be necessary. The 2009 amendment to the ASL Act deemed that every Looked After (now Care Experienced) child be considered to have additional support needs. Scottish Government guidance highlights that there should be a Named Person in place for all children and young people from early learning and child care until they leave school. The move to 1140 hours has provided additional access to young children with earlier

identification of needs. Also, the inclusion of vulnerable 2 year olds has placed additional pressure on budgets and service provision.

Scottish government guidance around addressing the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, particularly during a period of recovery from a global pandemic, has increased the numbers who are considered to have an ASN as a result of a mental health needs. A further consequence of the pandemic, particularly for young children is the impact of the lack of social contact on the development of language skills and social interaction with peers.

- 4.6 By law, education authorities must identify, provide and review the additional support needs of their pupils which can arise in the short or long term as a result of the learning environment, family circumstances, health, wellbeing needs or a disability. However, the interpretation of the manner in which the support is provided is determined by Councils within available budget constraints.
- 4.7 The presumption of inclusion of children with additional support needs (ASN) in mainstream schools is a key feature of Scottish education. In Argyll and Bute, this presumption of mainstreaming is supported by a fundamental belief that children should be educated within or as close to their own communities as possible. There is only one stand-alone special school, Parklands in Helensburgh. Inclusion within mainstream schooling is the principal mode of education delivery to children with a wide range of needs. Learning Centres have been developed in specific schools across Argyll and Bute to allow the delivery of enhanced provision to meet more complex needs locally. This paper sets out next steps in the development of these resources to allow a more equitable provision for all of Argyll and Bute's learners.
- 4.8 The Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) national practice model continues to be the approach used across Scotland for working with children and their families to ensure that all agencies work in partnership to secure the best outcomes for all children. Every child has a Named Person, who will be a health visitor for pre-school children and Head teacher (or delegated representative) from school age onwards. Identifying and addressing children's needs using the GIRFEC model is embedded in practice within all services in Argyll and Bute who work to support children and families.
- 4.9 All local authorities submit an annual census return on additional support needs to the Scottish Government through scotXed in September. It is only in recent years that a definition of support needs has been provided by the Government and the current definition in the scotXed data collection specification has 24 specific categories plus another box. The system is populated directly by schools based on their interpretation of support need and signed off by the HT.

However, this Council only uses three categories to assess ASN staffing allocations which highlights the flexibility in determining the total census population.

- 4.10 According to Scottish Government data from the Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland 2021, there were 232,753 pupils (33.0% of all pupils) with an additional support need (ASN) recorded in 2021. This was an increase of 0.7

percentage points on 2020 (226,838 pupils with an ASN record, 32.3% of all pupils). However, this is first time since 2009 that the rate has increased by less than one percentage point.

- 4.11 In Argyll and Bute, in the September 2021 census return there were 10,068 children recorded of these 3,005 in an authority educational establishment had an additional support, 29.98% of our pupil population.
- 4.12 In comparison, Argyll and Bute, in the September 2022 census return there were 9995 children recorded of these 3,257 in an authority educational establishment had an additional support, 32.59% of our pupil population.
- 4.13 In line with the National Improvement Framework (NIF), the Education Service has identified key priorities within Our Children Their Future delivered through the Education Service Plan. The Wellbeing, Inclusion and Achievement team has identified core improvement priorities to meet the needs of our learners including the commitment to provide high quality, well planned support for children and young people with additional support needs across all sectors.

## **5.0 Assessment of Need**

- 5.1 All local authorities address need through professional support which may include teachers, educational psychologists, health professionals such as occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and social workers. Excellent support is also provided by paraprofessionals such as support assistants. Support varies depending on the assessed need of the individual child. However, the nature of the support will also depend on the resources available for example provision of special schools and units and criteria for support devised at a local level. This Council's Education Service has implemented its Staged Intervention Framework which is intended to guide school staff as to how best to support children. In Argyll and Bute, staged intervention is the agreed process used to identify, plan for and support children who have additional support needs and/or who require a targeted intervention. This is a service or specified support which is targeted at addressing particular wellbeing needs or more specialist intervention, and is therefore not made available generally to all children.

The key principles underpinning Staged Intervention, as outlined as follows:

*What is staged intervention?*

- *Staged intervention is used as a means of identification, assessment, planning, recording and review to meet the learning needs of children and young people.*
- *It provides a solution-focused approach to meeting needs at the earliest opportunity and with the least intrusive level of intervention. The process involves the child, parents/carers, school staff and, at some levels, other professionals, working in partnership to get it right for every child.*

- *Staged intervention is designed to be flexible and allows for movement between stages depending on progress.*

In Argyll and Bute there are three stages of staged intervention. Children may move between the stages as appropriate. At all stages of intervention, there are five questions education practitioners need to ask themselves when they are concerned about a child:

1. What is getting in the way of this child or young person's learning, and achievement / well-being?
2. Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?
3. What can I do now to help this child or young person?
4. What can my agency do to help this child or young person?
5. What additional help, if any, may be needed from others?

There are specific requirements for planning and review timescales where a child is approaching transition between settings or leaving school.

### **Stage 1**

The class teacher or key worker (Early Years) identifies a need for some additional support. The Named Person is notified and the teacher /key worker makes some changes to the normal routine or gives some extra attention so that the child can get the best out of the work of the group or class.

Parents/carers will be kept informed and involved through general school reporting systems such as parents' evenings, report cards and learning logs. There will also be ongoing evaluation through these systems of the impact of the support given.

These changes might include differentiation strategies such as:

- making sure that extra attention is given;
- changing the group that the child works with;
- adjusting the amount of work that is expected;
- making minor adaptations to the classroom/ Early Years environment.

There may be involvement of an Additional Support Needs Teacher and / or Area Principal Teacher / Principal Teacher Early Years / Specialist Teacher in an advisory capacity. Psychological services may also be involved in a consultative role at this stage. This may also include children at key transition points.

### **Stage 2**

There is an identified need for targeted planning and intervention to address additional support needs.

A Child's Plan will be in place outlining the specific targeted interventions required and detailing long- and short-term outcomes and timescales. Timescales for

review of the interventions will be built in to the plan. There are likely to be termly reviews of short-term targets and annual reviews of long-term targets.

Additional support at this level may include (in addition to supports available at Stage 1):

- new resources being accessed for use by the whole class/group;
- small groups being created for additional tuition;
- an individual programme of work being introduced;
- a short term programme of individual support being put in place.

Classroom or Pupil Support Assistants may be deployed to help deliver these supports.

### **Stage 3**

There is an identified need for more targeted intervention and / or specialist provision and interventions including:

- a high degree of individualisation of learning and/or;
- access to a different learning environment and / or;
- substantial adaptation to the curriculum and/or;
- substantial adaptation to the learning environment.

A Child's Plan will be in place outlining the specific targeted interventions required and detailing long- and short-term outcomes and timescales. Where there is multi-agency involvement, a Lead Professional will co-ordinate this support. There may also be a Co-ordinated Support Plan in place.

Children/young people at Staged 3 will be identified in the following categories:

- Severe and complex/profound
- Moderate learning difficulties
- Social/emotional behavioural difficulties
- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment
- Children on the autistic spectrum
- Children with language and communication difficulties
- Children with severe physical impairment

Children at Stage 3 will require significant individualisation of learning and/or substantial adaptation to the curriculum. These measures will be established and implemented by means of the relevant staff in the establishment working in collaboration with:

- each other and the parents of the child;
- the Area Principal Teacher ASN / Principal Teacher Early Years;

- specialist teachers (for example the Teacher for Deaf Children or the Lead Teacher for Visual Impairment);
- Psychological Services;
- appropriate services and agencies outwith the establishment, such as Health, Social Work and CAMHS.

Additional support at this level may include (in addition to supports available at Stages 1 and 2):

- further, more substantial elaboration of the curriculum;
- advice and support being provided to the establishment from other specialists or agencies;
- placement (shared or full-time) in a Learning Centre, Parklands School or alternative setting;
- Access to Work Based Vocational Learning or other opportunities via a Flexible Learning Plan.

An Additional Support Needs Assistant may be utilised to help deliver these supports.

- 5.2 For children to receive ASN assistant support certain criteria require to be met. This assessment is identified as the point where inconsistent interpretation issues arise. The current system for allocating ASN assistant resources is based on assessing additional support need against criteria and principles. If the child's needs meet the criteria then an assessment of the number of hours required is undertaken. The process has to ensure that there is rigour in the system of allocation, particularly if the Education Service is to balance taking a needs based approach within a reducing budgetary situation.
- 5.3 The range of needs of our children and young people is vast and complex (as set out at 3.16) and can often be compounded by environmental factors related to domestic circumstances. As a result, the approach outlined above allows for a rational and rigorous assessment of need to be undertaken in an equitable way, with the individual circumstances of each child or young person also considered fully when making decisions about the allocation of appropriate support.
- 5.4 Reasons for needing Additional Support in Argyll and Bute

ASN	ABC**	Scotland
Autistic spectrum disorder	5.30%	3.40%
Bereavement	0.42%	0.60%
Communication Support Needs	2.47%	1.60%
Deaf blind	0.04%	0.00%
Dyslexia	4.92%	3.60%
English as an additional language	1.81%	6.00%
Family Issues	1.88%	3.30%

Hearing impairment	1.39%	0.50%
Interrupted learning	0.51%	1.00%
Language or speech disorder	3.87%	2.60%
Learning disability	3.19%	1.70%
Looked after	1.62%	1.30%
Mental health problem	0.92%	1.20%
More able pupil	0.26%	0.50%
Other	1.49%	3.30%
Other moderate learning difficulty	2.63%	4.50%
Other specific learning difficulty (eg numeric)	3.89%	3.80%
Physical health problem	3.12%	2.20%
Physical or motor impairment	3.66%	1.20%
Risk of Exclusion	0.16%	0.20%
Social, emotional and behavioural difficulty	9.62%	7.80%
Substance Misuse	0.05%	0.10%
Visual impairment	1.36%	0.70%
Young Carer	1.97%	0.70%

**\*\*Based on census 2020 data**

5.5 The ASN budget supports a cohort of 45.5 FTE support teachers grouped around an allocation to 8 individual clusters. These teachers are not part of the school roll and are managed centrally by Education Support Officers (ESOs). Since April 2017, there has been a confirmed staffing allocation of support teachers to each area.

## **6.0 Current Landscape and Requirement to Respond to Projected Levels**

6.1 The Education Service is experiencing unprecedented levels of demand for Additional Support across all education settings, with particular pressures stemming from an increase in more complex needs. At present, our current internal provision extends to only one standalone Specialist provision which is Parklands School in Helensburgh, and for the past two academic sessions the service have had to use capital funds to extend the internal spaces within the building in order to increase the pupil capacity. It is worth noting that currently Parklands School only serves those residing within the Helensburgh and Lomond area, with no similar provision existing in any of the other localities.

6.2 Learning Centre provision has been established in a number of areas as outlined in the diagram in this report, however the service have also had to invest in the expansion of many of these provisions to include capital works and an increase in requisite staffing to meet the needs of children within the local areas which have access. **For those residing outwith these areas, as highlighted in yellow on the diagram, there is no access to any specialist provision of this nature** and these children have specialist support allocated to their mainstream schools in order to meet their needs. This is allocated via

the central ASN budget which creates significant pressure due to the wide spread of needs across mainstream settings. Work will be undertaken to accurately model the number of learners who are currently accommodated in mainstream provision across the areas not currently served by Learning Centres, and whose needs would be more effectively met if these proposals are taken forward. At present, colleagues within the Education Psychology Service and Inclusion teams estimate that around 35 learners are in this position. These individuals would benefit directly from the establishment of the proposed four new Learning Centres.

- 6.3 The most recent staffing exercise undertaken by our Inclusion and Equality Team evidenced a continued year-on-year requirement for an increase in support for our children with Additional Support needs within our mainstream schools and given the budgetary constraints being faced across all local authority services, this budget has had to be right-sized. A review of provision in each setting has been undertaken and allocation of support adjusted accordingly. Other funding streams which have been allocated by the Scottish Government in regards to taking forward the Actions of the Additional Support for Learning Review of 2020 have been utilised appropriately to ensure that pupils with Additional Support Needs are having their entitlements met by maximizing the available budget without having to look to vire funds from the wider education budget.
- 6.4 With a greater investment in an equitable specialist provision such as those outlined within the proposal, this level of need within mainstream settings would be reduced. Within Appendix 1 and 2, a snapshot of possible reduction in spend into mainstream settings is outlined for one year. Circa £359k has been identified as the potential revenue saving- based on an analysis of current spend into mainstream which would be streamlined if these learners had access to one centrally located enhanced provision as outlined.
- 6.5 While the numbers of children and young people currently educated outwith Argyll and Bute remains relatively low, the cost of these placements require significant expenditure to be directed to meet the needs of a very small number of young people. At present this cost is **£449,362.81 annually** for day placements which is funded wholly from the existing Education Budget. As identified in Appendix 3, there are four pupils currently accessing external day placements who can potentially return to education within their local school, if the proposals were taken forward with a saving of **£202,440** per annum.
- 6.6 For children residing in areas outwith Helensburgh and Lomond and the Eastern side of Bute and Cowal, access to external day placements is not possible and as a result only residential care or remaining in mainstream is the only option. This creates an inequity which could be partially addressed if the proposals as outlined were taken forward. **If Learning Centre and Enhanced Wellbeing Hubs were in place, the need to consider residential placements would be accordingly reduced.**
- 6.7 At present a further **£704,615** is spent on residential placements by the

Education Service. These placements are jointly funded by Social Work and the overall cost is significantly higher. It is anticipated that if the proposals as outlined in this paper are taken forward, further work could be undertaken to assess the possibility of some of these children currently accessing external residential provision to return to Argyll and Bute. This would create a cost saving against the external placement budget.

- 6.8 Review of the existing provision within Argyll and Bute against presenting needs has led to the development of an approach with a longer term aim to reduce further the number of young people educated outwith the authority and to address the emerging issues of young people for whom full-time placement in a mainstream classroom setting is not possible nor appropriately meeting their needs. This is in line with the Council's priorities as outlined at 2.3.
- 6.9 In order for us to provide the necessary level of resource to maintain an equitable access to appropriate enhanced provision for our children and young people living with significant additional support needs, the gaps in our current portfolio (as outlined in the diagram in this report) require to be addressed.
- 6.10 The Education Service are currently working on a review of ASN Allocation processes, which determines the allocation of ASN Assistant Hours into mainstream schools. The options being considered are designed to offer a greater equity of provision, and to empower Headteachers to allocate resources to the children within their care and whom they know best. The options being considered also offer greater potential for risk-management in relation to budget and a clearer mechanism for forecasting spend year-on-year.

**7.0 In response to the challenges outlined, the following recommendations for future improvement to our learning estate are proposed:**

**7.1 Learning Centre Provision (Phase 1)**

An increased level of need for Learning Centre places is creating significant pressure on existing resources, and in some cases, a lack of local specialist resource is seeing a number of learners having to travel to provision outwith Argyll and Bute, at significant cost to the local authority, as well as significant emotional cost to the young person and their family. This is particularly noticeable in the Helensburgh and Lomond Area and Dunoon areas, which have access to external placements in a way which is less viable for learners living in our more rural settlements.

The above can also, in part, be attributed to an inequity of provision of enhanced resource, including Learning Centres, across the geographical educational estate. Another consequence of this, as noted above is that learners who require enhanced provision, simply do not access it and as a result pressure is placed on the mainstream setting which they attend and ASN Assistant Hours require to be significantly increased. The information below summarises provision in each locality area and highlights the 'gaps' which are

leading to young people and families facing significantly greater barriers in the meeting of their needs.

In Argyll and Bute children and young people with a wide range of complex and challenging needs are effectively supported within their local schools, however with needs increasing we are seeing greater parental demands as well as an increasing strain on our service workforce as a result of the growing incidents of dysregulated behaviour.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 states the assumption of mainstreaming children with additional support needs.

This inclusive approach requires additional support needs resources to be targeted directly to schools. Within Argyll and Bute there is **one** Special School and a number of Learning Centres located within schools across the authority, however their location has led to an inequity of provision which is felt keenly by learners and their families as well as the staff working to support a wide range of needs.

The premise of Learning Centres being based within schools allows children with complex needs to access a high level of support and an elaborated curriculum with the option of attending mainstream classes as part of their timetable, as appropriate. This approach allows an individual and tailored method of inclusion for the child which can be reviewed regularly and adapted to suit their needs. Importantly, this method of providing an enhanced provision allows children to maintain a full lifestyle within their local area, and does not require long periods of time travelling to external placements on a daily basis or in some of the most complex cases, on a residential basis.

The staffing of the special school and the Learning Centres is applied on a formula basis according to a staff to pupil ratio to provide consistency across Argyll and Bute. The special school and the Learning Centres provide dedicated, appropriate physical spaces for those with severe and complex needs to use for their learning. We have Learning Centres (LCs) within mainstream settings where the pupil can access mainstream parts of the curriculum as appropriate and to allow maximum opportunities for inclusion.

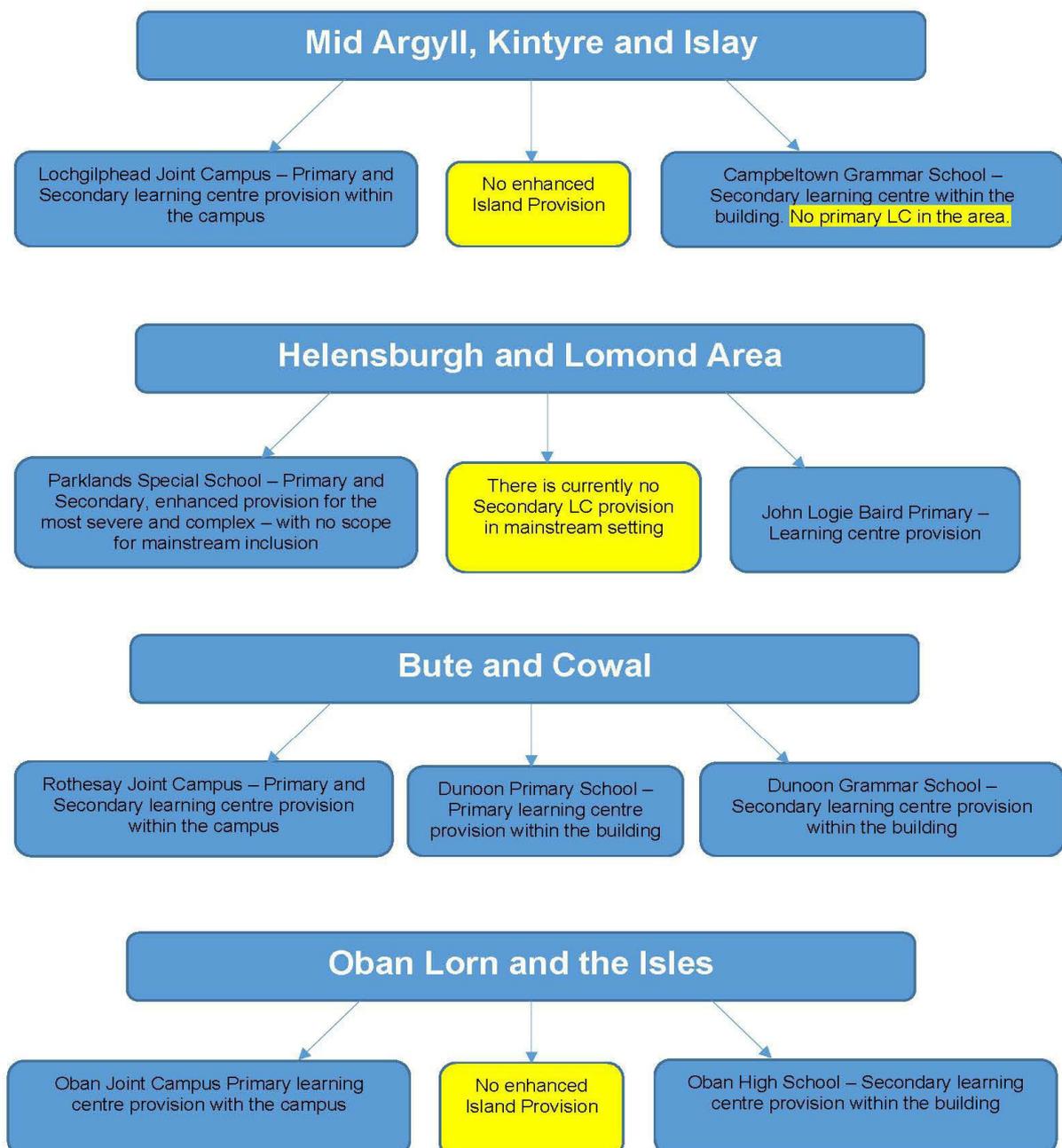
These facilities are bespoke and many include accessible teaching spaces, breakout quiet rooms, low stimulus, and high stimulus sensory rooms, appropriate outdoor space, changing facilities with the necessary equipment for people with physical disabilities, laundry facilities and accessible life skills kitchen areas. Elaborated curriculum activities can include horse-riding, swimming, learning in the outdoors and life-skills activities in the local community.

A theme of the feedback from the 2022 ASN consultation from stakeholders was the inequitable provision across different geographical areas in the authority.

The diagram on the next page shows our current Learning Centre provision for complex needs learners. Most notably, it identifies the gaps where we see an absence of provision and hence, a challenge in meeting the needs of some of our most vulnerable learners.

**All of this creates an inequity of educational experience and a detrimental impact on the attainment, achievement and potential for positive outcomes of this high priority cohort of our learners.**

**An Overview of Enhanced Provision across Argyll and Bute's Education Estate**  
**(May 2023)**



In order to make the access to Learning Centres more equitable across Argyll and Bute, we would require to establish **primary Learning Centre provision in the Campbeltown area**, as well as **island Learning Centre provision on Mull and on Islay**. Similarly, **a secondary provision in the Helensburgh and Lomond area**, within Hermitage Academy would reduce the number of young people being educated in external day placements outwith the local area. Although our smaller islands would not have provision directly, the coverage would be expanded to allow travel to more accessible provision as part of an agreed learning plan for individual pupils. The diagram on the previous page gives a clear overview of coverage currently and where the inequity currently exists.

**A breakdown of costs and necessary resources for phase 1 is noted in the appendix 1 attached.**

The works could be planned in a phased timescale, without requiring all to be completed simultaneously, however to address the level of need currently being experienced and that which is projected, progressing with all would tackle the issue of inequity directly.

## **7.2 Secondary Enhanced Wellbeing Hubs (Phase 2)**

While our Learning Centres provide an accessible environment, an enhanced pupil to staff ratio and the flexibility for a bespoke curriculum they are predominantly used by our most complex needs learners who can be experiencing both cognitive and physical impairments. The proposal to develop a number of Secondary Enhanced Wellbeing Hubs in addition to the four new Learning Centres proposed, would allow the Education Service to address the growing social, emotional and behavioural needs of a number of children and young people in a much more effective and efficient manner.

This vulnerable cohort of our children and young people are those with **complex emotional and mental health needs**. Often these children and young people require to access enhanced provision outwith the local authority at a tremendous cost, but are also often the learners from whom we see a disengagement and inability to access mainstream learning on a full –time basis. **The result of this is a significantly reduced capacity to meet their potential.**

Across the local authority we have many Care Experienced children and young people, Gypsy Travellers, Young Carers and those on the edge of exclusion and with highly dysregulated behaviour as a result of severe and complex emotional needs stemming from trauma.

The proposal to develop Secondary Enhanced Wellbeing provision within four mainstream secondary schools within the authority is a direct mechanism to tackle the challenges outlined above and to give our learners the best chance of successful outcomes. Adequately providing for their specific needs will support an improvement in attendance, engagement, attainment and achievement and secure the best possible outcomes for them as learners.

The proposal would allow schools to provide the extra support and flexibility required to create bespoke package of education for young people which avoids disengagement from education and the risk of these learners failing to attain and becoming marginalised from potential for securing a positive post- school destination.

It is anticipated that in the development of these provisions, a number of children at the primary stage who are currently transported outwith the local authority on a daily basis could be returned to their mainstream setting for their secondary education and importantly, the projected need to send further children outwith Argyll and Bute as they move into secondary education would be reduced accordingly. **Appendix 2 outlines the projected need for external day placements likely to be required within the next year.**

It is not possible to project exact numbers of learners possibly requiring external provision beyond the next 5 years, however given the pattern of emerging need across the country and Argyll and Bute specifically, the development of Secondary Enhanced Wellbeing Hubs allows us to future proof our Learning Estate and protect the most vulnerable cohort of children and young people within their own communities.

The benefits in developing these Secondary Enhanced Wellbeing provisions are threefold: (i) return pupils from external day placements, where possible (ii) Future-proof our provision in a way which reduces the need to send pupils to external day placements over coming years and (iii) provide a more robust resource to serve pupils with complex emotional and behavioural needs who are not currently achieving their potential within full-time mainstream settings.

### **7.3 Returning Pupils for External Day Placements – Further Detail**

At present we have four primary aged children in total, currently accessing external day placements for education who could potentially have their needs met within Argyll and Bute Enhanced Wellbeing provision if the resources were in place as noted above.

Placements within Crossreach School, Erskine Waterfront are currently purchased at £65,000 per child per annum, while placements in Spark of Genius, Skypoint School in Faifley cost between £24,460 and £44,487 per annum depending on the level of support required.

At present the Education Service fund the entire cost of these placements. These figures do not include the additional cost of daily transport to and from placement as well as any requirement for an escort in this regard. Although transport costs are not covered by the Education budget, a snapshot of the current costs incurred for external day placements is included at Appendix 2 and totals **£86.086**.

The children in Crossreach are currently at the upper primary stage with at least 6 years of school education remaining. Successfully providing support for four young people within Argyll and Bute rather than via external placements would

allow release of around £260,000 annually from the day / residential special school placement budget which is currently overspent. Similarly, a significant saving in transport costs could be made.

**The anonymised detail within Appendix 2 gives an overview of the current Spend on External Day Placements for Education, as well as outlining the projected need for imminent external placement and the stage at which each of these learners is at within education.**

It further outlines the current annual cost of enhanced support for a small number of learners whose needs could be met more effectively and cost of support streamlined, if the proposal for Enhanced Wellbeing Hubs is taken forward. **These costs are accrued as a result of having to employ specific staff to support them in their local settings- this is not the most efficient use of budget or resource.**

#### **7.4 Prioritisation**

Prioritisation of the above proposals would see the development of the 4 Learning Centres as an immediate area of need to be implemented as soon as is possible in relation to expenditure and feasibility. This would directly address some of the key concerns about equity of resource in the areas where we see 'gaps' as illustrated in this report.

The Enhanced Wellbeing Provisions are also of significant importance as we seek to reduce the number of our children and young people who require to access appropriate education provision from external providers as well as reducing the potential for school exclusions.

#### **8.0 Funding the Proposal**

8.1 As outlined, the education service are facing a significant budget pressure in regards meeting the complex additional support needs of a growing number of our children and young people. It is anticipated that this pressure will continue to grow as outlined in section 1, if we do not look at delivering provision in a more effective, equitable and efficient way from within our existing Learning Estate.

Argyll and Bute Council is not alone in having to address the growing additional and complex needs of our children and young people, ideally a national discussion on how education services can manage this emerging landscape more effectively within core provision is required and would be welcomed. The proposed development of four new Learning Centres and Secondary Enhanced Wellbeing Hubs as outlined in this report is a strategy which the service believes will address these concerns on a local level in-so-far as possible, whilst future proofing the learning estate for our children and young people. It does so in an equitable way which offers consistent resource across all of our localities.

8.2 In order to avoid having to request a significant amount of funding from the Council to resource the proposals as outlined, the Education Service has

developed them on the basis that the projected capital and revenue costs would be met from savings within the existing Education Service budget as outlined in Appendix 1. This would allow for the establishment of four new Learning Centres.

- 8.3 The proposals require to be balanced alongside the overall budget gap facing the Council and take into account the potential savings options which may well come forward to help bridge the gap. The funding, particularly on the revenue side, are in effect savings options that have been identified early that would therefore not be available to be used as savings options if put into this proposal.
- 8.4 The proposed use of existing funds is outlined below in regards to Capital and Revenue Resource Requirement for Phase 1 (Learning Centres)
  - 8.4.1 The **Capital Resource Requirement** of £1,255,000 for the Phase 1 – Learning Centres will be funded from an existing Education Unspent Budget Earmarked Reserve agreed at Council in June 2023.
  - 8.4.2 The **Revenue Resource Requirement** of £495,560 for Phase 1 – Learning Centres will be funded from additional funding received from the Scottish Government as part of their 100 day promise to increase support within schools.
  - 8.4.3 There would be a natural pause between phase 1 (Learning Centres) and phase 2 (Secondary Enhanced Wellbeing Hubs) of the proposals being taken forward in order to re-evaluate the position and impact and to allow a review of the use of revenue funding.
  - 8.4.4 On the basis that the proposals then proceed to phase 2 the estimated capital and revenue costs to do this would require to be met, either by the Service identifying these from within existing Education budgets, or by these estimated costs coming forward as a funding request to the Council.

The Capital Resource Requirement for phase 2 is estimated at £300,000.

The Revenue Resource Requirement for phase 2 is estimated at £612,124.

- 8.5 In agreeing to progression of these proposals, a number of the Council priorities are addressed with means of measuring tangible impact on key data in relation to attendance, exclusion, attainment and achievement.

## **9.0 CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 In conclusion to the report, and in light of the significant increase in the level of additional need being displayed across the pupil population, which can also be evidenced nationally, it is recommended that the proposals for future service transformation and improvement are progressed as outlined.
- 9.2 In putting forward these proposals, the Education service are conscious of the Council's financial position and the need to find significant savings over the

coming years. The Service are currently working on a number of savings options to be outlined as we move forward with the budget process.

- 9.3 There would be a natural pause between phase 1 (Learning Centres) and phase 2 (Secondary Enhanced Wellbeing Hubs) of the proposals being taken forward in order to re-evaluate the position and impact and to allow a review of the use of revenue funding.
- 9.4 The view of the Service, is that addressing the growing complexity of Additional Support Needs within our children and young people and doing so in an equitable way, is of the highest priority. The approach which the service believes should be taken, irrespective of how it is funded is that set out in this paper.

## **10.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Policy - None
- 10.2 Financial – The capital and revenue costs relevant to this proposal are outline in Appendix 1.
- 10.3 Legal – The statutory duties of the Council will be met.
- 10.4 HR – Potential alterations to management structures within ASN team will be considered.
- 10.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
- 10.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – All legislative requirements will be met
  - 10.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - None
  - 10.5.3 Islands – Potential to develop greater equity of access to ASN provision.
- 10.6 Climate Change - none
- 10.7 Risk – Appropriate consultation and scrutiny of process will mitigate risk.
- 10.8 Customer Service – Improvements in service/provision to better meet individual needs is being sought.

**Douglas Hendry - Executive Director with responsibility for Education**  
**Councillor Yvonne McNeilly – Education Policy Lead**

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Funding Detail for Phase 1

Appendix 2 - Current Spend on External Day Placements for Education

## Appendix 1

### Additional Support Needs Review

#### Phase 1

Learning Centres - Estimated Capital Costs	£	Potential Funding Available for Capital Expenditure	£
Adaptations Hermitage Academy (Secondary Learning Centre)	255,000	Unspent Earmarked 21-22 DSM School Carry Forward (These funds require to be spent within Education)	1,255,000
Costing for Primary Learning Centre Campbeltown Area	300,000		
Costing for Primary Learning Centre Isle of Mull	300,000		
Costing for Primary Learning Centre Isle of Islay	300,000		
IT Equipment	100,000		
<b>Total Estimated Capital Costs</b>	<b><u>1,255,000</u></b>	<b>Total Estimated Funding Available</b>	<b><u>1,255,000</u></b>

Learning Centres - Estimated Revenue Costs		Potential Revenue Funding	
<b>Staffing Costs - Learning Centres (Costed at New Salary Scales)</b>		Application of identified savings	495,560
4.4 FTE Teachers (1.1 Teacher per Setting)	282,212		
300 Hours ASN Support (75 hours per setting) per week	213,348		
<b>Total Estimated Employee Revenue Costing</b>	<b><u>495,560</u></b>	<b>Total Estimated Recurring Revenue Funding Available</b>	<b><u>495,560</u></b>

<b>Shortfall Phase 1</b>	<b>0</b>
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