

OUR CHILDREN, THEIR NURTURING EDUCATION

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Nationally mental health is a priority for all practitioners working with children and young people as outlined in the *Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027*. Improving the mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people is a key priority within the Children and Young People's Service Plan 2020-2033.
- 1.2. ***Our children, their nurturing education*** (OCTNE) is the authority wide education strategy that brings together nurture, adverse childhood experiences and trauma-informed practice. This will make a significant contribution to the development of a trauma responsive education workforce. The strategy ensures that children and young people will have access to wellbeing programmes and supports to enhance prevention and early intervention while providing more specialist support where required. These are core aims of the Children and Young People's Service Plan 2020 – 2023, with reporting through the Trauma Strategy Group and governance sitting with *Argyll and Bute's Children*.
- 1.3. The implementation of the strategy is being led by the Educational Psychology Service, including the Principal Teacher for Nurture and two Nurture Teachers who have been seconded to these roles.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC) places children and young people's wellbeing at the centre of all assessment and planning. These principles are now enshrined in legislation in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) which reinforces the rights of children and young people. Many of the key components of GIRFEC can be found within a nurturing approach, including the focus on wellbeing, an understanding of resilience and a need to implement thorough assessment to support children and young people's wellbeing needs.
- 2.2 Health and wellbeing are also key components of the ***Curriculum for Excellence*** and ***Building the Ambition*** which emphasise the need to ensure that children and young people develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing now and in the future.
- 2.3 Education Scotland in their publication ***Applying Nurture as a Whole School Approach*** states:
- 'The National Improvement Framework sets out clear priorities to deliver excellence and equity, including: closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people and improving children and young people's health and wellbeing. A nurturing approach places both of these priorities at the heart of a school and early learning and child care settings improvement agenda and is a key focus for many Local Authorities to support the closing of the poverty related attainment gap.'*
- 2.4 The recent review of the implementation of the Education (Scotland) (Additional Support for Learning) Act 2004 highlights that *'the National Improvement Framework must be revised to ensure parity for additional support for learning. This framework must be rooted in improvement methodology and assist in*

reinforcing a culture of improvement rather than compliance. Improvement methodology is rooted within the OCTNE accreditation process.

- 2.5 NSPCC research identified that it is the quality of relationships that support children to overcome adversities. This requires time and resource. There is a clear indication that nurturing approaches should be central to developments in schools at this time, with a focus on identifying the impact of the interventions. Wellbeing is rightly at the heart of the Argyll and Bute Education Service recovery plan, with OCTNE as a central component. Experiences of trauma and their impact contribute to significant barriers to learning. If children and young people are to be supported to reach their potential through education and beyond there requires to be a sustained commitment to meeting their wellbeing needs.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee notes:

- 3.1 The progress of the strategy against initial objectives and support the ongoing commitment that all educational establishments will become communities with nurture and relationships at their centre to support the mental health and wellbeing of all children, young people, families and staff.
- 3.2 The ongoing commitment to fully embed OCTNE in educational establishments across the authority over a journey of at least 5 years.
- 3.3 That a successful approach will be one in which systems and procedures are in place and capacity is developed in local areas that is not dependent on the Educational Psychology Service, including our Nurture Teachers in the longer term. This will likely be beyond 5 years.
- 3.4 That the need to consider funding streams which will allow for ongoing support through OCTNE, in particular the Principal Teacher for Nurture and Nurture Teachers over the next 3 – 5 years.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Between September 2018 and December 2019 the Educational Psychology Service led an authority wide nurture and relationships strategy group, composed of head teachers/depute head teachers and education support officers across Argyll & Bute. Using the Education Scotland self-evaluation and planning framework of looking outwards, looking inwards and looking forwards, we undertook an audit of nurture practice across the authority, including barriers, considered best practice from other local authorities, and used this evidence to develop a nurture and relationships strategy proposal for the Education Management Team.

- 4.2 In support of planning for recovery from COVID-19 an updated proposal was prepared for the Education Management Team in June 2020, and agreement for recruitment of a Principal Teacher (PT) for Nurture followed. The PT Nurture was recruited in October 2020 but was unable to be released from school until February 2021.
- 4.3 The OCTNE framework and accreditation model were developed, and the first cohort of schools enrolled in OCTNE in March 2021. A second cohort enrolled in November 2021 and a third cohort, focusing on Early Years establishments is in the initial planning and engagement stage.
- 4.4 There are now 29 (33%) schools engaging with OCTNE, with 23 already having achieved bronze accreditation (nurture committed), 1 silver accreditation (nurture aware) and 2 gold accreditation (nurture informed).
- 4.5 Initially the aim of the strategy was to support schools to become communities with nurture and relationships at their centre, as part of their recovery from COVID-19 (trauma informed). With the addition of two Nurture Teachers (September 2021), the strategy has expanded and is able to offer increased support to education establishments. This expansion is supporting schools to establish targeted nurture interventions for groups of pupils (trauma skilled) and supporting the team around our most distressed young people who are at risk of educational placement breakdown (trauma enhanced). The role of the Nurture Teacher is focused on providing intensive but time-limited support through coaching, consultation and building capacity in staff and schools to make this targeted provision sustainable.
- 4.6 Funding for the Principal Teacher for Nurture is in place until February 2023. The additional Nurture Teachers are funded from the Council Covid Recovery monies, and were initially seconded until September 2022. Funding has recently been identified that allow them to be in place until June 2023 to continue this valuable work.
- 4.7 Nine schools are being supported by the Nurture Teachers (NTs) to set up, or further develop, their targeted nurture provision for vulnerable pupils. Four schools are also receiving input from NTs to support five pupils who are, or were, at risk of educational placement breakdown.
- 4.8 A series of 6 podcasts have been developed to support the understanding of all 6 nurture principles. These can be included within Teachers GTCS log and contribute to their on-going Continuing Professional Development. These are available to all staff (including education, health and social work) within Argyll and Bute on Spotify and Anchor to ensure easy access. Feedback has been very positive with listeners across both Scotland and UK engaging and sharing this resource.
- 4.9 To date, a number of significant successes have been noted:

- Improvement methodology and small tests of change are being conducted at the individual school level, with the support from the Nurture Teachers.
- The accreditation and moderation model is supporting a high standard and consistency across Argyll and Bute, from early years through to secondary schools.
- The 3 day leadership training that was delivered by Educational Psychologists and the Nurture Teachers was highly evaluated with the following comments made by participants;
 - ‘One of the best training courses I have attended!!’*
 - ‘Gold star for everyone on the team. The course was paced really well and you had my full attention throughout!!’*
 - ‘Loved the interactive jam boards and will look forward to getting the follow up resources. Look forward to November conference and hope we can all be there in person.’*
- Higher quality targeted interventions are increasingly being implemented with fidelity, across Argyll and Bute, and expertise in nurture interventions is no longer restricted to the Helensburgh area.
- The capacity and skill of our workforce in schools is gradually increasing, and in some situations this has reduced the need for more specialist support from other agencies and central education teams in setting up targeted nurture supports.
- The work of OCTNE in developing nurturing cultures across our school communities was highlighted in Education Scotland’s National Health and Wellbeing Review (published March 2022).
- Focus groups with pupils and parents across two secondary schools have been undertaken and are currently being analysed. The information will be used to ensure that pupil and parental voice are included in the ongoing developments of OCTNE.
- A very successful conference was held in November 2021, bringing together representatives from schools involved in OCTNE, to hear from national experts in nurture and trauma in education.

4.10 As part of the Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress, published by the Scottish Government in March 2022, all Local Authorities are to develop annual stretch aims to ensure significant progress is made in recovering from the impact of Covid-19 and align to the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The required stretch aims are to be set to improve outcomes for all while closing the poverty-related attainment gap, in line with the model outlined by Scottish Government. The additional stretch aim is currently under development and will focus on this authority wide work on nurture in schools. The Central Team is working closely with the link Education Scotland Attainment Advisor, the PT Nurture and Educational Psychology Service to identify the key measure and define the stretch aim.

4.11 The recently launched Scottish Government consultation on *Included, Engaged and Involved Part 3: A relationship and rights based approach to physical*

intervention in Scottish schools, advocates well embedded nurturing approaches as central to reducing the need for seclusion or restraint of children and young people experiencing high levels of distress.

- 4.12 While significant progress has been made towards the initial objectives, and the addition of Nurture Teachers has allowed enhanced support to be available to schools and pupils, we are still at the early stages of a long and very worthwhile journey. For all of Argyll and Bute's educational establishments to become communities with nurture and relationships at their centre, and for this learning to be embedded, a period of at least 5 years will be required. For OCTNE to be a successful approach, where systems and procedures are in place and capacity is developed in local areas that is not dependent on the Educational Psychology Service, including our Nurture Teachers, this may realistically be longer.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Significant progress has been made against the initial objectives, and with the expansion of the strategy following the additional Nurture Teacher posts, progress has exceeded initial objects. This work will continue to contribute to the core aims of the Education Service Plan and the next Children's Services Plan beyond 2023, as we continue to embed our progress.
- 5.2 This is not a quick fix, but an ongoing journey of improvement and culture change, the importance of which has been amplified by the experiences of the global pandemic.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – OCTNE is currently aligned to local and national policy
- 6.2 Financial – Nurture teacher commitment moving forward
- 6.3 Legal - None
- 6.4 HR - None
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – Care experienced children and young people benefit significantly from nurture, relationship based approaches
- 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - None
- 6.5.3 Islands - None
- 6.6 Risk – inability to sustain this strategy in a way that ensures changes to practice at embedded and sustained
- 6.7 Customer Service - None

Douglas Hendry - Executive Director with responsibility for Education

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly - Policy Lead for Education

For further information contact:

Jen Crocket, Head of Education: Lifelong Learning and Support

Jennifer.crocket@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Sabrina Collins, Educational Psychologist

Sabrina.Collins@argyll-bute.gov.uk

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