

EDUCATION, LEARNING & LEISURE COMMITTEE – 23 MAY 2013

UPDATES TO SUPPORT STAFF IN SCHOOLS

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 **Comment on the service's progress with the implementation of the pupil support assistant (PSA) post in schools.**
- 1.2 **Agree to an interim evaluation of the implementation of the PSA post in June 2013, followed by a full review in August 2015.**
- 1.3 **Agree to a modification to the formula for PSA allocation as detailed in paragraph 2.4 below.**
- 1.4 **Instruct the Director of Education, Learning and Leisure to bring forward to a future Committee the results of the interim review of PSA implementation as described in paragraph 2.8 below.**

2 Background / Discussion

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory requirement to support children with additional support needs. All children and young people need support to help them learn and additional support may include a particular approach to teaching, deployment of personnel and/ or provision of particular resources. There are a wide range of factors that lead to children and young people having a need for additional support. These include the learning environment, family circumstances, disability or health need and social and emotional factors.
- 2.2 In March 2012 the Education, Learning and Leisure Committee agreed to a management review of Support for learning (SfL) Auxiliaries and the development of a formula based approach to the allocation of SfL Auxiliaries. This agreement prompted Head Teachers to highlight the need for a review of all staff who support pupils in schools. In response to the number of issues raised it was proposed that a new generic pupil support assistant (PSA) post be developed. This post has now been in place since August 2012 and provides a flexible approach to facilitating pupil learning and meeting pupil need.
- 2.3 The PSA post is allocated to schools using a formula agreed by Committee: 50% based on assessed pupil need across the school; 30% on school roll; 20% on deprivation factor as set out in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. School staff have been provided with full guidance on identifying the level of individual pupil need. Moderation of the recording of need occurs through Leadership for Learning (Quality Improvement) visits to school and through support work by officers. It is recognised that a more robust system for moderation of need across and between school clusters is required and plans are in development to extend this process for session 2013 to 2014.

- 2.4 Regular feedback is sought from teacher groups and trade unions about the implementation of the PSA post. Information from head teachers has suggested that the formula as outlined in 2.3 may not fully reflect the specific needs of an individual school, with some concern that support for general classroom practice may be affected. Given that the deprivation measure includes some factors associated with need, it is suggested that the formula may be slightly imbalanced with the wider deployment for PSAs in schools. Following statistical analysis, it is proposed to alter the formula for allocation to 40% need, 40% roll and 20% deprivation in order to ensure a fairer allocation of resource.
- 2.5 Whereas it is important to continue to work to ensure an equitable allocation of PSA to each individual school, there are always unknown, additional needs which arise during a school year, after PSA allocation. The proposed revised formula aims to provide increased flexibility. However, there will always be a need to consider small scale movement of PSA time from one school to another to respond to changing needs. A process exists for PSA movement through cluster groups. This is a new way of working for head teachers which requires time and some modification and further refinement to be fully effective.
- 2.6 A comprehensive training programme for PSAs is in constant development to ensure the enhancement of a skilled, flexible and stable workforce that can provide high quality support to all pupils, in particular those with additional support needs. Aberdeenshire Council's Learning and Development Online (ALDO) system has been utilised to provide consistent training guidance about the roles and responsibilities of the PSA including essential information relating to health and safety and child protection. Individual modules relating to specific needs such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Dyslexia and Sensory Impairment are underway alongside information about support strategies. PSAs also have access to Aberdeenshire Council's recently launched support manual which contains essential information for anyone working in our schools. In addition PSAs have access to professional development opportunities and training events arranged by their school or cluster ensuring that they are fully included in the developing life of a school. Work is also underway with the University of Aberdeen to explore the possibility of a small number of PSAs to be supported to complete teacher training. This opportunity applies to PSAs with a first degree who demonstrate the necessary skills and qualities to undertake a classroom teacher post. This will be a part-time study option and further promotes the role of a PSA as a positive career choice.
- 2.7 A system for replacing PSAs who are absent from work is in place and focused efforts to recruit relief PSAs has resulted in the creation of a suitable pool of staff available to offer support in schools at short notice. A teleworker is in place to respond immediately to school requests and she is supported by a traffic lighting system of all schools highlighting schools which require priority cover. For example it is essential that absences in special schools are covered immediately.
- 2.8 It was always the intention to fully review the implementation of the PSA post three years after initial employment, in August 2015. It is recognised that the implementation of the PSA post and allocation has required significant

changes to working practices for some colleagues and a process is underway to ensure everyone fully understands and works within the requirements of their role. It is therefore proposed to undertake a small scale interim review of the post by June 2013. The views of PSA staff with regard to support structures and changing remits will be sought alongside feedback from head teachers. Parent views on the changing role will continue to be gathered through the ongoing implementation of the review of enhanced provision and an audit of school, cluster and central processes for the deployment and management of PSAs will be undertaken. The scope of the interim review can be found in appendix one. Feedback from this process will be fed back to Education, Learning and Leisure Committee following consideration by Scrutiny and Audit Committee in September 2013.

- 2.9 Head of Finance, the Monitoring Officer within Corporate Services and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development have been consulted on the contents of this report, and have no adverse comments.

3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

- 3.1 The March 2012 report included a MEIA report. A further equality impact assessment is not required.

Maria Walker
Director of Education, Learning & Leisure

Report prepared by Pauline Stephen
25 April 2013

APPENDIX 1
Pupil Support Assistant Post
Scope of Interim Review

The headings below summarise the scope of the interim review of the pupil support assistant (PSA) post. Information in brackets at each heading describes the mechanisms for gathering data.

1. Background & Analysis (*collation of ongoing and existing work*)

Aberdeenshire Additional Support Needs (ASN) Figures & analysis, link to schools management information system
Review of Enhanced Provision (includes parental views re support levels)
Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) context
Universal to targeted support
Developing policy and evaluation tools
Change management
Budgetary context (964FTE, over £9 million, actual number of people, contingency fund)
Original PSA remit – Curriculum For Excellence (CFE), GIRFEC, ASN, increased flexibility, skilled workforce, improvement agenda
Benefits of targeted supported in local community & increasing use of flexible packages, role of tuition
Class Teacher General Teaching Council Scotland standards
Support Manual
ASN definition
Leadership for learning, quality assurance and support visits
Number of children and young people with complex medical needs

2. Duties and Remits (*Collation & PSA Survey*)

Clarity of roles: PSA, class/subject teacher, SFL Teacher
First Aid responsibilities

3. Management of Post (*Primary Head Teacher Council, Aberdeenshire Secondary Head Teacher Association, Enhanced Provision Project Board consultation, end of year Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats of central processes*)

(a) At School Level

School internal arrangements (timetabling, before and after school day, tea breaks)
Impact on outcomes for children
Attendance & absence
Morale
Cover arrangements

(b) At Cluster/LMG Level

Cover arrangements
Movement between schools
Relationships

- (c) At Centre
 - Cover Arrangements
 - Relief Pool
 - Formula Allocation

4. Development & Support (PSA survey, collation of work done, identification of next steps)

- Professional Development access and opportunity
- Range of professional development
- Use of Aberdeenshire Learning Development Online
- Relief pool access
- Use of Employee Annual Review
- Informal Support

5. Stakeholder Views (PSA Survey, ongoing union liaison, enhanced provision project board)

- Impact of permanent contracts
- PSA views (June 2013) Sector, roles, new tasks, training received & needed, aspects of role making positive difference to children and young people
- All stakeholder views (June 2015)

6. Communication (Collation)

- Planning processes and documentation for individual children
- Tracking and monitoring
- Literature
- Information Sharing

Timeline:

March 2013	Seek views of Scrutiny and Audit Committee on scope of interim review
April 2013	Further discussion with Scrutiny and Audit Committee
May 2013	Finalise scope
June 2013	PSA survey of views Consultation data Collation of review data
July 2013	Write up of review
September 2013	Report to Scrutiny and Audit Committee on review outcomes Action Plan agreed and reported to Education, Learning and Leisure Committee
Sept 2013 to January 2015	Implementation of Action Plan using plan, do, review cycle
March 2015	Agree Scope of Full Review
April to June 2015	Full Review
July 2015	Full Review analysis & collation
September 2015	Report back on Full Review