

East Lothian Council

Education, children and young people committee views on inquiry into additional support for learning

In response to your letter of 25 October 2023 regarding the above subject, please find detailed below response from East Lothian Council.

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.

Response:

- Through inclusive practice more children and young people being educated in their local communities and their local schools.
- Nurturing approaches and understanding of adverse childhood experience supports children and young people with social and emotional need to access their learning environments.
- Wide ranging definitions of what constitutes an additional support need ensures that all needs can be identified and met.
- National Practice Model GIRFEC wellbeing assessments ensures that a child or young person's wellbeing is considered holistically.
- More training opportunities and pathways for all staff working in this area to ease recruitment and retention of staff.
- More emphasis in the Curriculum for Excellence on parity of esteem to ensure that all learners get the recognition they deserve for their attainment and achievement.
- An Inclusion and Equity central team that have clear links set up with all schools and calendar of visits with schools to provide support and challenge. This team have both specific remits such as Care Experience and Safeguarding and Child Protection as well as wider Inclusion and Equity roles.
- Clear referrals pathways in place for schools to access additional resources, agencies and specialist provision placements.

What are the barriers to supporting this provision?

- ***any examples of good practice in this area;***

Response:

- Limited and reducing financial resource to meet the needs of an increasing population of children and young people.

- Retention and professional recognition of support staff can lead to quick staff turnover.
- Increasing numbers of children and young people with mental health problems and neurodiversity but long waiting lists to be supported by CAMHS.

Good practice:

- Single Point of Access for mental health supports provides clarity and consistency for schools to consider, refer and access through to services and resources available.
- Neuro Developmental Pathway provides clarity and consistency for schools to refer young people for consideration of ND diagnosis.
- However, budgetary pressures from across NHS means waiting times and assessment times are increasing.

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.

Response:

- Emphasis placed on welcoming schools and positive relationships.
- Our approach to GIRFEC through our Child Planning Framework ensures a team around the child approach to promote positive working relationships at all stages.
- Clear and consistent policies and guidance which are shared with parents and young people ensures open and transparent processes.
- Approaches to UNCRC and Rights Respecting Schools promote the voice of the child and young person.
- Mediation services are promoted and offered to resolve any disputes.
- Promotion of the services of advocacy groups including My Rights, My Say service and organisations such as Enquire to ensure parents and children and young people are fully aware of their rights.
- A wide variety of school staff such as Family Support Workers and links with partner organisations give parents and children and young people the opportunity to be supported by a range of staff.

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. 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.

Response:

Please the following excerpt:

ASN (Primary and Secondary Combined)	For ASN this is the school year in which they are decided as they include in year decisions and decisions for the following academic session					
School Year (decision made)	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	
ASN placing requests granted	2	0	1	3	11	
ASN placing requests refused	1	1	2	2	6	
ASN placing requests in total	3	1	3	5	17	

Primary and Secondary Combined	For mainstream this is the school year for which the request has been made eg decisions for 2023/24 are made by April 2023 for entry to the new school session in August 2023					
School Year (August)	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Non-catchment placing requests granted	147	145	148	149	152	181
Non-catchment placing requests refused	16	27	10	15	19	14
Non-catchment placing requests in total	163	172	158	164	171	195

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

Response:

- Open and transparent processes shared with parents and young people: [GIRFEC in East Lothian \(google.com\)](#)

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.

Response:

- Training provided to all staff at the annual census from the Equity & Inclusion team and Performance & Information teams to ensure consistency.
- Audit checks by school’s link Education Support Officers to highlight and remedy any apparent inconsistencies.
- Ongoing programme of CLPL sessions for school staff regarding SEEMiS records.

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

Response:

- ‘Learn – Pro’ online training modules on a wide variety of topics related to ASN available for all staff.
- In person and virtual CLPL events throughout the year. Consultation with school staff and partner agencies on what CLPL is considered requirement / priority.
- Support for Learning and Specialist Provision staff networks.
- Teaching and Support Staff conferences.

- PRD and professional update processes.
- School reviews.

Each school has a link Education Support Officer for Equity & Inclusion.

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?

Response:

- Communicating this with their child's Named Education Contact. Discussion at a Child Planning Meeting.
- Communicating this with the school's Education Support Officer who works in the central education team.
- Request that the local authority establishes whether the child / young person has additional support needs.
- Request, **at any time**, a specific type of assessment for the purpose of considering their additional support needs as well as when the local authority proposes to establish whether the child has additional support needs or requires a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP).
- Access to free mediation services. Escalation to complaints process.
- Refer to the Tribunal specified matters relating to CSP, appeals against the refusal of placing requests and failures by the local authority in relation to the duties regarding school to post- school transitions.
- Have access to a free advocacy service in Tribunal proceedings.
- An application for dispute resolution must be made to the Scottish Ministers.

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?

Response:

It is the duty of the local authority to meet the needs of all learners.

- Teachers and schools meet children and young people's needs through our GIRFEC approaches and associated Child Planning Framework. To support them there is also:
- CLPL opportunities

- Communicating, via their Line Manager, with the school's Education Support Officer and/or Quality Improvement Officer who work in the central education team.
- Links with partner agencies and associated services
- Support for Learning network
- Multi -agency forum (Child Planning Framework – Locality Team)
- Exceptional needs funding for individual pupils from the local authority Budget Access to specialist provision through the Education Resource group.

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