

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

31 January 1996

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Report No AC/42/96

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

ABSTRACT

This report describes some of the key aspects in relation to young people with special educational needs for whom the Education Authority has a statutory duty to ensure provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (a) notes the terms of this report;
- (b) instructs me to give a high priority to maintaining, and where possible improving, the educational provision for children and young people in Angus with Special Educational needs; and
- (c) instructs me to report back on specific proposals arising from discussions within the short-life working group which has been established, and also from discussions with neighbouring Councils.

CURRENT POSITION

- . In recent times, considerable legislative, philosophical and procedural change has affected teachers, local authorities, outside agencies and parents. Much of this change has been directly related to educational provision for children with Special Educational Needs.
- . These developments have led to substantial increases in costs, to greater expectations from parents and to a need for ongoing staff development for the staff who are dealing with children and young people with a range of needs.
- . Many children will, at some point, have a learning difficulty of one kind or another. For the majority, this may be a temporary problem to be solved with help from school and home, but for a few children the difficulty will be more persistent or severe and may require special help over a longer period of time. These children are said to have "special educational needs" and may have a Record of Needs opened for them by the Education Authority. This record will describe their needs and the measures proposed to meet these needs.

- . As a result of the 1981 Education Act the introduction of Records of Need, designed to assist in meeting the needs of a small number of children with more severe complex needs, has created a sometimes arbitrary division between learning support and special educational needs provision, leading to difficulties in decision-making to do with resourcing and placements for the children involved.
- . Special Educational Needs should be met within the framework of an education authority's policy on Support for Learning, based on the fundamental principles of early intervention, local resource provision, diagnostic assessment, partnership with parents, and responsiveness, with an emphasis on whole school approaches. Schools which have been most successful in supporting the learning of all pupils have shown a whole-hearted commitment to meeting individual needs and to providing guidance and support for all staff, with considerable emphasis given to the provision of an effective and motivating curricular experience for all pupils.
- . The role of parents over recent years has taken an increasingly high profile. In particular, many parents expect that their children will be educated as locally as possible. Whilst in general, provision at the local mainstream school has been the initial consideration for all pupils, it is recognised that there are implications for the kind of service which will be delivered by Angus Council, particularly with respect to the effective deployment of finite resources in meeting a diverse range of special needs across schools. In some cases a small number of pupils with very complex needs may be unable to attend the local school.
- . Children are likely to make the best progress when all those concerned with their education involve parents at all stages of planning and evaluation. It is recognised that parents support schools best when their views are respected and valued and their children's needs are understood and addressed.
- . It is expected that in all educational establishments, the whole staff will be responsive to change and will seek to ensure the most effective deployment of resources both human and material.
- . The provision of an effective and appropriate curriculum for all requires in the first instance a careful assessment of needs. This can be relatively straightforward or fairly complex and will depend on the special educational needs of individual pupils. It will involve parents and appropriate school-based staff but it may also involve other professionals, eg representatives from Health Board, Psychological Service, Social Work, specialist teachers.

- Class teachers are engaged in delivering the agreed curriculum to pupils in their classes. Where the special educational needs of these pupils are significant and/or diverse, class teachers should receive assistance from specialist and non-specialist colleagues. All class teachers will require to consult with parents.
- As part of a comprehensive support system for special educational needs, Tayside Regional Council has provided a pre-school home visiting service, mainstream and designated nursery places, supported places in primary and secondary schools and a peripatetic service and audiology service to the sensory impaired. This provision complements home and hospital teaching and the work carried out by Kingspark School, residential schools and college placements. At the level of school and service, there is provision for and access to support staff over and above mainstream staff both in the area of Learning Support, Special Educational Needs and Behaviour Support. An outreach service is provided from Kingspark School, the Education Authority contributes to the cost of Speech Therapy provision, and access has been established to services for the visual impaired. Enhanced provision to support children with specific learning difficulties within designated schools is currently in place.
- In certain nursery, primary and secondary schools training and care assistants are employed to meet the specific needs of individual children. A key element of this support is the responsiveness and flexibility of deployment which is central to effective support for learning. This flexibility is particularly important in a context of increasingly tightened budgetary constraints.
- In special circumstances the Education Authority can finance placement in residential schools and can also contribute to specialised residential provision. In addition, there is also ongoing demand for placement in the recently established national centre for conductive education, which is likely to be working closely in the coming months with the establishment of a more localised conductive education provision in Dundee, with the opportunity of Angus pupils having access to this facility.
- There is a statutory requirement for an education authority to operate an Educational Psychology Service to which a child may be referred. The psychologist may assess the development and the difficulties a child is experiencing without, at this stage, formally starting the recording process. A Record of Needs is not intended to be for all children who have difficulty with their learning in school, but only for those whose difficulties are pronounced, specific or complex, and likely to require continuous review.

- The first stage in formally opening a Record of Needs will involve the Community Child Health Service, the Educational Psychology Service, the parents, and the local school or pre-five services as appropriate.
- A programme of staff development has been provided with opportunities for all support for learning staff to undertake in-service training.
- Appendix 1 gives details of the enormous increase in the number of Records which have opened within Angus.

FUTURE PLANNING

A short-life working group has been established in order to identify issues about Support for Learning which Angus Council will require to consider, and to recommend appropriate ways of addressing these issues.

Preliminary informal discussions with the neighbouring councils of Dundee City and Perth and Kinross suggest that cooperation in making provision for pupils with special needs will be possible where appropriate. Future cooperation between neighbouring Councils in providing for children with Special Educational Needs may take different forms, for example:

- One Council provides a service and neighbouring Councils make use of this service, supported by inter-authority payments for individual pupils. It is suggested this approach is suitable for the three Special Schools currently in Tayside, for the Special Unit for Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired Children and also for Fintry Language Unit. See Appendices 2, 3 and 4.

Note: COSLA has established a working group charged with making recommendations on how best to manage inter-authority payments.

- An entirely informal arrangement is agreed between neighbouring Councils whereby staff working on the same area of provision but in neighbouring Councils are encouraged and supported by their employer in maintaining a cross-council support network with, for example, fortnightly meetings (possible example - Sensory Services.) See Appendix 4.
- Funding involves outside agencies (for example, BT Assist Project). See Appendix 5.

It is proposed that any specific recommendations arising from current discussions be reported back to the Education Committee as and when it is possible and appropriate to do so.

JIM ANDERSON
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

MSR/JC

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

RECORDS OF NEEDS AS AT 16.01.96

IN PROCESS	19
IN DRAFT	3
FINAL	342
TOTAL	364

RECORDS OPENED IN PAST YEARS

1983	2
1984	2
1985	6
1986	4
1987	1
1988	10
1989	8
1990	8
1991	5
1992	16
1993	61
1994	149
1995	68
1996	2
TOTAL	342
Plus In Process	19
In Draft	3
GRAND TOTAL	364

ANGUS PUPILS PLACED OUTWITH ANGUS

Tayside Regional Council

Macalpine Primary	2	
Kingspark	32	
Frances Wright Pre-School Centre	3	
Fintry Language Unit (1/2 days only)	3	
Glebe School, Perth	0	
Cherrybank School, Perth	0	
		40

Non Tayside Regional Council

New School, Butterstone	1	
Royal Blind School	2	
Aberdeen School for the Deaf	1	
Moore House	1	
Linn Moor	1	(50/50 funding with SW Department)
Lendrick Muir	2	
Falkland House	2	
Camphill Rudolph Steiner	1	
Starley Hall	1	
		<u>12</u>
		52

It is proposed that Angus pupils should continue to have access to these establishments on payment of an agreed fee to the appropriate body.

FINTRY LANGUAGE UNIT

This unit is based within Fintry Primary School, Dundee, and it operates in ways which allow pupils with language developmental delay to integrate in mainstream classes in Fintry Primary School, or in other locations in Angus or Dundee (none in Perth and Kinross at present).

The staff complement consists of 4 full-time teachers, one of whom is in a promoted post (AHT SEN), and all of whom are on the transfer scheme for Dundee City Council.

There are 5 children enrolled on a part-time basis from Angus (4 mornings only with additional peripatetic support and 1 review day only peripatetic support).

It is proposed that Angus pupils continue to have access to this provision on payment of an agreed inter-authority fee to Dundee City Council.

MULTI SENSORY SERVICES AND PRE-SCHOOL HOME VISITING SERVICE

SPECIALIST UNITS

The main specialist units in primary schools are in Macalpine Primary School for Hearing Impaired pupils, in Hillside Primary School, Dundee for pupils with Mild Hearing Loss and in Craigiebarns Primary School for Visually Impaired pupils. Craigie High School currently has units for Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired Secondary pupils.

Current numbers of Angus pupils attending these units are as below.

UNIT

Hearing Impaired Macalpine PS (Nursery Age)	3 1
Hillside PS, Dundee	0
Craigie HS	3
Visually Impaired Craigiebarns PS	1
Craigie HS	0
TOTAL	8

It is proposed that Angus pupils continue to have access to these units on payment of an agreed inter-authority fee to Dundee City Council.

PERIPATETIC SERVICES

The multi-sensory peripatetic service currently provides support to 82 Angus children (47 hearing impaired and 35 visually impaired).

The pre-school Home Visiting Service currently operates as part of the multi-sensory service team, supporting 16 Angus pre-school age pupils with Special Educational Needs.

It is proposed that an informal network across Councils be encouraged, along with an open mind on the part of all three Councils to future co-operation should unforeseen situations occur.

BT - ASSIST PROJECT

This project is based in Kirkton High School, and is funded in partnership with British Telecom, the University of Dundee, and SOED.

BT are providing £150,000 over 3 years, SOED £50,000 over 2 years, and staff from Dundee University are engaged in research on the development of appropriate software to enable pupils with communications difficulties to benefit from a broad based school curriculum.

Staff in the Unit consist of 1 development officer (solely currently funded by SOED), 1 seconded research teacher, who spends half her time attached to Dundee University, and 1 part-time clerical assistant.

The Unit is intended to enable peripatetic support to be given to various pupils from across Tayside Region, with changing pupil needs over time. The work of this project and its predecessors provides assessment for pupils across the whole of Tayside, coupled with advice on appropriate software which may be helpful to these pupils, and staff development opportunities for teachers working in mainstream schools with pupils who are experiencing communications difficulties.

Given the varying nature of the pupil population, together with the longer term research benefits of this project it is proposed that joint funding arrangements not directly related to pupil numbers at any given time are agreed.

