

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL - EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

POLICY STATEMENT ON PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SOCIAL COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES INCLUDING AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER

This policy statement has been developed collaboratively and collectively by the Autism Strategy Group which includes representatives from parents, mainstream and special education, Early Years, Primary and Secondary sectors, Dundee Educational Psychology Service, the National Autistic Society, NHS Tayside and the Social Work Department.

1.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

- 1.1** All Dundee City Council schools work within a framework of national and local policies. This policy statement is consistent with Education service policies with regard to learning, teaching, assessment and supporting learning. It details the Education Department's response to the specific needs of children and young people with social communication difficulties, including Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), within a wider framework of developmental disorders.
- 1.2** Children who experience difficulties with social communication, including ASD, are recognised as a population who require careful planning and consideration in educational settings. Diagnostic labels with associated patterns of behaviour include autism and Asperger's Syndrome. Many children may not have a medical label but nevertheless present with similar patterns of behaviour requiring consideration and review.
- 1.3** Children and young people with social communication difficulties, including ASD, may also share features of their learning style with others. These include:
- difficulties with focus, attention and concentration
 - problems with self-regulation and managing impulsivity
 - difficulties with motor movement
 - literacy or numeracy difficulties
 - specific language difficulty
 - sensory difficulties
- 1.4** The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 requires that children and young people with additional support needs are identified and supported. Dundee City Council responds to the Act by ensuring:
- early identification
 - partnership with parents
 - effective transitions
 - developing a range of provision - mainstream and special school
 - multi-disciplinary and collaborative work with partner agencies
 - staff training and development

2.0 EARLY IDENTIFICATION

- 2.1** Early identification is essential so that assessment of the child's needs, planning of educational provision and parental support can be facilitated.

2.2 Medical diagnosis is the responsibility of Health agencies. Assessment of educational needs and provision planning is the responsibility of the Dundee Education Department. Therefore, close communication between key agencies is essential.

3.0 PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

3.1 Partnerships with parents should ensure:

- open communication, provision of information and consultation with parents
- shared assessment of the child's needs
- involvement of parents in planning the child's programme of support

3.2 Informing parents:

- information is available for parents through this Policy Statement and Supporting Learning in Dundee Policy and Guidelines (2008)
- information, in leaflet form, is available to inform and support parents at times of their child's transition from one sector to another (ref para 6 below)
- information and associated links can be accessed through the Dundee City website

4.0 DEVELOPING A RANGE OF PROVISION

4.1 Dundee City Council Education Department endeavours to meet the needs of children with social communication difficulties, including ASD, through a developing range of provisions from mainstream school to residential special school, according to individual needs.

4.2 With the support of parents, we aim to establish a data-base of children with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The purpose of the data-base would be to inform planning and ensure that a coherent strategy to meet the range of needs continues to be developed.

4.3 Since 1996, the Education Department has taken a series of steps to improve the level of provision for children and young persons of all ages with social communication difficulties, including ASD, taking account of the severity of their disorder and their consequent support needs.

4.4 The Education Department is keen to manage the majority of children, with support, in mainstream schools, while recognising that a small minority of children with the most complex needs will require placement in a special school.

4.5 In Dundee, there are seven schools with enhanced levels of staffing to support children and young people with social communication difficulties, autism and Asperger Syndrome. These are Frances Wright Pre-School Centre, Kingspark School, Clepington Primary School, Fintry Primary School, Hillside Primary School, Harris Academy and Morgan Academy. Dundee City Council has engaged with the National Autistic Society in an accreditation programme which has resulted in five of these schools being NAS accredited. The good practice promoted by the accreditation has benefited specialist and mainstream provision throughout the city.

4.6 There is a significant number of children and young people who have social communication difficulties and may also have a diagnosis of ASD and whose symptoms are less severe such that they can, with support, fully access the mainstream curriculum.

4.7 Children in the process of assessment or exhibiting characteristic behaviours of developmental disorders are able to access the support of experienced staff.

4.8 The service offered to promote inclusion of children with developmental disorders in their relevant class will be expanded through the continuing development of existing support and consultancy provision.

5.0 MULTI-DISCIPLINARY AND COLLABORATIVE WORK

- 5.1** The Education Department maintains an ongoing dialogue with NHS Tayside and the Social Work Department regarding a co-ordinated approach to working with and supporting children and young people with social communication difficulties, including ASD, and their families.
- 5.2** Multi-disciplinary discussion with NHS Tayside and Social Work professionals is in place to improve the effectiveness of service delivery and information to parents.
- 5.3** Health and Education staff share responsibility for the joint implementation of support programmes in order to best address the needs of children.

6.0 PLANNING FOR TRANSITION

- 6.1** Transition is the term used to describe the process of a child moving from one sector of education to another i.e. nursery to primary, primary to secondary and secondary to post school provision. Transitions can be exciting and open up new opportunities for many children and young people. They can also be periods that are potentially difficult. We aim to ensure effective transition for all children and especially for young people whose learning opportunities may be challenged or compromised.
- 6.2** The most usual route for children and young people will be to enter their local nursery, primary, or secondary school and either employment or further education on leaving school. Good links between stages should ensure a smooth change for most children and young people and for their families. Some children and young people may have significant additional support needs that require assessment over time by one or more professional agencies in order to identify levels and types of support. For these children and young people, the transition will need a higher level of planning and preparation.
- 6.3** For some children who have - or may have - additional support needs, transition is a long-term process, consisting of professional observation, assessment, consultation and planning with parents.
- 6.4** Many of the issues associated with transition relate to the school environment and the things that make each setting different; for example, the size of the building, the layout, toilets, routines, people. The principles of identifying the key team around the child apply in all situations. It is the responsibility of the current and receiving placements to identify the team around the child and arrange a process of information sharing, transition planning and review.
- 6.5** Where significant additional resources may be required to support a child, decisions about placement are made by the Education Department with advice from multi-disciplinary panels.
- 6.6** For transition from nursery to primary and primary to secondary, a Resource Management Panel is responsible for recommending placement of children with recognised additional support needs. This panel is made up of a representative of Dundee Educational Psychology Service, Health Professionals from Armitstead Child Development Centre and the Therapy Services, and the Support for Learning Manager. Educational psychologists are invited to present individual case files to the panel.
- 6.7** The Panel meets in December. The information presented to the Panel, by the professionals, is a summary of their assessment and a minute of the Shared

Assessment and Planning for Transition Meeting, of which parents are an integral part. The minute reflects the shared views of professionals and parents.

- 6.8** When all the information has been shared and the recommendations considered, it is the Panel's duty to match the description of the child's need with an appropriately supported placement. Parents of children considered by the panel will be informed in January of the recommended placement.
- 6.9** Following assessment, children with emerging additional support needs can be placed by the Panel at other times throughout the session in a supported placement if their needs are assessed as requiring such provision.
- 6.10** When beginning to plan for transition, schools should seek and take account of relevant advice and information from other agencies no later than 12 months before the child who has additional support needs is expected to have a change in school education. For a child or young person who is expected to cease receiving school education the transition planning should begin in advance of the 12 months to allow time for involvement of other agencies and preparation of appropriate post-school provision. There may be individual circumstances, however, which do not allow for this.
Ref: "Supporting Children's Learning - Code of Practice"

7.0 STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 7.1** The field of social communication difficulties, including ASD, is a highly complex and varied one. It is important that there is appropriate in-service provision for staff who work with children and young people with social communications and ASD.
- 7.2** A successful programme of autism-related in-service has been developed in recent years. This will be built upon and extended as detailed below.
- 7.3** Dundee City Council, in close collaboration with key partners in NHS Tayside and Social Work, will continue to support staff and parents through:
- outreach training through the Mainstream Autism Strategy
 - twilights and seminars
 - attendance at CETA (Centre for Education and Training in Autism) training
 - special events
- 7.4** Partnership links with the National Autistic Society through the aforementioned programme of national accreditation provides staff with access to specialised, advanced training and networks of autism-specific schools and developments across the United Kingdom. This supports a process of continuous improvement in the quality of autism-specific service provision in the city.
- 7.5** Dundee City Council Education Department will provide targeted staff development opportunities to enable staff to develop the necessary skills and abilities to support children and young people with social communication difficulties, including ASD. These may include:
- attitude and values
 - communication skills
 - assessment and intervention skills
 - knowledge base and professional development skills
 - team work
 - management skills
- 7.6** Dundee City Council will develop training and information events to further involve parents as both audience and contributors.

8.0 SERVICE PLANNING

- 8.1** A multi-agency planning group - the Autism Strategy Group - has representatives from parents, Education practitioners, NHS Tayside and Social Work. This group plans the educational services available in the city's special and mainstream pre-school, primary and secondary school sectors for children and young people with social communication difficulties, including ASD.
- 8.2** A sub-group - the Mainstream Autism Group - supports the delivery of internal training and outreach services for mainstream school staff who work with those children and young people with ASD who can sustain educational placements in appropriately supported mainstream school settings.
- 8.3** A second sub-group - the Post-16 Autism Group - plans for improvements in transitional arrangements for young people with ASD who are about to leave secondary school to enter the world of further or higher education, employment or training. This sub-group has representatives from Careers Scotland, Dundee Educational Psychology Service, Educational Development Service, Dundee University, Abertay University, JobCentrePlus, NHS Tayside, Carolina House Trust, Social Work, Dundee College, Kingspark School and the two secondary school Resourced Locations.
- 8.4** The work of the Autism Strategy Group and its two sub-groups is consistent with the corporate Partnership in Practice Action Plan (ref Committee Report: 789-2004).

9.0 MAINSTREAM AUTISM STRATEGY

- 9.1** The Mainstream Autism Group was formed to develop a strategy to make the environment and the curriculum more accessible for children and young people with social communication difficulties including autism. There are three strands to this Mainstream Autism Strategy.
- *Resources* - Experienced staff advise mainstream schools on appropriate resources and support their targeted use. They support the adaptation of the classroom environment to suit the needs of individual children and young people.
 - *Training* - Bespoke training by members of the sub-group, other experienced practitioners and parents of autistic children is provided in order to increase the skills, abilities and motivation of mainstream school staff to sustain children and young people with social communication difficulties, including ASD, in mainstream settings
 - *Support* - Practical support is provided by experienced practitioners from each of the three sectors: nursery, primary and secondary. This is augmented by enabling staff from other schools to participate in Peer Shadowing in schools where good practice is evident in maintaining their inclusion of children with social communication difficulties, including ASD.
- 9.2** The models of outreach support in all three sectors (pre-school, primary and secondary) can be further varied to meet the needs of the pupils and staff of individual mainstream establishments.

10.0 POST-16 AUTISM STRATEGY

- 10.1** The Post-16 Autism Group was formed to develop a strategy to improve:
- 16+ transitional arrangements from statutory education to further or higher education, employment or training for young people with autism, and

- transitional support and consequent outcomes for young people by maximising appropriate alignment of provision and services with individual need.

11.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 11.1** Initial accreditation and subsequent annual re-accreditation through the national NAS Accreditation process has provided independent quality assurance. This has ensured that standards in Dundee's schools have remained high. This programme of accreditation is now under review and negotiations are in progress with NAS to look at a system which would offer a city-wide accreditation rather than specific school accreditation.
- 11.2** The inclusion of standards similar to NAS accreditation as part of the programme of Extended School Reviews ensures local good practice and accountability.
- 11.3** Individualised Education Programmes (IEPs) will be prepared collaboratively for all children with ASD. IEPs are used as planning tools which describe the child's additional support needs and appropriate measurable outcomes. The IEP will be regularly reviewed to evaluate progress and inform planning for next steps.
- 11.4** If a child also has substantial, continuing and direct involvement from one or more partner agency, then a Co-ordinated Support Plan will be considered for them. The CSP, if appropriate, will ensure that the support the child receives is co-ordinated to maximise the impact of the support for the child.

12 THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- 12.1** Schools will provide an environment that takes into account the additional support needs of children and young people with social communication difficulties, including ASD. In addition, targeted supports and approaches will be offered. These will include:
- appropriate opportunities to gain an understanding of the social world they live in and to develop life skills which they can use outside the school
 - opportunities to identify and develop their personal skills
 - opportunities to be included socially and academically with a wide range of peers

13.0 LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES AND PLANNING GROUPS

- 13.1** This policy is directly linked to the Education Department's policies relating to Supporting Learning and Learning Together in Dundee as well as the Department's Accessibility Strategy. It is, furthermore, directly linked to the corporate multi-agency Partnership in Practice Agreement 2004-2007.
- 13.2** Dundee City Council takes steps to ensure that all its services are well planned and articulate with our partners in the support of children, young people and families. Towards this end, the Autism Strategy Group and its two sub-groups, the Mainstream Autism Group and the Post-16 Autism Group, link with the following strategic and operational planning groups
- Support for Learning Administration Team
 - Support for Learning Group
 - Additional Support Act Dundee Implementation Group
 - Access and Inclusion Advisory Group
 - Transitional Review Group
 - Local Area Co-ordination

- Partnership in Practice
- Steering Group for Children with Complex and Additional Needs
- Children's Services Planning Groups
- Disability Action Group

Links to online services:

- National Autistic Society website - www.nas.org.uk
- Autism Services Directory - www.autismdirectory.org.uk
- Next Steps - www.nas.org.uk/content/1/c4/99/53/nextsteps.pdf (a post diagnosis resource for parents and practitioners)
- Training for practitioners and parents - www.autism-in-scotland.org.uk/training