

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE1 February 2024Report by Director of EducationSPOTLIGHT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING: READINESS
TO LEARN**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a spotlight for Education Committee on elements of the ongoing work being undertaken by the Education Department and our early learning and childcare settings and schools to support children and young people's wellbeing through readiness to learn.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the spotlight regarding children and young people's wellbeing and readiness to learn.

BACKGROUND

3. The Education Department's vision statement "*Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*" outlines the commitment and expectation that all learners will be supported to realise their potential.

4. Article 28 of the UNCRC states that children and young people have the right to education and that education should develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full (Article 29).

5. In order to achieve this, we need to ensure that all children and young people are ready and able to learn. Readiness to learn is a fundamental concept in education that refers to a child or young persons' ability and motivation to acquire new knowledge, skills, attitudes and participate in the life of the school. It encompasses various aspects, including cognitive, emotional, social, and physical readiness.

6. Committee will be aware of the year 1 evaluation report [Progress and Impact on Implementation of Strategic Equity Fund Plan 2022-26](#) which provided Education Committee with an update of progress related to the Strategic Equity Plan. This spotlight shines a light on key areas of readiness to learn in supporting children and young people's wellbeing and specifically their emotional, social and physical readiness and a full evaluation of the Strategic Equity Fund will be provided at the end of year 2. This paper will be complimented by presentations provided by Arthurlie Family Centre, East Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Service and St Ninian's High School.

7. The [Improving Outcomes Through Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding: Strategic Equity Plan 2023-2024](#) was approved at the September 2023 Education Committee and highlights the key actions related to readiness to learn.

8. A key measure of success as highlighted through the stretch aims is attendance in schools. Attendance in schools plays a pivotal role in shaping the attainment, achievement

and overall wellbeing of our children and young people. Regular attendance is not only a requirement but also a foundation for a student's educational journey. It is a crucial aspect that directly impacts academic achievement, social interactions, and future opportunities.

9. Although overall levels of attendance in East Renfrewshire are high, and favourable nationally, last session the stretch aim was not met and there is an ongoing drive to return to pre-pandemic levels of attendance.

REPORT

10. The Improving Outcomes through Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding: Strategic Equity Plan 2023-2024 highlights the following key actions related to readiness to learn:

- Early Intervention and prevention for secondary aged pupils experiencing emotionally based school avoidance;
- Comprehensive CLPL programme;
- Enhance partnership working to ensure pupils are well equipped to learn and engage in school;
- Implement Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy 2022 – 2025;
- Develop and implement a Social Justice Strategy;
- Promote digital inclusion;
- Expand and enhance the Healthier Minds Service to ensure an ongoing commitment to supporting the mental health, wellbeing, attainment and achievement of children and young people; and,
- Implement the recommendations from the department's ASN review.

11. The Learn Well Service has been established to support young people with their wellbeing and education while they are not attending school for reasons relating to Emotionally Based School Absence (EBSA). The Service works in close partnership with the young person, their family and school to ensure that their educational needs are met and that a range of opportunities remains open to them. In addition, the service offers extracurricular activities aimed at young people and their families to encourage positive engagement within the family unit and participation in wider social experiences. The service aims to improve outcomes for young people and help them to recognise their own potential.

12. The Learn Well Service was created by combining resources from different funding streams, including the Strategic Equity Fund, Care Experienced Children and Young People's Fund and the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. This has allowed the creation of a diverse team to support the different wellbeing needs of our most vulnerable learners, many of whom are care experienced or neurodiverse. The Service comprises one Outreach Teacher, one Pupil Support Assistant, one Neurodevelopmental Support Worker) and 1.5 Children 1st Project Workers. Together, the team have supported 26 young people through the Strategic Equity fund pathway and a further 11 young people through the Care Experienced Fund pathway. Intensive support is offered through home visits, one to one sessions, group support and online learning.

13. The Education Psychology Service has developed evaluation tools for the Learn Well Service in order to measure how young people feel about their health, wellbeing and education, this allows tracking of impact on health and wellbeing alongside other data such as participation. Data has highlighted the following impact:

- Almost all (90%+) of the young people have shown increased resilience and a willingness to engage in education. They have all pushed themselves out of their comfort zone with the support of the Learn Well team.
- Almost all (90%+) have engaged with learning activities appropriate to their age and stage.

14. The work of the Learn Well Service was recently the subject of a good practice visit from the Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise.

15. A range of professional learning opportunities has been developed to support wellbeing and readiness to learn and evaluations of these sessions have highlighted they have increased practitioner confidence and knowledge. These sessions include:

- Trauma Informed, Nurturing and Attachment Based Approaches
- Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Promoting Attendance, Engagement and Achievement
- Inclusive Practices
- Suicide Prevention and Self Harm

16. In order to support readiness to learn in the early years, the Educational Psychology Team have implemented an initiative called 'Bucket Time'. Bucket Time aims to develop joint attention, communication and interaction skills of children with Autism Spectrum Condition and other additional support needs. 132 early years' practitioners across 24 ELCC settings within East Renfrewshire have received Bucket Time training and evaluations of the programme have highlighted that it is having a positive impact on children's ability to communicate, interact and focus.

17. Work has continued linked to the [Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy](#) and has focused on 3 key themes:

- Communicate
- Collaborate
- Consult

18. Family Centred Approaches is a self-evaluation framework used by our education establishments to assess how well they involve and engage with families across their communities. Seven more ELC settings achieved Gold Family Focused status this year and four more primary schools achieved Gold status.

19. East Renfrewshire's Educational Psychology Service have developed an East Renfrewshire Strathclyde Family Wellbeing Scale (ERSFWS) to measure family wellbeing in order to measure and track family wellbeing effectively. The research undertaken when developing the ERSFWS was presented at the International Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare, Copenhagen May 2023. This Scale now being used routinely to inform and measure the family wellbeing support undertaken by Family First, Healthier Minds and the Learn Well Service allowing the measurement of a range of indicators including relationships, coping with stress and family connectedness.

20. The [Social Justice Strategy and Framework](#) which was approved at 20 April Education Committee, aims to improve the equality, diversity and inclusiveness of education in order to meet the needs of all. The framework and strategy bring together practical guidance and signpost resources to help schools promote social justice through six key areas of practice: curriculum design; learning, teaching and assessment; relationships; professional learning and development; recruitment and retention; and use of resources.

21. The [Review of the Impact of Pupil Equity Funding](#) report shared at Education Committee in Sept 23 highlights key actions schools are taking linked to the Social Justice Framework and makes specific reference to work related to reducing the cost of the school day including the following; *'The majority of plans for 2022-23 included details of how the school is reducing the Cost of the School Day (CoSD), while qualitative evidence demonstrates that most schools are already working to reduce costs to families in a variety of ways....17 schools have engaged with support offered through the CoSD school leads online group since 2021 and CoSD approaches are becoming well embedded in the work of the majority of schools.'*

22. The key areas outlined in the strategy align closely with wellbeing and readiness to learn and include:

- Improve knowledge, understanding and skills related to social justice;
- Improve equity in attainment and achievement;
- Improve recognition of diverse identities in curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment;
- Improve the representation of diverse children, young people, families and staff in the life and work of settings and schools; and,
- Reduce barriers which limit the involvement and engagement of specific groups of children and young people, parents and carers and staff.

23. Digital inclusion remains a priority ensuring equitable access for all to support education and participation. An example of this is our approach to hospital education which is now being delivered in partnership with the Glasgow Hospital Education Team. Education for children in hospital now includes:

- Provision of devices;
- Support from the Learn Well Team;
- Google Classroom, Google Meet and other online platforms Online learning provided by school;
- Telephone conversations;
- Internet resources; and,
- Reduced Face to Face teaching from the Glasgow Hospital Education Team.

24. Mental health continues to be a key aspect of the curriculum with approaches such as 'Compassionate and Connected Classrooms' and 'Emotion Works' being adopted as a whole school approach. Commendably many of our secondary schools have developed wellbeing hubs to support the health and wellbeing of children and young people and provide a safe nurturing space for children and young people to be supported.

25. The Educational Psychology Service and multi-agency partners have continued to support children's mental and emotional wellbeing through the Healthier Minds Service. 44 multi-agency screening hubs took place where 376 children and young people were discussed. 94% of the children and young people who received support from the Healthier Minds team reported improved outcomes. The service worked closely with schools and Community Learning and Development (CLD) in order to support young people to access relevant provision and support, including community-based supports.

26. The Healthier minds website has been updated and developed to continue to promote mental wellbeing and support children and young people, parents and practitioners across East Renfrewshire. Information and resources have been added in the following areas:

- ASD and Girls
- Supporting Unaccompanied Minors
- Supporting Young People with High Levels of Anxiety
- LGBTQIA+
- Bereavement Support for Practitioners

27. Following the review of [Additional Support for Learning in East Renfrewshire](#) and subsequent recommendations which were approved at the February 2022 Education Committee, 4 work streams have been established comprising of colleagues across different sectors and provisions and are working on the following themes:

- Vision
- Culture and Climate
- Specialist Provision
- Professional Learning.

28. Key achievements to date include the establishment of a Communication Support Centre in Carolside Primary School; redesign of the Social Emotional Behaviour Needs Outreach Team to include an enhanced Nurture provision within Carlibar Primary School; creation of a vision for ASN learners in East Renfrewshire, update of Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy and approaches including review of Behaviour Support Strategies (BSS) and developing CLPL on Keeping Trauma in Mind, and developing a CLPL programme for Pupil Support Assistants.

29. As highlighted in the introduction, attendance is a key measurement of success related to wellbeing and readiness to learn. Committee will be aware from the [Progress and Impact on Implementation of Strategic Equity Fund Plan 2022-26 Report](#) that overall, attendance in the Primary Sector increased in 2022-23 to 94.4% from 93.9% in 2021-22. This compares favourably with the national average of 92.2%. Overall attendance in the secondary sector was recorded as 91.1% which is 0.3% less than 2021-22 and the lowest recorded in the past six years. This does however compare favourably with the national average which is 87.7%. Although when comparing overall attendance with all other education authorities, East Renfrewshire is the highest we are ambitious to improve our attendance.

30. Analysis undertaken at the end of Term 1 (August – Oct) this session compared to end year attendance over the past 8 years shows an improving picture. Key improvements include:

- Primary attendance has risen from 94.4% in 2022/23 to 96.3% in October 23 and secondary attendance has increased from 91.1% in 2022/23 to 93.2% in October 23;
- The average rate of attendance for the primary learners entitled to free school meals has increased to pre- pandemic levels of attendance for this point in the year and is currently 92.6%. The gap between children receiving a free school meal has reduced from a 5% last session to a current 4% gap.
- In secondary schools it was 86.4% compared to 83.8% last session. The gap between children receiving a free school meal remains similar to last session and is 7.6%.
- The attendance of primary children in quintile 1 has increased to 93% and the gap between quintile 1 and quintile 5 has reduced from 5.2% last session to 4%.

- In secondary schools the attendance of children in quintile 1 has increased to 86.2% however the gap between quintile 1 and quintile 5 has increased from 6.8% last session to 8.4% currently as all quintile groups continue to increase.
- October 23 data highlights the highest values for both male and females in primary schools since the pandemic with no gender gap. It has also improved for both boys and girls in secondary schools with boys' attendance around 1% higher.
- In primaries the gap between ethnic minority learners has reduced from 2% to 0.5% from figures recorded in 2022/23. In secondary schools last year there was not an ethnic minority attendance gap, however this year this has increased with an ethnic minority learners' average attendance of 94.3% compared to 92.9% for all other pupils.
- The % of primary school children with very high attendance (98% and above) has increased from 26.2% last session to 48.5%. The % of children with exceptionally low and low attendance (below 85%) has decreased from 15.2% last year to 11.3%.
- In secondary schools the % of children with very high attendance has increased from 13.9% last session to 36%. The % of children with exceptionally low and low attendance has decreased from 27.9% last year to 20.9%.

31. Attendance is just one measure of impact related to wellbeing and readiness to learn. As highlighted in paragraph 19, a Family Wellbeing Scale has been developed to measure family wellbeing. In addition to this, the Education Psychology Service have developed a Health and Wellbeing assessment for primary and secondary schools which is currently being piloted by the Barrhead Cluster of schools. This assessment has been developed to measure resilience, school connectedness and wellbeing. The assessment covers themes such as attitudes to learning, sense of belonging, friendships and managing emotions. Following the pilot period, these assessments will be rolled out across all schools.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

32. A range of different funding streams have been accessed in order to support the various areas highlighted in this report. These include:

- Strategic Equity Fund
- Whole Family Wellbeing Fund
- Care Experienced Children and Young People Attainment Fund
- Counselling in Schools Funding
- Community Mental Health for Children and Young People

33. In addition to this, schools benefit from Pupil Equity Funding and many have used this to focus on activities related to wellbeing and readiness to learn.

CONSULTATION

34. The department has carried out extensive engagement on the different areas identified within this report, for example, as part of the development of the social justice strategy, stakeholders including parents, carers, children and young people and education staff were consulted on a range of themes related to social justice.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

35. Equality, Fairness and Rights Impact Assessments have been undertaken to support the development of the different areas discussed through this report.

CONCLUSION

36. There are a number of factors which impact on children and young people's readiness to learn and recognising and addressing these are vital in creating an environment and experiences that meets the diverse needs of our children and young people. By employing strategies as highlighted in this report, we are improving their readiness to learn which in turn contributes to their overall academic success and personal development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

37. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the update regarding children and young people's wellbeing and readiness to learn.

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