



## Consultation Response to Angela Morgan's Review of the Implementation of Additional Support for Learning (ASL) in Schools: October to December 2019

### **Efforts for positive change should focus on improving communication and relationships.**

The number one focus should be to ensure that appropriate strategies are in place for each child/young person with additional support needs. To do this, collaborative working is key. For parents/carers and children/young people, what most often makes a difference is good communication and supportive relationships with a key person or key people who are approachable, welcoming, friendly and accepting. We recommend a focus on training and supporting staff to build effective relationships, especially in secondary schools.

### **Children/young people with additional support needs and their parents/carers need to be listened to, consulted and included in support strategies and decision making.**

Things work well when:

- The team around the child have a “can-do” attitude and take time to listen seriously to, consider, and address concerns of the parents/carers and the child/young person.
- Everyone involved is honest and open about the challenges.
- There is individualised support and strategies are specific to the individual needs of the child/young person and focus on building on strengths and growing ‘islands of competence’.<sup>1</sup>
- The child/young person and the parent/carer are involved in developing goals/targets.
- Advocacy is used effectively: it can help enormously to support children/young people to take part in meetings and decision making.
- All school staff are supported and trained to develop skills which help children/young people with additional support needs.

The children we support say that their favourite teacher is the one who listens to them and knows what to do when they are having meltdowns or “autistic” behaviours. The skillsets and knowledge of all staff should be recognised.

### **Teachers and Pupil Support Assistants need allocated time and space during the working day to consider, plan and prepare the support that a child/young person needs.**

Time should be scheduled for staff to share knowledge of what works, what doesn't work and what needs to be better. This could make a massive difference at a whole-school level, particularly in secondary schools where one child is supported by at least 6 different teachers a day or a PSA might only be allocated one free period per week to plan and prepare at least 5 different sessions of one-to-one and small group-work with children/young people.

### **Things work well when the team around the child can be held to account.**

When our Family Outreach Specialists attend meetings to support parents and carers, families often comment that school staff and other professionals act more efficiently and offer more solutions and better solutions. The professional team knows that there is a third party who is aware of the action the team is taking and who can support the child, young person or their parents/carers to hold individuals to account.

### **Specific examples/**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.drrobertbrooks.com/pdf/0506.pdf>

**Specific examples of the areas of practice which could be further enhanced through better use of resources to support practice, staffing or other aspects of provision:**

**Ensuring that schools and local authorities implement legislation in a manner which is consistent and accountable, yet flexible.** Local authorities should provide parents/carers with clearer criteria for support and details on how individuals are being supported. The parents we speak to are often confused by whether their child needs support and, if they are allocated support, how or if it will happen. We often see parents/carers having to organise and coordinate the support that their child receives.

There are differences across the local authorities in relation to how they implement GIRFEC: for example, the paperwork and terminology (such as use of Lead Professional) differs. Local authorities' policies and procedures should be clear and most importantly, easily available, online and/or provided to all relevant parents/carers, relating to when children/young people are entitled to CSPs, specific learning plans; 1:1 support; Child's Plans etc.

Local authorities should be held accountable to ensure that they are consistent in coordinating support in an appropriate and legally binding way, where the legislation applies. There are large differences in the proportion of Coordinated Support Plans (CSPs) used by different local authorities. We should address inconsistencies in implementing the legislation.

**Encouraging Local Authorities and schools to be honest and flexible in the approaches used and how resources are allocated.** A child/young person's needs may be best met by an out of catchment area school placement or placement at a school in at a different local authority. If parents and professionals agree that a school or a service in another local authority would best meet the needs of a child/young person, then this should be enough to ensure that the local authorities work together to implement that. Unfortunately, we have heard that some local authorities are not allowed to say they cannot meet a child's needs: it appears that complete school placement failure, or multiple failures, have to occur before alternatives are considered and support is increased. The need to prove that a placement doesn't work is likely to have longer term negative consequences on the child/young person and family.

**Ensuring that support is appropriate, personal and cost-efficient, as part of a child/young person's individual strategies.** For example, where appropriate there should be: more subtle visual supports such as personal visual timetables; more effective and consistent use of communication diaries, which result in everyone feeling informed and having the opportunity to flag up issues and concerns; more appropriate use of IT equipment; more cost effective school transport available which is appropriate to the individual support required; more consistent availability and use of quiet spaces, sensory rooms and nurture facilities. Sensory needs should be considered in mainstream environments by implementing policies such as the use of quiet areas, movement during the school day and reducing the use of school bells.

**Managing parents'/carers' expectations about communication approaches,** by agreeing the format and frequency of communication and frequency and dates of meetings.

**Defining roles.** Clarifying the role of lead professional would help ensure that children/young people receive support and that the burden is removed from the already stressed parents/carers. Clarifying the job descriptions of Pupil Support Assistants in secondary schools would ensure that PSAs are recognised and supported. In some areas, despite the same job description for PSAs in primary and secondary schools, the two roles are worlds apart.

**Exploring how Educational Psychologists' skill set is used/distributed.** Often school staff advise of the need to liaise with an educational psychologist, however educational psychologists tend to be allocated to school clusters and it is difficult to get their input even at level of consultation/advice, so we should focus on how services are provided.