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Supporting Learners in Angus

A Parents' Guide

Produced in consultation with parents

(Throughout this leaflet the term parents is used to include guardian/carer with parental responsibilities)

Contents



1. Introduction
2. What are Additional Support Needs?
3. Assessing Additional Support Needs
4. Meeting Additional Support Needs
5. Individualised Educational Programmes and Co-ordinated Support Plans
6. Frequently Asked Questions About Assessment
7. Choosing Where Your Child will be Educated
8. Moving on
9. Supporting Children and Families
10. Finding Solutions and Resolving Differences
11. Useful Contacts and Further Sources of Information
12. Glossary

NB: in this guide the following terms apply:

- **Parent** - includes guardian/carer with parental responsibilities
- **Child (pre-school)** - 3 to 5 years
- **Child (school age)** - 5 to 16 years
- **Young person** - over 16 but not yet 18 years



1. Introduction

In November, 2005 the *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004* came into force with the aim of creating a stronger, better system for supporting children's learning. The Act gives new rights to parents and ensures that the views of children are sought and taken into account when their needs are being considered.

The Act introduces a single system for meeting the needs of children who require additional support to ensure that they can make the most of their education. It requires schools and other agencies to work in partnership to make a real difference to the lives of children with additional support needs.

Any child who needs more or different support to what is normally provided is said to have *Additional Support Needs (ASN)*.

A Code of Practice, called *Supporting Children's Learning*, sets out detailed guidance on how the Act should be implemented.

The *Angus Support for Learners Policy* was revised (October 2006) to provide guidance on how the Code of Practice will be implemented locally.

This Parent's Guide provides links to the Angus policy which is available online at: www.angus.gov.uk/sflpolicy.

The Code of Practice is available online at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/57346/0016754.pdf>

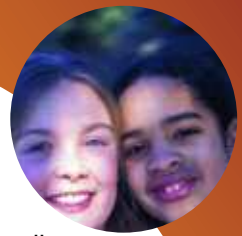
The *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004* is available online at: <http://www.scotland-legislation.hmso.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2004/2004004.htm>

Angus Council is committed to providing a high quality education for all pupils by

- providing a setting in which they feel valued and safe
- ensuring they are given the opportunity to realise their full potential; and,
- supporting them, including pupils with Additional Support Needs, in as local a setting as possible.

SFL Policy section 1

2. What Are Additional Support Needs?



All learners need support to help them learn. Through good quality teaching and a suitable curriculum, most are able to make progress without the need for any additional support.

However, some children and young people will require support which is different from what is normally provided in the classroom. In other words, they need additional support.

The following are some examples of situations which may mean that a child needs some additional support in school. These examples are only a guide because every child is different and it is not possible to list all of the reasons why additional support might be needed. Circumstances which disrupt one pupil's learning may have little or no effect on the learning of another. One child's additional support needs could last for just a few weeks while another's may last for years.

Factors which might mean additional support is needed could include:-

- **Learning environment** – what is being taught, or the way in which it is being taught, may not be suitable for an individual child
- **Family circumstances** – family breakdown, homelessness, or becoming looked after may have an effect on a child's ability to learn
- **Disability or health needs** – sight or hearing difficulties, mental or physical health problems, learning or attention difficulties can all affect how well a child learns
- **Social and emotional factors** – bereavement, bullying, behavioural difficulties or experiencing racial discrimination could mean that a child needs additional support.

Circumstances like these can and do also affect children under five. In some cases, additional support is provided by the Education Department to children under three who have a disability.

There are no special schools in Angus. Children with additional support needs are educated in their local school wherever possible but some Angus schools are able to offer more specialised support for pupils – particularly pupils who have physical disabilities and/or sensory impairments.

In Angus these schools are called *Resourced Schools*.

SFL Policy sections 4.2 & 4.14

3. Assessing Additional Support Needs



Assessment helps to identify whether a child or young person has additional support needs and also helps to determine what kind of support is needed.

While “assessment” sounds very formal, pupils’ needs are constantly being assessed through their daily contact with pre-school staff, class and subject teachers. In most cases the needs identified are met in the classroom, with the support of parents at home.

If assessment reveals a need for additional support, this may be provided by the school’s Additional Support Needs (ASN) staff or by other services within the Education Department such as the Educational Psychology Service or the School and Family Support Service.

Where a child’s needs are complex, specialists may carry out more formal assessments. Other agencies may also be involved, for example the Health Service, the Social Work Department or organisations in the Voluntary Sector.

Parents have the right to ask Angus Council to arrange an assessment to find out if their child has additional support needs. Young people (*pupils over the age of 16*) can also request an assessment in their own right.

The Education Service is under a duty to respond to such requests and must comply unless the request is considered unreasonable.

SFL Policy sections 4.5, 4.6 & 4.10

4. Meeting Additional Support Needs



The *Angus Support for Learners Policy* describes in detail how additional support needs are identified and addressed. Five key stages set out, in sequence, what is to be done and by whom to meet a pupil's needs. Assessment and support is always put in place in a way which is designed to cause the least disruption to the pupil's learning experiences and development.

The five Key Stages are:-

Stage 1 All pupils have their educational needs identified and met in the classroom by their teacher. Pupils and parents are involved in this process all the time and it is the everyday business of the school. The overwhelming majority of children will not move beyond this stage.

Stage 2 Some pupils need additional support. This will usually be provided by the school's ASN staff. Other pupils may need support from people like the School's Educational Psychologist, the school doctor or nurse, or a Social Worker. An Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) may be used to set learning targets. Progress on the IEP is reviewed regularly – at least once every term.

(More information on IEPs is contained in Section 5 of this guide).

Stage 3 If the support provided by Stage 2 intervention is not sufficient, partners, including parents and pupil, will be invited to a Stage 3 Case Conference. This meeting will review the support already offered and following discussion will plan how further additional support can be provided. There will be regular follow-up meetings to review progress. If the support is successful and meets the needs of the child there may be no need for further meetings. Ongoing needs will be met by Stage 2 support.

Partners invited to these meetings will be drawn from a range

of agencies which may be able to offer support, such as Community Child Health or the Social Work Department. Meetings will normally be held in the school and chaired by a senior member of the school staff.

If your child has a *complex* need (that is, one likely to have a significant effect on their school education), or several different needs (*multiple* needs), expected to last for more than a year and likely to need significant additional support from the education authority and at least one other partner agency, a *Co-ordinated Support Plan* (CSP) may be considered at this meeting.

(More information on CSPs is contained in Section 5 of this document).

Stage 4 If the support put in place at Stage 3 does not fully meet a pupil's needs, they may be referred to a Stage 4 Conference. At this stage, senior managers from the Education Department meet with colleagues from the Social Work & Health Department and perhaps from NHS Tayside. They review the decisions of the Stage 3 Case Conference(s) and consider other Angus-based support such as an alternative package of care and/or education. Further assessments can also be requested at this stage.

Requests for Co-ordinated Support Plans made by any of the Stage 3 partners are considered at this stage.

All decisions made at Stage 4 are regularly reviewed.

Stage 5 In exceptional cases, an individual pupil may need support from specialist resources, including a school or care placement outwith Angus. Senior managers from the Education and Social Work & Health Departments and from NHS Tayside meet at this stage and decide on the suitability of such provision.

Pupils at Stage 5 will already have a CSP prepared.

SFL Policy sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 & 4.10

5. Individualised Educational Programmes & Co-ordinated Support Plans



As described earlier, some pupils need a level of support which is greater than, or different from, that which is normally provided in the classroom. This is what is meant by saying that a pupil has *additional support* needs. More detailed planning of their educational programme may be helpful.

Opening an **Individualised Educational Programme** (IEP) is one way to put into place a detailed planning and review process.

An IEP is an educational planning document which describes in detail the nature of a pupil's additional support needs and identifies the type of support which is required. The IEP sets out both long and short-term targets to meet the pupil's needs. Parents have an important part to play in setting the IEP targets and monitoring progress.

A very small number of pupils (probably less than one per cent of the school population) require a **Co-ordinated Support Plan** (CSP) to organise their support.

A pupil requires a CSP to manage the provision of additional support if:

- they have a need which is **complex** (likely to have a significant adverse effect on his or her school education); or
- they have many different needs (**multiple**)

and their need(s):

- is/are likely to last for more than a year
- require significant additional support from the education authority
- also require significant additional support from at least one other partner agency.

This level of support need is sometimes referred to as “having enduring, complex or multiple barriers to learning which require a range of additional support from different services”. Another measure often used when professionals discuss opening a CSP is whether the support provided by partner agencies is “direct, continuing and substantial.”

A parent or young person has the right to ask the education authority to establish if a Co-ordinated Support Plan is required. Requests should be made in writing, or electronically, to the **Director of Education, Angus Council Education Department, Forfar.**

A CSP plans long-term and strategically. It contains a description of a pupil's additional support needs and details of how these needs affect their ability to learn. It describes the type of support that is required and states who will provide this, for example Speech and Language Therapist, other Health Service practitioner or Social Worker. The views of everyone involved, and this includes the pupil and their parents, are written down in the CSP, together with the name of the person appointed by the Education Service to be responsible for co-ordinating the plan (*the Co-ordinator*).

It should take no more than 16 weeks to prepare a CSP, unless there are exceptional delays in arranging for specific types of assessment to be carried out. School holiday periods may also have an effect on how long it takes to complete the process.

The CSP will be reviewed every 12 months. However, an early review may be prompted by a significant change to a child's circumstances.

If there is disagreement about any aspect of a CSP, *mediation* can be arranged, or a reference to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal can be made by the parent or young person. (See also Section 10)

More information about CSPs is available on the Enquire website mentioned above at

<http://www.enquire.org.uk/enquire/publications.html>.

SFL Policy sections 4.1, 4.17 & 4.18



6. Frequently asked questions about assessment

Who can request an assessment?

- the Education Department
- a parent
- a young person over the age of 16.

How should a request for assessment be made?

- any request for an assessment should be made in writing, or electronically to the Director of Education
- the request must say what type of assessment is required and why.

Parents can make arrangements for a private assessment to be carried out and the Education Department will take the report of this assessment into account when considering a pupil's needs.

If you would like more information about how to request an assessment please contact:

Frances Watt, Administrative Assistant - Additional Support Needs, Education Department, Forfar.

WattF@angus.gov.uk Tel: 08452 777 778

What will happen next?

- once a request for assessment has been received, the Education Department will reply to you within 4 weeks
- if your request is agreed, arrangements will be made for assessment(s) to be carried out
- if the Education Department considers your request is unreasonable it will be refused, but the reasons for the refusal will be given to you in writing.

How can an appeal be made if a request for assessment is refused?

- there is a free mediation service available
- there is also access to a dispute resolution process.

More information about the dispute resolution process can also be found at www.asntscotland.gov.uk.

SFL Policy sections 4.5, 4.6, 4.19 & 4.20

7. Choosing Where Your Child will be Educated



Pupils usually attend their local school but for those who need more specialist support there is the possibility of attending a different Angus school (usually a *Resourced* school, see Section 2), where different provision, such as extra or specialist teaching support or a smaller group setting, can be made available.

About six months before a child with known additional support needs reaches school age, the Education Service usually proposes to parents a school placement which will be best suited to meeting the child's anticipated *educational* needs. If the child's local primary school is able to offer appropriate provision, a place in that school will be offered as a first choice. If, however, it is unlikely that all their educational needs can be met there, the Education Department will propose an alternative placement. Staff will take your own views into account and provide you with information about how to make a request for a school of your own choosing.

Similar arrangements apply when pupils with additional support needs transfer from primary to secondary school. A review process is begun, during Primary 6, in which parents and professional colleagues involved with the pupils will be invited to take part, as will the pupils themselves whenever this is appropriate. During this year the Education Department will propose a secondary school placement to parents. Because all Angus secondary schools can now offer more support within a safe environment than was possible even a few years ago, for the overwhelming majority of Angus pupils the first placement proposal will be their local mainstream secondary school. However, if a review suggests this would not be suitable, or if parents wish to request a different school, that initial proposal will be considered again.

A very small number of children need specialised support which is only available at a school outside Angus. In some cases the Education Department works with parents and professional colleagues about arrangements for pupils to access this type of support

(See also references to the Five Stage Process in Section 4)

Placing Requests

Where parents wish a child to attend a different school from that proposed by the Education Department, they must make a Placing Request.

Placing Request forms are available from any school or any Council Access office in Angus.

The Education Department may refuse a Placing Request under certain circumstances but parents are informed in writing the reason(s) for refusal and about their right of appeal.

More details about Placing Requests can be found in the Scottish Executive leaflet *Choosing a School - a Guide for Parents* which can be requested from the Education Department or through the Angus ACCESSLine 08452 777 778, and which is also available on-line at www.scotland.gov.uk

SFL Policy sections 4.6, 4.9 & 4.14

8. Moving On



All children and young people go through a number of important changes (transitions) during the course of their education – starting pre-school, beginning primary school, moving on to secondary school and leaving school for the adult world.

Some pupils also experience a change of school if their family moves to a new area.

The Education Department will try to make sure that these changes are managed as smoothly as possible. This is the case for all pupils, but of course particularly when the pupil involved has additional support needs.

Before each transition the Education Department gathers information about the pupil's support needs and makes sure that this is taken into account in planning the next step. In the case of pupils leaving school at sixteen or over, this information can be shared with agencies or services who will support the pupil during transition or post-school. However, information will only be shared *with the agreement* of parents or, where appropriate, the pupil.

As described above (Section 7), the process of transferring information will begin at least six months before a child moves from pre-school to primary school, and at least twelve months before the move to secondary or to post-school.

Parents and pupils are consulted and involved at each stage of transition planning.

SFL Policy section 4.9

9. Supporting Children and Families



The Education Department recognises the importance of working in partnership with parents and actively encourages them to support their children's learning.

Children and young people are encouraged and enabled to express their views and opinions and to take part in discussions and decision-making whenever it is appropriate.

Parents can make decisions on behalf of their child until they are 16 years old and can speak or act for their child in situations where it would be difficult or impossible for the child to express their views.

Parents and young people have the right to have a supporter or advocate present in any meetings where their additional support needs are being discussed.

A supporter can be anyone the parent or young person nominates (some exceptions are detailed in the Support for Learners Policy) who can assist the parent or young person before and during meetings by, for example, helping them to express their views, asking questions for them, or offering them advice.

An advocate is also someone who can support a parent or young person by speaking on their behalf and representing them at meetings. More explanation about the roles of supporter and advocate can be found in the Enquire Parents' Guide to Additional Support for Learning, (see reference below).

SFL Policy section 4.19



10. Finding Solutions and Resolving Differences

The Education Department's policy is to work in partnership with parents, pupils and young people, and it aims to make it possible for disagreements or differences of opinion to be resolved amicably at an early stage.

When concerns arise, the first point of contact should always be with the Head Teacher of the school.

Sometimes, however, help may be needed to resolve disagreements and in such situations a free Mediation Service is available to Angus parents and young people. The mediation process involves an independent, trained mediator who will help resolve differences and find a solution acceptable to both parties. In Angus this service is provided by *Parent to Parent*, an independent, voluntary organisation which is based in Dundee. A supporter or advocate can again attend mediation meetings in order to support parents and pupils.

If agreement still cannot be reached, or if the parent or young person feels mediation would be inappropriate, disagreement about issues related to Additional Support Needs can be referred directly to either the Dispute Resolution Service or the Additional Support Needs Tribunal, although the Additional Support Needs Tribunal deals only with matters related to Co-ordinated Support Plans.

For advice on how to access Mediation Services, Dispute Resolution or the Additional Support Needs Tribunal please contact Frances Watt.

SFL Policy sections 4.20



11. Contacts and Further Information:

Contacts

- The Director of Education
Angus Council
Education Department
Forfar Telephone 08452 777 778
- Frances Watt
Angus Council
Education Department
Forfar Telephone 08452 777 778
- Enquire Helpline - for advice and information about the Act
Telephone: 0845 123 2303
Textphone: 0131 22 22 439
E-mail: info@enquire.org.uk

Further Information

- ***The Parent's Guide to Additional Support for Learning***
Published by ENQUIRE – The Scottish Advice Centre for Additional Support for Learning available online at:
<http://www.enquire.org.uk/enquire/pdf/parents-guide-to-asl-2006-01.pdf>
Copies can also be requested by telephone - Tel: 0845 123 23 03

12. Glossary - Additional Support Needs

Additional Support Needs

a child or young person has additional support needs if he or she is, or is likely to be, unable to benefit from school education without additional support.

Additional Support Needs Tribunal

a hearing which provides independent and expert adjudication on disagreements about Co-ordinated Support Plans

Advocate

a person who can support a parent or young person by speaking on their behalf and representing them at meetings.

Appropriate Agencies

other agencies which have a legal obligation to help education authorities carry out their duties under the ASL Act. These include Social Work, Health Board, other local authorities, Careers Scotland, colleges and universities.

Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP)

a planning document for pupils with long-lasting complex or multiple barriers to learning who require a range of additional support from other services outwith education. It describes the pupil's needs and how these needs affect his or her ability to learn. It describes the type of support that is needed and states who will provide this support. The CSP must be reviewed every 12 months or earlier if there is significant change in a child's circumstances.

Educational Psychologist

a chartered psychologist specialising in education. He or she can give advice about additional support needs to parents, schools, the Education Authority, other agencies such as the Careers Service, and may contribute directly to assessments.

Individualised Educational Programme (IEP)

a document which describes in detail the nature of a pupil's additional support needs and identifies the type of support that is required. Targets are set and the pupil's progress is reviewed regularly.

Mediation

a free service provided to help resolve difficulties relating to additional support needs at an early stage. A trained mediator will help both parties to reach an agreement on how to resolve an issue but the mediator will not offer advice nor make recommendations.

Other Agencies

a number of other agencies, such as voluntary organisations, may help support a child or young person's learning but do not have a legal obligation to do so, unlike Appropriate Agencies such as Health or Social Work who must provide support unless this is in conflict with other duties.

Staged Intervention

a sequence of steps for identifying additional support needs and finding ways of meeting these needs in an appropriate way.

Supporter

a supporter can be anyone the parent or young person nominates (minor exceptions are set out in the Support for Learners Policy) and may assist the parent or young person before and at meetings by, for example, helping them to express their views, asking questions on their behalf or offering them advice.

Additional Support Needs Specialists

teachers who advise other members of staff on the range of teaching methods, strategies and resources available to meet the additional needs of learners. An ASN teacher might work in the classroom with the class teacher, provide individual support or teach small groups of pupils.

Transitions

these are the stages that children and young people go through in the course of their education. They include starting nursery, entering primary school, moving on to secondary school and leaving school.