

School Leaving Date Exceptional Circumstances

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report highlights the COVID-19 related disruption to post school transition planning for our most vulnerable young people with complex needs or disability, with resulting parental concern leading to requests for an additional year at secondary school.
- 1.2 The current policy document *School leaving dates, deferred entry and retain at stage* (attached) details that:
- ‘Only in exceptional circumstances can a young person return to school for a 7th year or seek to access courses in our secondary schools as adult learners. In all cases, this will require Heads of Education approval.’
- 1.3 Transition planning takes place within the context of the multiagency guidance *Post School Transition: Getting it right for children and young people with a disability* (attached).
- 1.4 To date, through agreement at the Education Management Team, it had been established that the circumstances of the pandemic should not be considered an ‘exceptional circumstance’ within the context of this policy as this impacts on all young people leaving school. This is in line with current national guidance and practice.
- 1.5 The Community Services Committee is asked to note the impact that two national lockdowns have had on supports and services for our most vulnerable young people with complex needs and/or disabilities, and to agree that the consequences of the pandemic constitute exceptional circumstances, and as such, that a further year at secondary school may be permitted subject to careful consideration of individual circumstances.

This variation would apply for those young people with a complex need or disability who are in 6th year in academic session 2020 – 21 only.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Argyll and Bute Council Education Service and Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership are committed to improving outcomes for young people with disabilities who are experiencing the exciting but also potentially anxious transition from full time enrolment in school and support from Children's Services, into the adult world with possible support from Adult Services.
- 2.2 Careful consideration has been given to the needs of young people with a disability as they move on from school, with Argyll and Bute's multiagency procedure reviewed in September 2018 following close collaboration with the Association for Real Change (ARC Scotland). The full guidance document is attached.
- 2.3 Transition planning is in line with the requirements of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2014 and sits within the well-established Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) practice model.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Community Services Committee is asked to:
- Note the impact that two national lockdowns have had on supports and services for our most vulnerable young people with complex needs and/or disabilities;
 - Agree that the consequences of the pandemic constitute exceptional circumstances, and as such, that a further year at secondary school may be permitted for those young people, subject to careful consideration of individual circumstances;
 - Note this variation would apply for those young people with a complex need or disability who are in 6th year in academic session 2020 – 21 only; and

- Note that any budget pressure arising from implementing these recommendations will in the first instance be met from existing ASN budgets, subject to any additional funding made available from either the Council or Scottish Government.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The post-school transition guidance emphasises the importance of staff from all agencies working closely together to ensure positive and sustained outcomes for young people post school, following the principles of *Getting it Right for Every Child*. Central to transition planning is effective joint working between staff from Children's and Adult services in respect of information sharing, joint assessment of need and in identifying long term care planning goals.
- 4.2 Post school transition represents a major life change for young people. It often raises issues of maintaining and making new friendships, accessing community resources, work or further education, coping with new situations and challenges as well as building resilience and increasing independence. The guidance highlights that it is critical to ensure issues that are important to young people and their parents / carers are properly identified, acknowledged and addressed, by the right people at the right time, in an empathetic and holistic manner.
- 4.3 Discussion at the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) Children and Young People Network during the initial period of lockdown reflected that nationally, education services were following their existing transition and school leaving date policies. As a result, through agreement at the Education Management Team, it had been established that the impact of the pandemic should not be considered an 'exceptional circumstance' within the context of this policy as the pandemic had an impact for all young people leaving school.
- 4.4 In the autumn of this year it was predicted that supports and services would begin to return to normal in the new year, allowing transition plans to be finalised in line with the expectations of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2014. At that time it was not anticipated that there would be a further period of lockdown.
- 4.5 This further lockdown has had an impact on the delivery of supports and services within local areas, restricting the extent and quality of transition planning for some young people with complex needs and disability. In some areas there are already very limited options for young people with complex needs leaving school. This more general issue will be addressed through the Disability Transitions Group which includes colleagues from adult services.

4.6 An analysis of need across Argyll and Bute has identified that approximately 20 young people with complex needs or disability may be particularly disadvantaged as a result of the impact of the pandemic.

4.7 Careful analysis of young people with complex needs and disability currently in their 6th year of secondary education has identified that there are eleven young people who may benefit from an additional year at school as a result of the current circumstances. Using agreed staffing calculations, it is anticipated that an additional 140 hours a week additional support needs assistant time will be required if all eleven young people take up this option. Details of the breakdown of support is included in the table below.

4.8

Area	2020-2021	2021-2022	Calculation
	S6 pupils with complex needs	Additional ASN assistant staffing required	
Bute and Cowal			
Rothesay Joint Campus	0	Nil	
Dunoon Grammar School	2	20 hours	total number including S7 pupils = 23, requires 3 classes with or without S7 pupils Teaching staff 3FTE ASN assistant staffing for class with S7 pupils = $((9/2.5) \times 25) + 25 = 115$ hours ASN assistant staffing for class without S7 pupils = $((7/2.5) \times 25) + 25 = 95$ hours
Helensburgh and Lomond			
Parklands	2	nil	total number including S7 pupils = 29, total without S7 pupils = 27 teaching staff - additional teacher required with or without S7 pupils due to new intake. current ASN assistant time is allocated per class and should remain at the current total
Hermitage Academy	1	20 hours	ASN assistant required 20 hours
Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay			
Islay High	1	25 hours	
Campbeltown Grammar School	1	10 hours	ASN assistant staffing for class with S7 pupils = $((9/2.5) \times 25) + 25 = 115$ hours ASN assistant staffing for class without S7 pupils = $((8/2.5) \times 25) + 25 = 105$ hours
Lochgilphead High School	0	nil	

Oban, Lorn and the Isles			
Oban High School	4	65 hours	total number including S7 pupils = 20 Teaching staff 3.6FTE ASN assistant staffing for class with S7 pupils = $((10/2.5) \times 25) + 25 = 125$ hours ASN assistant staffing for class without S7 pupils = $((6/2.5) \times 25) + 25 = 85$ hours in addition 1 child gets 2:1 support (+25 ASN assistant hours)
Tiree High school	0	nil	
Tobermory High	0	nil	
Total pupils	11		
TOTAL additional staffing		140 hours additional ASN assistant	£85,540 for the full year

4.9 To ensure that our most vulnerable young people with complex needs or disability are not further disadvantaged it is recommended that, where robust multiagency assessment of need and careful analysis of the transition plan identifies that an additional year at secondary school would be in the young person's best interest, that this is granted on the basis of 'exceptional circumstance' arising from the pandemic. This variation would apply for those young people with a complex need or disability who are in 6th year in academic session 2020 – 21 only.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The COVID-19 global pandemic will have implications for many children and young people's wellbeing and achievement. To ensure equity, careful consideration requires to be given to our most vulnerable children and young people. For those with complex needs and a disability making the transition from school to their adult lives is already a very challenging and anxious time for them and their families. It is important that across services steps are taken to reduce the chance of young people being disadvantaged further. It is therefore asked that the recommendation at 4.8 above is considered and agreed.

5.2 It is possible that any relaxation in current national and local practice of exceptional circumstances may lead to an increase in requests for a seventh year for pupils who do not have additional and complex needs. This would have budget implications for the Education Service that have not been scoped within this paper.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy - none

6.2 Financial – additional 140 hours / week of support needs assistant

6.3 Legal – inadequate transition planning would conflict with the requirements of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2014

- 6.4 HR – ensuring adequate staffing
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty - equity is a key consideration for young people with a disability
 - 6.5.1 Equalities: disability is a protected characteristic – as detailed in the Equality Act 2010
 - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – none
 - 6.5.3 Islands – none
- 6.6 Risk – vulnerable young people failing to make a successful transition
- 6.7 Customer Service - none

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – School leaving date policy

Appendix 2 – Post School Transition: Children & Young People Affected by Disability