

# EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE : 27 MAY 2003

## PROPOSAL TO EXTEND PROVISION FOR CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEVERE COMMUNICATION DISORDERS/AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS IN EAST AYRSHIRE

### Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to implement the second phase of the present strategy to support young people with severe communication disorders in East Ayrshire.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 East Ayrshire Council are committed to providing an education service of the highest quality. This requires a deployment of resources in the most effective way possible to support the learning and teaching of all children and young people, particularly those with Special Educational Needs.
- 2.2 In the light of the evolution of existing provision in East Ayrshire for children with Severe Communication Disorders/Autistic Spectrum Disorders, it is necessary for the Authority to plan ahead for the future needs of these individuals across the full school age range from 5 to 16+ years.
- 2.3 This paper centres on issues highlighted by the document Autism in Scotland's Schools of which East Ayrshire was a participating authority, issues raised by the Language and Communication Steering Group, and more recently a specific Authority working party looking at gaps in the present support structure.
- 2.4 The current demands of the new legislation in Scotland places a duty on Local Authorities to ensure that education promotes inclusion, and there is an inexorable trend towards providing support for the full range of educational supports within mainstream schools. There are, however, identified gaps in the level of provision for children/young people with Severe Communication Disorders/Autistic Spectrum Disorders:
- At present there is no provision, other than mainstream school learning support or special schooling, for children/young people who require a continuation of specialist support beyond the stage of Primary Three.
  - There is no current provision for integrating these children/young people into a supported secondary mainstream setting. It is likely that such youngsters who do enter mainstream secondary education at present are likely to have significant behavioural and socialisation difficulties.
  - An increasing number of children and young people are being supported within mainstream placements but with limited resources that have to be shared across all pupils with a range of needs. The staff can only have at

best limited specialist knowledge of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, and economies of scale in training for all individuals across all establishments have significant implications.

- 2.5** Our children and young people affected by Autistic Spectrum Disorder are supported in one of the following ways:
1. Crosshouse Communication Centre (P1-P3)
  2. Mainstream school – limited additional support
  3. Special school – where the pupils have associated significant learning difficulties
  4. Multi-disciplinary support from Health and Social Work services where appropriate.
  5. Outwith local authority specialist school, e.g. Daldorch House School

### **3. CROSSHOUSE COMMUNICATION CENTRE**

- 3.1** It is anticipated that a significant percentage of the Crosshouse Communication Centre population will go on to their mainstream schools. However, what has become more and more apparent is that the nature of their difficulties means that some children, whilst making significant improvements and progress relative to themselves, continue to experience major barriers to full-time mainstream integration without significant individualised support.
- 3.2** There are and will continue to be a percentage of Crosshouse Communication Centre pupils whose needs require continued attention and support via the Centre. At present the Centre has three children in P4, and it is anticipated a further three, over the next two years, will not have made the required progress to move onto mainstream primary with limited support by P4.
- 3.3** As these children grow older, and could feasibly be part of the Crosshouse Communication Centre, there will be fewer places for children entering the centre in Primary One, without a structured and agreed system to accommodate them.
- 3.4** It is anticipated that there will continue to be a percentage of children who will move onto special schooling or mainstream school at a Primary One stage due to the nature of their individual Autistic Spectrum Disorder. An extension of the Centre would not be expected to remove pupils from other more appropriate provision.
- 3.5** Only pupils with a genuine requirement for maximum individualised support to allow them to successfully access the 5-14 curriculum, in addition to continued work on social communication skills, would remain accessing significant support within Crosshouse Communication Centre, beyond Primary 3.

#### **4. OUTREACH SUPPORT**

- 4.1** The increase in number of pupils in the Crosshouse Communication Centre has created the need for more staff flexibility to support pupils back into their own local Primary School. This was traditionally done on an increased staffing basis with the Centre created to support a maximum of 10 pupils. The present population is 12 pupils.
- 4.2** Increasingly, centre staff have been approached for consultation/advice and strategies by staff within the network team, and from class teachers across schools in East Ayrshire. It would also be very helpful if there was flexibility for staff to be available for team or co-operative teaching as part of the outreach development, where appropriate. Further, it has been identified that teaching staff would welcome in-service training opportunities provided possibly by the staff of the Centre. A recent survey carried out amongst primary and pre-school head teachers revealed the range of outreach that staff in our mainstream establishments would find useful (see Table 1 attached). Currently this advice is provided on an ad-hoc basis as time allows. It would be far more effective if it could be revised on a more strategic, ongoing basis. Providing a structured and strategic outreach service would be a more economic and effective way to support children and young people in areas further from Kilmarnock and Crosshouse.

#### **5. SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION**

- 5.1** Secondary school provision – if we are to truly aim to meet the needs of this population in the longer term, on a more strategic basis, it would be timeous to consider the development of a secondary school centre. Such a centre would provide support to those young people requiring it to maintain and benefit from a mainstream secondary school placement. There are currently young people in our secondary schools who would benefit from such provision, and in the coming sessions we predict a growing number of young people will struggle educationally, socially and emotionally without significant specialised support for them and their schools. After an in depth survey identifying East Ayrshire pupils on the Autistic Spectrum (appendix 2) it was proposed to start consultation for a secondary support centre.

#### **6. TRAINING**

- 6.1** The working group identified specific training needs. It was agreed that the most appropriate training would be received from the course on Autism at Birmingham University, as experience dictates it provides a very high quality of such training. It was proposed that staff be identified for training from the Crosshouse Centre, Network Support Team and targeted schools related to pupil tracking. It was felt that a strategic approach to the training would identify a member of staff in each Learning Partnership to be trained, such that eventually every Learning Partnership would be equipped with a number of specialist trained staff – from within schools, from the Network Team peripatetic service, and where appropriate from other Partnership personnel.

This comprehensive long-term training programme would greatly support pupils in their local school and help individual schools to develop structures and systems to support all pupils on the Autistic Spectrum within their establishment. It would complement the Centre based provision allowing the range of needs for children/young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder to be met across the authority in the most appropriate and effective way possible.

## **7. PROPOSALS**

- 7.1** That the provision of Crosshouse Communication Centre be extended to cover P1 to P7 range. Pupils requiring further input and attendance at the Centre beyond Primary 3 would require to be agreed via a multi-disciplinary review, and continue to do so throughout following years.
- 7.2** That a secondary school centre provision be established with sufficient teaching and ancillary personnel to allow maximum integration into the mainstream classes. It is further proposed that the secondary school centre should be identified as Loudoun Academy. Currently, it is anticipated that upto 14 children with autistic spectrum disorders reside within the Loudoun catchment area. Consultation has taken place with the head teacher, parents, teachers and other staff of Loudoun Academy who have recognised the need for the development of this part of provision as part of the school's overall approach to support for learning. It is proposed to conduct further detailed consultations with interested groups on the implementation of this development. This consultation will involve the school board. As necessary, the results of this further stage of consultation will be reported to Committee.
- 7.3** That an outreach/consultancy service be developed, utilising staff expertise to provide a range of supports from advice on resources, teaching strategies and staff in-service training.
- 7.4** That the authority seek 12 training places on the Birmingham University training course for Autism in session 2003-2004.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1** Nil

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1** All developments and proposals will be funded within present resources and specific Executive Grants for Inclusion.
- 9.2** The development of a secondary school base should significantly reduce the pressure to place children with an autistic spectrum disorder in an establishment outwith East Ayrshire, the costs of which currently are of the order £35,000 to £100,000 for each placement. This initiative should therefore be seen as a significant spend-to-save project.

**9.3** The staffing costs associated with enhanced learning support arrangements at Loudoun Academy would be those associated with making routine effective provision for this group of young people. In order to staff the first phase of the project, the following are anticipated:

2 x teachers @ £27,050	£54,100
1 x classroom assistant (term time)	£11,187
employment costs	£12,017
<b>Total</b>	<b>£77,304</b>

There will be start up costs for furniture, equipment and classroom supplies. These will amount to £6,000 in the first year.

Modifications of a classroom base to suit the needs of children with communication disorders will be necessary. This will include provision of suitable decoration, sink and hygiene facilities. The costs of this will be £15,000.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- i) agree extension of the provision from Crosshouse Communication Centre to include P4 to P7 and outreach support;
- ii) endorse the establishment of a secondary centre at Loudoun Academy: subject to consultation with the school board and other interested groups;
- iii) approve the strategic training programme with Birmingham University; and
- iv) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew  
Director of Educational and Social Services

JMcC/MR  
10.03.03

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- i) Autism in Scottish Schools – National Autistic Society

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Schools, Tel: (01563) 576192

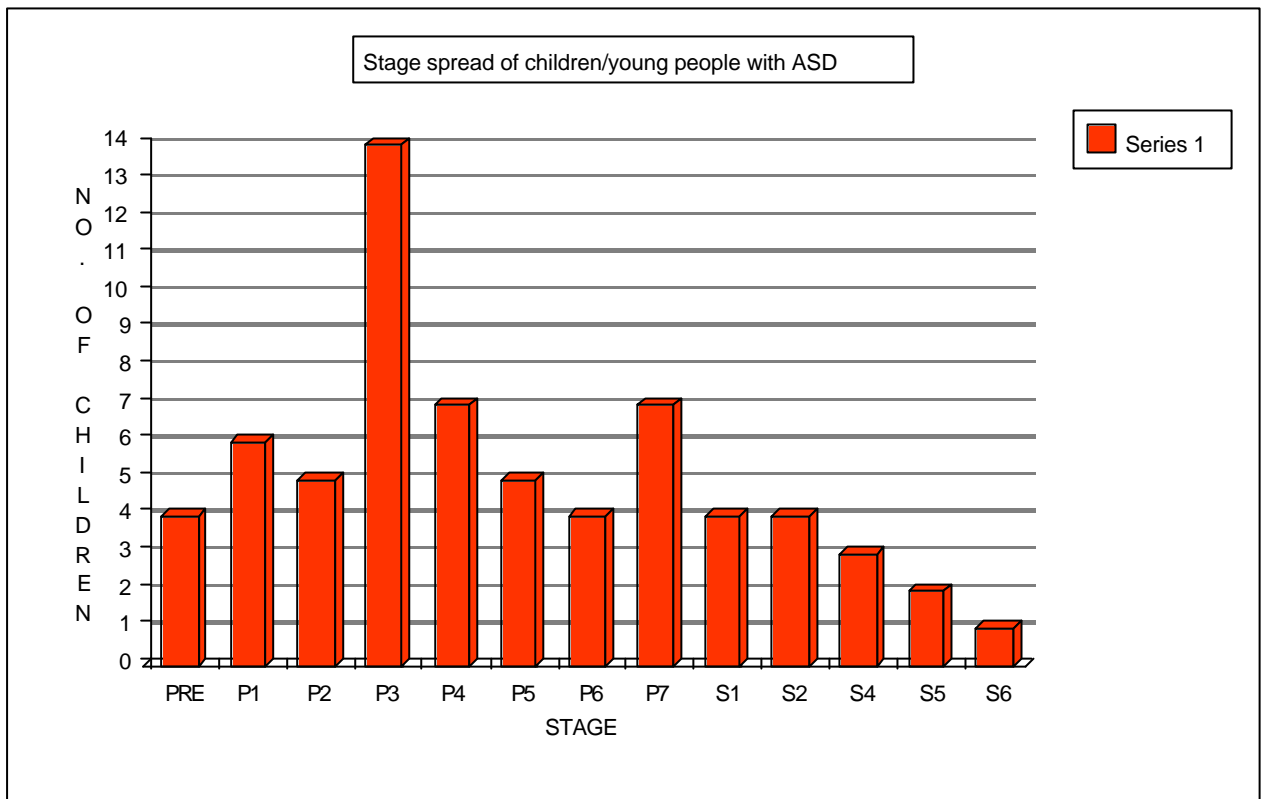
**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : GRAHAM SHORT**

## Survey of Preschool and Primary Establishments across East Ayrshire

### % Likelihood to Use Aspects of Outreach

Aspect of Outreach	Preschool		Primary	
	Highly Likely	Likely	Highly Likely	Likely
<b>Specialist Input to Planning IEPs</b>	85	15	77	23
<b>Advice to teachers on:</b>				
(ii) teaching methods	69	31	77	20
a. resources	61	31	77	20
b. strategies for managing behaviour	69	31	68	29
<b>Telephone contact with specialist staff</b>	92	8	71	29
<b>General advice/information/training</b>	54	38	40	57

## Appendix 2 (1)



**Total number of children/young people with ASD resident in East Ayrshire at December 2002: 66**

## Appendix 2 (2)

