Paper 2

An audit of current approaches to professional learning and implementation that support autistic children and young people in Scotland

A summary of Local Authority Responses

(Based on survey returns March-July 2019)

Education Scotland
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Summary of audit of approaches to training and implementation currently being used in Scottish local authorities to support autistic children and young people

Context for the task

In order to support the development of the Autism Toolbox it was agreed to:

a) review the evidence for effective educational interventions for autistic learners (see Paper 1)

b) audit approaches to professional learning and implementation currently being used in Scottish local authorities (current paper)

Rationale for the audit of approaches to training and implementation currently being used in Scottish local authorities

- it was **not** within the capacity of the team to visit every local authority (LA) to conduct a systematic review of their professional learning approaches and the interventions used to support autistic learners; and,
- it **was** feasible to request LA representatives to provide information through a simple survey

Method

- a survey was devised by the Education Scotland Inclusion Team (see Appendix 2);
- a request to complete the survey was sent to Local Authorities through the Association of Support for Learning Officers (ASLO); and,
- returns were collated to identify the range and scope of work currently being undertaken across Scotland

Data

- all 32 Local Authorities completed the survey;
- the survey has garnered a wealth of information on how local authorities are supporting their staff to understand the needs of autistic learners;
- most local authorities provided details of approaches being used in their establishments to support autistic learners in the classroom and school community; and,
- it should be noted that the responses varied widely in the amount of detail given. Some respondents outlined a wide range of training, strategies and approaches used within their establishments, whilst others kept their response very concise
  It is important, therefore, to note that the collation of interventions below is the minimum which is being delivered across the local authorities.

Summary of Feedback received

The collation of responses from local authorities is set out in Appendix 1.

Key points arising from local authority feedback

1. Professional learning (see blue section of Appendix 1)

- All local authorities in Scotland provide a range of professional learning opportunities related to autism for educational staff suggesting that despite competing demands this is still a priority for local authorities.
- Almost all local authorities provide professional learning for teachers (class teacher and specialist staff), assistants (pupil support and classroom) and early year practitioners while most provide training to Newly Qualified teachers and head teachers.
- In terms of the development of professional learning on autism there seems to be a lack of involvement of key partners (e.g. NHS staff) and key stakeholders (e.g. parents and autistic people).
- The majority of local authorities are delivering professional learning with partners but only a few are involving parents and autistic people (e.g. ex-pupils) in delivery.
- An encouraging range of types of professional learning is available from local authorities including provision of information and guidance, online learning opportunities, post-graduate courses in autism, tiered approaches to professional learning, professional learning communities and collaborative practitioner enquiry.

2. Interventions in the area of autism (see green section of Appendix 1)
- **All** local authorities support autistic learners through a range of approaches. This reflects both the Welsh Government (2018) and Bond(2016) reviews of effective intervention which suggest that the use of a range of approaches is likely to be required to meet the varied needs of autistic learners.
- The majority of local authorities noted professional learning as a key intervention which demonstrates a recognition that educational practitioners who understand autism are vital to effectively support autistic learners.
- There is a wide range and number of strategies and approaches being used across Scotland to support autistic learners with some emerging as core; these include classroom interventions which focus on enhancing communication and social and emotional support.
- Over half of the local authorities reported that they use sensory approaches, and consideration of the environment. Over half of local authorities also report the use of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) based approaches to develop an understanding of autistic learners' experience of anxiety and stress and the resulting impact on their behaviour.

- Other popular approaches reported are coaching and mentoring, transition planning, use of the Autism Toolbox, individual planning following the assessment of learners, tailored approaches to conflict resolution and resources to support leaners to understand their autism and share their views.
- Some authorities listed key frameworks that are used. The majority reported using aspects of TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children), whilst a few reported using SCERTS (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support) and Synergie (an approach which uses mentors in developing skill and building capacity to address behaviours that challenge).

Potential Areas for Development

- Consideration of wider engagement with key partners and stakeholders when developing professional learning resources.
- Consideration of greater involvement of parents and autistic people in the delivery of professional learning.
- Parental engagement- some local authorities have outlined their work to ensure that the parents and carers of autistic learners are included, engaged and involved with education. This is an area which should be further developed across Scotland. Support from parents can enhance the delivery and of programmes and provide a perspective on the impact different approaches have on their children. Like all parents, they have a unique perspective on the way in which their child's school experience impacts on family life. Parent support groups are used in some local authorities to provide support for families, often on a multi-agency basis.
- Education Scotland is currently working with a range of partners to provide further information and professional learning opportunities by refreshing the Autism Toolbox and by developing a professional learning module. This will enhance the suite of free learning modules already available to support staff to deliver inclusive education for all.

Introduction to Inclusive Education

Inclusion in Practice: The CIRCLE Framework - Secondary

Dyslexia and Inclusive Practice

Autism professional learning and development and autism interventions in local authorities
Summary of Responses

Terminology

In the analysis of the local authority responses the following terminology has been used when describing the analysis of the information provided:

Almost all	over 90%	Most	75% to 90%	Majority	50% to 74%	Less than half	15% to 49%	Few up to	15%

Section 1: Professional learning in the area of autism

Question 1: Which team/s developed the professional learning programme?

The 32 LA reported using a wide a range of services, individuals and groups when developing professional learning programmes.

A majority used:	Less than half used:	A few used:		

• Educational Psychological Service
• Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Additional Support Needs (ASN) Outreach or Resource Teams
	• Additional Support Needs Management Teams/ Accessibility and Inclusion Services
	• NHS including
	  Occupational Therapy
	  Speech and Language Therapy
	  Dietician
		• ASD Provision Staff/ ASD Teacher
		• A range of school-based staff
		• Autism Strategy working group
		• Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
		• Clinical Psychologist
		• Career-long Professional Learning (CLPL) coordinator
		• Early Years Team
		• Language and Communication Outreach Team/Service
		• Parents
		• Social Work
		• Special School Staff
		• Third Sector providers		

Section 1: Professional learning in the area of autism

Question 2: Who currently delivers training?

The 32 LA reported using a wide a range of services, individuals and groups to deliver training.

Almost all used:	Most used:	A majority used:	Less than half used:	A few used:

• Education Practitioners including:
  ○ ASD (ASN) Outreach/ Resource Centre/ Support Team
  ○ ASN Management Teams including Education Officers and Quality Improvement Officers
  ○ ASN Teacher
  ○ SEBN Service
  ○ School Staff
  ○ Special Schools
  ○ Headteacher
  ○ Language & Communication Outreach Team/Service (various terms used)
  ○ Collaborative Support Service Team
  ○ Community Learning Development (CLD) staff
	• Educational Psychological Service	• Allied Health Professionals including:
		  ○ Speech and Language Therapy Team
		  ○ Occupational Therapy Team
		  ○ Accessibility and Inclusion Services/Team
		  ○ Dietician
			• ASD Provision Staff
			• Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
			• Higher/Further Education Courses including:
			  ○ Post Graduate Courses Aberdeen & Birmingham Mentioned
			  ○ Open University
			  ○ Local College
			• Third Sector Autism Support including:
			  ○ Autism Connect
			  ○ Autism Education Trust
			  ○ Autism Network Scotland
			  ○ National Autistic Society (including accreditation)
			  ○ One Stop Shop
			  ○ The Skills Network
				• LA online training available
				• Careers' Link Autism Specialist
				• Ex-pupils
				• External Speakers
				• Parents
				• Clinical Psychologist
				• Paediatrician
				• Social Work
				• UNISON Autism Awareness Training for to Pupil Support Assistants
				•

Section 1: Professional learning in the area of autism		
Question 3: Who is training delivered to?		
Almost all provide training for: • Additional Support Needs Specialist Teachers • Early Years Practitioners • Class Teachers • Pupil Support Assistants/Classroom Assistants	**Most provide training for:** • Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) • Head Teachers	**LA also noted others they provided training for (few):** • Parents • Support Groups • Support for Learning staff • Communication friendly strategies in DFS accreditation pathway • Inclusion Support Officers • Active Schools' Coordinators • Other school staff – cleaners, janitors, office • Third sector partners • Early Level Support Teachers • Supporting Families Team • Early Years Team • Social work • Health practitioners • Police Liaison Officers • Staff working in children's services, • Colleges/further education staff
All of the local authorities have training in place which targets the needs of their staff depending on the sector in which they work.		

Section 1: Professional learning in the area of autism
Question 4: Do schools have autism champions?
Less than half of the LA reported having autism advisors or champions or support for learning specialists in schools or learning communities. It was noted by some that whole school training was the preferred approach where there were autistic learners in the school.

Section 2: Interventions in the area of autism
Question 1: Which interventions does the local authority use to support children and young people?
A wide range of professional learning opportunities, interventions, strategies and approaches were mentioned in the responses to this question. These responses are summarised thematically below.

The majority of the LA reported using communication approaches, these included:

- Picture Exchange Systems (PECS)
- Support through CALL Scotland
- Boardmaker
- Makaton
- Visual Timetables
- Total Communication Policy
- I-CAN
- Intensive Interactions
- Widget symbols
- Language reduction (processing time)
- Talking Mats
- Make a Deal (visual reinforcement)
- ICT
- Scripting
- Language and Communication Friendly Self evaluation
- Dyslexic Friendly Schools (communication approaches)

The majority reported using a range of professional learning including:

- LA information and guidance
- LA online learning
- Free online learning courses eg Open Learn and NHS Education Service
- Tiered approach to training
- Multi-agency training and working including allied health professionals and social work
- Psychological Services
- Professional learning communities

- Post Graduate course in autism
- Collaborative Practitioner Enquiry

The majority reported using TEACCH

The majority reported using social and/or emotional approaches including:

- Social Stories
- The Incredible 5-point scale
- Circle of Friends
- Emotion Works
- Social skills and communication programmes
- Self-Regulation
- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHs)
- Social Circles
- Social Skills
- Social Use of Language (SULP)
- Incredible Years Classroom Management

Less than half reported using individual planning based on analysis of need often following assessment

Less than half reported interventions involving parents including:

- Home support
- Workshops for parents
- Support groups
- Seeking parental views on training requirements and experiences

Less than half reported using sensory approaches and supports for ASD learners:

- Calm boxes
- Fidget toys
- Weighted blankets etc
- Sensory support
- Sensory/quiet rooms

- Ear defenders
- Sensory diet

Less than half reported focusing on the environment to support autistic learners including:

- Environmental checklists and self-evaluation in this area
- Autism friendly environments
- Enhanced ASD support areas on schools

Less than half reported using LA staff to support autism training and support including:

- Autism Advisors
- Autism Forum
- Professional learning communities
- Outreach
- Specialist Service
- Senior Learning and Care Staff

Less than half reported using CBT approaches including:

- Zones of Regulation
- Living Life to the Full
- Homunculi

Less than half reported using approaches to support the understanding of distressed behaviour, and self-regulation, these included:

- Understanding / managing challenging or distressed behaviour for autistic learners
- Individual Reward charts
- MAPA
- CALM

Less than half reported using the Autism Toolbox

Less than half reported using coaching and mentoring approaches

Less than half reported using transition planning including the Transitions Planning Framework

Less than half reported using conflict resolution approaches including:

- Restorative approaches
- Conflict resolution

Less than half reported engaging with learners, those who did mentioned:

- Resources to obtain learner voice
- Learner perspective
- My autism and me
- All about me

A few mentioned using positive mindset approaches including:

- Growth Mindset
- Building Learning Power
- Mindfulness

A few mentioned using therapeutic approaches including:

- Creative Art
- Music Therapy
- Therapets
- Yoga and relaxation approaches
- Lego Therapy

A few mentioned using:

- Nurturing Approaches
- Reverse Integration
- Life Skills
- Third Sector
- National Autistic Society

A few mentioned using outdoor and play based learning including:

- Forest School
- Structured Play
- Outdoor play and learning

A few mentioned using SCERTS

A few mentioned using Synergie
A few mentioned using the CIRCLE approach

Appendix 2

Autism professional learning and development and autism interventions in local authorities

Autism is an increasingly important national priority. Local authorities use a variety of professional learning approaches to facilitate staff development and a range of interventions to support children and young people.

The aim of this return is to gain a clearer picture of the current national trends. This will better enable us to support the improvement of what is offered nationally to support professional learning in the area of autism.

Please complete this and return to Angela.Stoner@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk as soon as possible.

Name of local Authority	
Contact details of respondent	
Permission to share This section was added following the initial returns Due to the high quality of the returns received so far demonstrating well the extensive range of activities being delivered to support learners with Autism, we are seeking permission to share a final summary of returns and would be grateful of you could indicate if you are content for us to do so. We do not intend to identify what each authority does other than to list those who have responded.	
Permission to share	Yes No (please indicate)
Professional Learning in the area of Autism	
Which team/s developed the professional learning programme?	
Who currently delivers training?	

Who is training delivered to (put 'Yes' where applicable) ?	Early Years Practitioners	PSA/ Classroom Assistants	NQT's	Class Teachers	Headteachers	ASN Specialists
	Other					
Do schools have designated autism champions?		Yes/No				

Interventions in the area of Autism
Which interventions does the Local Authority use to support children and young people? e.g. TEACCH

Many thanks for your help,

The Inclusion team, Education Scotland