

## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

## REPORT

To: Education Committee	Subject: "SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN SCOTLAND" A SCOTTISH OFFICE DISCUSSION PAPER
From: Director of Education	
Date: 27th July 1998	
Ref: JMcG/LL	

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report advises members of the publication by the Scottish Office of a discussion paper on special educational needs. Responses to the document were invited by 7 August 1998 and the North Lanarkshire submission which forms the appendix to the report therefore requires homologation by the education committee.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The education committee is asked to:

- (i) note and approve the contents of the report
- (ii) homologate the council's response which has already been submitted to the Scottish Office in order to meet the required deadline.
- (iii) refer the report to the social work committee for information and interest.

Members wishing further information about this report should contact:

Michael O'Neill, Director of Education, on 01236 812307 or  
Jim McGuinness, Head of Support for Learning, on 01236 812280.



A copy of the discussion paper is available in the Local Government Library, 4th floor Civic Centre, Motherwell.

## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL : DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

"Special Educational Needs in Scotland"  
- A Scottish Office Discussion Paper

Report by Director

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The discussion paper entitled "Special Educational Needs in Scotland" was published by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID) on 5 May 1998. Comments on a number of key questions were invited by 7 August 1998. Given the significance of the document and the timescale involved it was decided, with the agreement of the education convenor, that the department should conduct a short consultation exercise with a range of professional colleagues active in the field of special education in order to inform the council's response. Views were also invited from the social work department.
- 1.2. North Lanarkshire's response to the questions posed by the discussion paper is attached as Appendix 1 to this report and the education committee is invited to homologate its contents.

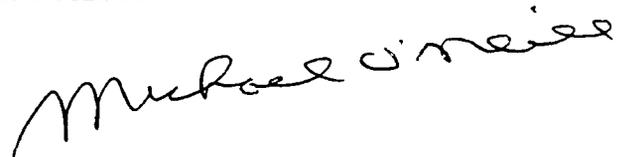
## 2. RECOMMENDATION

The education committee is asked to:

- (i) note and approve the contents of the report and
- (ii) homologate the council's response which has already been submitted to the Scottish Office in order to meet the required deadline.
- (iii) refer the report to the social work committee for information and interest.

Members wishing further information about this report should contact:

Michael O'Neill, Director of Education, on 01236 812307 or  
Jim McGuinness, Head of Support for Learning, on 01236 812280.



## APPENDIX I

**SOEID Discussion Paper**  
**“Special Educational Needs In Scotland”**  
**North Lanarkshire’s Response**

**Background**

In response to the SOEID discussion paper, *Special Educational Needs in Scotland*, the education department in North Lanarkshire brought together a number of educational professionals from mainstream schools, special education, peripatetic support and the psychological service with the aim of formulating an informed and comprehensive response to the questions raised in the paper. The views of key colleagues in the social work department have also influenced the submission.

**General Comment**

- (i) North Lanarkshire welcomes the publication of the SOEID discussion paper which it sees as making a significant contribution at a strategic and operational level to the delivery of education to pupils with special educational needs in Scotland. It is hoped that the Advisory Committee being set up by the Minister will further inform this process and facilitate developments in the area of special educational needs. Nevertheless, the authority would have welcomed a more radical review of special educational needs similar to that undertaken in England and Wales through the DFEE green paper *Excellence for All*. It is hoped that such a review may be conducted at some stage in the future.
- (ii) An inordinate amount of local authority professional time and resources is currently utilised in formal assessment within the *Recording* framework and in the associated bureaucratic maintenance of Records of Needs. There is an urgent need to review this model, which increasingly restrains the flexible use of resources in meeting identified need.
- (iii) Education law may need to be reviewed and amended in the light of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, particularly with regard to children with disability.
- (iv) Additional specific grant funding should be made available to facilitate those authorities which wish to move towards a more inclusive model of special needs provision.

## Responses to Questions:

### Involving Parents

- Q1 *Would an independent national SEN advice service be helpful? If so, how might it be funded and how could its services be delivered in effective partnership with other existing local or client specific groups?*

Circumstances vary widely across the country and special educational needs provision differs significantly from area to area. There is therefore no doubt that parents of children with particular needs do require support and advice about what is or could be available. However it does not seem feasible that a national body could advise parents to the level of detail they would require within their particular local context. What would therefore be helpful would be some form of "signposting" system which could provide advice and support of a more general nature while helping parents to access key individuals within local authorities and support agencies in their own area.

Within this context many of those consulted felt that improving co-operation between and among groups of neighbouring local authorities was a more pressing and potentially difficult issue.

### Involving Pupils

- Q2a. *How should good practice for involving children and young persons with special educational needs be identified and disseminated?*

The emergence of the 1995 Children Act, to which implicit reference is made in this section of the discussion paper, has heightened awareness of the need to address the difficulties of properly consulting young people, particularly those with special educational needs. Teachers are already engaged in awareness raising exercises around the 1995 Act and its implications for curricular change and development in the field of guidance and counselling. Where particular good practice exists it should be highlighted and shared with other practitioners. Schools should be encouraged to examine existing mechanisms for listening to children and their parents and to seek further improvements. A special educational needs newsletter might provide a vehicle for the collation and dissemination of good practice.

- Q2b. *Should there be a separate guide for the children and young persons to complement the Parents Guide to Special Educational Needs?*

Yes. This would be a welcome development in the light of the 1995 Children (Scotland) Act. Attention would need to be paid to style and content as well as ethnic minority and sensory impairment issues.

### **The Role of the School**

- Q3. *In what ways can the development, communication and implementation of school policies on special educational needs be improved?*

The HMI report "Effective Provision for Special Educational Needs" (EPSSEN) provides schools with a very sound framework within which to formulate appropriate policies and practices to meet the special educational needs of pupils. Within North Lanarkshire emphasis has been placed on promoting the principles of EPSSEN and headteachers have been urged to give appropriate priority to the provision of inservice and staff development opportunities to support its implementation.

### **The Role of the Local Authority**

- Q4. *How can the development and discussion of education authorities' policies on special educational needs involve all those with an interest in special educational needs provision?*

North Lanarkshire has adopted the policy framework "Every Child is Special" which itself was the product of a most comprehensive review of special educational needs in the former Strathclyde Region involving a major consultation with providers and users of services. In North Lanarkshire we are promoting collaboration amongst schools, particularly between mainstream and special sectors in order to encourage the transfer of skills and experience amongst practitioners. The physical relocation of 2 special schools within mainstream school buildings and the establishment of a number of special units within mainstream schools have been important steps forward in the promotion of new thinking and policy development.

The production of *Children's Service Plans* provides another opportunity for the involvement/commitment of other council departments, most significantly social work, and other key agencies including the health boards and trusts. The adoption of a *Special Needs Forum* may be another way of bringing together those with an interest in this area.

### **The Role of the Voluntary Sector**

- Q5. *Are there particular priority areas which should be considered under any future Special Educational Needs Grant Scheme?*

Priority areas would be:

- (i) Funding for joint authority/voluntary sector initiatives to support SEN pupils and their families over long holiday periods.
- (ii) Funding/promotion of joint training/staff development initiatives.

## Identification , Assessment and Intervention

Q6. *How can the early identification, assessment and intervention processes be improved?*

The following suggestions should be considered:

- (i) Education link to Health Board's special needs system to allow immediate alert with regard to children identified as vulnerable by health professionals.
- (ii) Promotional material for parents on available services.
- (iii) Improved networking/liaison between council departments and external agencies at strategic and operational level.
- (iv) Effective mechanisms for sharing information and for planning purposes in terms of required provision and resources.
- (v) The establishment and consolidation of practices outlined in relation to EPSEN.
- (vi) Joint training for staff involved in the multi-agency approach to identification and assessment of children with special educational needs.

## Team Working

Q7. *How might the provision of therapy services be improved?*

There is a need for greater co-ordination and liaison, particularly in relation to the provision of services from medical professionals. The issue of "ownership" is critical. Difficulty of purchaser/provider relationship where, for example education has to pay for medical services (e.g. speech therapy) without operational or professional control.

There is also a need to clearly identify and delineate areas of statutory responsibility of education and health in particular.

The funding of various therapies also needs to be reviewed.

## Staff Development and Qualifications

Q8. *Should there be annual national priorities for SEN staff development and training? If so, how should they be identified?*

Any national priorities would need to reflect the priorities of schools and local authorities. The SEN national training project might serve as an appropriate forum for achieving this balance.

A module on SEN should be **compulsory** as part of initial teacher training.

- Q9. *Should the appropriate sections of the 1956 Code on mandatory qualifications for teachers of SEN pupils be repealed, maintained or extended?*

The 1956 Code should be repealed as it is now philosophically and operationally outdated. It is neither practical nor desirable to fragment the teaching profession through the development of highly specialised qualifications. Teacher training should be all embracing so that prospective entrants to the profession have an understanding of the need to educate the whole child. Teaching practice for all students in a special needs setting would be helpful. The provision of modular courses reflecting various aspects of special education offers a more flexible approach which underlines the increasingly inclusive nature of special education. Specialist knowledge must remain embedded in a wider framework of SEN qualification.

#### **Education for Children with Chronic Illness**

- Q10. *Is there a need to clarify the role and responsibilities of education authorities and others in relation to the education of children with chronic illness? If so, how might this be achieved?*

There is a need for improved liaison/communication between health and education regarding children who are **hospitalised** for significant periods. Professional isolation of hospital teaching staff is an issue requiring further thought.

Clarification of the extent to which education should take responsibility for provision of education to pupils who may be at home through long-term illness/recuperation would be helpful.

JMcG/LL  
July 1998