

**CLASSROOM/PUPIL [tbc] SUPPORT STAFF WORKING GROUP
NOTE OF MEETING, 24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

Welcome and introductions

Attendees:

David Roy, Scottish Government

Melanie Lowe, Scottish Government

Tracy Manning, Scottish Government

Frances Foreman, Education Scotland

Peter McNaughton, ADES

Matthew Swinney, Cosla

Simon Cameron, Cosla

Dougie Atkinson, Voice

Maria Pridden, Unison

Janette Kerr, ASLO (Education Support Officer Dundee City Council)

Sally Cavers, Children in Scotland

Taking stock

1. The Group reflected on where they were when they first met in February and where they are now, with a focus on the impacts of Covid-19. There was a strong emphasis on the fundamental role played by support staff both during school closures (supporting learning hubs) and with schools re-opening/pupils retuning.
2. The Group highlighted that most staff welcome the return to school and comment that pupils have coped very well, although this is not without its challenges, including: a rise in children returning with emotional and behavioural difficulties (additional workload for PSAs); high levels of staff anxiety and uncertainties of what the winter period will bring; some schools adapting a 'bubble'/'zone' system in response to overwhelmed PSAs (allowing one person to work with a smaller group). However, staff shortages is an ongoing issue in facilitating this; workforce has shown great resilience and adaptability – keen to seek specific value placed on them.

Action Points from last Meeting (4 February 2020)

3. Dougie – to engage with counterparts in Wales seeking views from members on how the Education Workforce Council is working in practice – to feedback at next meeting. Dougie confirmed that he engaged with relevant counterparts in Wales, however, this post was currently under review and informed the Group that he will pick this up with the successor in due course.
4. Fran – to consider if/how Inspection Reports could be a valuable source – to feedback at next meeting. Fran confirmed that this action is challenging to progress in the current climate (inspections suspended) and in light of wider priorities. The Group agreed to consider if this action remains helpful as discussions progress and to bring back to the table in the future if required.
5. Tracy – to invite ASLO representative to join Working Group. Tracy welcomed Janette to the Group as the ASLO representative to this meeting.

6. Tracy / David – to review terms of reference and share in advance of next meeting – to discuss at next meeting. Tracy confirmed that this action hadn't been taken forward in light of current circumstances. The Group agreed to reconsider in light of current priorities and for Tracy to share revised ToR in advance of the next meeting.

ASL Review Recommendations Overview

7. Melanie confirmed that the [ASL review report](#) was published in June setting out a wide range of recommendations across 9 themes (vision and visibility, mainstreaming and inclusion, maintaining focus, but overcoming fragmentation, resource, workforce development and support, relationships and behaviour, understanding rights and assurance mechanism and inspection). The review was broadly welcomed as a clear driver for making change. Melanie and team are working to develop an Action Plan in response that is due to be published in October.

Overview of the professional learning available for pupil support staff currently from Education Scotland

8. Fran summarised and highlighted the importance of the impact of the ASL review recommendation for the Group. Fran also up-dated the Group on the work she had undertaken to identify existing learning opportunities for school support staff and the potential to develop a specific national 'learning hub'. The Group discussed a number of external work streams that learning could be taken from, including the package of support in England through the *Education Endowment Fund*.
9. The Group discussed the ongoing complexities of the variation of job titles and roles and responsibilities across support staff in terms of targeting support. Matthew informed the Group of similar issues with regards to the role of home-school-link and agreed to consider this issue for further discussion at the next meeting.

Action Points:

- **Matthew/Simon** - to consider how we develop a better understanding of differing roles and responsibilities and feedback at next meeting.
- **Tracy** - to consider terms of reference in light of current circumstances and share in advance of next meeting.
- **Jennet** - to share final ToR (once agreed) for views at the next ASLO meeting scheduled for November.

Date of Next Meeting

Scheduled - 04 November 2020.