

## Appendix 13: Focus Groups

### Focus Group 1

**Number invited: 6**

**Number of attendees: 2**

**Number of senior central officers in attendance: 2**

### **Opening message and introductions**

'Thank you for giving up your time today. This is part of the statutory consultation on the Falkirk Council's current Enhanced Provision model. Our aim is to listen to your views, understand concerns and gather ideas about what would need to be in place if any changes were to take place.

We are not here to debate or persuade but instead to hear from you. Everything you share will be treated respectfully and, when we report back, your comments won't be attributed to individuals.

### **Statement on the Proposal for Enhanced Support in Every Falkirk Primary School**

Following the ongoing consultation activity, discussion and feedback, we want to clarify that no decision has been made regarding the model of enhanced support and we would continue to encourage engagement from all relevant stakeholders. We want the final approach to reflect the needs and aspirations of all. At the very core of the proposal, we seek a way to ensure that every Falkirk child receives the right support, in the right place, at the right time, within their own school and community. Work on looking at potential options for transformation of the EP model actually began in 2023, in response to rising ASN needs in all schools.

We want to provide clarity around some wording in the consultation paper, particularly relating to the suggestion that all children who currently attend an Enhanced Provision would be required to return to their catchment school. We would like to be very clear that no child will be forced to move school. The proposal sets out the ambition that, if every school is equipped with the staff and resource to provide enhanced support, children could be educated in their local school and community. This remains a goal in the proposal that could be achieved through careful transition, planning and collaboration.

A few points to help the flow of discussion: one person at a time, kindness and respect for all perspectives, we will aim to keep the focus on what is best for all children and learning and be mindful of time, so everyone is heard. Today's session will run for 1.5 hours.'

### **Background**

- Current situation: EP classes provide concentrated support in a small number of schools.
- Proposal: Evolve to a model which will redistribute staff/resources across all schools and not keep these within 15 sites.
- Why consider change: fairness, sustainability, inclusive practice.
- If nothing changes, support remains concentrated, not all schools can meet the needs of their own children .

Facilitator: 'Any quick clarification questions before we start discussions?'

## Initial reactions

Prompt: 'What's your first reaction to this proposal—positive, negative, or mixed?

## Next thoughts

### **Part 1 – Benefits**

'What positives could you see for your child or schools generally?'

- Parents feel that the positive would not be for this proposal to go ahead but instead for there to be more EPs, in their current form, to be built and created in some more schools.
- Parents would like there to be a designated EP class in each of the schools and for the teachers to be properly qualified to be able to support the children in the right way.
- Parents felt that if there was a true reflection of Enhanced Provision with the properly trained teachers in the new spaces then that would be something that would be vital to this working. If the staff are not properly trained then this would fail and, you would lose teaching staff and impact the children.
- There would need to be a guarantee that every teacher who was going to work in these spaces would need to have the current ASN/SEBN training and qualifications to be able to work in the right way with the children in each of the spaces.

### **Part 2 – Concerns & Conditions**

'What are your main worries?'

- Worried about mobile units and if they are capable of being the right places for any enhanced support spaces to be provided. They are very warm in summer and can be very cold in winter.
- Parents feel strongly that children who are currently in Enhanced Provisions are not able to cope in mainstream and so there is fear around their children coming to the end of their primary time and moving to secondary school.
- Parents feel strongly that the children coming through to high school are not able to manage in the provisions which are in the high schools at the moment. KD: There are children who do go from EP to Carrongrange High School but there are also children who come from EP to the mainstream high schools, and they are supported through a devolved model.
- Nobody with children who are in mainstream who do not have additional needs do not have the 'fight' that ASN parents and parents of EP children have and have had.
- Parents have heard concerning information that there has been a 'removal' of exceptional SfLA hours from children in secondary school. KD: Responded by explaining that the hours have not been removed, the hours have been given to the schools directly but the 'named' hours are now only given for medical reasons which is back to the previous (pre-covid) systems.

Parents raised that the parents of these children (who had direct hours removed) had not been spoken to directly or individually and that this should not have been left to the schools to do this – parents feel that the communication around this should have been different.

- Parental experience around trying to get the right support for their young person, the information around things like staged intervention levels etc. was not given/not clear. Parent had to do their own research around staged intervention levels, felt overwhelmed, felt let down and failed by the school. If education services had taken responsibility around this process, then the parent and family would not have had to do their own work and research around this kind of information.
- Parent feeling that they need to 'fight' and they have been capable of doing that and not every parent knows how to do this, can do this, are able to gain the right education and information around this process.
- Parent concern around partnership working and how information is currently communicated.

Example of areas of NHS services (where information is readily available) used to highlight the information which is needed around all of the processes and procedures which are needed to be known and understood for parents of children with ASN.

- Parents raised that the proposal document was not as clear for all parents/carers to be able to understand.
- Concern around schools not being well enough informed to be able to support parents in the right way. The schools need to be supported to be given the right information so that they can support parents and families.
- Parents do not care which school their children go to, they want a 'save space' and the right people with the right training to support the young people with this higher level of need.
- Parents are concerned that the authority will not be able to deliver the curriculum in the right way to pupils with a range of different needs if they are not teachers who are qualified in ASN support/education. Parent concern that this is not going to work as the teachers won't be qualified enough.
- Concerns raised that the EP model as it currently stands does not fully work (things like teachers leaving after they have been placed in an EP in order to support children that parents feel they are not qualified to help) and so taking something that already doesn't work and spreading that is not going to work.
- There have already been examples of lack of continuity within the current EPs with situations such as being different teachers each year where there should be the same staff and teachers all of the time as the children need this level of consistency. KD response: Scottish Gov took away the need for a teacher to have an ASN qualification to be able to work with children with ASN, but this is being brought back. Also, because of low numbers, the EPs were only built in 15 schools due to budget constraints at that time either.
- There are number concerns even around the current set up within EPs.
- Parental experience of working with children whom they were not trained to be able to work with and this does not help anyone because the staff and children are failed in this way.
- There is a level of frustration and inequality which still exists and children with high levels of additional needs and there are many cases where children with needs are bullied for being different.
- Parents are looking for children to be safe from situations like this and from bullying and being targeted.
- Bullying protocols don't keep children safe and there can be extensive work done by school and staff with these children but if society allows this behaviour and their homes allow this behaviour then this is almost impossible for us to tackle. When this cannot be tackled, it impacts the mental health, wellbeing, education, engagement and attainment of children with needs and differences.
- Children with ASN can be looked at as someone to 'look after' and not a peer.
- Children who attend enhanced provisions are often cognitively, even if they do not appear so in their looks etc., functioning at a lower age than their chronological age.
- Parent raising that they are not sure that the staged intervention levels are correct. KD response: There has been work started and will continue on moderation, information hubs, ensuring good and the right practice is taking place. There are some parents who did not want their child to be in an EP, wing, Carrongrange etc.
- Parents agree with this as they have gone through their own journeys and emotional journeys of this.
- This isn't just about the academic progress of children; it is also about the life skill progress.
- St Mungo's do not have an official base, and it doesn't function in the same way as the official council provided provisions.

- There is a concern that what is happening in secondary would need to match anything if there was to be a change in primary.  
'What would need to be in place for you to feel confident about this change?'
- Parental feeling that the change to Carrongrange from an MLD school is having a continued impact on the ASN children in question.
- The feeling of community for their children is really important and so regardless of whether they are in their catchment school or not, they need to have that level of community/friendship/peers.
- The secondaries are currently not consistent in how they are delivering their support also and this may need to be looked at in order to avoid a post code lottery of support.
- If the funding doesn't match what is needed, then that is where so much concern comes from a proposal like this.

### Prioritisation

Give each participant the option to vote on the 3 most important issues/conditions for them.

- We need to know that the standard of what is being offered is of the same high standard and that there is a consistency across the board. Parents need to know that their children is going to be supported in more than just traditional academics as this is not the priority for many ASN families and children.
- There needs to be less 'woolly' information and more specifics on what is going to be offered for children with ASN.
- If the outcome was an EP in every school with the right and trained staff.
- Headteachers would need to be thinking of what is best for the children and not just what is going to be 'easy' for the school.
- It needs to not be SfLAs who are tasked with supporting these children with high levels of need.
- There needs to be fixed staffing around the children who currently have EP places.

### **Final points**

'Thank you for being open and thoughtful.

If you'd like to add anything else after today, you can complete the online survey or send written comments. The QR code on the desk will take you straight to the platform.

The consultation runs until October 27<sup>th</sup>, and a report will be taken to Executive Committee in February 2026. Your contribution is crucial to this and to the next steps which Falkirk Council Education Services will take.

### Focus Group 2

**Number invited: 6**

**Number of attendees: 2**

**Number of senior central officers in attendance: 2**

### **Opening message and introductions**

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## **Statement on the Proposal for Enhanced Support in Every Falkirk Primary School**

Following the ongoing consultation activity, discussion and feedback, we want to clarify that no decision has been made regarding the model of enhanced support and we would continue to encourage engagement from all relevant stakeholders. We want the final approach to reflect the needs and aspirations of all. At the very core of the proposal, we seek a way to ensure that every Falkirk child receives the right support, in the right place, at the right time, within their own school and community.

We want to provide clarity around some wording in the consultation paper, particularly relating to the suggestion that all children who currently attend an Enhanced Provision would be required to return to their catchment school. We would like to be very clear that no child will be forced to move school.

The proposal sets out the ambition that, if every school is equipped with the staff and resource to provide enhanced support, children could be educated in their local school and community. This remains a goal in the proposal that could be achieved through careful transition, planning and collaboration.

A few points to help the flow of discussion: one person at a time, kindness and respect for all perspectives, we will aim to keep the focus on what is best for all children and learning and be mindful of time, so everyone is heard. Today's session will run for 1.5 hours.'

### **Background**

- Current situation: EP classes provide concentrated support in a small number of schools.
- Proposal: Evolve to a model which will redistribute staff/resources across all schools and not keep these within 15 sites.
- Why consider change: fairness, sustainability, inclusive practice.
- If nothing changes, support remains concentrated, not all schools can meet the needs of their own children

Facilitator: 'Any quick clarification questions before we start discussions?'

### Initial reactions

Prompt: 'What's your first reaction to this proposal—positive, negative, or mixed?'

### Next thoughts

#### **Part 1 – Benefits**

'What positives could you see for your child or schools generally?'

- EP teachers have been amazing for the children of a parent. One parent referring to the EP staff as 'angels' due to what they provide.
- If all schools could provide this then that would be the right thing.

#### **Part 2 – Concerns & Conditions**

'What are your main worries?'

- Pupils who are already in EPs, one parent would not want them to move as they were settled.
- There are concerns around the funding for this, parents agreed that they would like there to be an EP/EP model in all of the schools, but they are concerned that the budget for the EPs just being 'spread' across everyone is going to stretch it all.
- There are concerns that there would be 'mainstream' children with the EP children and that was asked as a question. KD response: the EP model is already a mainstream model where children from the EP can access mainstream where needed and possible

but it's not about just placing them in a mainstream class or filling the EP class with lots of children from mainstream.

It would be about providing that EP style support to the children who need this but also allowing a flexible model for HTs to be able to manage this within their own school.

- There are sensory issues with the main school classes, building, garden/playground etc. One parent highlighted these issues and said that her child has grown and moved on so much in the time that her child has been receiving the EP support and would not want this to go back the way and so they would want to home school them if the small, safe spaces were not going to be available in the future.
- Parents are concerned about children and parents in the mainstream not being receptive and understanding to the needs and behaviours of the children within the Enhanced Provision.
- It is felt that the skilled staff and strategies are also what takes the EPs above and beyond where they are just now. Some of the staff have many years (in some cases 30 years) of experience and training people by just giving them online courses as this would not work.
- Parents asked why there cannot be a phase in of two or three EPs, trial that and see how that work first. This would be a middle ground which would be more open and honest as parents feel this current idea of trying to provide the support for all schools is not going to work.
- Parents feel there is always going to be someone who is not happy and there is never going to be a model which is right or suitable for everyone. Parents highlighted that even as they sat together, their ideas on.
- Parents feel they have had to fight for the EP place already and they feel like they are having to fight again due to the idea of EPs changing.
- The current model is great for the children who are in it but not for everyone else and that is recognised.
- What about sitting down and talking to the teachers in the EPs and asking them what they think would be the right proposal if this doesn't go through because they might come up with the right thing for everyone.
- Not all of the EPs are even the same and there is not a consistency with how they EPs even operate never mind across all of the 47 schools.
- Concern around other mainstream children bullying the children from the EP and the children from the EP will not always understand that. Siblings might then get involved to protect their siblings. Parents do not want a target on their child's back.
- The support to go into mainstream isn't always there and that means children in the EP are just staying in the bases anyway. KD response: the staffing is 1 teacher and 2 SfLAs so if this is not happening or there is more than that being given then the current model itself may not be fit for purpose.
- A worry is if a child has not had a good day/good morning and this can be communicated currently to the EP teachers and if this was lost then this could set off other children and cause bigger issues.
- 'What would need to be in place for you to feel confident about this change?'
- Parents do think it should be the case that the same kind of support as the EPs give in every school but not by diluting the support and money.
- Parents highlighted that they would need the spaces and areas created that replicate the small and safe spaces of the current enhanced provisions.
- Parents feel the environments need to be right and there needs to be a lot of consideration needs to be taken around this no matter what the model, if there is any change, is going to be.
- Parents would need guarantees that their children would not be made to move or change if that is not right for them.

- Parents feel that the small and supported environments of the EPs are working for their children and they are concerned that their children would regress if they were to access mainstream classes.
- Parent raising that a child's happiness and mental health is going to be preferred over the academic successes or abilities.
- The strong communication is needed and that partnership working is required for the children in the EP to be best supported properly and for parents to have a voice and be kept up to date with what is happening for their child.
- There can be lots of children in the EP who are talking and concerning themselves with their own interests and if they just placed in a mainstream class then that doesn't mean that he is actually included with the other children.
- There is a community in the EP classes which can be built and created through the practices of the EPs, and this would be needed and necessary if there were any replicated classes in other schools.
- Parents would want there to be a small, secure and safe area where children can also access outdoors. Staffing would also be needed for this also.
- There would need to be the same concern around lunch and play (staggered and not with others for example).

### Prioritisation

Give each participant the option to vote on the 3 most important issues/conditions for them.

### **Final points**

'Thank you for being open and thoughtful.

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### Focus Group 3

**Number invited: 6**

**Number of attendees: 3**

**Number of senior central officers in attendance: 2**

### **Opening message and introductions**

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### **Statement on the Proposal for Enhanced Support in Every Falkirk Primary School**

Following the ongoing consultation activity, discussion and feedback, we want to clarify that no decision has been made regarding the model of enhanced support and we would continue to encourage engagement from all relevant stakeholders. We want the final approach to reflect the needs and aspirations of all.

At the very core of the proposal, we seek a way to ensure that every Falkirk child receives the right support, in the right place, at the right time, within their own school and community. We want to provide clarity around some wording in the consultation paper, particularly relating to the suggestion that all children who currently attend an Enhanced Provision would be required to return to their catchment school. We would like to be very clear that no child will be forced to move school.

The proposal sets out the ambition that, if every school is equipped with the staff and resource to provide enhanced support, children could be educated in their local school and community. This remains a goal in the proposal that could be achieved through careful transition, planning and collaboration.

A few points to help the flow of discussion: one person at a time, kindness and respect for all perspectives, we will aim to keep the focus on what is best for all children and learning and be mindful of time, so everyone is heard. Today's session will run for 1.5 hours.'

## **Background**

- Current situation: EP classes provide concentrated support in a small number of schools.
- Proposal: Evolve to a model which will redistribute staff/resources across all schools and not keep these within 15 sites.
- Why consider change: fairness, sustainability, inclusive practice.
- If nothing changes, support remains concentrated, not all schools can meet the needs of their own children.

Facilitator: 'Any quick clarification questions before we start discussions?'

**Tuesday 23 September 12noon – 1.30pm**  
**4 parents/carers in attendance**

### Initial reactions

Prompt: 'What's your first reaction to this proposal—positive, negative, or mixed?'

### Next thoughts

#### **Part 1 – Benefits**

'What positives could you see for your child or schools generally?'

- Comments below.

#### **Part 2 – Concerns & Conditions**

'What are your main worries?'

'What would need to be in place for you to feel confident about this change?'

- I am worried that my child's support will be reduced by this proposal, for example, my child has 2 adults to support at all times, I would want to know that this would be maintained as this is still needed.
- With money being so tight, I am concerned that there will not be sufficient training and support for those staff who are not currently working with children with ASN at the moment. This proposal requires money to teach the teachers.
- I am fearful that people with a level of expertise will be lost in the system. My experience at the moment is that EP teachers go over and above – it is not just a job to them. I am concerned that not everyone would be willing and able to do the job in that way and that not all children will get that level of support from teachers who really want to teach children with ASN.

- I am concerned that not all teachers will be able to cope with the level of needs and behaviours that children currently in EP can exhibit. I am concerned that this will be a loss of teachers as a result of that.
- Currently, there is an inconsistency in the level of quality of provision within EPs at the moment. I am concerned that this proposal may cause further inconsistency as there will be more levels of need across a higher number of schools. There needs to be a better level of consistency in approach across all schools (mainstream and specialist provisions) for all children and young people.
- At the moment, EP children are taught by more than one teacher, I am concerned that this proposal would mean that there would be even more teachers teaching EP children, leading to a greater level of inconsistency. SfLAs need to be trained and supported properly to be able to de-escalate behaviours, if needed. At the moment, SfLAs do not need any special training or experience for the job. In general, training for all staff is a major issue and consideration within this proposal, including to keep children and themselves safe.
- I am concerned that this proposal means more time for my child in mainstream. At the moment, my child really struggles with the time that he spends in mainstream. I am worried about bullying.  
Children do not seem to have a level of tolerance as they are not being taught about disabilities. Children across the board need to be educated on the needs and differences of other children.
- I am concerned that children will be less safe by this proposal if my child will need to be in a mainstream class or spend more time in a mainstream classroom. Even just now within the EP class, my child isn't always safe. I am concerned that there will be a safeguarding issue if there are more children with ASN in mainstream classes.
- The proposal is badly worded, and it does not reflect what we are now being told. I am concerned that there are mixed messages. **Clarification was given**
- I am concerned that there isn't enough resources to go around to ensure all children to be safe in school. It feels that the EPs are already underfunded, so if this is to be redistributed across even more schools, I am concerned that even more children will miss out.
- I feel like it's a constant fight to get the right level of support for my child. It feels like ASN children are being targeted by this proposal.
- I am concerned about what this proposal will mean for my child at secondary school. Some children in EP require specialist equipment and have physical needs, I am concerned that provision will not be made for this when children go into a mainstream secondary school. Consideration will need to be given to this.
- Parents should not be asked to reapply for a specialist or enhanced provision when children are moving from primary to secondary.
- I read from the proposal that my child will be returned to our catchment school, I had concerns about this given that there would be no staff in the new school that would know my child or their needs. **Clarification was given**.
- There needs to be a genuine communication about what works for our child, and that advice from parents needs to be implemented.
- Head Teachers and school staff need to have a greater level of decision-making and autonomy over the resources that they have. Nursery / primary staff know our children's needs very well, this knowledge is not taken into account in the transition of children from nursery to primary; and, primary to secondary. It can feel that children are new and unknown at the point of them going into primary school or secondary school.  
Parents shouldn't feel that they need to 'reapply' for something that they have already and have people who don't know children making such decisions.
- I am concerned that schools do not have the sufficient space available to implement a provision for children who need a smaller space away from mainstream peers. Would there be scope for previous nursery buildings to be made into EPs.

## Prioritisation

Give each participant the option to vote on the 3 most important issues/conditions for them.

- Funding for ensure that there is a standard in every school that would meet the needs of all children.
- Proper, regular and well-funded training and support for all staff at all levels.
- Every school needs an EP – safe and breakout spaces, and this needs to begin at nursery.

## **Final points**

‘Thank you for being open and thoughtful.

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## Focus Group 4

**Number invited: 6**

**Number of attendees: 1**

**Number of senior central officers in attendance: 2**

## **Opening message and introductions**

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## Background

- Current situation: EP classes provide concentrated support in a small number of schools.
- Proposal: Evolve to a model which will redistribute staff/resources across all schools and not keep these within 15 sites.
- Why consider change: fairness, sustainability, inclusive practice.
- If nothing changes, support remains concentrated, not all schools can meet the needs of their own children

Facilitator: 'Any quick clarification questions before we start discussions?'

## Initial reactions

Prompt: 'What's your first reaction to this proposal—positive, negative, or mixed?'

## Next thoughts

### **Part 1 – Benefits**

'What positives could you see for your child or schools generally?'

- Want to discuss concerns first.

### **Part 2 – Concerns & Conditions**

'What are your main worries?'

'What would need to be in place for you to feel confident about this change?'

- What would happen to buildings to make sure children are safe e.g. pupils able to run out of school. What will be done to the buildings to increase safety.
- Consultation on learner voice – pupils currently in the EP how are they involved for example in this consultation. Who generates the questions for pupils.
- How are we ensuring that the questions are not biased towards the chosen model?
- Challenge is that when there isn't a concrete model then this causes concern. Hard to support when we don't know what this will look like.
- What if no children came into local school from EP – would this mean my local school would not receive an EP provision/enhancement should that support be needed in future. This would need to be in every primary school going forward – what is the plan for this to ensure this is equitable.
- When would the changes be implemented once the decision has been approved?
- If not approved is there a back-up plan for upgrading staff skill e.g. pedagogy to ensure that support for ASN is developed still.
- While waiting for the proposal to be approved are applications for placements for EP still being processed?
- Every school to be safe for every child.
- Inclusive practice – teachers have the pedagogy/understanding, knowledge to provide learning opportunities in an appropriate way and safe spaces that are with teachers. Often children are in mainstream with SfL assistants – every child should have access to a teacher.
- Further education of other children who do not have additional support needs. Some parents are afraid about what they can say. This can cause mental wellness when there is a lack of understanding.
- Safety issues – buildings being fobbed.
- Transition planning.
- P7/5/3 in EP and all moved to the same school at the same time; this would put a lot of pressure on the school – there would need to be additional adults. There may already be pupils who are already in school receiving extra support from within existing staffing
- Staff training to support.

- There needs to be a change and different strategic approach. Not sure about pupils from EP going into mainstream as inclusion – enough work hasn't been done – more needs to be embedded first. Too quick to change could be detrimental.
- Need of the children has grown bigger than the provision. All schools need to be in the same position, coping with the children they already have, before accepting additional children who are transitioning in and this will be challenging and needing to develop relationships.
- EP being used as part of consultation – families who have children in the EP have a vested interest – parents not involved may not have the border understanding about the bigger picture of changes and that changes are part of a strategy and so answer in a particular way e.g. against closure.

### Prioritisation

Give each participant the option to vote on the 3 most important issues/conditions for them.

### **Final points**

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### Focus Group 5

**Number invited: 6**

**Number of attendees: 1**

**Number of senior central officers in attendance: 2**

### **Opening message and introductions**

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### **Statement on the Proposal for Enhanced Support in Every Falkirk Primary School**

Following the ongoing consultation activity, discussion and feedback, we want to clarify that no decision has been made regarding the model of enhanced support and we would continue to encourage engagement from all relevant stakeholders. We want the final approach to reflect the needs and aspirations of all. At the very core of the proposal, we seek a way to ensure that every Falkirk child receives the right support, in the right place, at the right time, within their own school and community.

We want to provide clarity around some wording in the consultation paper, particularly relating to the suggestion that all children who currently attend an Enhanced Provision would be required to return to their catchment school. We would like to be very clear that no child will be forced to move school. The proposal sets out the ambition that, if every school is equipped with the staff and resource to provide enhanced support, children could be educated in their

local school and community. This remains a goal in the proposal that could be achieved through careful transition, planning and collaboration.

A few points to help the flow of discussion: one person at a time, kindness and respect for all perspectives, we will aim to keep the focus on what is best for all children and learning and be mindful of time, so everyone is heard. Today's session will run for 1.5 hours.'

## **Background**

- Current situation: EP classes provide concentrated support in a small number of schools.
- Proposal: Evolve to a model which will redistribute staff/resources across all schools and not keep these within 15 sites.
- Why consider change: fairness, sustainability, inclusive practice.
- If nothing changes, support remains concentrated, not all schools can meet the needs of their own children.

Facilitator: 'Any quick clarification questions before we start discussions?'

## Initial reactions

Prompt: 'What's your first reaction to this proposal—positive, negative, or mixed?'

- Mixed view initially when the proposal was released. The idea to have every child able to access the right support in their local school is a brilliant idea but the reality of trying to do this feels worrying because how will the council divide 15 provisions worth of support and resource between 47 schools

## Next thoughts

### **Part 1 – Benefits**

'What positives could you see for your child or schools generally?'

- If this were to work, it seems like a really good idea and what people can all agree that this is a good thing for everyone.
- Pupils being able to walk to school, ride a bike, not have to go in a long taxi journey as they would be close to their home and not have to worry about that element of the transitions.
- It is the responsibility of all teachers/staff to be able to support ASN and so this would be a good push for people to upskill and enhance their teaching to be able to support a higher level of need.

### **Part 2 – Concerns & Conditions**

'What are your main worries?'

'What would need to be in place for you to feel confident about this change?'

- A huge concern around there already being a high level of need in schools currently and then how that will feel if EP children with a high level of need start to return.
- There is a worry that if no EP children or parents choose to move back to their catchment schools then this idea of a 'redistribution' of resources cannot happen and then what will happen to be able to achieve this upskilling and enhancing of other staff in other schools.
- There would be concerns around the stages of children and making sure that the children, if they did move school, then there needs to be enough space in the mainstream classes to compliment the children who come back in case they need/want to use that time in mainstream classes.
- The worry is the journey from where we are now to where the council and the parents want (right support for all in all schools).
- The training of staff would be really important but how you make that ASN training and approach consistent across the board is going to be a challenge and that won't be easy.
- There is still a lot of stigma still attached to additional support needs and not enough education for teachers and in society and this needs to be tackled .

- It is worrying that there are teachers who are still traditional in terms of their approach to children (ASN or other) and their mindset and how do you change that?
- The question and challenge of consistency will however always be there and that is something that needs to continue to be supported and addressed.
- Communication from school (mainstream for a mainstream child) is already not great so how will this be if there is more need or how will it be tackled regardless?

### Prioritisation

Give each participant the option to vote on the 3 most important issues/conditions for them.

- What could it look like and what is needed would be:
- Transparency.
- Consistency across all of the schools (regardless of what happens with EP or not).
- Inclusive practice and inclusive approaches.
- We can't be playing catch up with what changes are made/proposed and we need to get anything right from the beginning.
- There needs to be more weight and priority added to the school and home communication and relationship because so many times parents are feeling shut out and left out.
- The transition of information about children is lacking from stage to stage and school to school but there needs to be a better way forward.

### **Final points**

‘Thank you for being open and thoughtful.

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The consultation runs until October 27<sup>th</sup>, and a report will be taken to Executive Committee in February 2026. Your contribution is crucial to this and to the next steps which Falkirk Council Education Services will take.

### Focus Group 6

**Number invited: 6**

**Number of attendees: 1**

**Number of senior central officers in attendance: 2**

### **Opening message and introductions**

‘Thank you for giving up your time today. This is part of the statutory consultation on the Falkirk Council’s current Enhanced Provision model. Our aim is to listen to your views, understand concerns and gather ideas about what would need to be in place if any changes were to take place.

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Following the ongoing consultation activity, discussion and feedback, we want to clarify that no decision has been made regarding the model of enhanced support and we would continue to encourage engagement from all relevant stakeholders. We want the final approach to reflect the needs and aspirations of all. At the very core of the proposal, we seek a way to

ensure that every Falkirk child receives the right support, in the right place, at the right time, within their own school and community.

We want to provide clarity around some wording in the consultation paper, particularly relating to the suggestion that all children who currently attend an Enhanced Provision would be required to return to their catchment school. We would like to be very clear that no child will be forced to move school. The proposal sets out the ambition that, if every school is equipped with the staff and resource to provide enhanced support, children could be educated in their local school and community. This remains a goal in the proposal that could be achieved through careful transition, planning and collaboration.

A few points to help the flow of discussion: one person at a time, kindness and respect for all perspectives, we will aim to keep the focus on what is best for all children and learning and be mindful of time, so everyone is heard. Today's session will run for 1.5 hours.'

## **Background**

- Current situation: EP classes provide concentrated support in a small number of schools.
- Proposal: Evolve to a model which will redistribute staff/resources across all schools and not keep these within 15 sites.
- Why consider change: fairness, sustainability, inclusive practice.
- If nothing changes, support remains concentrated, not all schools can meet the needs of their own children.

Facilitator: 'Any quick clarification questions before we start discussions?'

## Initial reactions

Prompt: 'What's your first reaction to this proposal—positive, negative, or mixed?'

- That it's a cost cutting exercise and this will mean that children who are already in mainstream will get less support.
- Can see the reasoning behind this and it is logical but can't see it working in reality.
- The training for staff is a huge thing, and the teachers are already stretched and spread thinly so adding additional children who need extra support is going to make it harder.
- This will potentially disrupt the flow of learning and the teaching which is already happening.
- The idea is great, a brilliant idea to be in their own catchment school.
- Concern however is around the design of all of the buildings would allow for this to happen in a meaningful way.
- Some newer buildings might be able to manage this but what about the older ones?
- Children already in mainstream classes might already be receiving a lot of support and this will impact them because class teachers could have to do a lot more to be able to manage the needs of all of the children, especially if there are children with a higher level of need in the class. Teachers need to be supported in this.

## Next thoughts

### **Part 1 – Benefits**

'What positives could you see for your child or schools generally?'

- The children need to be integrated and be able to have access to this (especially if they can manage it and progress from it).
- The schools who have EPs have been supporting children with that level of need for a long time and so making sure all schools are providing this actually might mean all schools need to grow, train and learn to a level of consistency which can only be good thing.
- It will be positive to make sure that schools are supported going forward so that they are always upskilled, able and receptive to supporting even the highest needs of learners.

- Strong communication, when this works, is exactly what is needed because things can be fixed and when people can work in genuine partnership rather than the situation becoming combative and difficult. This is when it breaks down.
- Better training and consistency would help to take the 'fight' out of situations where parents are trying to support their ASN children.
- The teachers are fantastic and they are working so hard all of the time.
- It is great when you see children with higher needs and ASN being really integrated into their mainstream classes as it teaches all children to be understanding and learn how to support each other and co-exist.

## **Part 2 – Concerns & Conditions**

'What are your main worries?'

'What would need to be in place for you to feel confident about this change?'

- Some children with the level of need within Enhanced Provision will display behaviours which are really challenging to manage, even when the teacher is really skilled, brilliant and well liked.
- Concerns around the training and support that SfLAs are being given as some people are being taken on without any training or qualifications in this area and the children can be impacted negatively by this not happening but also this is not positive for the staff member either.
- Children who have specific stage 2 requirements and need support at this stage might not be able to get it due to the lack of support in the school and then this leads to an EP referral being put in when it isn't needed.
- Teacher willingness is really important because we can train teachers, but they need to be able to actually ready within their mindset to take this on.
- Getting the space to accommodate that will be hard.
- Schools are already constrained and so it makes it ever harder to provide individual and personalised care.
- Schools might need to plan for different lunches and plans around breaks in order to meet the needs of all of these learners.
- It's nice to have a community of parents/children who understand ASN and would this be lost if children were to be moved from EPs and be in mainstream schools. We would not want this to be lost because this community can be so crucial to their development and their own ways of communicating.
- A concern is also that one child might take all of the resources away from other children who also need it (overcommitment to some children and not leaving enough for others).

## Prioritisation

Give each participant the option to vote on the 3 most important issues/conditions for them.

- Clear and transparent actions and communication.
- Taking the needs of the highest level into account as this will benefit all.
- Smaller class setting, targeted support, better understanding of needs and joining mainstream for the things which children can cope with. Parents would want their children to have access to this if it was in their own school and this would be desired.
- To make it happen: you will need staff numbers, staff training and staff mindset.

## **Final points**

'Thank you for being open and thoughtful.'

If you'd like to add anything else after today, you can complete the online survey or send written comments. The QR code on the desk will take you straight to the platform.

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