
Report To:	Education & Lifelong Learning Committee	Date:	12 May 2009
Report By:	Corporate Director Education and Social Care	Report No:	EDUC/51/09/CL
Contact Officer:	Colin Laird	Contact No:	01475 712824
Subject:	Results of the wider consultation on the Future of the School Age Language Unit (SALU) in Highlanders' Academy Primary School		

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is:

- i) to provide members with details of the responses received in the SALU consultation
- ii) to highlight the issues raised during the consultation and their implications
- iii) to seek members' approval for the recommendations made

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 The consultation on SALU finished on 27 March 2009.

2.2 The level of response was low and is evenly split between Option 1 the status quo, and Option 4, pupils supported in their mainstream schools. The other options found virtually no support.

2.3 There is a polarisation of support between professionals for Option 4 and 2 parents, their Parent Councils, class teacher and EIS for Option 1.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that Option 4 be approved. As responsibility for developing the best provision for young people with speech and language impairments lies within Education Services, the view of professionals should be taken into account.

Ian Fraser
Corporate Director : Education and Social Care

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The School Age Language Unit is located in Highlanders' Academy and supports young people with speech and language difficulties.
- 4.2 The Education and Lifelong Learning Committee of 20 January 2009 approved the issue of a consultation document on the future of SALU.
- 4.3 The scope of the consultation covered elected members, members of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee, school staff, parents and carers, parent councils and the appropriate trade unions.
- 4.4 Four options were offered for future provision, taking account of the need to maintain the existing unit until all current pupils had moved to secondary school:

- Option 1 Status Quo
 The current unit would remain unchanged
- Option 2 All referred children should attend Highlanders' Academy Primary School
- Option 3 A unit servicing children from P1 to P3 only
- Option 4 Pupils' needs are met in their mainstream schools with visiting support from Speech & Language Impairment teacher and therapist

The perceived advantages and disadvantages of each option were included.

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Written representation on the Committee's proposals were sought from interested parties in terms of the Education (Publication and Consultation etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1981 as amended.
- 5.2 A list of those consulted is included in paragraph 4.3 above.
- 5.3 The consultation was carried out between 27 January and 27 March 2009, a period of just over 8 weeks.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A total of 18 responses were received.
- 6.2 Most responses were from individuals, rather than block letters.
- 6.3 The breakdown of the responses is as follows:

Head Teachers and staff	7	Principal Teacher	1
Parents	4	Nursery Head	1
Parent Councils	3	Unions	1
Speech & Language Therapist	1		

- 6.4 Of the responses received:

7 were in favour of Option 1 (39%)
7 were in favour of Option 4 (39%)
1 was in favour of Option 2 (5.75%)
3 were in favour of no one specific option (16.25%)

7.0 ISSUES RAISED

- 7.1 A number of issues were raised and are listed below. Where appropriate, comments are added under each statement. All statements are reproduced as submitted.

In support of Option 1

It is my belief that children should not be ticked as having achieved the same but that for many of these children socialisation and integration would be part of their learning objectives and can best be met by a mixture of care and education settings working in collaboration.

Agreed, but option 4 would also provide that mixture of care and education settings, or more accurately support plus education.

Level of support (in mainstream schools) may not be consistent. More time can be spent on individual needs in SALU.

Processes and supports often are not consistent. Under option 4 it would be the same teacher and the same therapist working with all children so consistency should be achievable.

Early Intervention is the success for the children who attend SALU.

Agreed. However, early intervention can be applied in any setting.

On a selfish note, we would opt for option 1 as being the best arrangement for our pupil. Our classroom assistants are following up exercises identified by the Speech and Language Therapist on a daily basis.

This is productive use of classroom assistants or auxiliaries in any school setting.

Support in schools would have to be specific for speech and language development. Would the support given be on an outreach or consultative basis.

Outreach, leaving the school very clear exercises/patterns to consolidate between visits.

Although we believe the support given by the unit and staff could continue successfully, we acknowledge the perceived disadvantages, and would agreed that there are some areas of personal development from which our child may be excluded. It is also disappointing that, whilst there are numerous methods of communication available, i.e. email, telephone etc, the various personnel involved in the support of a child with SLI are unable to properly share information about the child's educational, and developmental progress. Inter-agency collaboration is imperative for every child with additional support needs.

Agreed. A thought-provoking contribution. The quality of IEP targets between the current unit and schools has been commented on adversely. There is a difficulty in ensuring that information is appropriately transferred between schools.

My son thrives being with children who have a similar need as him in SALU. To put him in a situation where other children, who don't have the same need as him, can hear and see him being taught for the sake of 'inclusion' simply draws attention to his communication difficulties. I would never wish for him to be subjected to that kind of stigma by being taught in this way.

There is also a danger of a young person being stigmatised by being taught in a separate unit.

The unit has had proven successes. Having spoken to one of the children attending this unit we found that the child is very happy and content there.

Noted.

Having the unit which builds the child's confidence can only enhance inclusion.

Having a separate unit does not enhance inclusion.

The child travels to the SALU before school starts and returns to St Francis during their lunchtime, so there is little wasted time travelling.

The time missed in class on English Language and Mathematics is more concerning.

Option 1 was by far the overwhelming preference for the professionals who deal with the pupils who attend, or might need to attend SALU. Time and again the same comments were made by the staff in the primary schools:

- keep unit in present form
 - before attending, pupils found it difficult to mix
 - pupils who attended show a huge increase in confidence
 - 1:1 provision in the unit cannot be replicated in a full classroom situation
 - the specialist provision was such that the pupils involved worked with others with the same problems and so they felt no stigma
 - early intervention
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Noted. Some members clearly feel there is a parallel situation with some members of the deaf community who restrict their contact to other signers. This presents a narrow perspective on human interaction. 1:1 provision will not always be possible in SALU – 1 teacher for 10 pupils.

As (pupil named) Education providers I feel it is astonishing that you have relegated her future potential to the 50% of school leavers who do not go on to further or higher education, of which it seems you are so proud of on the website.

Not clear what is being argued here. 91% of Inverclyde leavers go on to positive destinations.

If the catching up of missed work is a big issue, then we have been living this scenario since (pupil named) started school, as we have had to pay to send her to a private tutor to help supplement and support what she does not get in school.

Missing 5 hours of class time may be an issue for this pupil.

If too many changes are initiated at one time and (child named) fails to adapt, this not only impacts greatly on her ability to cope at school and home, it causes major problems with her behaviour and leads to numerous health issues.

This child would not be affected by any change proposed under Option 4. The difficulties indicated by the parent are noted.

In support of Option 2

The best for the above full assessment by therapist; training for staff in SLI; liaison; time for liaison; individual and small group support would be Option 2.

Noted.

One parent commented that option 2 would deny his child access to denominational education.

Noted. Agreed.

In support of Option 4

As a school we are trying to be as inclusive as we can. The boy who went from our school didn't like it, especially the taxi thing which he viewed as a stigma. He did not adapt to the different style of teaching and constantly pleaded not to have to go. We had a review, he stopped going and was happier then. Having said that it will clearly suit some children very well, but in the climate of inclusion?

Noted.

After lengthy discussion and deliberation with the staff we believe Option 4 should be the preferred option.

Noted.

Option 4 would be the best provision with the understanding that input and support from a Speech & Language Therapist is essential rather than unrealistic expectations from the class teacher.

Our son's integration into mainstream has been made easier by the provision of a support assistant which has made him feel more secure and therefore more confident in himself.

Noted. This is one case – hard to generalise from this potential view.

I would always promote inclusion in mainstream if at all possible, with visiting staff.

Noted. By visiting this respondent means a peripatetic teacher and an incoming therapist.

Having had no experience of SALU, I felt it was difficult to comment on proposals, however. I know how much children benefit from support in their own school setting

Noted. A view expressed from outwith the issue.

Having had several children attend SALU over the years we recognise the excellent work that has been done there. However, we are also very aware of the confusion of split site education for young people and the amount of mainstream education missed. For this reason we feel Option 4 would give maximum support to pupils and staff with minimum disruption to the pupils.

Noted.

8.0 EVALUATION OF THE RESPONSES

8.1 Option 1 was favoured by some respondents because:

- a mixture of care and education is needed
- risk of inconsistency of support in mainstream schools
- classroom assistant follow-up works well
- like child to mix with other children having the same impairment
- present child happy and content
- little time wasted travelling
- pupils in SALU blossomed
- can supplement with private tutor
- workload issue for classroom teachers if option 4 endorsed
- pupils can be resistant to change

8.2 Option 2 was favoured by one service because:

- logistically it maximised their deployment time
- an SLI skills base could be built up with all staff in that one school
- liaison time would be most easily managed

8.3 Option 4 was favoured by a mix of professionals and one parent because:

- schools try to be as inclusive as they can
- adverse pupil reaction on one occasion
- this option facilitates input from therapist and/or teacher on mainstream site
- additional support from an auxiliary or classroom assistant is also possible
- committed to promoting inclusion whenever possible, using visiting staff/expertise
- children can benefit from support in their own school setting
- child stigmatised by taxi issue

9.0 CONSULTATION

9.1 A meeting was held in SALU on 29 September 2008 where there was a lengthy exchange of views with the current parent cohort. The meeting was attended by authority officers, head and class teacher, parents, union representative and one councillor.

The views submitted in the consultation are broadly representative of the discussion at that time. There is a clear dichotomy of opinion here. Existing parents feel supported by the provision. Officers believe the provision can be delivered differently and more inclusively in mainstream settings. The costs of transport is not a big factor with either set of views.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 This is a difficult situation to decide upon. The motivating factors are the National Priority of Inclusion and Equality, the presumption of mainstreaming wherever practical and the desire to provide appropriately for future generations of children with speech and language impairments.

On that basis it is proposed that approval be given to Education Services to produce a plan for the phasing out of the existing unit without detracting from current support needs and the introduction of a mainstream SLI support incorporating work by a specialist and a speech and language therapist (prioritised by NHS), consolidated between visits by school staff. The process may take 5 years to complete.

11.0 IMPLICATION

- 11.1 A teaching post for SLI would still be required. The Speech and Language Therapy contract would be negotiated on a similar basis to the current practice.