

Education and Skills Committee – Inquiry into the Draft Budget 2018-19

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into the Draft Budget and welcome its specific focus on additional support needs (ASN) provision for the coming financial year.

As an alliance of organisations who support those children and young people with ASN we contributed to and participated in the round-table discussion on ASN, feeding into the Committee's report *How is Additional Support for Learning Working in Practice* (15th May 2017).¹

We are using this submission to reinforce our concerns about the increase in the numbers of those pupils identified with ASN, against a backdrop of cuts in services, including the numbers of ASN teachers and specialist support staff. This is especially relevant given the Scottish Government presumption of mainstreaming, which we support.

In this context we would clearly welcome an increase in funding directed towards those with ASN, including greater special school provision, but recognise the constraints the Scottish Government has in ensuring local authorities spend education funding on these services.

We support the Education and Skills Committee call for a financial review undertaken by the Scottish Government to ascertain whether education authorities are spending in line with the level of need (Report - Recommendation 17). This financial review should be the starting point for Scottish Government discussions with education authorities on their funding allocations.

We also make a call for a dedicated Scottish Government ASN Attainment Fund for local authorities, highly-targeted for maximum benefit and additional to current funding.

It is currently difficult to ascertain the potential funding requirements per local authority, given the major disparities in the number of those identified with ASN between local authorities. This is an issue we as a coalition have highlighted on a number of occasions and requires to be resolved as a matter of some urgency as this provides a significant challenge in ascertaining the level and targeting of funding required.

1. About the Scottish Children's Services Coalition

The Scottish Children's Services Coalition (SCSC) – www.thescsc.org.uk - is an alliance of leading independent and third sector service providers that care for and support vulnerable children and young people, as well as their families.

Our vision is for Scotland to become a world leader in the care and support of vulnerable children and young people. We aim to achieve this through campaigning for a wide range of high-quality, well-resourced and quickly accessible services. This is so that these children and young people get best possible care and support, tailored to their individual needs and helping them to achieve their full potential.

¹ Education and Skills Committee, *How is Additional Support for Learning Working in Practice*, 15th May 2017. Available at: <https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/ES/2017/5/15/How-is-Additional-Support-for-Learning-working-in-practice--1/6th%20Report,%202017.pdf> (accessed 14th November 2017).

Our members deliver specialist care and education services to children and young people with ASN, as well as direct help and support to their families. They also provide independent advocacy, advice and representation to children and young people with care experience.

Members of the SCSC are: Falkland House School - www.falklandhouseschool.org, Spark of Genius - www.sparkofgenius.com, Who Cares? Scotland - www.whocaresScotland.org and Young Foundations - <https://youngfoundations.com/>.

2. Background

- **In 2016, 170,329 pupils in Scotland's schools (publically funded primary, secondary and special) were identified with ASN, representing just under a quarter of all pupils (24.9%).²** The number of pupils with ASN has increased by **44% since 2012** (from 118,034 pupils in 2012), and 60% of those with ASN were boys.³
- The increase in the number of pupils with ASN is due to a number of factors, including increased awareness and better identification, and continued improvements in recording those with ASN. Children and young people identified as having ASN are disproportionately from lower income families and areas of deprivation, particularly those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Between 2012 and 2016 the number of pupils identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has increased by 55%, with dyslexia by 36%, with mental health problems by 126%, those in care by 44% and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties by 53%.⁴
- ASN disproportionately affects children and young people from lower income families and areas of deprivation. If we are to ensure that inclusion is meaningful, close the educational attainment gap and create a more equal society it is key that we provide the right help, at the right time, from the right people.

3. Greater investment in services

The combination of an increasing demand on services by those with ASN (partly due to a broadened legal definition of ASN and increased identification), set against a background of cuts to public services and delays in identification, assessment and intervention, means that many children and young people are missing out on the support they vitally need.

We welcome the increase in local authority expenditure on those with ASN, from £503,338,000 in 2012-13 to £583,596,000 in 2015/16. However due to the increase in the number of those with ASN, average per-pupil spending on additional support for learning (local authority primary, secondary and special education), has dropped from £4,276 in 2012/13 to £3,817 in 2015/16, a cut of £459, amounting to 11%.⁵

- We support the Education and Skills Committee call for a financial review undertaken by the Scottish Government to ascertain whether education authorities are spending in line with the level of need (Recommendation 17). This financial review should be the starting point for Scottish Government discussions with education authorities on their funding allocations. It should however be noted that there are issues around the quality of data on spending on additional support for learning collected at a local authority level, and it is vital that this is improved for consistency.

² Scottish Government, *High Level Summary of Statistics Trend Last Update – Additional Support Needs*, December 2016. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/TrendSpecialEducation> (accessed 5th January 2017).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Scottish Government, *Pupil census 2016 supplementary data*, Table 1.8, 10th April 2017. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/dspupcensus/dspupcensus16> (accessed 27th April 2017). 2012: *Pupil census 2012 supplementary data*, Table 1.8 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/dspupcensus/pupcensus2012>, 26th March 2015 (accessed 27th April 2017).

⁵ Scottish Parliament, *Written Answer, S5W-08627*, 24th April 2017. Available at: <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Simple&DateChoice=0&MSPIId=4987&SortBy=DateSubmitted&ResultsPerPage=10> (accessed 25th April 2017).

- There should be a dedicated Scottish Government ASN Attainment Fund for local authorities, highly-targeted for maximum benefit and additional to current funding.
- Failing this, Scottish Government attainment funding (the Scottish Attainment Challenge) should be allocated to local authorities based, not just on deprivation and free school meals, but also on the number of children with ASN. These figures should be recorded and reported in a consistent manner across all local authorities.

4. Staffing provision

It is vital that there is increased investment to deliver adequate staffing provision, supporting those children and young people with ASN. This is especially relevant given a presumption of mainstream education, objective to improve educational outcomes and close the educational attainment gap.

For young people with ASN, it has become a 'postcode lottery' of whether specialist staff have been cut and if their teacher is appropriately trained.

- Despite a **44% increase between 2012 and 2016 in the number of pupils identified with ASN** in publically funded primary, secondary and special schools, from 118,034 to 170,329 (24.9% of pupils), the number of ASN teachers has **fallen by 12%** over the same period, from 3,384 to 2,990, a new low.⁶
- Analysis also shows that the number of support staff, including teachers, in publically funded primary, secondary and secondary schools **dropped by 0.8% between 2012 and 2016**, from 12,993 to 12,908.⁷ This includes a substantial fall in the number of specialist support staff, such as ASN auxiliaries and educational psychologists, as outlined below.

Support staff in publically funded primary, secondary and special schools:

	2012	2016	Change (%)
Overall	12,993	12,890	-0.8
Includes:			
ASN auxiliary or care assistant	6,492	5,463	-15.8
Behaviour support staff	180	183	+1.7
Classroom assistant	5,668	6,567	+15.9
Educational psychologist	411	371	-9.7

School-based counselling services

With recognition of our mental health expertise, we would call on all secondary schools to have a qualified and appropriately experienced counsellor, providing support to troubled and/or distressed children and young people, including those with mental health difficulties. Scotland is currently the only UK country with no national strategy for school-based counselling services.

⁶ Scottish Government, *Letter from John Swinney to Education and Skills Committee, Scottish Parliament, 26th July 2017/ Supplementary data for the Teacher Census 2016*, Table 2.8 for primary school and 3.9 for secondary school, 10th April 2017, Annex A. Available at: http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Inquiries/20171108In_Cab_Sec_Resp_to_ES_Cmttee_-_pre-budget_scrutiny_18-19.pdf (accessed 14th November 2017).

⁷ Ibid., Table 2.15 for primary school and 3.17 for secondary. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/teachcensussuppdata/teachcensus2015/teachercensus2016> (accessed 27th April 2017).

2012: Scottish Government, *Supplementary data for the Teacher Census 2012*, Table 2.15 for primary school and 3.17 for secondary school, 14th January 2016. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/Summarystatsforschools/teachcensus2012> (accessed 1st August 2016).

Children and young people in Scotland are subject to a 'postcode lottery' of access to support and it has been estimated that more than 250,000 children and young people have no access to school-based counselling services.⁸

Unlike Scotland, counselling services are guaranteed in all secondary schools in Northern Ireland and Wales. In Wales the vast majority of children and young people who received counselling (88%) did not require any form of onward referral once counselling sessions had been completed.⁹

Investing a fraction of the mental health budget on school based counselling services helps to keep children in school and avoid unnecessary and often stigmatising mental health diagnoses, as well as reducing the burden on the already stretched and costly CAMHS provision - the cost of five sessions of counselling is equivalent to just one contact with CAMHS.¹⁰

Presumption of mainstreaming

The cornerstone of an inclusive approach to education is a **presumption of mainstreaming** for pupils with ASN, meaning that they are educated in a mainstream school unless exceptional circumstances apply. Successful inclusion within mainstream requires resources, leadership and training of staff.

A presumption of mainstreaming is something we as a coalition fully support, although we are concerned about the impact of a lack of resources in supporting an increasing number of those with ASN in mainstream schools. This includes a reduction in the number of ASN teachers, pupil-support staff, educational psychologists and other specialist support services.

The fall in the number of specialist staff due to local authority budget cuts means that many pupils with ASN in mainstream education are not receiving the type and level of support they need and to which they are entitled. This is seeing many of them ending up poorly supported or excluded from school altogether.

Cuts are putting increased pressure and enormous stress on a reducing number of ASN teachers and pupil-support staff. This is denying pupils specialist help and also increasing the work burden on class teachers, many of whom are inadequately trained, with implications for both them and other pupils within the class.

The Scottish Government's promise to maintain mainstream teacher numbers, with the necessary resources devoted to maintain this, is exacerbating this situation.

There are also a large number of children and young people currently in mainstream education whose interests would be most appropriately served by being in a special school or unit.

5. Increased specialist provision for children and young people

Special schools are under pressure in dealing with an increasing number of pupils with a higher complexity of need. For example, there are more children reported with life limiting conditions (over 15,000), who often have complex needs, and this figure is set to rise.¹¹

However, the number of special schools has declined from 155 to 141 between 2012 and 2016, a fall of 9%, with the number of pupils falling from 6,976 to 6,735, a decline of 3%.¹²

⁸ BBC Scotland, *School counselling support 'patchy'*, 28th August 2017. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-40959463> (accessed 11th September 2017)/

⁹ British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy, *Positive impact of School-based Counselling in Wales*, 31st March 2017. Available at: <http://www.bacp.co.uk/media/?newsId=4037> (accessed 10th February 2017).

¹⁰ BACP, *School counselling for all*, 215, p. 4. Available at: https://www.bacp.co.uk/docs/pdf/14839_sbc_for_all_england.pdf (accessed 11th September 2017)).

¹¹ University of York, *The CHISP Study*, October 2015. Available at: <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/pdf/chisp.pdf> (accessed 25th July 2016).

Given this shortage of special schools places, their needs are often currently being met in mainstream rather than specialist settings, such as special school and unit places, including residential schools. At present these are few and far between.

Given this increasing pressure, teachers report that many children and young people with severe and challenging behavioural problems are being placed in mainstream education, often against their best interests.

As a result, these children are frequently excluded or placed on reduced timetables. Without the appropriate support, including access to specialist additional staffing when required, this is putting increased pressure on teachers, other pupils and families.

There are a number of excellent residential schools, including East Park School in Glasgow and Falkland House in Fife. However, due to a shortage of residential placements children are often placed far from home. This leads in the longer term to these children losing contact with their communities and families.

We need a greater number of special school and unit places and greater support to local authorities to deliver this on a wider geographic basis.

6. Disparities in ASN figures between local authorities

There must be clearer guidance from the Scottish Government to local authorities, ensuring consistent and meaningful identification and recording of children and young people with ASN.

While we note the Education and Skills Committee - *How is Additional Support for Learning Working in Practice* (15th May 2017) - recommends that there should be a financial review to ascertain the extent to which education authorities are spending in line with the need of their area (Recommendation 17), it is clearly vital that accurate figures for those with ASN in such authorities are established. This is also key when it comes to the issue of potential ASN attainment funding.

There is a significant variation between local authorities in the number of pupils identified with ASN. It is not clear what is driving this considerable variation but different interpretations of the legislation and local contexts, including key learning support staff, may well be behind the differences.

The current method of collecting data is therefore completely ineffective for measuring differences between local authorities and cannot be used to develop good practice and improved support.

Clearer guidance from the Scottish Government will enable comparisons to be made between local authorities on resourcing, identify key trends in ASN and will assist in the effective provision of services.

This data will help to ensure that children and young people with ASN are equitably supported across Scotland, uphold the presumption of mainstreaming, and ensure that progress is being made with attainment for those who face the greatest challenges in terms of their learning.

The 2016 figures from the Scottish Government indicate:¹³

Glasgow City reports 31.7% of pupils with ASN v North Lanarkshire – 16.2%; North Ayrshire – 27.8% v South Ayrshire – 12.2%; Aberdeenshire – 38% v Aberdeen City – 21.7% (24.9% for all local authorities).

There are also issues around the quality of data on spending on additional support for learning collected at a local authority level, and it is vital that this is improved for consistency.

¹² Scottish Government, *Summary Statistics for schools in Scotland, No: 7-2016*, Table 2.1, 13th December 2016 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/12/9271/336277> (accessed 24th January 2017).

¹³ Miles Briggs MSP, PQ SSW-05965, 26th January 2017.

Recommendations

Increased funding: There must be a greater investment in services that care for and support children and young people with ASN. This includes an adequate provision of ASN teachers, pupil-support staff educational psychologists, mental health professionals, school-based counsellors and other specialist support services.

This will improve educational outcomes, support the closure of the educational attainment gap, and ensure that statutory requirements are fulfilled.

- We support the Education and Skills Committee call for a financial review undertaken by the Scottish Government to ascertain whether education authorities are spending in line with the level of need (Recommendation 17). This financial review should be the starting point for Scottish Government discussions with education authorities on their funding allocations.
- There should be a dedicated Scottish Government ASN Attainment Fund for local authorities, highly-targeted for maximum benefit and additional to current funding.
- Failing this, Scottish Government attainment funding (the Scottish Attainment Challenge) should be allocated to local authorities based, not just on deprivation and free school meals, but also on the number of children with ASN.
- There are issues around the quality of data on spending on additional support for learning collected at a local authority level, and it is vital that this is improved for consistency.

Increased specialist provision for children and young people: There are a large number of children and young people with complex or specific needs, currently in mainstream education, whose needs would be better met through specialist provision.

- Local authorities must be assisted to increase the number of special school and unit places available on a wider geographic basis, reflecting the rising numbers of children and young people with complex or specific needs.
- These places may be provided by the local authority or independent sector.

Better recording and reporting of ASN: There must be clearer guidance from the Scottish Government to local authorities to ensure the consistent and meaningful identification and recording of children and young people with ASN. There is significant variation between local authorities in the number of pupils identified with ASN.

This data will help enable comparisons to be made between local authorities on resourcing, identify key trends in ASN and ensure the delivery of effective and equitable support to children and young people with ASN across Scotland.