Information from annual Report to Parliament on implementing the additional support legislation

Scottish Ministers report to Parliament annually on the Implementation of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended). As a result of this reporting, there is a more accurate view of the numbers of children and young people identified as having a sensory impairment in Scottish education. The four years of reporting by Scottish Ministers has begun to establish patterns in the more accurate identification and recording of the numbers of children and young people with sensory impairments. Overall, we are improving the quality of information and data and are able now to identify informative developments regarding outcomes for children and young people with additional support needs.

Numbers of children and young people

The Report to Parliament offers information on numbers of learners with hearing impairment, visual impairment and children and young people who are deaf blind. From 2012 to 2015, the annual report to Parliament records that schools have continued to identify an increasing number of children and young people with hearing impairment as an additional support need. Within these four annual reports, numbers of children and young people identified with a hearing impairment in schools increased from 1990 to 2534. Similarly, the numbers identified with an additional support need arising from a visual impairment have increased from 2593 to 3544 children and young people.

Attainment

The annual report to Parliament by Scottish Ministers identifies attainment for school leavers in two forms. There are the overall average tariff scores and nature and level of qualifications. The tariff score gives an overall totality of awards through the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the rating of a basket of awards at whatever level. The second set of figures gives an account of what awards young people leaving school gained at the different levels of course awards from National 2 to Advanced Higher.

The data shows that young people with a hearing impairment are gaining more and more qualifications in more subjects. This leads to increases in overall average tariff scores. In terms of hearing impairment there may be evidence of closing the gap in attainment. In 2010/11 the overall attainment of deaf learners was 57% of the national average while in 2011/12 it was 68% and 72% of the overall national average in 2012/13. These figures continue to highlight that more can be done to close the gap for those with hearing impairment.

In terms of visual impairment there is less clear evidence of narrowing the gap in attainment and no clear continued upward improvement in overall quality of attainment. The gap in attainment for young people with visual impairment compared to the national average has remained consistently around 60% over the past three years. The average level of tariff scores for young people with visual impairment has not shown much change over the last 3 years.
Positive destinations

Overall the numbers gaining the positive destination of higher and further education for young people with hearing impairment and those with a visual impairment are above national averages. The national average of attending higher and further education is 64% in 2012/13 and it is 68% for both hearing and visually impaired. The breakdown of numbers across higher education and further education is that nationally 36% of young people gain the positive destination of higher education while nationally 28% go on to further education. For those with a hearing impairment it is 18% and 50% while for those with a visual impairment it is 20% and 48% of young people.

In the three year period the numbers of visually impaired young people continuing in higher and further education has risen from 86 to 138 while for hearing impaired it has risen from 58 to 139 young people.

Conclusion

We cannot be complacent about the attainment of a number of differing groups in Scottish education. In Scotland, we are an improving system of education and outcomes continue to rise. While there is still an attainment gap that is too wide for those with sensory impairments, evidence suggests that the gap may be closing for those with hearing impairment but for those with a visual impairment it remains a more stable percentage of the national average. In terms of numbers we now know more and more young people with additional support needs arising from a visual or hearing impairment are gaining an improving number and level of awards and gaining entry to higher and further education.

Education authorities and schools need to continue to identify and assess and record children and young people with additional support needs including sensory impairments. Such recording can take account of levels of needs of different learners.

Education authorities and schools also need to track and monitor progress in achievement and attainment more robustly for children and young people at risk of missing out, such as those with an additional support need including sensory impairment.

There is also a need for education authorities and schools to continue to improve inclusive environments and to raise awareness of the risks linked to aspects of disabilities and additional support needs including sensory impairment.

Further work should be undertaken within the literacy strategy for children with additional support needs, including sensory impairment to contribute to improving outcomes in literacy and language.

Education Scotland can consider ways to improve practice further through offering examples of good practice and professional learning resources, to continue to work in partnership with schools and local authorities to build capacity, and supporting
schools to raise attainment for all including those with additional support needs and sensory impairments.