Additional Support Needs
Submissions Pack

Treatment of evidence

The Committee issued a brief call for views running for just over two weeks to inform the roundtable. It has received a large number of responses, including lots of accounts from parents of children and young people with additional support needs. Parents and teachers continue to send in their accounts and any that were not ready for issue in this submissions pack will be issued to members in a further pack for the session with the Cabinet Secretary on 8th March.

As these submissions are sensitive in nature they have been anonymised wherever requested and the names of children have been removed, as have references that may lead to individuals working in schools or local authorities being identified. All those submitting were sent a message to make clear that their submissions would be published unless they stated otherwise. However, where there is particularly sensitive information in a submission, the clerks have marked the submission as anonymous in this pack and are seeking active agreement from the parent to publish. Therefore some of the anonymous submissions are anonymous pending this permission being received. The deadline for submissions for this meeting was 21st February.

Focus groups

The Committee held a number of focus groups in January/February and the discussions on ASN from those groups of trainee teachers, teachers and academics are available here:
http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Inquiries/20170224ES.ASN_FocusGroups.pdf
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EIS

Additional Support Needs in School Education
The EIS welcomes the opportunity to comment on ASN provision in schools. We have serious concerns about ASN provision in Scotland at present. The EIS wishes to highlight three key issues in this submission: the impact of cuts to ASN provision, teacher morale, and attainment narratives.

We note the wide range of circumstances from which additional support needs can stem. A child is said to have ‘additional support needs’ if they need more, or different, support to what is normally provided in school to children of the same age. Children can need support for many reasons, including being a young parent or carer, experiencing abuse or neglect, having English as an additional language, or having long-term learning difficulties or disabilities.

The impact of cuts to ASN provision
Cuts to school budgets, and to teacher numbers, which despite protection for the past two years have declined quite significantly overall since 2007, are very problematic. So too is the decline in support staff numbers. Teacher census data tells us that the number of support staff in primary schools in some roles (e.g. Behaviour Support) has declined since 2010, (a 57% reduction), and the number of ASN assistants in 2016, while similar now to the 2010 figure, has declined by 730 (FTE) since 2013, when it peaked.

The number of teachers with additional support for learning as their main subject fell by 166 between 2007 and 2016, a fall of 5.4%. The reduction since 2009, when the number of such teachers peaked, is starker – a fall of 14.8%. ASN teacher numbers also fell in 16 out of Scotland's 32 local authorities over the period 2007 to 2016.

| Teachers with additional support needs for learning as their main subject |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 3,062 | 3,301 | 3,402 | 3,363 | 3,258 | 3,249 | 3,157 | 2,963 | 2,936 | 2,896 |

Source: Parliamentary Question (S5W-05579)\(^1\)

The data on changes to support staffing levels is as follows:

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional support needs auxiliary or care assistant</td>
<td>3,096</td>
<td>3,016</td>
<td>3,396</td>
<td>3,826</td>
<td>3,458</td>
<td>3,091</td>
<td>3,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour Support</td>
<td></td>
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In secondary schools, although there are similar numbers of Behaviour Support staff now as in previous years, and slightly more than in the years 2013-2015, there is a huge reduction in ASN staff compared with the situation in 2011. There are now 374 FTE fewer support posts than in 2011 - a reduction of 20%. This has had a huge impact on teacher workload.

### Support staff in secondary schools (FTE)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional support needs auxiliary or care assistant</td>
<td>1,48</td>
<td>1,60</td>
<td>1,71</td>
<td>1,80</td>
<td>1,85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour Support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,545</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is particularly concerning in a context where the range of learners’ needs in the classroom is becoming ever wider, with the presumption of mainstreaming (which the EIS supports in principle) meaning that schools now have learners with a very wide range of support needs, including (but not limited to) sensory impairment, autism spectrum disorders, physical disabilities, experience of the care system, and emotional and behavioural issues. However, there is less resource to meet those growing and very diverse needs. Some schools no longer have any one to one support for pupils with additional support needs, or have no specialist services. Some EIS ASN Network members have described the current approach as “mainstreaming on the cheap”.

Data from the Scottish Government confirms that the number of pupils with additional support needs has vastly increased. In 2016, 170,329 pupils (24.9% of all pupils), were identified as having additional support needs and 95% spent at least some of their time in mainstream classes. In 2011, the overall number was 98,523. The increase over those five years is 73%. It is hard to see how it is possible to ‘Get it Right for Every Child’ when so many children now have identified needs, and schools are operating within austerity budgets.

We are also concerned about the lack of resources for professional development and training, which ASN teachers wish to undertake so that they can better meet pupils’ changing needs. Schools lack funding for CPD courses or to cover the cost of supply staff to enable release from the classroom of teachers wishing to undertake relevant professional learning.

The cuts in staffing resources also mean that ASN teachers have busier workloads and less time to complete incident reports, which can mean under-reporting of violent incidents. We also have concerns about the reduction in educational psychological services. The number of educational psychologists practising in Scotland fell by a tenth in the three years from 2012 to 2015. There were 370 trained educational psychologists practising in Scottish local authorities in 2015 - 10% fewer.
than the 411 practising in 2012. These staff provide valuable support to children with additional needs and can be of assistance to teachers in meeting children’s diverse needs.

Cuts to English as an Additional Language services are also of concern. As a consequence of the lack of availability of financial resources, EIS members are reporting that the additional support for learning needs of many pupils are simply not being met sufficiently to facilitate their progress either in terms of their curricular achievements or their health and wellbeing. As one might expect, this issue is particularly acute in areas of the country where there have been significantly high levels of migration of families for whom English is an additional language.

Teacher morale

Members have reported that the current climate is very challenging and having a serious impact on their morale. ASN teachers have large workloads and have reported that they feel unable to meet pupils’ needs as they would wish to. There is also an under-valuing of ASN teachers’ skills and experiences, and we have anecdotal evidence that ASN staff are often used as supply, especially as the cover crisis worsens.

Many ASN teachers report feeling under-valued or not fully supported by senior management. For example, when violent incidents have occurred, ASN teachers have been told that “it’s part of the job”. We have further concerns about ASN roles becoming de-professionalised and assumptions being made that this is work that any teacher can do.

Our members working with children with additional support needs report that their daily work can be very rewarding, but it is also difficult and stressful. ASN teachers can experience serious violence and disruption from pupils, including being bitten, spat on, scratched and grabbed. Many colleagues report behaviour management concerns as their biggest difficulty, and don’t feel safe at work.

Our members also report concern about large class sizes, and their impact on teachers’ ability to meet all learners’ needs, which further depletes morale. EIS policy is that no class should exceed 20 pupils, while a range of circumstances might justify smaller groups (e.g. composite classes, classes featuring pupils with additional needs). We regret the Scottish Government’s failure thus far to meet its target of reducing class sizes. In fact, average class sizes continue to edge upwards.

Evidence clearly indicates that smaller class sizes are better for pupils, and have a significant impact on the quality of the learning experience, the ability of teachers to respond to the needs of individual pupils and on achievement and attainment. Given the Scottish Government commitment to tackling the attainment gap, the trend of rising class sizes is an issue that must be tackled through greater investment in a greater number of qualified teachers, including teachers with a specialism in additional support needs.

http://www.eis.org.uk/public.asp?id=2835
Attainment narratives

We would also wish to note that the current debate about attainment in Scottish schools, which has had a focus on achievement of CfE levels, SQA exam results and standardised assessment data, has not visibly taken account of the types of achievement that matter to pupils with additional needs, or even engaged with what achievement means in this context. The Delivery Plan for Excellence and Equity in Education contained very little content on this. This narrowing of the debate around what achievement means is concerning for EIS members working with learners with additional support needs. We also hope to see further elucidation of the connections between poverty and ASN. For example, children with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty. In 2014/15, 27% of households in Scotland with a disabled child were in poverty, compared with 18% of those without. The attainment debate, and all pedagogical developments in Scotland, should take account of this.

Scottish Children’s Services Coalition

We are 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. SCSC members deliver specialist care and education services to children and young people with additional support needs (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. For further information – www.thescsc.org.uk

Members of the SCSC are

Falkland House School - www.falklandhouseschool.org,

Spark of Genius - www.sparkofgenius.com,

Who Cares? Scotland - www.whocarescotland.org

Young Foundations - www.youngfoundations.com

Kindred - www.kindred-scotland.org,

Action for Sick Children Scotland - www.ascscotland.org.uk.

http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/02/5028/1
Additional Support Needs provision in school education

In 2016, **170,329 pupils in Scotland’s schools** (publicly funded primary, secondary and special) were identified with ASN, representing just under a quarter of all pupils (24.9%). This is an increase of 44% since 2012 (from 118,034). Of these, 95% were in mainstream schools, making up 23.9% of mainstream school pupils.

**Key Issues**

The provision of support to those with ASN varies considerably across Scotland, and while the Coalition supports a presumption to mainstream, it is vital that those with ASN receive the care and support that they need within the spirit of ‘Getting it Right for Every Child’. For some children their needs will be best met in a specialist setting.

**Spending cuts** - A combination of an increasing demand on services, set against a background of cuts to public services and delays in identification, assessment and intervention, results in many children and young people with ASN missing out on the support they vitally need.

□ This means that local authorities may find themselves in breach of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended), and is leading to a potentially ‘lost generation’ of vulnerable children and young people.

**ASN disparity of recording between local authorities** - There are significant variations in figures provided by local authorities on pupils with ASN in primary and secondary schools. The current method of identifying and recording pupils with ASN is inconsistent across local authority areas. The most recent figures from the Scottish Government (published 13th December 2016) indicate:

- 39% of Primary school pupils were recorded with ASN in Aberdeenshire, while this figure was 19.7% in Aberdeen City and the figure across all local authorities was 22.3%.
- 37.6% of Secondary school pupils in Glasgow city were recorded with ASN, while the figure was 16.2% in North Lanarkshire and the figure across all local authorities was 26.8%.

**Inadequate staffing levels and training** – While we **support a presumption to mainstream**, it is vital that children and young people with ASN who are in mainstream schools receive adequate support. However, despite a **47% increase between 2012 and 2016 in the number of pupils identified with ASN** in local authority primary and secondary schools (from 111,058 to 163,594) the number of ASN teachers has **fallen by 16%** over the same period (from 2,146 to 1,799).

In many cases mainstream teachers lack the training necessary to meet the needs of their pupils with ASN. For example, research carried out by learning disability charity, ENABLE Scotland, found that 98% of education staff said their initial training had...
failed to prepare them for teaching children with additional support needs, including those with learning disabilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Change (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>18,923</td>
<td>17,923</td>
<td>-5.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASN auxiliary or care assistant</td>
<td>5,258</td>
<td>4,581</td>
<td>-12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour support staff</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>-14.4</td>
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</table>

Analysis also shows that the number of support staff in local authority primary and secondary schools decreased by over 5% between 2012 and 2016, from 18,923 to 17,923.

Lack of specialist support can have a severe impact on the child and can result in an increase in challenging behaviour. This impacts on the child, their classmates, teaching staff and their parents who have to manage the child’s deteriorating behaviour at home. As a result, these children are frequently excluded or placed on reduced timetables.

**Recommendations**

**Improved identification and support** - Children and young people who are thought, for whatever reason to require additional support, should be promptly assessed and provided with the care and support they need, ‘Getting it Right for every Child’.

It is a sad fact that children and young people with ASN have poorer educational and employment outcomes than those without, but preventative support and early intervention can assist, reducing the developing of further difficulties and maximising their life chances.

There must be greater partnership working between the public sector and independent and third sector service providers in order to deliver the best possible care and support to children and young people with ASN, tailored to their individual needs.

**Increased funding** - Greater funding should be made available for services that care for and support children and young people with ASN to ensure that statutory requirements are fulfilled and to support the closing of the educational attainment gap.

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.

**Better recording and reporting of ASN** - Clearer guidance from the Scottish
Government is needed to ensure consistent and meaningful recording and reporting of the number of children and young people with ASN in all local authorities. This data will enable comparisons to be made between local authorities on resourcing, identify key trends and ensure the delivery of effective and equitable support to children and young people with ASN across Scotland.

**Greater numbers of ASN teachers and support staff and better training for mainstream teachers** - The decrease in the number of ASN teachers and support staff must be urgently addressed, especially if we are support a presumption to mainstream. There also needs to be better training and continuing professional development for mainstream teachers so that they can support children and young people with ASN.

**Increased specialist provision for children and young people** - The needs of some children and young people with complex or specific needs, are better met in specialist settings.

Local authorities should be assisted to increase the number of special school/unit places available to reflect the rising numbers of children and young people with complex or specific need. These places may be provided by the local authority or independent sector.

*Sylvia Haughney*

My name is Sylvia Haughney, I’ve been Support for Learning Instructor with Glasgow City Council for over 34yrs. My role is to assist in the teaching and learning of children with Complex Learning Needs.

In those years I have gained invaluable knowledge, experience and understanding of the children I have supported. Through training such as Makaton sign language, which promotes communication and language development. PECS, a picture exchange communication system. TEACCH, a structured teaching programme for someone who is ASD, Autistic Spectrum Disorder and also working in collaboration with other professionals such as speech and language therapists, physios and educational psychologists I have developed skills that enable me to support children who display the most challenging and complex behaviour.

I have found my particular expertise in high demand over the years from both parents and colleagues principally as a result of training I have received. I consider this training to have been a necessity. All staff require extensive high quality training on a direct basis within a multidisciplinary context.

Being adequately trained with direct continuous contact with educational psychologists and speech and language therapist etc., allowed ASN to meet measurable and achievable targets for pupil development. This was the effect of continuous communication and balanced effort across a multi-disciplinary team.

The current cascade model of skills transmission is however inadequate to ensure that today’s staff in schools are able to cope with the extraordinary demands of ASN.
‘Schools are now faced with uncertain planning in response to reasonable parental demands as a systematic dismantling of the multi-disciplinary approach has taken place. Progress is difficult to measure in the current system and planning has become subject to the random effects of chance rather than the systematic observation and correction, achievable in a multi-disciplined approach.

I believe this to be a direct result from budget saving cuts.

When devising and implementing positive support plans and or risk assessments, it is important that all staff take part, agree with the structures and the boundaries that the plan contains. Consistency is the key to success.

It is my experience that if staffs don’t work together or if the staffs are inexperienced due to little or no training, relationships break down and challenging behaviour increases in frequency and intensity.

As a UNISON education steward I feel I’m giving members in the mainstream sector advice not only on their terms and conditions but also on how to support pupils with additional support needs. Tellingly, the statistics from Health and Safety currently show there was a sharp rise in violent incidents in the mainstream sector and a fall in the ASL sector. Personally, I believe the presumption of main streaming gives rise to this correlation. This also brings GIRFEC into question.

Unison Submission

Introduction

UNISON is Scotland’s largest public sector trade union. UNISON members deliver a wide range of services across every sector in education including nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools UNISON is able to analyse and collate their experience as service users and staff to provide evidence to the committee. UNISON welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to Education and Skills Committee.

Evidence

UNISON conducted a survey of members working in schools in September 2016 while the survey focused on the impact of cuts on schools members answers to the questions highlighted a range of issues which are relevant to the committee’s inquiry into Additional Support Needs in schools.

The key challenges raised by members were:

- Increased general workload and physical demands
- Increasing amounts of challenging behaviour
- Dealing with medications and personal care

Almost 80% respondents indicated that their workload is getting heavier. For some members this means doing much more of the same work as before because staff numbers and hours have been cut but expectations remain the same. Members are also telling us that there are increasing levels of challenging behaviour and in some case violence in schools and that it’s our members who have to deal with pupils who
are disruptive and violent towards staff and other pupils. Alongside pupils displaying challenging behaviour many members are now expected to deal with a range of medical and personal care needs for children that they do not feel adequately trained, supported or indeed paid to undertake.

Pupils exhibit challenging behaviour for a range of reasons. Some have with complex disabilities and mental health problems others are just reacting to challenging things in their personal lives. Getting it Right for Every Child requires that they need the right support. This requires resources, staff and appropriate training and support for staff to ensure that they are able to deal with behaviours in a suitable manner. Not finding the lowest paid member of staff in the building and telling them to keep an eye on them. Being the victim of violence at your work is not acceptable just because the person who hits you has a disability or is facing a difficult time in their lives. It’s not fair on the pupil themselves, nor their fellow pupils and certainly not for the victim.

Support staff, particularly classroom assistants, are also expected to undertake a range of personal care and medical tasks. We are not talking about cleaning a cut and putting on a plaster or giving a child some Calpol. (though even these carry risks that need to be properly managed) Pupils require a range of interventions, checking blood sugar and responding with correct insulin injections, catheterisation, tube feeding, dealing with tracheotomy tubes. These are tasks which carry high degrees of risk if not done properly. Many staff are uncomfortable with taking on the level of responsibility and risk that medical procedures require and feel that the training and risk assessment that they have been given are not adequate to the tasks involved.

Alongside medical intervention are the personal care tasks which members are increasingly expected to undertake: nappy changing, cleaning intimate areas, heavy lifting and operating hoists. Enabling children with disabilities to participate in mainstream education is something that we fully support. It is their fundamental human right. Enabling this requires more than warm words and Act of Parliament. It needs adequate resources to provide the appropriately trained and qualified staff to support their individual needs whether that is for personal care, medical procedures or behavioural challenges.

These quotes from come from our survey and give an indication of members’ experiences in our schools.

**What’s being cut?**

*We can give less support to pupils; two children now need day long support which means that others suffer. We do not have enough staff. Children of less ‘pushy’ parents left out.*

*Specialist behaviour units etc been closed*

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4 A child has open heart surgery after a cut that wasn’t properly cleaned in school leads to an infection http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/young-girl-undergoes-open-heart-9741018
Educational psychologists, EAL and speech and language therapists.

Working in one class in the morning up until my lunch with a child with additional needs then with another class after my lunch with one child with medical needs and another two children with additional needs.

My remit bears no comparison to what it was initially. I have greater responsibility, working directly with children in either groups situations or individually. There is an increased number of children with ASN and there are not enough PSAs to give adequate support.

More personal care, more manual handling. Less classroom time with pupils who have learning difficulties not of a physical nature.

More complex additional needs pupils so more time spent on personal care, physio, hoisting and so on.

More children are having complex difficulties, not enough support staff to help.

Dealing with challenging behaviour

Certainly different. Still classroom based as much as possible but more involved with behavioural issues and working one to one with pupils unable to cope. Often spend long periods of time out of the room, wandering corridors, entertaining children who refuse to join the class.

The job seemed to start off as a general supportive role to pupils in the classroom especially for pupils who found the curriculum extremely challenging. Now ASNs in our school seem to be sent into classes, back to back, to provide support in extremely challenging classes both in behavioural terms as well as learning support needs. I feel that pupils with mental health issues are also passed off to us instead of the 'professionals' who should be better-equipped to take on the complicated supportive role and the accompanying continued documentation of the situation. When one considers that the job evaluation stated that our communication skills interaction were rated lower than those of refuse collectors, something does not add up!

Dealing with more behaviour issues than learning

Instead of working with children with learning difficulties we are being used to manage abusive and physical children. I have been kicked, spat at punched and bit quite a few times in the last 6 months. We are used to help clean rooms, tidy and give medication.

The job has become more physical because of the children's needs, they are more profound both mentally and physically. PSAs have more physical abuse than ever.

Comments on medicines/procedures and personal care

Being a first aiders it can be abit over powering on what we are expected to do. We have 4 kids who have type 1 diabetes, at least 5 kids with allergies who require epi...
pens on them at all times. More than 10 who are asthmatic, 3 kids who are in wheelchairs who need special equipment for handling and moving and medication in case they fit or any other problems and over and above this medication that gets handed by parents for children to have throughout the day. One child has just had surgery and requires physio 3 times a day. All PSA's are totally stressed with what we have to do. And on edge if we get a decision wrong. We are not nurses, dentist doctors etc like people think!

My workload now includes children with special medical and health needs eg toileting more frequently which includes stoma bag emptying three times a day. Also changing oxygen canisters when necessary. One day a week administering peg feeding

More pupils in mainstream with complex medical needs as well as learning needs

Yes very much. Psa's are now in playground, dinner hall, administer multiple medication daily, first aid and therefore very little time is in classroom. As a Classroom Assistant previously my main duty was to be in the classroom assisting the teacher with children's learning.

Due to the staff cuts in our department the workload has definitely increased and we are being asked to do more and more i.e. personal care, (splint checks, hoisting, standing frame, liaise with physiotherapy and OT.epileptic pupils, wheelchair pupils: toileting, getting ready for PE and swimming, moving a bambach chair from room to room, fire drill: evac chair am asked to work in the office. Give medication. Expected to provide personal care for pupils. This makes me feel uncomfortable as I am a Classroom Assistant and these jobs are not in my job description

last August l've been put in the position of working (unofficially) as a one-one with an autistic child with little support & no training giving or offered

Yes most definitely. We have to deal with a lot of verbal and physical violence from the children rather than help children with their education. Also, we are expected to give children their insulin injections of they are diabetic, which is a massive responsibility and quite frankly, we are not nurses

epilepsy training was rushed through in less than an hour after school. As a result I felt unprepared and untrained to deal with the pupil's medical issues. Playground supervision is understaffed (ratio pupils to staff out of balance ) and borderline dangerous.

Catherisation of a pupil on a daily basis! Left to deal with lots of problems which are infact guidance issues!

Very much so. Peg feeding, insulin injections, dealing with children with complex needs not properly trained for.

Yes. First aid ( including injections, ripped, catheterisation, self harm), counselling,
Conclusion

UNISON is the largest public sector trade union in Scotland. We are able to analyse and collate members’ experiences of the sector, as service users and staff, to provide evidence to the committee. Our recent report\(^5\) reveals a dedicated workforce committed to supporting children to reach their potential but who are under enormous pressure. Much more needs to be done to ensure that we are *Getting It Right For Every Child*. UNISON therefore welcomes the committee’s inquiry into schools education and ASN in particular.

**LGiU Policy Briefing (provided by Prof. Sheila Riddell)**

**Pupils with Additional Support Needs: local authority variation and impact of social background**

Date: 21.07.16

Authors: Dr Elisabet Weedon and Professor Sheila Riddell, Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity, University of Edinburgh

**Summary**

In 2004 new legislation heralded changes to support for pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Key changes included a new support plan for those with complex and enduring needs – the Record of Needs (RoN) was phased out and the Coordinated Support Plan (CSP) was introduced. An expanded list of categories was developed to record the child’s type of learning difficulty or ‘reason for support’. More emphasis was placed on issues relating to social difficulties in addition to those relating to cognitive, physical, and sensory difficulties. Since the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning legislation, the proportion of pupils identified as having ASN as increased from around 4.5 per cent of the school population in 2005 to 22.5 per cent in 2015. However, whilst about 2 per cent of children received a RoN, a much smaller proportion have a CSP (about 0.5 per cent of the pupil population). There is also considerable variation between local authorities in the proportion of pupils identified as having ASN and in the use of CSPs. Overall children from poorer backgrounds are more likely to be identified with ASN, but less likely to receive a CSP. These changes are explored in this briefing using data from the 2015 Pupil Census published by Scottish Government.

**Background and context**

In the context of a growing focus on inclusion, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 changed the way in which support for pupils with learning difficulties was managed, increased the number of categories used in relation to reasons for support and enhanced the rights of parents to challenge local authority decisions. Since that time there has been a considerable increase in the

number and proportion of pupils with ASN (see figure 1). The majority of these pupils are located in mainstream classrooms with a small proportion of pupils in mainstream schools spending some or no time in mainstream classroom. The proportion of pupils educated in special schools has remained virtually unchanged since 2005.

Figure 1: Per cent of total pupil population with ASN, 2003-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changing support plans and ASN categories
Although the proportion of pupils counted as having ASN has increased, this is likely to reflect changes in recording rather than changes in the pupil population. Prior to 2010, only pupils with a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP) and/or an Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) were recorded in the statistics. Subsequently, children with other types of plan, such as Child Plans, Behavioural Support Plans and Multi-Agency Support Plans, have been counted. Whilst the overall numbers of children with ASN have increased, the number and proportion of children with a CSP has decreased. Between 2009 and 2011 the proportion of the total pupil population with CSPs was around 0.5 per cent (compared with 2 per cent of children who were issued with a RoN). Since 2011, the proportion of children with a CSP has decreased to below 0.4 per cent. This is potentially concerning as this is the only plan that is backed by legislation in terms of entitlement to support and legal redress.
As noted above the system for recording ASN changed in 2004 and was fully implemented by 2007. Prior to the change, there were nine main categories with sub-divisions in two of these categories. By 2007 there were 18 categories with no subdivisions and the category relating to complex or multiple impairments was discontinued. The total number of categories is now 21. In the old set of categories, the word ‘significant’ was used in relation to hearing, visual, physical or motor impairments as well as for language and speech disorder. This word was not used in the new categories which may have led to a greater number of children as being considered to have ASN. A further change is that a pupil with more than one reason for support (e.g. with a hearing impairment and dyslexia) will be recorded in both categories. Prior to the introduction of the new categories, a pupil was only recorded in relation to the main reason for support. Whilst pupils can be recorded in more than one category, the overall number of pupils with ASN is based on a single headcount of pupils.

In summary, the rise in the number of pupils with ASN is likely be as a result of changes to recording practices, both in terms of tightening up audit procedures as well as including children with a wider range of plans. At the same time, the plans used to record individual pupils’ needs have changed in nature and there has been a decrease in the use of CSPs, which is the plan that offers greatest protection in terms of access to services because of its statutory underpinning.
Local authority variation
The considerable overall increase in numbers masks great variation between local authorities. These differences can be seen in figure 2. The average for Scotland is 22 per cent. Fourteen of the local authorities (just under half), have rates below this with North Lanarkshire’s rate being almost at the level of 2005. Two authorities are on the average and the remainder are above. Five authorities have rates of 33 per cent or above indicating that they categorise around one third of their school population as having 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 smallest authorities (Eilean Siar, Orkney and Shetland) have high rates; however, these rates should be treated with caution as slight changes in the population both in terms of the overall pupil population and those with ASN can cause considerable fluctuations. In addition to variation in identification of ASN, there is also local authority variation in the use of different categories used to identify ASN and there is some evidence of links between certain categories and the social background of pupils.

Figure 2: Incidence of ASN in Scottish local authorities, per cent of the total mainstream school population within each local authority, 2015

Identification of ASN in pupils from different social backgrounds
Scottish Government uses the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) to measure disadvantage. This is an area based measure and based on a set of indicators that examine factors such as educational level, crime rates, housing, and employment in an area. Each area is ranked and areas can be grouped into quintiles from the most (SIMD 1) to the least disadvantaged (SIMD 5). Although this is a measure of area rather than individual, deprivation, it offers a means of comparing individuals from different areas based on postcodes and this information is available for most of the pupil population. It is therefore one of the measures used when exploring aspects of educational disadvantage.
Pupils from less advantaged neighbourhoods are more likely to be identified as having ASN than those from other neighbourhoods. In 2015 more than 28 per cent of pupils from the most disadvantaged backgrounds were identified as having ASN in comparison with 16 per cent from the most advantaged neighbourhoods. The type of ASN identified among pupils from different social backgrounds is not reflected evenly across the categories. Pupils from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods are considerably more likely to be identified as having social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties than are those from the most advantaged areas, whereas the opposite is true in relation to dyslexia. Dyslexia is a contentious category, there are disagreements with regards to its definition. This is likely to be one of the reasons why its identification varies across local authorities as has been noted in a recent Education Scotland report Making Sense: Education for Children and Young People with Dyslexia in Scotland. This variation could impact on pupils’ abilities to access support in examinations though it is not possible to say whether this is the case based solely on these statistics. It is worth noting though that a secondary pupil in East Renfrewshire is 14 times more likely to be diagnosed with dyslexia compared with a secondary pupil in North Lanarkshire.

Figure 3: A comparison of reason for support for pupils from the most deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 1) and those from the least deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD 5), 2015

A further concern in relation to the impact of ASN on pupils from the most deprived neighbourhoods is that they are less likely than those from more advantaged areas to have a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP). In 2015 1.3 per cent of pupils the most deprived areas (SIMD 1) had a CSP compared with 2 per cent of those from the least deprived areas (SIMD 5).

Comment
The increase in the number of pupils with ASN is, on the one hand, beneficial as it might mean that children who are having difficulties are being identified and supported. On the other hand, identification with ASN might lead to unnecessary
labelling of transient difficulties with potentially stigmatising effects. Perhaps more concerning is the considerable variation in identification of need between the local authorities. The data cannot tell us how this impacts on actual practice in particular contexts. It may well be that the much lower proportion of pupils with ASN in North Lanarkshire allows the authority to focus on those with the most complex needs and that the school setting is managed to mitigate the effect of particular difficulties by such measures as a differentiated curriculum. On the other hand, middle class parents may be able to engage more actively with educational professionals, enabling them to secure better support for their children and challenge local authority decisions. Children with less assertive parents, often from less advantaged backgrounds, may have their difficulties ignored and parents may lack the social and economic resources to secure the type of legal redress associated with a CSP, for example, access to the Additional Support Needs Tribunals for Scotland. There are also equity implications in relation to the categories of difficulty which are used. Children from the least advantaged neighbourhoods are more than twice as likely to be identified with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties, a particularly stigmatising label.
The Additional Support Needs Tribunals for Scotland (ASNTS) hears references (appeals) from parents or young people against decisions of education authorities regarding the provision of educational support under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. The Equality Act 2010 introduced the right to make a claim (appeal) to the ASNTS in respect of disability discrimination relating to pupils in school education. Claims may be made by the parent, the young person or the child (where the child has the capacity to make the claim).

**Listen!** The most common response when children are asked how we can improve their access to the ASNTS is that we need to listen to them - listening means creating real opportunities for children to have a voice. The ASNTS is committed to expanding the ways in which the voice of the child can be heard in our tribunal proceedings and we are on a continuing journey of improvement.

Research is clear that looked after children are at risk of poorer mental health and lower educational attainment. During 2015, Govan Law Centre (GLC) repeated an earlier freedom of information request (the original in 2013) to the 32 local authorities in Scotland to quantify the extent to which local authorities were identifying and assessing the educational needs of looked after children. The conclusion from this research was that there is still some considerable way to go before the rights of looked after children under the 2004 Act are fully implemented.

There is a statutory presumption in the 2004 Act that that looked after children have additional support needs, unless the local authority assesses as otherwise\(^6\). Despite this and despite the research on educational outcomes, few references or claims are made by, or for, looked after children\(^7\). Taking into account the findings of the GLC research and the ASNTS President’s engagement with education authorities, schools, voluntary and statutory agencies, a potential reason for this may be a lack of awareness of the ASNTS and a common misconception that this jurisdiction is restricted to children and young people with physical or learning disabilities. The 2004 Act makes no such distinction.

**A child or young person has additional support needs for the purposes of the 2004 Act where, for whatever reason, the child or young person is, or is likely to be, unable without the provision of additional support to benefit from school education.**

**The ASNTS is committed to overcoming communication barriers** to ensure that a child or young person who wishes to convey their views in or to a tribunal is not

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\(^6\) See section 1B, 2004 Act.

\(^7\) The term “looked after children”, includes looked after young people.
prevented from doing so. This includes providing children with a choice of communication.

**Saskia’s boots!** The ASNTS recognises the importance of looking accessible. To support this, the President’s Annual Reports in 2015 and in 2016 were illustrated by children. In 2015, by the children of Seamab School, which provides residential care and education to looked after children.

In 2016, by Saskia, aged 11 years, whose art work has become colloquially known as “Saskia’s boots”, which illustrates how scary it can be to be a child, when adults have meetings and are making important decisions. The big shoes represent adults who sometimes forget to listen to children because they are bigger and have so much to say. A copy of the 2015/16 Annual Report can be accessed at: https://www.asntscotland.gov.uk/content/publications

**The Education (Scotland) Act 2016** will expand the jurisdiction of the ASNTS by giving certain rights under the 2004 Act to 12 to 15 year olds who are assessed as having capacity. Before a right can be exercised, the child will have to be assessed by the education authority as having capacity and that there is likely to be no adverse impact on the child’s wellbeing from the exercise of the right. The ASNTS will have jurisdiction to hear appeals on the outcome of this assessment. A child will be able to exercise a right to make a reference to the ASNTS provided a tribunal is satisfied on the two stage test (capacity and wellbeing).

**The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014** places elements of the *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)* approach on a statutory footing, to establish a single planning process using the wellbeing indicators for children who need additional support from services. The 2014 Act also introduces “corporate parent” provisions, and those listed in this category, which includes local authorities, have corporate parenting responsibilities towards children who are looked after by a local authority and young people under 26 years who have previously been looked after. The corporate parenting provisions came into force on 1 April 2015.
Responsibilities of corporate parents include assessing the needs of children and young people for services and support the corporate parent provides and taking action to help those children and young people to access opportunities. 

The President has shared with local authority solicitors, heads of education and the Children’s Commissioner her concern to ensure that additional support needs are recognised as part of such services, support and opportunities.

**Unmet legal need?** Despite this landscape of innovative legislative reform the President of the ASNTS remains concerned about the extent to which parents and carers, looked after children, children with mental health problems and children without a diagnosis who have additional support needs are aware of their statutory rights to access the ASNTS.

May Dunsmuir  
President  
Additional Support Needs Tribunals for Scotland  
17 February 2017

**Enable Submission**

**Background** 
ENABLE Scotland is the largest voluntary organisation in Scotland of and for children and adults who have learning disabilities and their families. We provide personalised support to over 2700 people who have learning disabilities, and their families, in Scotland. Together with our 5000 members, for more than 60 years, we have campaigned for an equal society for every person who has a learning disability.

ENABLE Scotland is pleased to submit evidence to the Education and Skills Committee on the school experience of pupils who have learning disabilities, in response to the call for views on additional support needs in school education.

In 2016 ENABLE Scotland held a national conversation on this subject and received evidence from more than 800 young people who have learning disabilities, parents, and members of the education workforce.

Those 800 voices inform ENABLE Scotland report and 22 recommendations for change published in December 2016: #IncludED in the Main?! 22 Steps on the Journey to Inclusion for Every Pupil who has a Learning Disability.  

For ENABLE Scotland the publication of this report is about acknowledging the challenges that exist and moving forward to take action to change things for the better; we therefore particularly welcome the Committee’s interest in this matter.

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8 ENABLE Scotland, #IncludED in the Main?! - 22 Steps on the Journey to Inclusion for Every Pupil who has a Learning Disability, 2016  
Summary of Findings
Feelings of angst, isolation, loneliness and not doing your best are common across all three respondent groups:

- 60% of young people who have learning disabilities feel lonely at school. 62.5% have been bullied.
- More than half (51%) of young people who have learning disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorders feel they are NOT achieving their full potential at school.
- 62% of class/subject teachers have experience stress or professional anxiety about not being able to meet the needs of pupils who have learning disabilities in their classroom.
- The most common words used by parents/carers to describe their experience of the school system were: battle (67%), stressful (77%) and alone (44%)

To address the issues of isolation, exclusion and bullying, evidenced by #IncludED in the Main?!, adequate time and resource must be provided to develop both staff and pupil understanding of learning disability. Talking about difference is part of the journey to inclusion.

Loss of Specialism in Scottish Education
Additional support for learning teachers are specialist resources and a central part of their role is to support classroom/subject teachers to develop their approach through creative curriculum architecture, strategies and models that meet the needs of pupils with additional support needs in their classrooms. For example this could include accessible curriculum techniques, task-based learning, and positive behaviour support approaches.

- Fewer than 12% of the education workforce felt satisfied that they can meet the educational and developmental needs of a child or young person who has a learning disability.
- Less than 10% answered that they felt confident that a child or young person who has a learning disability was getting enough of their time and support.
- Most education staff (78%), in particular class/subject teachers (86%), said: there are not enough additional support for learning staff in my school to support pupils who have learning disabilities.
- Indeed, the number of additional support for learning teachers in Scotland fell last year to its lowest level since 2007. In 2015, there were 2,936 teachers with additional support needs (ASN) as their main subject in Scotland. The number is down on the 2014 figure of 2,963. A total of 22 out of 32 local authority areas reduced ASN teachers since 2009.  

Recommendation: Urgent Action is required to ensure that this specialist resource is routinely available to education staff to support an inclusive

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9 Answer to Parliamentary Question from John Swinney MSP
http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-00665&ResultsPerPage=10
learning environment.

#IncludED in the Main?! highlights there is a clear need for renewed focus on developing excellence on learning disability education.

**Recommendation: Scottish Government should establish a National Centre for Excellence on Learning Disability Education to: develop and accredit CPD; promote and disseminate best practice; create cutting edge resources; and support teachers to develop teaching strategies.**

**Additional Support for Teachers**

Through #IncludED in the Main?! ENABLE Scotland found additional classroom support to be in high demand and perceived as in low supply.

When asked: *what would help in a mainstream setting to teach children and young people who have learning disabilities* the most popular response from the education workforce was: *More support assistants.* (70.63%)

There is evidence that working with classroom support can lead to improvements in pupils’ attitudes, and also to positive effects in terms of teacher morale and reduced stress. Research also suggests that classroom support can also have a positive impact on academic achievement. However it should be noted that impact varies widely dependent on how that resource is deployed.

Indeed negative impact has been reported where support from classroom support has substituted rather than supplemented teaching from teachers.\(^{11}\)

Where classroom support is shown to have a positive impact, it is likely that adequate support and training will have been provided to both assistant and teacher so that both understand how to work together effectively. Research which focuses on assistants who provide one to one or small group support shows a stronger positive benefit. Often such support is based on a clearly specified approach which teaching assistants have been trained to deliver.\(^{12}\)

It should also be noted that while teachers are regulated by the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS), there is currently no independent regulatory oversight of classroom support.

The National Improvement Framework\(^6\) is set to measure ‘teacher professionalism’


as a key improvement driver. Yet many other people contribute to children and young people’s learning and development. For young people who have learning disabilities, classroom support has a particularly vital role.


Recommendation: Scottish Government and COSLA should establish a national Commission on the role of classroom support in Scotland pursuant to a standardised role, supported by a national training programme, and guidance on appropriate deployment.

The absence of accountability for inclusion
Despite the policy and legislative position, unrecorded exclusion from school, also known as, ‘informal exclusion’, ‘cooling off period’ and ‘sending a learner home’, continues for young people who have learning disabilities.

- 40% of parents/carers said their child had been informally excluded from school, 19% said this was happening on a weekly basis.

More than a quarter of young people who have learning disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorders told us they can’t take part in games and sports with other people in their school. 23% don’t get to go on school trips. Nearly half (46%) said they don’t get the same chances to take part in games in the playground as everyone else in their school.

To exclude children from the opportunities available to their classmates and peers on the basis of their disability is in violation of the Equality Act 2010.

Despite the legislative framework being strong, the evidence suggests that there is an urgent need for robust guidance, training, and systemic accountability for inclusion.

In Conclusion:
Scotland now has an entire generation of young people the majority of whom have been educated in mainstream settings and supported under the additional support for learning framework. Their experience should inform the next steps taken in Scottish Education.

ENABLE Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government’s commitment to review the current guidance on the duty to provide mainstream education.4 This is an opportunity to enhance the implementation of this policy; informed by the learning since its inception; and underpinned by contemporary legal and policy developments, including, the Equality Act 2010, GIRFEC, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended.

We hope the Committee will take the opportunity to discuss this in their meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney MSP.
ENABLE Scotland looks forward to continuing our work with MSPs to take the next steps on the journey to inclusion for every pupil who has a learning disability. We hope members will take the opportunity to consider our full report and 22 recommendations for change – available on our website.

For more information on any part of this submission please contact:
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kayleigh.thorpe@enable.org.uk
01698 737 109

**ADHD Parent Support West Glasgow Submission**

ADHD Parent Support West Glasgow is a parent support group which currently supports around 120 families with one or more children diagnosed with ADHD in and around the Glasgow area with peer to peer support and training.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects up to 5% (1 in 20) of school-aged children and young people and 1.5% are estimated to have severe ADHD (hyperkinetic disorder). However, the most recent pan-Scotland data available suggests that only around 0.7% of children across Scotland are diagnosed, with the rate of diagnosis within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde standing below 0.3%\(^\text{13}\). Children with ADHD can be inattentive and impulsive and this can cause significant problems in a child's life, such as underachievement at school, difficulty making friends and problems with discipline. The long term consequences of ADHD, if not diagnosed early, treated and well managed, are very serious for both the individuals affected and society at large. ADHD is associated with reduced life chances characterised by school exclusion and academic failure, joblessness and low occupational status compared to IQ, substance misuse and criminal offending. A cohort study covering nearly 25 million person years in Denmark published in The Lancet in 2015 demonstrated that ADHD resulted in an increased risk of premature death, largely through unnatural causes such as accidents and suicide\(^\text{14}\).

Despite this outlook, ADHD seems to have had far less attention within the Scottish education system than autism, for example. We hear on a weekly basis from parents about the difficulties they face in relation to their children with ADHD at school. The most common concerns raised are:

- Children showing ADHD symptoms are not routinely picked within the school system so that they can be referred for assessment. Their behaviour is very often put down to poor child attitude or poor parenting. Parents feel that teaching staff

\(^{13}\) Attention Deficit and Hyperkinetic Disorders: Services Over Scotland (final report). Health Improvement Scotland 2012.

\(^{14}\) References omitted to save space but available on request.
are not trained to recognise ADHD, and they often have to ‘fight’ for a diagnosis in a drawn out process.

- Educational psychology departments in some councils take a philosophical stance against a ‘medical model’ of ADHD, in direct contradiction to NICE and SIGN guidelines. This means that they may actively discourage referrals by schools to CAMHS services for assessment and treatment.
- Once diagnosed, children with ADHD receive very inconsistent levels of support in school. Some schools provide Individualised Education Plans and put in place excellent classroom strategies to assist children. Others, despite confirmation of the diagnosis from the NHS CAMHS team, provide little additional support or understanding and continue to ‘punish’ children for behaviours which could be much better managed in other ways. Teacher training again is the key.
- Where additional classroom support is provided for children, it is typically delivered by classroom assistants who have little or no training in ADHD and the many classroom strategies which can help children with it. The support therefore feels like ‘policing’ rather than actual assistance.
- Many children are excluded from school – often time and time again, and others put on short days or ‘taught’ away from other children – sometimes on their own in unsuitable locations such as a windowless photocopier cupboard. These situations can go on for months with parents having to fight every step of the way to obtain better support or a resolution of their child’s situation.

A recent survey which we ran (in conjunction with four other ADHD support groups) with parents yielded comments such as the following:

- My son struggled at school, social situations and peer relationships. Disorganisation, forgetfulness and losing items are also a major problem. Hyperactivity creates problems with sitting still through class.
- My son has no friends and his progress at school is slow. He can’t sit still enough to finish a meal. He has to be supervised at all times as he can become very hyper and hurt himself. He finds listening and following instructions near impossible and he does not sleep well.
- My daughter struggles with her emotions and being able to talk about any worries she has. Without medication she is very hyper and struggles to calm down and behave appropriately in school and home.
- ADHD causes problems at school, clubs, with family. My child falls behind at school because he can’t concentrate and retain information. Teachers constantly punish him without trying to understand his difficulties.

We would therefore urge the committee to give recognition of ADHD the priority that it needs within the education system and to introduce mandatory training for teachers about ADHD. Educational psychology teams and CAMHS teams need to work together in a joined up way and align their philosophy of working around evidence based guidelines. There also needs to be better data about the number of school children with an ADHD diagnosis so that diagnosis rates, and appropriate support, can be tracked and planned.

Geraldine Mynors
Chair – ADHD Parent Support West Glasgow (www.adhdglasgow.com)
The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments

Education and Skills Committee: Additional Support Needs in School Education Submission by the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments

Introduction and Context

The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments (SCCMI) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Education and Skills Committee’s deliberations related to the needs of children/young people with additional support needs and is fully supportive of the Scottish Government’s ambition that Scotland’s services for children are the best in the world. As a national facility, a Grant Aided Special School and through its extensive experience in delivering integrated education and therapy programmes for those affected by neurological conditions, the SCCMI believes it is ideally placed to offer an informed view of the requirements of children/young people with additional support needs.

It is recognised that due to the nature of the Committee’s remit, there is a natural focus on education and school, however the services required by such children/young people are considerably more extensive than those provided by schools alone, therefore limiting discussions within a school focus is neither consistent with GIRFEC principles, nor the way in which the services required by such children/young people, should in our opinion, be addressed. GIRFEC principles require that children’s needs are addressed holistically through the collaboration of various agencies, therefore it is appropriate that this principle is maintained when children/young people’s needs are being considered in a national context.

The opportunity for parents to inform the Committee’s deliberations is also welcomed, however this is the latest of several such requests, with previous comments, although being well-documented, unfortunately, do not appear to result in significant action. An example of available information is that included in the Doran Review (2012)16, with work on progressing the Review’s recommendations ongoing, (currently under the direction of the Deputy First Minister), however some 5 years following publication, no substantive outcomes in relation to parental comments have resulted. Committee members may wish to consider some parental comments included in the Review.

- Organisations have lost sight of their responsibility to those they serve, are self-protective and defensive.

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15 The SCCMI offers programmes for children/young people from birth to 19 years, has provided services to children from all Scotland's local authorities and currently, children from 15 local authorities engage with its programmes

• Local authorities not seen as honest brokers and unhelpful attitudes and values exist in some organisations.
• Local and health authorities have subverted elements designed to safeguard the rights of disabled children.
• Lack of ‘joined-up’ working from agencies/professionals - bemusement about where responsibilities lie.
• Resources should be allocated on the basis of need, rights and entitlement.
• Grouping children/young people with varied complex additional support needs is inappropriate.
• Out of authority and national provisions are required to meet needs that cannot be met by local authorities.

The Scottish Government's Ambitions: Establishing Excellence

The attention being given to this area by the Committee suggests an acknowledgement of the Scottish Government’s view that the quality of services throughout Scotland, which in many areas may be of a good standard, is not consistently excellent, with governmental ambitions for world-leading services being unfulfilled17, and undoubted variations in quality across the country. One of the difficulties in achieving national excellence, is that the Scottish Government may articulate ambitions and prepare policies, however it is neither in direct control of the planning, nor the delivery of services and those with responsibility for services’ delivery may be either unwilling, or unable to deliver the quality of services desired.

Meeting Children/Young People Needs

Characteristics of Children/Young People with Additional Support Needs
It requires to be acknowledged that children/young people with additional support needs are not a uniform group, with patterns of need being unique to the individual, influenced by the nature of their underlying conditions and the circumstances of his/her life, with such needs changing over time. Provisions made for each child therefore require to be adapted according to individual characteristics, with many requiring intensive physical and social support throughout their lives.

Parents' Views
Parents wish and should expect their children to have personalised, sensitive, comprehensive and holistic services delivered by staff who are highly knowledgeable in the specific area of additional support required and who engage with children/young people and their parents in a manner which demonstrates respect and who value both the child’s and parents’ views.

Providing the Highest Quality of Services

It is offered that until there is acknowledgement that the children/young people in question have differing rather than generic needs, and the issues identified by parents as identified above are addressed, it will not be possible for the Scottish

17 Education Scotland Corporate Plan 2013-2016 (p.15)
Government to consider their services for those with additional support needs to be considered as excellent.

Vision and Leadership
Moving from the current generally adequate to good levels, enhancing the quality of provision throughout Scotland and fulfilling governmental ambitions to establish provide internationally recognised services, is a challenge which requires vision and cannot be left to the pragmatic solutions which have pervaded many areas of the sector to date. It requires to be acknowledged that there is no effective national leadership in this field at this time and fulfilling governmental ambitions requires determined leadership to drive a clear and realistic national (rather than 32 individual provisions) strategy and without such leadership, it is believed that governmental ambitions will remain unfilled and services will not progress beyond current levels.

Providing Specialised Not Generic Services
Children/young people with additional support needs have substantially differing needs resulting from quite different sources and the source of their needs requires to be acknowledged, rather than being disregarded. Meeting individual needs at the highest level is therefore dependent on providing specialist services tailored to specific needs. This is considered to be a key issue which is not accepted in many areas within both the Scottish Government and local authorities, with the majority of children, irrespective of their individual needs, being placed in generic rather than specialist provisions, which, it is believed, is not conducive to establishing excellence.

Establishing Effective and Coherent Teams
The majority of services are delivered currently through contributions from staff from a range of organisations who do not have common management. Delivering high quality, effective and efficient services requires staff from various professions to be formed into cohesive teams under common management and which can develop specialist knowledge and skills which meet each child’s specific needs.

Providing Exemplars of Good Practice
Establishing effective management structures and coherent teams able to deliver the high quality, efficient, effective and specialist services which are required on a national basis, requires exemplar organisations and it is offered that such exemplar organisations could be identified to offer direction and guidance to others and thus contribute to a high quality national provision.

Comann Nam Parant Submission
Comann nam Pàrant is the national organisation which offers advice and support on Gaelic medium education (GME) to parents and it represents the interests of parents whose children are educated through the medium of Gaelic at various levels, from pre-school to secondary level.
In Gaelic medium education the entire curriculum at early and primary level stages is taught through the medium of Gaelic but there is still variable availability of subjects at secondary level.

Gaelic medium education is available to all families irrespective of whether there is any Gaelic spoken in the home.

As in English medium education there are number of children in Gaelic medium education who have Additional Support Needs. The recently published ‘Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education’\(^{18}\) states ‘Steps should be taken to improve provision for children and young people in GME who require additional support in their learning.’ This infers that provision for children in GME is lacking and this is an accurate representation of our own experience.

Early identification of pupils who may require intervention is particularly problematic in GME\(^{19}\) mainly due to a lack of resources available to GME teachers.

If a child is identified either by parents or the school as experiencing difficulties parents are often, unfortunately, advised to remove the child from GME and transfer to English medium education. There are a number of factors which contribute to schools giving this advice but it is mainly lack of resources to support the child and a lack of Gaelic speaking support staff or sympathetic English speaking support staff with an understanding of bilingualism. The result is that GME is not the wholly inclusive system of education that we aspire to.

However, we are also aware of many instances where children with ASN have been very successful learners in GME, when given access to adequate support and resources. In fact, many children have achieved a degree of bilingualism that they would have unable to achieve within the system of second language learning in EME.

Parents with highly able children may also choose GME as a challenge for a highly able child and these children may have ASN which should be met.

In summary, there are particular challenges in meeting ASN within GME. There is a need to increase the number of Gaelic speaking support staff as well as ensuring that all support staff have an understanding of bilingualism. There is a need for more resources for use in GME which will allow early diagnosis of ASN and improve management, allowing more children to remain within GME. The sharing of resources, including staff, through digital means should be encouraged.

Comann nam Pàrant is happy to be involved in any further discussions relevant to provision for ASN in GME.

\(^{19}\) http://www.scilt.org.uk/Portals/24/Library/slr/issues/24/24_3_Lyon.pdf
Highland Council Response

The number and complexity of children and young people identified with ASN across Scotland has been reported to be increasing over the years and this pattern has been noted in Highland also. Some of this increase can be explained by different and better recording methods, rather than changes in prevalence figures. However, some groups of children and some types of need have also been rising. These include:

- Children who have experienced very preterm births and have significant medical, physical, sensory and cognitive needs. This group requires a significant level of support to meet their health, education and care needs.
- Children who have been adversely affected in relation to their emotional, social and psychological development as a result of family stresses, acrimony and possibly violence prior to or following parental separation and/or divorce. These children may find it difficult to develop positive relationships in school and present with challenging or withdrawn behaviour.
- Children who take regular medication as a result of a medical condition, without which their daily functioning will be affected.
- Children where English is not their first language.

The current educational and legislative context has required better assessment and planning for pupils, with a sharper focus on identifying and meeting additional support needs at all levels. In addition, parents and young people themselves are more aware of their rights and understandably have high expectations of local authorities in how they support their children and meet their identified needs.

Within this changing landscape it has been very difficult to predict with accuracy the level of resource that may be required in the future to support pupils in Highland schools. However, we have worked hard to provide a robust system of identifying need within a resource allocation model [http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/144/additional_support_needs_-_allocation_model](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/144/additional_support_needs_-_allocation_model) which sits within the framework of the Highland Practice Model (GIRFEC) [http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/230/highland_practice_model_-_delivering_additional_support_for_learners](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/230/highland_practice_model_-_delivering_additional_support_for_learners)

Over the past few years in Highland, significant efforts have been made to ensure more robust figures are recorded and collated in relation to each school, Associated School Group and Area, so that trends can be followed regarding the number and type of additional need experienced by the pupils in Highland Schools. This work commenced with a major review of ASN Services in 2014. [http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/10913/additional_support_needs_review_paper](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/10913/additional_support_needs_review_paper)

Within Highland, the unique approach to Integrating Children’s Services has created opportunities for better planning and integration of support for children and young people, and this has been extremely helpful in providing more holistic approaches to assessment and intervention for children and young people.
The change in complexity and type of need of pupils that would have been familiar to see within mainstream schools in the past, makes it more important to consider different training strategies, interventions and a different pedagogy for staff.

There is a range of provision to support children with additional needs in Highland, although issues around rurality and population mean that there is less specialist provision than there would be in larger cities and towns. Most pupils therefore attend their local mainstream schools where staff can at times find it difficult to provide a fully inclusive environment for children and young people in their communities.

Some parents and staff have raised concerns about the agenda of inclusion, feeling that children with no additional needs or lower levels of need are marginalised or adversely affected, when support is targeted to pupils with ASN, even though much research and our own experience has shown that inclusion (when done properly), supports the social and emotional progress of children with and without disabilities.

Recognising that support staff are central to the success of pupils with ASN has led us to take a more consistent approach to staff training, with Pupil Support Assistants now having a handbook that details a core CPD requirement, with timescales given for required updates and refreshed training in particular areas e.g. Child Protection, De-escalation, Intimate Care, Moving and Handling, Autism Awareness etc. [http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/234E2C4D-706E-4C6A-9C27-E5D5A5001E9E/0/PSAHandbookreviewedAug13finaldraft.pdf](http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/234E2C4D-706E-4C6A-9C27-E5D5A5001E9E/0/PSAHandbookreviewedAug13finaldraft.pdf)

Work to build capacity in schools to improve emotional literacy, mental health and wellbeing has increased over recent years with the increase in the number of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs who exhibit both low level and challenging behaviour impacting on attainment and ethos within some schools. This work begins in the early years, supported by our integrated health and social care services (Family Teams), working with early years, ASN and education staff.

We believe that improvement planning informed by self-evaluation is the means to achieve effective service delivery. Self-evaluation should be informed by feedback from professionals, parents/carers, children/young people and from statistical data. Such information is regularly gathered by the ASN team in Highland to identify the strengths upon which service improvement can be made and also to identify our capacity for improvement at an individual school level and across the Council.

To support local authorities in their work around ASN we would welcome central government recognising the resource implications of providing effective support structures and holistic training strategies across children’s services, starting in the early years. The extension of early years’ hours and access to good quality preschool education has to factor in the costs of providing additional support for those children with complex emotional, health and cognitive needs.

We would also want to highlight the significant benefits to supporting children and families within an integrated health, social care and education service. This has enabled us to work towards integrating assessment and planning from birth.
In relation to planning, we believe that the Coordinated Support Plan, included within the Education (Scotland) ASL Act (2005) is no longer necessary as the child’s plan as legislated for within the Children and Young People’s Act is sufficient to support children and young people with additional support needs.

**Youth Link Submission**

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. Our vision is of a nation which values its young people and their contribution to society, where young people are supported to achieve their potential. The following response focuses on youth work’s role in supporting young people with additional support needs and contains the views and experiences of members working directly with these young people.

**Comments**

**Young people’s rights**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) specifies that children with disabilities have the right to live full and decent lives and to play an active role in the community (article 23). Crucially, the UNCRC also asserts that young people have a right to have a say in all matters affecting them. Young people with additional support needs must be included directly in the development and improvement of support provision. YouthLink Scotland would encourage the Committee to speak directly to young people with additional support needs and engage them meaningfully in this inquiry.

The National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19 asserts that all young people, in every part of Scotland, should have access to high quality and effective youth work practice. This unequivocally includes young people with additional support needs.

**Case Study**

Vibrant Communities, East Ayrshire Council – Celebrating Abilities conference

Led by a team of young people with ASN, Vibrant Communities ran the Celebrating Abilities conference which helped peers understand the importance of inclusion through the experiences of young people with ASN. The conference was thought up by one young person and the organising team had the opportunity to build up stronger relationships with youth workers and peers, whilst also gaining new skills.

**Role of youth work**
Through engaging in youth work, young people are more resilient, optimistic for the future, consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control. The nature of youth work provides an innovative approach that posits the young person as a partner in the learning. Youth workers based in schools often have more time to dedicate to supporting young people on a one-to-one basis or in small groups.

Play and learning outdoors have been proven to have a myriad of positive outcomes for children and young people and the outcomes are particularly relevant to supporting young people with ASN including lower stress impacts, improved behaviour, enhanced cognitive abilities and reducing ADD/ADHD symptoms. It is especially pertinent to consider the opportunities for play for young people with learning disabilities. Research from Enable Scotland found that 46% of pupils who have learning disabilities don’t get the same chances to take part in games in the playground as everyone else.

There are many positive examples of outdoor youth work engaging young people with additional support needs such as Forest Schools in Renfrewshire. Young people are engaged in outdoor learning elements such as survival and bush craft skills, identifying flora and fauna whilst also gaining accreditation through John Muir Awards and the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award.

Opportunities for improved support

YouthLink Scotland believes that education, formal and informal, must do more to ensure young people are included and are given the support to develop their personality, talents and abilities (as per Article 29 of UNCRC). Our members felt there were areas where support could be improved for young people with ASN:

- Young people with ASN should be supported to lead the development and implementation of support programmes
- Improved support for post-school progression
- Improved collaboration between schools (specialist schools and mainstream) to improve peer support, reduce bullying and support inclusion.
- Increased funding for targeted youth work
- Case Study - Reeltime Music - Coltness Music Project
- The project in Coltness High School builds music and personal skills for young people with additional support needs and who would not normally access mainstream music departments. The project was identified by HMI as Innovative Practice in 2014.

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20 YouthLink Scotland, *Youth Work Outcomes*.
22 Enable Scotland, #IncludED in the Main?! 22 steps on the journey to inclusion for every pupil who has a learning disability.
• One young person, J, had been attending Coltness HS on a part-time, one-to-one basis due to an extended period in the children's hospital. Through his involvement in Coltness Music Project J has increased self-esteem and is developing his social skills.
• “The [Reeltime Music] team are incredibly patient and inclusive and J’s entire family have benefited from this project. He has overcome a number of barriers to take part in this and I really do not know of a more fitting example of meeting young peoples’ needs as this.” Deputy Headteacher

Skills Development Scotland Submission

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this call for evidence on Additional Support Needs (ASN) in School Education. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) plays a role in supporting young people with additional support needs at various stages of their education journey, through the delivery of Careers, Information and Guidance (CIAG) in all secondary schools in Scotland.

CIAG is offered in mainstream and ASN schools and is designed and delivered to be fully inclusive, in line with our commitment to ensure equality in the delivery of all our services. The local reviews of our CIAG services by Education Scotland to date have recognised the effectiveness of our services to support vulnerable customers. In line with the scope of the Committee’s call for evidence on views and experiences of ASN provision in Scotland’s schools we have outlined the following in our submission:

• How we support individuals with additional support needs in schools;
• How we endeavour to provide staff who work with individuals with additional support needs with the appropriate training and guidance; and
• In recognition that ASN provision requires a joined-up approach, how we work with partners across Scotland in the design and delivery our services.

Supporting individuals in schools
Through our CIAG service, in partnership with schools, we provide intensive and targeted, face-to-face careers coaching, ensuring that pupils who are most at risk of not making a positive transition into education, employment or training receive targeted support to develop Career Management Skills (CMS). These pupils are offered career guidance coaching from Careers Advisers and Work Coaches a number of times throughout their school journey, and their progress and improvement is closely monitored. This approach recognises that some individuals,

23 Our Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming Report 2015-17 reaffirms our commitment to equality and sets out our ongoing focus. We also have specific continuous improvement plans: CIAG Equality Action Plan, MA Equality Action Plan and Corporate Parenting Action Plan. We also have an Equality Management Group comprised of colleagues from each directorate/operational region and a specific CIAG Equality Group to lead on implementation of these plans. These groups are supported by an External Advisory Group, chaired by a member of the SDS Board and comprised of expert organisations representing customers from protected equality groups, who provide advice on best practice.
including young people with additional support needs, may need further support to aid their transition to further education, employment or training. The detail of the service delivered in each school is agreed through our School Partnership Agreement. This approach is consistent in both mainstream and ASN schools. Table 1 outlines the specific tailored support provided to ASN pupils at different stages in school.

We also have specific resources to support pupils with additional support needs. We have, in collaboration with the Scottish Consortium of Learning Disability (SCLD) and Values into Action Scotland (VIAS), produced materials called ‘My Career Plan’ to support the development of CMS and preparation for transitions beyond school. This provides activities and materials to facilitate the coaching approach and also acts as a record of progress for the pupils.

**Partnership working**

We recognise that an integrated joined-up approach is required to support ASN individuals to access, sustain and progress to, and within, opportunities. As such, we work with a range of strategic groups and organisations to support the development of CMS and promote the employability and employment interests of ASN young people. This includes local authority Community Planning Partnership groups such as Opportunities for All, colleges, training providers, the voluntary sector and employers.

To strengthen local and national partnerships and improve access, we have undertaken activity to forge closer and more meaningful relationships with organisations that support specific groups. For example, we are a member of the Scottish Autism Employment Network and the Scottish Consortium of Learning Disability Project Search Steering Group and work strategically with partners such as National Autistic Society, Enable, Capability Scotland and Dyslexia Scotland.

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**Table 1**

| Early Intervention | As it may take longer for some pupils with additional support needs to develop CMS, the introduction of earlier intervention is key. SDS support includes P5-7 resources for teachers, intervention at the P7/S1 transition, including group sessions to support individuals during key transition phases, and then throughout S1-S3. Activity includes one-to-one engagements with pupils when making subject choices and drop in sessions for all pupils, and is supported by the use of SDS’s careers web service, My World of Work, from an early stage. SDS offers schools the option of both group and individual interventions for pupils in S3 who would benefit from this enhanced service offer. |
| Subject Choices | The introduction of a Subject Choice interview with the young person and their parents/carers is an excellent opportunity to broaden the horizons of ASN pupils and their parents/carers and challenge stereotypes. A parent / carer resource pack is being developed and consideration of pupils with additional support needs has been central to this development. In addition we have been developing flashcards for our staff which are now available on our intranet. |
| Senior | Pupils with ASN are likely, through needs assessment and validation, to |
Phase
receive the targeted Senior Phase offer, which comprises a coaching approach to developing CMS delivered through tailored, one to one, face-to-face support.

My World of Work
Newly developed My World of Work resources – Animal Me, My Interests and Skills Builder – have been identified as a particularly good resource to use with some pupils with ASN.

Training and Supporting our Staff

SDS careers colleagues routinely adapt their approach and employ a range of strategies to suit the individuals they are working with. We are committed to the continuous professional development of our staff and our Continuous Professional Development Framework aims to ensure that staff knowledge and skills are kept up to date and relevant. In relation to ASN, training available includes:

- an induction programme for all new starts, including information on rights and responsibilities and the promotion of resources relating to equality and diversity
- an ASN CPD Module
- a three day CMS module that covers approaches to working with pupils with ASN

SDS colleagues also benefit from participating in locally arranged training with partners and through discussions with teachers in schools increase their knowledge of the specific needs of pupils. Earlier this year, to better support colleagues in this area of work and to increase general awareness and knowledge of ASN across SDS, we refreshed the ASN section of our intranet. This very comprehensive resource is easily accessible and complements and builds on the existing information and training provided for colleagues.

Conclusion
We hope this provides the Committee with an outline of our offer to those with additional support needs. We look forward to following the inquiry over the coming months.

Skills Development Scotland
February 2017

Moray Council Submission

The biggest concern is that there are increasing numbers of children and young people identified with ASN. This is particularly noticeable in ELCC age children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of pupils with ASN</th>
<th>Percentage of pupils with ASN</th>
<th>% increase 2011-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>External Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>£73,159</td>
<td>£37,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>£113,252</td>
<td>£65,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>£170,477</td>
<td>£91,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>£190,658</td>
<td>£89,165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers of pupils being supported by Central Support Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sensory Education</th>
<th>Autism Development Team number of pupils</th>
<th>English as an Additional Language number of pupils (numbers of languages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>510 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>590 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>710 (49)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The budgets to, and staffing of, these teams have remained static in spite of the increased need for services.

We welcome the updated guidelines on presumption of mainstreaming and healthcare in schools. As an authority with no special schools, there can be a tension with some parents about which school is best able to meet the needs of their child.

Moray carried out a review of ASN by parent/carer survey, various consultation events and school participation which looked at what is working well and what needs to be better. The outcome of this was that a draft ASN strategy was written (attached). After public consultation, there will be a final version adopted with action plans written to take developments forward. The 8 outcomes identified indicate the areas which require most development in Moray.
Recruitment of suitably skilled and experienced teachers is a challenge. We have developed pathways as Life Long Professional Learning opportunities for teachers. Post-graduate specialist training could be made available more locally.

Trouble recruiting classroom/subject teachers has meant that ASfL/ASN teachers being routinely used for cover in schools.

Full and clear understanding by teachers of the role of Classroom Teacher in GTCS standards. Specifically in relation to their responsibilities “in order to meet the needs of all learners”. This would allow specialist ASfL/ASN teacher to focus in the appropriate areas.

Parental expectations – many expect individual support for their child regardless of level of need.

Links with other authorities are very valuable – Northern Alliance looking to develop ASN group; ASLO meetings – for sharing good practice.

Lack of central officer capacity to properly support and challenge schools whilst working on an improvement agenda. Challenge of a small authority requiring the same areas/topic to be covered as larger authorities with fewer staff.

National direction on policies required by authorities, schools would be helpful—generic version could be created for personalisation by authority? Central officers in all authorities are working on same topics.

It would be very helpful to have national direction about Quality Assurance processes for schools.

Adoption UK in Scotland Submissions

Comments for Education and Skills Committee from Adoption UK in Scotland

Adoption UK in Scotland is a charity working with adoptive families at every stage of their journey, offering advice, information and support. One of the most common reasons why adoptive parents seek our help is that their children are having problems at school. Why is this?

Adoption today is very different from 30 years ago. Many of today’s adopted children will have come from a background of abuse and/or neglect and may have experienced many moves through the care system. These children’s needs do not change the moment they are adopted but this is not recognised by existing legislation and guidance. As looked after children they were assumed to have additional support needs, (until it had been established that they did not). Once they are adopted, this is no longer the case. Unfortunately although legal status and home circumstances may have changed overnight, the child has not – they have just as many needs plus the additional difficulties of adjusting to a new family. Being adopted does not wave a magic wand and erase any of the harm the child may have experienced before entering the adoption process.
Behavioural science deduced and neuroscience has confirmed that the way we are cared for in the womb and early childhood affects brain development. Consistently ‘good enough’ loving relationships and low stress levels in early childhood build a brain that equips a child to learn, share, empathise, regulate their feelings, have good self-esteem and be resilient to everyday stresses. However, traumatic early experiences affect both the ability to form trusting relationships and develop healthy, well-functioning brains. Some of the typical complexities affecting adopted children include developmental trauma, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and attachment difficulties.

In our experience many schools do not understand this. Teacher training lacks the input to allow knowledge and understanding of adoption in the classroom. It is often assumed that an adopted child is a ‘normal’ child, and often their additional support needs go unrecognised. Their disruptive and difficult behaviours are seen as ‘naughtiness’ and the adoptive parents are viewed as inexperienced, over protective or looking for excuses for their children’s behaviours. There is a strong presumption that the parents are the source of the children’s ‘bad’ behaviour – rather than their child’s early experiences.

Adoptive parents often have to fight for the recognition of their children’s needs. Often, they have to find out for themselves about ASN, what they can ask for and what their child could be entitled to. The professionals they are in contact with are not forthcoming with this information. Adoptive parents are also often in the position of having to explain the effects of developmental trauma to school staff, and can be expected to provide solutions for the teachers to use in the classroom. There is no training on attachment and related issues in teacher training and schools tell us, little money or time available for additional training. Teachers and schools that we have worked with have been very keen to learn more about the cause and impact of developmental trauma and attachment issues, but often have been unaware of these prior to our involvement.

This combination of lack of acceptance of adopted children as having additional support needs and lack of knowledge about how to meet these needs causes many difficulties for adopted children and their families. Most frustratingly, adopted children do not necessarily need expensive equipment or complicated strategies to support them. They do however; require understanding, flexibility and time. We receive many reports of a lack of flexibility in school procedures. Adopted children often have a developmental age much younger than their chronological age but they are expected to start and progress through school at the same rate as their peers. We hear of children moving from foster care to their new family on Friday being expected to start school on the following Monday. Parents describe immense difficulties in getting flexible arrangements such as starting school later or once started in school, attending for shorter days/weeks so that their children can build up the attachment relationships they need with their new family. Parents are forced to place their children in situations without adequate support knowing that they will ‘fail’ because support will not be put in place until failure has occurred. Unfortunately, these failures can be explosive and the damage done makes it even more difficult for the child to manage at school. Even more intensive (and expensive) support will be needed and the likelihood of success is much reduced.
Disciplinary procedures are often a source of difficulty, since most of them are based on children having well developed cause and effect thinking. Children who have suffered developmental trauma, and those affected by drug or alcohol use during pregnancy, tend to have very poor cause and effect thinking and require a lot of support to understand consequences. Some of our families have both birth and adopted children and can see clearly the impact that this developmental delay has on a child's ability to function in school. This ASN requires schools to understand the impact of their disciplinary procedures on adopted children (and their families) and to understand why they behave the way they do, and to support them so that they feel safe at school. Use of punishment and exclusion is of no benefit as the child doesn't understand why they are being punished and the parent is already doing everything they can! This lack of understanding leads many adoptive families to resort to home schooling.

It has been scientifically established that the most effective support for adopted children in school comes about through the formation of good relationships with the adults looking after them. In the early stages, this might require input from an additional member of staff. We hear from schools when we are providing training or are on training courses ourselves, how few support for learning staff there are and how little time they have available for individual children.

When we have been delivering training in schools, the staff are invariably very receptive and grateful for the insights and strategies that we give but they say they do not have the resources to implement them. We have often been in the position of delivering training to teachers attending after hours and in their own time as they recognise their need to find out about the ASN of adopted children and what they can do to meet their needs. Many have remarked how the information they have gained has helped them with all the children in their classes and how it is in line with other training they have received.

In conclusion we are clear that the current position for adopted children in Scotland's schools today is that their additional support needs are unrecognised, unacknowledged and unmet. While we do hear some positive stories where children have met with understanding and empathy from their teachers and school management and have been supported to settle in school and been able to learn and succeed this is the exception rather than the rule. For adopted children rates of exclusion and stress are high and their attainment is poor compared to their peers. We would suggest that:

- Adopted children retain the same status as looked after children in that they are assumed to have additional support needs until it has been established that they do not;
- Training on the effects of developmental trauma and attachment issues included in basic teacher training;
- A programme of recognised CPD training be made available to all schools to equip them to better understand and support adopted children;
- More support for learning teachers in schools.
The existing situation is expensive. Adopted children are not achieving their educational potential and at worst end up in special units or back in the care of the local authority. Their likelihood of becoming adults, who can contribute to their local community, and the nation as a whole, is low. These children have already been let down by their disadvantaged childhood, and often the professionals involved in their early lives. If their additional support needs are not met in school, they are being let down again. Education is a right for all children in Scotland, not a privilege. We would like to see adopted children receive the support that they need to help this right to be fulfilled.

University of Glasgow, School of Education

Submitted by the teaching team: Certificate/Diploma/Masters in Inclusive Education: research, policy and practice and the Scottish Network for Able Pupils

• What are your views on Additional Support Needs provided in Scotland’s schools?

Scotland’s inclusive approach to Additional Support for Learning (ASL) has allowed us to consider how we offer support and challenge in a way that moves us from special education, where there is a particular focus on, for example, disability and learning disabilities, to a broader understanding of young people who may require support. This broadening definition saw the inclusion of groups such as highly able pupils, children who are looked after and accommodated or children for whom English is an additional language. This shift recognizes that groups of learners not traditionally seen as “special” may also require support. Education Authorities have to identify, make and review provision for children and young people for whose education they are responsible.

The current legislation and policies – for example Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act, Getting it Right for Every Child, Children and Young People (Scotland) Act - fit very well with Scotland’s long history of comprehensive education and are a recognition that children learn in different ways and at different rates.

The National Framework for Inclusion (see http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/NEW/) reflects on the values and beliefs, the professional knowledge and understanding and the professional skills and abilities which are expected of Scottish teachers in relation to inclusive understandings. The questions in the framework related to the Standards for Registration (http://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/the-standards/standards-for-registration.aspx), acknowledge the experience and positions of students and teachers and were designed to encourage reflection on practice. The use of the National Framework for Inclusion supports teachers as they develop inclusive practice. There has been interest in this framework from international institutions. For example, staff from Scottish universities working in the field of Initial Teacher Education were invited by the Ministry for Education in The Netherlands to share the work being done with students in this area.
Staff in Teacher Education Institutions have also worked hard to ensure that new teachers have engaged with the underpinning values of social justice and inclusion that are fundamental to the Standards for Registration. Those returning for Post-Graduate study have the opportunity to drill down in more detail to interrogate their practice in relation to policy, values and research. Sometimes this will involve considering specific groups of learners or conditions, for example, autism, but this is always done within an inclusive education context.

While these moves are welcome, recent changes to higher education have, in some cases, resulted in experienced staff, with a background in both research and classroom practice not being replaced by similarly experienced staff when they leave.

Discussions on social media have seen teachers raise issues such as class size, cuts in resources, cuts in numbers of classroom assistants along with a perceived rise in disruptive behavior, greater numbers of pupils with recognised conditions etc. Some of these views expressed present a very narrow view of inclusion, redolent of SEN and in-pupil deficit. There is also possibly an unintended ‘professional' deficit i.e. I can or want to teach only well-behaved pupils of average ability or above. These issues can and must be addressed through continuing lifelong learning opportunities and it is vital that teachers are encouraged and supported to engage in effective professional development that helps them to reflect on their practice and to address the need to provide effective quality education for all.

What have your experiences been?
Our understanding of practice in schools comes from a range of experiences including school placements on undergraduate programmes, practitioner enquiry projects at Post-Graduate level and through working directly with authorities, schools and parents on a variety of projects.

Across these groups, our experiences with practitioners and parents suggest there is considerable support for the principles of inclusion as expressed in legislation and policy. However there are significant tensions for stakeholders in implementing the policies as resources are redistributed and/or cut.

Individual teachers are responding in creative, innovative and enthusiastic ways to create classrooms that include a wide range of learners. This is evidenced in our under and postgraduate student practitioner enquiry projects. Through examining their practice they are developing inclusive ways of supporting young learners. Starting with a sound knowledge of inclusive pedagogical approaches, they develop strategies to support all. These projects might also involve a close examination of a particular group of learners, for example, children with autism, non-verbal children, children experiencing trauma, children who are dyslexic. Combining pedagogy with an in depth knowledge and understanding of a particular group of learners results in contextualised, appropriate pedagogical interventions that benefit all.

Our work with parents of highly able pupils reveals that many parents are unsure what they can ask of a school by way of support and they are often unaware that their child’s learning needs are recognised within the auspices of additional support for learning. A major issue parent’s face is in helping schools to understand what
their child can do cognitively. Schools will often prioritise the social development of able learners. Combining social development and cognitive learning effectively, presents a significant challenge for schools and teachers. There are examples from practice that demonstrate that when schools think in the creative and innovative ways as described above and reflect on values and principles relating to learning it is possible to support highly able learners effectively and inclusively.

Our experiences suggest that where policy and practice meet, learning is supported well. The gap between policy and practice seems to be bridged best by knowledgeable and highly qualified teachers. Teachers we work with are keen to “learn more” and are committed to inclusive principles. Additional support for learning has to be infused across career long professional development opportunities, management and leadership developments and in advisory groups as Scottish education seeks to grow and develop and if we want to ensure that we meet our goal of becoming an inclusive society.

Over 10,000 students from across the globe have participated in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), The Right to Education, written by staff from the University of Glasgow and hosted by Futurelearn. Many of the examples used on this MOOC to illustrate policy and good practice were from Scottish education. Students from all countries and backgrounds – teachers, student teachers, parents, researchers, journalists, United Nations staff - were impressed by the legislation and the work being done in Scottish schools.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 demands that we provide inclusive, quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030 (UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). Scotland should build on the developments made and ensure we do not go back to a deficit driven form of support.

**CELCIS Submission**

CELCIS (Centre for excellence for looked after children in Scotland), based at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, is committed to making positive and lasting improvements in the wellbeing of Scotland’s children living in and on the edges of care. Taking a multi-agency, collaborative approach towards making lasting change, CELCIS works alongside leaders, managers and practitioners to break down barriers and forge new paths in order to change thinking and ways of working with everyone whose work touches the lives of vulnerable children and families.

There are approximately 15,500 looked after children in Scotland. These children are individuals who have a range of needs, strengths and vulnerabilities. They live in a variety of circumstances including foster care, residential care, kinship care, and at home with one or both of their birth parents. Children who are looked after have all experienced difficulties in their lives. A significant number will have experienced a range of adversity, including suffering neglect, abuse and trauma. The backgrounds
of many children who are looked after feature socio-economic disadvantage, and reduced opportunities in many areas.\textsuperscript{24}

Educational outcome indicators show that the gap between looked after children’s attainment and achievement, and that of all children, remains unacceptably large.\textsuperscript{25}

We welcome the opportunity to submit our views in response to the call for views on additional support needs in education. We would promote any reform that would strengthen the ability of schools to ensure that looked after children are able to attain, attend and participate at the same rate as all other children.

The \textit{Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009} promotes the interests of looked after children by stating that they are presumed to have additional support needs unless assessed as otherwise. However, there is inconsistency in how local authorities and schools assess and implement this legislation. In 2015, a \textit{freedom of information request} by Iain Nisbet (previously of the Education Law Unit at Govan Law Centre, now of Cairn Legal) showed large variations in practice between local authorities. Variations were clear in the rates of assessment. Where an assessment did take place, variations were evident in the proportion of looked after children assessed as having no additional support needs (ASN) (range 0-89%), proportion of those found to have ASN being assessed for a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP), (range 0-100%), and proportion with ASN who have a CSP (range 0-46%). Further to this, data returns to the Scottish Government would suggest there are differences in recording practices between and within agencies, and in access to assessments:

- The \textit{Children Looked After Statistics} (CLAS) show large variations between local authorities in the proportions of looked after children reported as having known ASL needs – from 3% in Falkirk, 5% in city of Edinburgh to 44% in Orkney, 28%. The range seems unlikely to reflect children’s need and more likely to reflect recording practice.
- The CLAS also show a different pattern from the figures generated by the \textit{Pupil Census} (PC). In some local authorities, there is a close correspondence, e.g. Aberdeen City (PC 23.4%; Looked After Children 28%), while in other authorities there is a wide discrepancy, e.g. Fife (PC 27.4%; Looked After Children 9%).

These inconsistencies would suggest that looked after children are not receiving the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) that they are not only entitled to by law, but that they require to allow them to fully engage with the curriculum.


Education staff are now more involved in child’s planning in its widest sense. This is a strength of policy and legislation including *Getting it Right for Every Child* and the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*; schools are ideally placed to assess and provide for additional needs, given the significant amount of time they spend with children. In order to identify and provide for the ASL needs of looked after children, it is imperative that teaching staff have the necessary skills and abilities to assess children appropriately. Presently, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) does not include any compulsory curricular content around the additional support needs of looked after children. Whilst ITE contains input around Additional Support Needs, it has a general focus and does not provide the necessary depth of knowledge and skills required for the consistent benefit of looked after children.

This creates barriers for teaching staff and furthers the likelihood of inconsistent support. CELCIS recently found evidence of this inconsistency in an audit of 40 child’s plans within one local authority. Main findings indicated that education, and a child’s ASL needs, were not given priority within the child’s plan and that evidence of ASN assessment was not routinely present.

A key role in ensuring the ASL needs of looked after children are met is that of the Designated Manager, a senior member of staff within educational establishments, who is responsible for the needs of all looked after children within the establishment. Effective discharging of the *Core Tasks for Designated Managers* can have a profound positive impact on the educational experience and attainment of looked after children. However this role is not statutory. The role does not exist within all schools and where it does exist, it is often part of a wider pupil support remit without a clear focus on looked after children. This is anecdotal evidence that has been gathered through our ongoing contact with the education workforce; there is currently no national data on the extent to which schools have adopted this role and how it is functioning. Robust data, clearer guidance on expectations of the role, how it will be reported on and where responsibility for support and scrutiny lies would have a positive impact on achieving equity and excellence for looked after children.

**AHDS Submission**

The biggest policy development in this area in recent times was the advent of a presumption of mainstreaming. AHDS members are very supportive of this policy as a positive development both for pupils with additional support needs and for those without. However, a presumption of mainstreaming must be accompanied by appropriate resources if it is to work for all pupils.

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Mainstreaming is not of itself inclusion nor is it equity. For inclusion and equity to be apparent children with additional needs require support. For some that support cannot be given in a mainstream school, for others it is entirely possible but requires investment of staff and resources. Where pupils with additional needs are placed in mainstream settings without the necessary supports this can hamper their learning and/or have a negative impact on the learning of others in their class.

While AHDS has not conducted any specific research around the state of Additional Support Needs education it is clear from interaction with members that they are under increasing pressure to accept children with ever greater additional support needs in the mainstream while the support available to ensure an effective educational experience continues to reduce. Similarly, members in specialist ASN schools are reporting considerable reductions in referrals from local authorities. The common understanding about this is that the reduction in referrals is not due a reduction in the number of children who would have previously been referred but rather is due to concern about the cost to local authorities of providing such placements.

The recent Enable report ‘#IncludED in the Main?!’ paints a picture of Additional Support Needs education which is immediately recognisable to members. The report would be a valuable starting point for the Committee as it seeks to reflect the reality reported to ENABLE through consultation responses and takes a positive, forward-looking, approach to considering the apparent gaps and action required to “…take the next steps on the Journey to Inclusion”.

The only issue we would like to highlight separately from the ENABLE report relates to staff training. We regularly hear comments from members about the lack of availability of appropriately trained staff. This relates to support assistants and to teachers. Specifically in relation to teachers there are many colleagues calling for much greater input on ASN to be included in initial teacher education and for student placements and the teacher induction year to take place in ASN schools or units.

#IncludED in the Main?!: 22 steps on the journey to inclusion for every pupil who has a learning disability  

The National Deaf Children’s Society Submission

Intro
The National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) is the leading charity in Scotland dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people. In Scotland, we have a dedicated team based in Glasgow led by Angela Bonomy, Director (Scotland & Northern Ireland).

Background
The Scottish Government have recognised the unacceptable attainment gap that exists for this group. We welcomed the Scottish Parliament’s Inquiry in March 2015 into the attainment of pupils with a sensory impairment which examined the varied factors contributing to this attainment gap and the challenges facing deaf education.

We also welcomed the historic passage of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. While the Act did not include explicit provisions around education, the bill proceedings saw robust debate about what is needed to improve deaf education.

**Support for deaf learners in school**

Every deaf child is different, some may prefer using spoken language such as English, others may use British Sign Language and some may use a combination of spoken and sign language. The support required by deaf children therefore varies: around 80% of deaf children are educated in mainstream schools, another 10% attend mainstream schools with attached deaf resource bases and the remaining 10% attend special schools. As such, alongside the universal offer of schools, deaf children may require Teachers of the Deaf, Educational Interpreters, Classroom Assistants, equipment such as radio aids and SoundField systems, Educational Audiologists, good acoustical conditions and trained practitioners in deaf and British Sign Language awareness.

The eligibility criteria that is used by local authority hearing impairment services varies significantly. In some areas children with all levels of hearing loss are supported, while in some authorities no or minimal support is provided for learners with mild or unilateral hearing losses. Parents tell us they often have inadequate mechanisms through which to challenge this inconsistent provision of support.

Models of education provision for deaf children was an issue highlighted in the Inquiry report, revealing mixed views about the presumption of mainstream education for learners with ASN this has been reiterated more recently through Enable Scotland’s ‘IncludED In the Main?’ campaign. To achieve inclusion, it is critical that the needs of a deaf child within a mainstream school are effectively identified and addressed. On a national level there is a need to understand how best to achieve inclusion and how mainstream and specialist practitioners should work together, drawing on examples of best practice that we know exist across Scotland.

Resource base provision can also be successful: this message was conveyed to us by deaf young people at our Deaf Learners Conference 2015, ran in partnership with Education Scotland. However, currently less than half of local authorities in Scotland have a resource base. In order for resource base provision to be a genuine option for more deaf learners more resource bases would need to be established with investment and restructure. It would also be critical that peripatetic services and schools are supported to promote positive outcomes for the deaf children they work with. We would welcome the opportunity to share effective practice in this respect through our professional members network as well as provide further information and

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27 CRIDE 2013
resources around supporting the achievement of deaf children in educational settings. These resources include Quality Standards for deaf children and young people in both resource provision, and specialist teaching and support services.

The Deaf Learners Conference in 2015 brought together over 70 deaf pupils to discuss their education experiences. Lack of deaf awareness from teachers was identified as a top challenge for deaf young people. A lack of deaf awareness also created challenges with supportive technology, with pupils describing experiences of teachers being unable to use FM systems/radio aids either consistently or at all. High quality deaf awareness training for mainstream teachers is fundamental to improving deaf pupils’ education outcomes.

We welcome the fact that the Scottish Government is currently working on an Action Plan which will seek to address the committee’s Inquiry recommendations. We hope this Action Plan will help reduce the inequity in support available for deaf young people across local authorities. We agreed with many of the recommendations outlined in the Inquiry report including:-

The routine inspection of peripatetic hearing impairment education services; Improving data on the number and qualifications of Teachers of the Deaf and professionals working with deaf learners.

Reduction in specialist supports available to mainstream schools is of real concern. We are becoming increasingly aware that services are being affected by restructure and proposed redesign and/or budget reduction. We strongly recommend that investment into these crucial services is maintained. However, where change does happen, we recommend authorities take a partnership approach with families and carry out comprehensive equality impact assessments and children’s rights and wellbeing assessments.

The new legislation under the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 marks an opportunity to strengthen early years provision for deaf children and their families. This was not directly addressed within the Committee’s Report, although this was discussed at some length during the Inquiry proceedings. We are currently calling for early years guidance to be developed and endorsed by the Scottish Government to support deaf children and their families at this crucial time.

For more information contact:
Lois.drake@ndcs.org.uk

PAMIS

PAMIS is a charity that supports people with learning disabilities and their family carers and we feel it is appropriate to respond to this petition as we support families across Scotland whose children access additional support needs provided in Scotland schools.

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28 NDCS Quality Standards: Resource Provision for deaf children and young people in mainstream schools
29 NDCS Quality Standards: Specialist teaching and support services
In our experience the reality of current educational provision for children accessing this service is that there is not a uniform and consistent approach across schools to providing the support necessary to enable children with complex needs to achieve their full potential. In some areas we have observed low morale for both pupils and staff. We as an organisation would be interested in being involved in the wider discussions on this topic and would welcome a broader consultation exercise. Supporting children with complex needs is a highly specialised area where parents have become experts by experience but many report to us that they feel this experience is overlooked and that they feel undervalued. Teachers themselves at times appear to struggle with the complex disabilities of the children they are supporting and it appears also that there is lack of support for teachers in crucial areas such as communication. This is reflected in the support that families ask PAMIS to provide. Family carers report that teaching and support staff lack the knowledge and understanding of how their sons/daughters use behaviour as a means of communication and this in turn leads to a lack of appropriate support. There appears to be limited knowledge and use of interventions such as positive behavioural support and active support, unfortunately this often leads to inappropriate use of restraint.

GIRFEC is designed to ensure appropriate care and education is delivered but there appears often to be a gap between policy and practice. We have observed some very concerning practice in relation to the education of children with complex needs and feel very strongly that this is an area that requires closer scrutiny, support and development from an expert reference group that includes parents and specialist organisations such as PAMIS. This collaborative approach will help support a meaningful and appropriate programme of education for all of Scotland’s special needs children. We are concerned that while there are examples of excellent education provision there are also examples of poor practice which is leading to a poor quality of education and support for the children accessing education.

Organisations like PAMIS have learning and development tools and specific resources that could enhance the knowledge, skills and practice of staff. We would recommend that education, health, social care and the voluntary sector work together with family carers as expert partners to consider how the best educational provision can be delivered to children with complex needs.

PAMIS
http://pamis.org.uk/

Down’s Syndrome Scotland

Call for Views: Additional Support Needs in School Education

Down’s Syndrome Scotland is the only Scottish charity focused solely on the needs of people with Down’s syndrome (Ds) and their family carers. We provide information, support and services for people with Ds, their families, carers and those...
with a professional interest. We also seek to improve public knowledge and understanding of Ds and to champion the rights of people with Ds.

Down’s Syndrome Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to this call for views from the Education & Skills Committee of the Scottish Parliament. We asked members of our Policy Panel to comment on the questions raised by the committee. Three of our members replied to the call for evidence and their submissions can be found below:

- **Aicha Reid, mother of a 4 year old girl (Edinburgh City)**
  I think the important things are that:
  
  - ASL legislation in combination with GIRFEC guidance in Scotland is fit for purpose along with other relevant policy and the Curriculum for Excellence.
  - School staff need better training in how to differentiate the curriculum for children with learning difficulties
  - Schools need a variety of services to support them meet the needs of children who need additional support, e.g. local authority services, partner agencies and the voluntary sector.
  - We need better equity in provision across schools and local authorities
  - The social inclusion of children with learning difficulties needs to be considered at a more sensitive level than purely attending their local geographical school. There are other factors which influence inclusion such as availability of appropriate peer groups which need to be taken into account.

  Our experiences as a family have been that in reality there is not equity of opportunity in early learning and childcare for a child who needs additional support. There is significant work to be done to improve the capacity of the partnership nursery sector. There is wide variation in the skills, understanding and potential of education staff to meet the needs of children with additional support needs. The playing field is far from even.

- **Christine Williamson, mother of a 13 year old boy (South Lanarkshire)**

  Taking from those who already have least makes us no different from other countries where we often sit on moral high ground, slating how terrible it is.

  My son has had 1-to-1 support throughout education – in a mainstream primary and in the last year has transitioned to a mainstream secondary. This has been hugely successful – both for my son, and for all of the other children who have learned in an environment where difference is tolerated and welcomed. The children in his school are much more tolerant of difference than they would have been otherwise.

  I am under no illusion that the work load for staff to differentiate for him is high, however he benefits massively from being in a mainstream environment – learning how to behave socially and independently. He would not enjoy the same learning
experience in a special needs school with children with a range of needs. What role model is there to promote positive ‘acceptable’ behaviour/good speech etc?

I would not be happy as a parent for him to be in mainstream without this support and supervision to ensure his safety, and I know the school would struggle also. Of course there is a cost to providing this support, which has to be met. However what is the long term cost to society to provide care throughout adulthood if collectively we do not give my son the skills to live independently as part of his community: day care provision from 18 – 60? support with person care at home? support of the physical and mental health of family carer?

It is not going to work for every person with additional needs, but for those who are able, the benefits of providing support to access mainstream community is enormous – and much cheaper for the government/society in the long term!

- **Brian and Lynn Murray parents of 16 year old girl**

Our daughter attended Mainstream (MS) Nursery school following Child and Family Centre which she attended 2 days a week. The routine of the Centre probably helped with settling at Nursery where she had the benefit of one-to-one assistance and input from Physiotherapy and Speech & Language Therapy (SALT). Nursery was, generally, a positive experience for us all.

Due to successful Nursery experience, we decided to apply for her to go to MS school. The idea was well received by support staff and Primary school; a transition plan was put into place. The only issue we had was that when the transition was in full swing, people took on actions at meeting, it fell to us (parents) to suggest that someone should co-ordinate the meeting actions to ensure that all the necessary steps were being taken. The psychologist took this task on and co-ordinated everything. We fed comments back to the psychologist who was starting out on supporting children with Down’s syndrome in MS Primary schools. These were suggestions around what we thought were useful pointers considering our experiences.

Our view is that transitional planning could be more business-like.

Our daughter attended MS Primary school where she also had one-to-one assistance. This was a very successful experience with one or two early behavioural issues early on (such as scratching) which settled down/were brought under control.

Pupil’s educational achievement levels are recorded; unfortunately, we felt there wasn’t consistency around this from one teacher to the next. It was as if, as the teacher changed, each new teacher had to revisit our daughter’s abilities, with a result that she wasn’t always building on the work done in the previous year with the knock-on effect that some skills were lost as a teacher might start on another strategy. We think that teachers suffered from a lack of understanding the way in which children with Down’s syndrome learn, and that neglecting a skill previously gained could mean that the skill was lost as a teacher strove to determine how to proceed educationally with our daughter. It feels like extra teacher training/support was needed. Whilst the psychologist was supporting, her time was challenged by
people who had more issues or challenges than our daughter, therefore teachers were not trained or supported as much as we would like to see in order to help pupils like our daughter to fulfil their potential. In addition, speech therapy outreach is something that has been rationed throughout out her whole school career, it has been exhausting at times to try to justify the investment. Communication issues hinder education.

Our view is that teaching staff need to have more training and support to teach children with additional support needs, and they also need to understand that consistency and seamless transitions are even more important for those pupils.

Sadly, we found that many people seemed to fear the idea of our daughter going to MS school. Teachers from both primary and secondary worried about her being bullied, however, we felt that any school pupil is a potential target for bullies and that keeping our daughter from the mainstream for that reason would mean that there would still be bullies unless that sort of behaviour was addressed by schools anyway. Another wise young friend also pointed out that some young people might also want to meet and help people like our daughter and this made us think of a more positive side to mainstreaming, which meant that others (staff included) might benefit and blossom from meeting her.

The Speech Therapy department and the MS HS Learning Support department were against us sending our daughter to the MS HS! I assume the former didn’t want to keep her on the caseload and the latter felt that she was a support for learning step too far. As we persisted in pursing the idea, they did their best to discourage us. A perceived extra workload for them was the only other reason we could think as to why they would discourage us from sending our daughter to MS HS.

She was being discriminated against, it wasn’t an easy time for us because the HS Support for Learning Department didn’t make much effort to find out her capabilities and put up barriers at meetings. In fact, it seemed that a brief meeting with our daughter, was enough for the MS HS representative to go back to support staff and tell them that she couldn’t speak (her ability to communicate therefore took support staff by surprise when they did meet her!). The HS staff did not visit our daughter very much at Primary school as part of the transition process. The head teacher wrote us a letter pointing out all the negatives about her going to his school. To be honest, we could have probably sued the local authority for discrimination offences. We faced a choice: sue, and walk away; or persist in the idea of sending her to the local MS HS.

Fortunately, the psychologist and the local authority support staff member understood why our school request should be supported. Down’s Syndrome Scotland was also a great support to us in a difficult meeting climate. So, we committed to the idea of sending our daughter to local MS HS. This decision led to the school Learning Support Department trying to get a shorter school day officially organised before our daughter even got to the school gates! For all the reasons stated, the transition from primary to high school wasn’t as good as it might have been.
Despite some bad attitudes, we sent our daughter to the local MS HS in August 2012. We swallowed hard and realised that it was going to be down to her to ‘sell herself’ to the school. Thanks to the Local authority support staff and Down’s Syndrome Scotland, the right level of support was finally put in place. The first few months held no particular problems, but there was tension from some of the school staff, they had obviously not been reassured that they could manage a school day with a little girl with no behavioural issues but who was challenged in her learning.

School staff should realise that many pupils are challenged, and that children with Down’s syndrome are not so different. Discrimination is a strong word but we feel that our daughter, who had every right to attend her local MS HS, was discriminated against on this occasion.

Four years later, the story is very different. Our daughter is valued by staff in school who are very protective of her and some of whom go the extra mile for her. We have no regrets about not sending her to special school.

Differentiation of the curriculum has been an issue for some teaching staff and we think that’s something that school teaching staff should learn more about and be prepared/given more time to ensure this happens for our daughter and any other pupils who would benefit too.

Due to a difficult start at HS - we feel that our daughter could have done better educationally; however she is still learning at school and, we believe, will continue to do so.

Exclusion disables. In fact, research tells us that children with Down’s syndrome who attend mainstream school are more enabled. The Scottish Government need to do work to ensure that public sector staff respect pupils with disabilities and additional support needs. Now that Scotland has ratified the UNCRPD, the status quo is unacceptable.

We trust these comments assist the Committee with its enquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact our office on 0131 442 8849 or by email at rachel@dsscotland.org.uk should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Policy Officer

Dunedin School

Additional Support Needs Provision in Scotland’s Schools
View from Dunedin School

One of the biggest questions for ASN Education in Scotland is “Is the closing of specialist school provision and the setting up of bases in mainstream schools the
best way to meet the educational needs of young people with Additional Support Needs?"

With the varied and complex needs pupils have a varied and flexible provision is required. At Dunedin School we provide council funded places for pupils who find it too daunting to attend mainstream school. We do this as a charity school to whom the council sends suitable pupils.

Our school only takes 21 pupils and provides a safe, quiet and nurturing environment where we can accommodate pupils’ individual needs and gradually re-engage them in education and increase their self-esteem.

The majority of pupils who come here have complex additional support needs which are often compounded by mental health issues and only a small, quiet environment can help them.

One of our major concerns is the length of time pupils are out of education before they come to Dunedin which can be between 18 months and 2 years due to the desire to keep them in the mainstream environment if at all possible. Therefore we are constantly playing catch up on their education and filling gaps. It is an uphill struggle after their lack of success in education which generally comes on at the start of secondary school. The pupils we have can’t cope with the constant changing of teachers, classes and pupils in a mainstream school and once they start to fail, even being in a base in that school is too traumatic.

We have great success in re-engaging our pupils by building up to regular attendance, engagement in lessons, gaining qualifications and getting these pupils to a positive destination. Without this sort of provision these pupils would be stuck in their bedrooms unable to engage with society.

**Castleview Primary School Edinburgh**

Schools should be responsible and accountable for the universal support of all pupils in their care, including targeted support for individuals and removal of barriers to learning.

At Castleview we strive to establish a learning environment with an ethos of inclusion and positive relationships. We are a Scottish Attainment Challenge school and have strategies in place to improve the attainment and achievement for pupils facing challenges including Young Carers, LAAC and low SIMD.

At Pathway 1 and 2, a variety of appropriate tasks, activities and resources are used to meet learners needs including use of the CIRCLE framework, Visual Support Project and Literacy and Dyslexia Guidelines. We are currently in year 1 of the Whole School Autism Training. We have robust data on our learners and use this to effectively plan support. We access training and resources to deliver Fresh Start, Read Write Inc and SEAL to a range of pupils across the school. We have a clear plan for allocating and managing Pupil Support Assistant time, including the running

For learners requiring significant input to access mainstream education, we work in partnership with Pathway 3 services. We have risk assessments, IEPS or behaviour support plans in place for these pupils and share information with key staff. Health Care Plans are in place and are regularly reviewed and updated. We make reasonable adjustment which is demonstrated in our approach to exclusion/part time timetables.

We are a Rights Respecting School. We follow the ethos of GIRFEC. We have a pupil Rights Respecting Schools Group, Action Group and a Parent Council. School activities including sport and out of school activities are organised to enable access for all learners.

Our experience of the ASLS service has been very positive, our service leader is in regular contact with the school and has been supportive. We are able to access support through ASAP and understand how to apply to CMRG. We work effectively alongside Pathway 3 staff and Educational Psychologist which helps inform our planning, practice and provides practical ideas and resources. In particular, this can be of benefit at times of transition.

In order to continue move forward we would welcome the development of one child plan to bring into line the current ASP, IEP, Assessment of Needs and Child's Plan with guidance as to what would be statutory. Ideally this plan would be able to be used by Education, Health and Social Work to enable effective working together. An audit of ASN information currently stored on SEEMIS would be helpful with clear guidelines as to what should be recorded, including updates of language/terminology/categories used.

**South Ayrshire Council**

Within South Ayrshire our vision is

“to achieve excellence and equity. We have the highest expectations for all learners so that they achieve their potential regardless of their circumstances.”

Within Additional Support Needs we believe that there are three tenets crucial to achieving this:

- Everyone Belongs
- Everyone has a Champion.
- Everyone Achieves

The vision aims to achieve this through ensuring that learners and practitioners have a sense of belonging and understand the role we all play in delivering positive outcomes.
The rights of learners and parents and carers are clearly established in a range of national and international legislation. We will ensure that these rights are upheld and the views and rights of the learner are taken into account.

Finally we believe that everyone can achieve. This is personal to each and every one of us. We will identify and grow strengths while focusing on crucial skills and knowledge to shape our young people towards becoming successful learners, confident individual, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

Local Context:

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The current provision of the Local Authority

- 41 Primary Schools
- 8 Secondary Schools
- 2 Special Schools
- 4 Authority bases with a range of additional complex learning difficulties.

The model of inclusion is strongly aligned to the entitlement of presumption to mainstream for all learners. Additional needs and support are identified through the team around the child process.
We support this through the provision of the following additional support for learning staff.

Cluster Teachers 41.6 fte  
Central Staff 32.64 fte  
School Assistants 300 fte

**Assessment and Planning for the Needs of Children and Young People.**

The local authority is introducing new management guidelines and processes for the assessment of children and young people. Committed to Getting it Right For Every Child, we aim to identify need at the earliest level and provide support and interventions timeously drawing on a range of universal and targeted provision.

In accordance with the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004, children’s needs are also met through the provision of Coordinated Support Plans.

This is achieved by the Team around the Child process and agencies’ contributions to holistic child assessments plans.

These are the challenges:

- Multiagency working can be a difficult due agencies’ limited capacity;
- Resources are scarce in relation to emerging need e.g. Autism, Mental Health and Social and Emotional Difficulties;
- Support for parents would be a key intervention but resources are limited;
- The introduction and perceived workload and bureaucracy of the wellbeing application;
- Incongruity in views of agencies regarding criteria to satisfy Coordinated Support Plans; and
- Integration and harmonisation of Coordinated Support Plans / Child Assessment Plans and other statutory reports.

**Training:**

The authority is involved in upskilling / improving the competence and confidence of our workforce at a number of levels.

This includes:

The provision of training in key interventions to improve teaching and learning. The local authority has prioritised Numeracy, Literacy and Health and Well Being.

Considerable investment has been allocated to providing post graduate learning opportunities for teaching staff specific to Additional Support Needs.

We are committed to continue to develop all our staff to improve outcomes for children with Additional Support Needs.
We would welcome:

- Greater focus on Additional Support Needs at initial teacher training level.
- A distinct postgraduate pathway for teachers of complex additional support needs e.g. similar to one year Postgraduate Diploma in P.E.

Frank Cardle,
Quality Improvement Manager,
South Ayrshire Educational Services.

**NASUWT Scotland**

Dear James
The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to provide information to the Education and Skills Committee on Additional Support Needs in Scotland’s schools.

The NASUWT supports the ambition contained within GIRFEC for all children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) to receive a high-quality education, however the educational setting must be appropriate and the placement properly resourced to meet the needs of each child.

The Union is uniquely placed to provide a current, evidence based contribution to this debate. As recently as last week we published the key findings of our Additional Support Needs Survey which examined teachers’ experiences in relation to the presumption of mainstream agenda. More than 300 teachers responded over a period of 4 weeks in September and October of 2016. Most respondents were class teachers in local authority schools and 98.5% teach classes with pupils who have an identified additional support need.

Whilst the NASUWT supports the principle of the presumption of mainstream, it is clear, as our survey demonstrates, that pupils with ASN are being placed in schools which are either inappropriate for their needs or are unable to provide adequate support.

The key findings of the questionnaire are set out below.

With reference to the way that presumption of mainstream is interpreted by the education authority:

- 62% of teachers said that pupils were frequently educated in mainstream when it would be more appropriate to have alternative provision.
- 50% of teachers said that it has impacted negatively on their teaching to some extent, and 44% said that it had impacted negatively to a great deal.
- 36% of teachers stated it has impacted negatively on pupils placed inappropriately in a mainstream setting to some extent and 61% said it has impacted negatively to a great deal.
The NASUWT has consistently argued that by not providing a child with ASN with the appropriate level of support, or the correct educational learning environment, this does not only negatively impact on their learning, but also the other pupils in the class. In terms of the wider impact of inadequately resourced presumption of mainstream on the teaching and learning of the generality of pupils:

- 42% of teachers said this has impacted negatively on the generality of pupils in their classes to some extent
- 54% said it has impacted negatively to a great deal.

The NASUWT has consistently raised concerns regarding the lack of, and ongoing removal of support for pupils with ASN. The Union now has clear, empirical evidence to support these concerns:

- 31% of teachers did not receive internal support for classes with ASN pupils.
- 68% of teachers said that they did not receive external support for classes with ASN pupils.
- 75% of teachers believed that their pupils did not receive the support they were entitled to under GIRFEC.
- 76% of teachers said that the level of support for ASN has declined in the past 2 years and:
  - 91% of teachers did not believe the support they received for ASN was adequate.

The NASUWT has also consistently raised concerns that the current implementation of presumption of mainstream coupled with cuts in financial support, specialist teachers and essential support staff has had a direct detrimental impact on behaviour management and the learning environment. This is supported by our survey findings:

- 78% said that, in their experience, the presumption of mainstream has had a negative impact on pupil behaviour.
- 97% of teachers surveyed have experienced low-level disruption in their class;
- 63% reported verbal abuse;
- 33% reported threats of physical abuse with 25% reporting physical assault.
- 62% of teachers state that behaviour management has declined in the last two years.

The NASUWT has consistently argued that presumption of mainstream is not working and is failing pupils with ASN, other pupils in the class and the educational professionals trying to deliver effective teaching and learning. It is certainly not Getting It Right for Every Child!

Teachers and schools will always strive to do their best for every child they teach, but it is unacceptable for them to be expected to meet the needs of pupils without the necessary resources. Members’ experiences completely contradict the recommendations for reducing excessive teacher workload.
The entitlement of pupils with ASN to have all their barriers to their educational progress removed must never be compromised. Every child, irrespective of needs, background or circumstances deserves an education that enables them to reach their full potential.

The NASUWT welcomed the attainment funding from Scottish Government but there is still a lack of clear guidance on what levers have been introduced to ensure the funding reaches the pupils it is intended for.

Supporting children and young people with ASN requires renewed investment in tailored services and education settings to ensure there is equality of opportunity and choice for all.

The NASUWT would be happy to meet with you and committee colleagues to discuss all of these issues in more detail.
Teachers Submissions

Anne Warden BSc(Hons), dipSpLD, ADG, AMBDA

Independent ASN Assessor/ Teacher

My main concern is that young people’s specific needs are still not being assessed in a timely manner and the perception is that dyslexia cannot be identified before the child is eight years old. Many teachers and parents I talk to say that their school/authority do not start the assessment process until primary four stage. This is not correct, qualified and experienced teacher assessors as well as psychologists can and do identify young people with a learning need long before the age of eight. By this age many of these children are already two to three years behind in their literacy and numeracy. Many never catch up.

I believe there are local authorities not using the Scottish Government Definition of Dyslexia which in my professional view does help to define some of the nuances of dyslexia and it is not just a difficulty with reading acquisition.

I believe many local authorities do not have enough suitably qualified teacher/assessors and enough support for learning staff to support all the young people once identified as having additional support needs.

Some authorities’ psychologists do not do full dyslexia assessments.

Young people are not being recorded as being dyslexic in school/authority statistics possibly because they are only being recorded as having additional support needs.

Parents find that it is difficult accessing information they need on their rights to ask for an assessment of their child’s needs and what support to expect. I have evidence that schools in the same authority, even in the same street, do not provide the same opportunities for children to be identified and given support. This lack of consistency is not acceptable.

Parents go to the expense of a private assessment as the school feel that they are providing the support the child needs as the child ‘has dyslexic tendencies’. This is not acceptable, people either are dyslexic or not! I see children daily who are now able to accept that they learn in a different way and are finding out how to learn in the way that helps them. Having their dyslexia recognised at an early stage helps them understand that they are not stupid.

Dyslexia Screeners are not full assessments and do not pick up all those who are dyslexic.

It is an interesting fact that children who attend Independent schools have more chance of being identified as being dyslexic and offered support. This is because
parents can afford to pay a psychologist’s fee which can be as much as £600.

If there were more peripatetic teacher /assessors attached to local authority schools surely this would be costs effective and help raise standards.

Teacher training colleges appear not to be emphasising that there will be a high proportion of children with additional support needs including those who are dyslexic and dyscalculic in today’s classrooms and their needs need to be addressed. I know many teachers and NQTs that do not know about the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit www.addressingdyslexia.org.uk – identification and support for learners age 3 to 18 years or CALL Scotland for assistive technologies and accessibility solutions www.callscotland.org.uk

Secondary Schools need to provide ‘evidence of need’ for Assessment Arrangements to be provided for SQA examinations. Some dyslexic and others with memory difficulties for example are not identified until they are about to sit these exams. The school may not have a trail of evidence.

It is possible for schools to provide scores on standardised tests of working memory, short term memory, speed of processing, reading and writing speed that meet with the SQA (and JCQ) quality assurance criteria for assessment arrangements. Being dyslexic doesn’t automatically mean that a candidate will get extra time or other arrangement for all exams or at all.

**Geraldine Moore**

The situation is extremely concerning in schools across Scotland right now. Inclusion sounds great and looks great on paper. The reality is that there are nowhere near the number of ASN staff – fully trained teachers as well as support assistants – to meet the needs of pupils who have a diversity of support needs. Pupils suffer from missing out and, in the end, they do not experience inclusion at all. The bottom line is that we need the situation to be addressed openly and honestly. We need teachers to be trained properly as specialists in all areas; we need more staff; we need resources.

**Louisa Maestranzi**

I teach a pupil who is blind and has a full time support teacher. I am her art and design teacher. She has worked on ceramics over the last 2 years and is very able. I have had no additional time to fully research and develop the specialised body of resources which would enhance her learning and skills. I have not had any specialist support which has been able to develop further resources either. I have needed more time and advice. It is very like having a whole separate class to develop work for yet there is no provision made for me to have this time. Remember this has coincided with implementing N5, Higher and Advanced Higher from scratch.

Many of the pupils I teach with additional support needs have behavioural / social issues which impedes their learning. The ASN support simply does not have enough people to truly support their very delicate needs. We have the paper work to
evidence their needs and therefore the legal responsibility to remove barriers to their learning but we do not have enough staff to deliver these high expectations. We do not have small enough classes to support their challenging behaviour or enough staff to establish nurture groups. These pupils with challenging behaviour and support needs are creating barriers to the learning of others in the class.

There is now a great deal of paperwork to communicate the needs of pupils with ASN needs. Reading this paperwork and then acting on the advice given takes a great deal of time. There are no longer enough contractually paid hours to be able to regularly read ALL the individual needs and develop appropriate resources or teaching methods to best support. Lots of little bits are achieved here and there but this is not fully meeting the needs of all learners.

Education is just one part of the agenda for ‘closing the attainment gap’. Frequently the pupils who are not progressing in their learning also have very little active support from their home environment. A lack of ambition or a distrust of institutions makes the communication between school and home very difficult. Supporting positive activities in the community which will help to build self-esteem for both our young people and their parents will contribute to building a sense of potential success. Removing community activities such as libraries or local museums not only loses jobs but also the ability to access positive experiences which can build further success.

**ANON**

I have 8 years additional support needs within Primary education and early years. My experience has been partly positive and partly negative. The positive is dedicated staffing hoping to make a difference to the learning needs of many children. My negative experience is the use of the ASN resource. Within the council/school I work within many of the staffing hours are used to photocopy and make booklets as we don't have enough text books. We spend many hours laminating resources which are never pooled as a resource when the class teacher finishes with them, we can then be asked to make the same resource for the next teacher. It takes 3 minutes to put a piece of paper in a laminate pouch then laminate it. I can sometimes be asked to do 50 in one day that 150 mins I am not spending with children supporting them with learning. This can happen daily and I am only one ASN laminating, there are lots of us doing the same. Newly qualified teachers appear shy in delegating us to support in their classes perhaps it should be highlighted in there training. Most of the ASN come from the supply list most do not have any qualifications within education or early years most do not want to do any when they are on board if offered. It is just a job that fits round their commitments. When supply staffs start they are not given an induction or training and have to hit the floor running. In order to improve the attainment of all, ASN staff should be qualified or be willing to work towards a qualification. To achieve this salaries offered need to reflect that commitment. I work 25 hours a week, I have a level 7 qualification in Children and Young people yet my take home pay after 8 years is £ 840 per month.
**Jim Berwick**

I'm a teacher in a school for young people with moderate to severe learning difficulties.

I have a couple of questions about the Curriculum for Excellence, the curriculum we are being asked to deliver to our young people.

Could you tell me the name of any one professional with experience of ASN who helped to draft the Curriculum for Excellence?

Could you give me one good example of how their help influenced the wording of the Curriculum for Excellence?

I'm setting the bar pretty low there. Obviously, it can’t possibly be the case that no account whatsoever was taken of Scotland’s young people with learning difficulties when the Curriculum for Excellence was drafted. That would of course be both ridiculous and discriminatory.

**Alison Gilgallon**

The ASN provision in schools is wholly inadequate. If pupils with emotional, social and learning needs are to achieve anything near their potential then appropriate resources need to be provided.

**MY SUGGESTIONS**

1. Increase in learning support assistants who are trained, paid appropriately and recognised as playing a vital role in the education system.
2. This should help reduce the high turnover of staff in these roles which increases stability for children with ASN.
3. Learning Support assistants in secondary schools should work in departments and support the pupils within this department. Building up expertise in the subject in order to appropriately support pupils. We did have a trained primary teacher as a classroom assistant for 2 years and it was amazing the difference this expertise brought to the department and to the pupils.
4. Bring back classroom assistants
5. DONOT revise the trips and rewards culture for the “bad boys” it does not work and can have a demotivating effect on pupils.
6. Parents need to be encouraged to take a supportive role in encouraging their child to achieve. More guidance/social workers to work closely with home links particularly in primary but continued in to secondary for those difficult teenage years.

**Jane Smith**

I understand that you are looking at issues surrounding Additional Support in Scotland's schools.
I work in the primary sector, in an area of high social deprivation. Many of our children start school unable to talk in phrases, never mind sentences, so have a starting point way behind their counterparts in many other schools. We also have a significant number of children with behavioural issues, children on the Autistic spectrum, and a range of learning difficulties. A few of our children are regularly dangerous, but there 'isn't anywhere else for them to go.' Our pupil support allocation has been cut by the council, in an attempt to make economies, and so the class teacher is expected to breach the hole in provision to GIRFEC.

The end result is that teachers are demoralised and stressed, children who need support are not getting the level of support they need, if any, and other children lose out because the teacher is ‘firefighting’. The local authority collects statistics about the number of incidents when staffs are attacked/ injured, but it doesn't lead to any change, or support for a child who is not coping, for whatever reason. Teachers seem to have no protection.

Please, if you do nothing else, can you do something to ensure councils prioritise pupil support staff funding, and that a child who is dangerous is properly supported in an appropriate environment

ANON

I am writing to you as a teacher of children with additional support needs. I have been working in a small ASN school in Edinburgh for 14 years now and have seen a huge shift in the profile of our children, mainly in my opinion, due to inclusion. The children we are getting in at P1 have significantly more challenging needs both behaviour and learning wise. We have always been classed as a moderate learning difficulties school but the children we are teaching now do not fit this category. Because of this our class sizes have remained the same and are unmanageable. We are having to split classes and use every available space in the school to accommodate small groups or individuals usually with support staff. This is not ideal and not fair on the learners. ASN schools need smaller classes. Putting more staff into the mix is not a solution as it just increases bodies/noise in the classroom. A lot of the schools such as St. Crispins and Kaimes are capped at 6 per class. Why is this not standard across the board when we are now mostly dealing with the same difficulties?

Another concern of mine is the provision of Secondary School for some of our children. There needs to be more specialised provision for children with Autism in their secondary years.

My only experience of inclusion of ASN pupils into mainstream comes from listening to other teachers and from my understanding it is very difficult with very few support staff and very little specific training. Support for Learning teachers in mainstream schools are having to try and support these children as well as the children they would have previously supported. Their remit is far too big now which impacts on their effectiveness. I don’t think that inclusion is working in a lot of cases. It would be great if individual schools had 1 or 2 specialised teachers specifically to support teachers/support staff to help include children with more challenging needs into mainstream schools. I know ASL services in Edinburgh are stretched beyond belief.
and physically cannot support all the children they need to in Edinburgh. Inclusion is a major issue for schools and they need more support to allow it to work.

**ANON**

As a SFL Teacher in a Primary school with an ASR attached I am fully aware of the need and entitlement of all children to education.

However my current experience is dealing with increasing numbers of children who have extreme social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This prevents not only them from accessing the curriculum, but in turn those around them have huge disruptions to their learning also. The ever increasing numbers of children requiring one to one support, means less support for the rest of their class.

I have every sympathy and empathy for families whose children have addition support needs both diagnosed and awaiting diagnosis. However I feel greater specialist provision is the only way in which needs can be met properly and attainment for all can truly be raised.

As a parent it also concerns me greatly that the education of my own children is affected due to the constant disruption caused by one or two individuals.

**Phillip Mathis**

Regarding the provision of ASN in Primary schools I myself am a teacher. I am concerned that in a school such as the one that I am we have a ratio of nearly 1 in 4 with additional support needs. I work in a small authority in an impoverished area with few positive role models or positive destinations.

As a class teacher it is frightening to feel that you cannot possible meet the needs of every child in your class no matter how hard you try. We require more bodies in school to provide support for all individuals as a lot of our learning assistant time is spent providing 1:1 support to BESD children, meaning that children who may have previously received a greater deal of targeted learning support are not receiving it. I am not apposed to mainstreaming and celebrate the many successes it has seem but do not feel that it can be provided effectively without more staff in authority schools.

The government wants to close the attainment gap but I feel that this has been approached in a rather back to front fashion. Neuro-sequencial modelling has proven that children are unable to learn in if they are in a heightened state of emotion or desensitised therefore would it not have been better to focus on HWB then literacy, then numeracy? Not completely the other way around. Such a structure would surely serve all children (including those with ASN) better.

PLEASE give us more bodies, more ASN teachers on the ground and more time to focus and review new approaches, rather than expecting constant changes with little
real world impact. The ability to stop and reflect will support all learners and allow the Scottish government to develop a coherent approach across all authorities rather than sporadic and “authority centred” good practice.

**ANON**

I worked as a PSA in a mainstream school. I left due to the number of ASN children in the school. Don’t get me wrong, I did my best and was continually verbally & physically abused (by children & parents) but there comes a time when you have to say enough is enough. We moved our daughter from the school I was working in as it was intolerable for her to see me being abused my one of her classmates. The majority of children in mainstream education are having their learning disrupted by ASN children and it is time for this to stop. Bring back more special education facilities & let the majority of children get the education they deserve.

Instead of the being evacuated from a classroom because 1 child is kicking off / having a meltdown, can we get these children educated in a safe environment where they get the education they need to progress into their adult life?

**Lorna Walker**

If you had asked me to comment 15 years ago, I’d have said many authorities were on track to provide effective support for a wide range of children and young people within relatively inclusive settings. In broad terms, East of Scotland authorities - Highland, Orkney and Shetland, Moray, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Fife, Dundee, Perth and Kinross, Fife, Borders and Dumfries and Galloway - understood what is required to ensure there are sufficient and well trained Support for Learning/ Specialist staff to ensure children requiring wide-ranging support received this in the right place at the right time. These teachers also had the crucial role (one of 5) of supporting classteachers, who did not have relevant training or experience, to improve and differentiate their curriculum to ensure access by all children. Training included in the 80’s and 90’s some year long secondments and resulted in high levels of expertise and much credibility for these services. Unfortunately, the majority of these highly trained teachers have retired and have taken with them much needed knowledge, skills and experience.

At the same time as training provided by universities or colleges became less intense, the presumption of mainstreaming (properly) emerged. In addition, the 2004 Act (properly) broadened the definition of SEN to ASN, thus increasing the numbers of children identified as requiring support.

However, without sufficient and well trained Support for Learning services, many mainstream teachers unsurprisingly struggled and some became resentful. HGIOS? 1st Edition placed much emphasis on a Quality Indicator (QI 4.5) that evaluated the quality of support services – thereby ensuring to some extent that authorities understood the importance of high quality support for many children. Subsequent
HGIOS? editions removed this QI and believed that the generic QI ‘meeting needs’ and now ‘personalised support’, could sufficiently identify whether or not children were receiving the support they required to progress. As a(n) HMIe I can say this was a nearly impossible task. The HGIOS? 4 QI : 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion, actually misses the point.

The role of Support staff in this context is much less clear and Senior Education Managers at Authority level who have not seen in action the impact of sufficient and well-trained support staff understandably do not value this area of expertise. Support staff in recent years have therefore become the easy target for staff cuts. This includes both teachers and support assistants.

The result is that ‘inclusion’ and children requiring additional support are seen as the problem by some professional unions who regard the challenge (in their eyes) of an increased range of needs in mainstream classes as an impossible task. There is no doubt that it is a difficult task – and only one of many faced by Scottish teachers who have been bombarded with a desperately complex curriculum, uncertainty in relation to assessment, levels and standards, and new National Qualifications. Parents on the other hand have significant legal rights on their side and many demand mainstream placements for their child.

In addition, support from NHS staff and Third sector agencies is variable across Scotland.

The solution is not easy. The very foundation upon which effective inclusive provision was based has been swept away:

- We have Senior Education Managers who may have little experience of effective support services who are under severe pressure to cut budgets and view Support Services as an easy target;
- There is a significant lack of practical specialist training and real issues about the associated costs;
- There is a lack of effective promoted Support for Learning/Specialist teachers with relevant training to pass on to colleagues;
- The lack of credibility of Support Services in some authorities has led to a reluctance to enter this area of education that has little to offer by way of promoted pathways;
- Sadly many Scottish children, in my view, no longer have the additional support they require despite the best efforts of many Senior Managers and hard working teachers.

What have your experiences been?

As a former HMie with key responsibility for ASN, including residential special schools, and prior to that as an Adviser and Senior Education Officer in ASN as well as headteacher of a large special school, I have very strong views on how additional support is assessed, resourced and delivered in Scotland. My experience in SEN and subsequently ASN covers more than 30 years. I have also undertaken reviews of inclusive practice in Perth and Kinross (2009), Aberdeen City (2014) and South Ayrshire (2015). My electronic flipbook http://www.supportmanual.co.uk/ was
purchased by 13 authorities and other agencies between 2010 and 2016 – and was used widely, a sure sign that staff are desperate for guidance.

**Lisa Ainslie**

As a secondary school teacher in my twelfth year of service, I've had lots of experience of working with children with additional support needs. In my opinion, additional support needs assistants in schools provide an invaluable service and the continuing drop in numbers of assistants is being felt across the school in which I work. With more inclusivity in classes and the continued drive towards better attainment for all, pupils with additional support needs are not having their needs met as teachers are stretched in many different directions in our attempts to support individuals when faced with increasingly limited allocation of ASN assistants in classes. In my view, ASN assistants provide a vital service in our classrooms and cutting back on this service is doing a massive disservice to our pupils.

**ANON**

I have taught in mainstream primary schools for 38 years, teaching mixed ability classes, usually with very few children with additional support needs. Up to 2 or 3 years ago we always had a visiting learning support teacher who could support class teachers with any children who needed some help and help to provide resources which could be used by the class teacher. These teachers have now been removed.

This year I have a P1 class of 25 which includes 3 children with severe autism. These children have disrupted most lessons I have tried to teach, one of them is violent to the other children and members of staff. The rest of the class have become very unsettled, some of them try to copy this behaviour and are not having the P1 experience they should be having. I have become very stressed and now suffer from anxiety and I have decided to take early retirement in the summer as I could not dare contemplate another class which may have children with such complex needs that I have had neither the training nor experience to deal with.

**ANON**

As someone that works in support for Learning in schools I would stress the fact that it is vital that we are able to continue with supporting pupils in their daily day in school. Over a number of years I have seen a huge decline in supporting pupils which is a disgrace because every pupil that needs support should be getting supported. A number of years ago we all did training on getting it right for every child yet that is not happening why? I keep asking the same question to my line manager and we always get the same answer Money cut backs. Why not cut back on hiring high powered and highly paid jobs. At the end of the day if a child needs support for whatever reason in schools then they should be given the support. We need more additional needs assistants in our border schools. We are not
appreciated for what we do. This in turn makes us feel our jobs are worthless especially when we don't get the support that is needed. Year in year out we are told there will be cut backs year in year out we ask why are the children with Additional needs refused support. The Scottish government has a policy that clearly states that if children with additional needs they will get the support this is not happening. Parents are not informed quick enough because if they were then they would fight for the support but by the time they are told no support is available for their child then it is too late to fight for it.

I just hope that whoever makes the decision that it is the right decision.

There is no way that teachers can cope in classrooms with pupils with additional needs. They need the additional Needs Assistants in the classrooms as well I see this daily in my job. I love my job greatly but what I don't enjoy is all the politics that go with it. All the uncertainty about the job like will I still have a job after the summer what effects will the cut backs have on me and the pupils I support. I feel personally that communication is lacking not only from our Scottish Borders Council Education sector but actually within the schools themselves.

So what I am saying is Additional Needs Assistants have a vital role in the schools to support the pupils that need supported. Please can we have more support staff not less?

**Alice Grant**

I am a retired teacher. I graduated in Modern languages, did a post grad in primary teaching and have taught in several different educational establishments in Moray from the 70s to 2015. (I worked as a Primary teacher before lecturing in Further Education on Child Psychology, Development, early language Development and The importance of Play. I worked as an SEN Teacher in secondary for 18 years during which time I completed the post grad qualification, before finishing my career as the Looked After Children Teacher for Moray.)

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of Learning Support in both primary and secondary schools.

My experience over 18 years was as an SEN Teacher in a Secondary School in Elgin, Moray. An Additional Support Needs Base in this school served many purposes – all invaluable- but to my mind most of all as a haven for pupils with needs, whatever the level of needs from 1 to 5. In such a base pupils feel safe and valued, and the work is tailored to their needs – work which is differentiated if necessary, measured and achievable. Often cups of tea and toast are offered as a reward on completion of work or incentive to begin!! Pupils may work in small groups or in 1:1 with a teacher/auxiliary when out of classes maybe once or several times a week. Tolerance and encouragement and an element of fun pervades an SfL base and works wonders!
Although inclusion in mainstream is naturally important, I do feel that for some time in their school week, time out of class working in an additional Support Needs base provides a welcome break for pupils with needs, provides these pupils with additional tailored help which enables them to then become more included in work of classes, and provides a time for mainstream teachers to perhaps concentrate on classes when pupils who may be a disruptive influence are having their needs catered for elsewhere.

Experienced SEN Teachers are able to test for eg dyslexia, to liaise with class teachers about needs of pupils, to create differentiated worksheets to enable more inclusion for pupils with needs, to work alongside teachers in class and to work with groups in the base towards attaining different modules/assessments which are of high interest level for the pupils and which serve to aid their all round development. I am unsure as to which qualifications are current, but in my day we worked towards qualifications in Gardening, Computing, PSE, Communication, Enterprise and even French and German at basic levels!

I am sure I am not writing anything new here or telling what is not already accepted, but I do feel that over recent years there has been more emphasis on individual teachers catering for pupils with Special Needs within the classroom environment. This is of course to be applauded and encouraged – but I feel only up to a point! Never underestimate the importance of SEN Teachers, Auxiliaries and Bases. They will help raise attainment levels and cut truancy levels - if they are encouraged, staffed adequately and valued. In my view, Additional Support Needs Bases are indispensable! ASN Teachers are a godsend – train them well and set them to work!

David Jones

It is clear that Local Authorities are under a great deal of financial pressure, from many sources, and are charged with making some very difficult decisions about how to spend their, real terms, decreasing pot of money. The biggest single call on the funds of local authorities is the provision of education.

The provision of education in local authority schools is being, increasingly, controlled by national government who want to side line much of the work of local authorities. The talk from the Minister for Education about sending finance directly to Head teachers seems like a way of ensuring that the money being provided for education is actually spent on education. Unfortunately, that may well not be as efficient a way of ensuring that finance is spent on areas of education that require it. The current funding model of transfer of funds from national government to local government uses a blunt instrument to ensure that education funding for teachers is spent on teachers. This approach, of threatening local authorities with removal of budget if they don’t employ the prescribed number of teachers, is at best a crude methodology. What it does, is force local authorities to look for cuts elsewhere in the education budget to balance the books.

In Dumfries & Galloway this budget cutting has been done by disproportionately cutting additional support needs staff; I feel this is purely driven by the need to keep
the pupil-teacher ratio at 12.7:1 as it was in the past. It is nonsense to insist that the ratio should remain at such a level whilst reducing the support for pupils with special needs. It is especially disappointing to have to maintain this 1:12.7 teacher/pupil ratio when the national provision is set, on average, at 1:13.7; an allowed movement of even 0.5 in this ratio would make for a substantial improvement to the funding for Additional Support Needs. It would be necessary for the government, in that instance, to ensure that any funding released by easing the teacher/pupil ratio is ring-fenced in the education budget. This type of methodology is not uncommon as the government has used this method in several instances over recent years to ensure that their requirements are fulfilled.

Dumfries & Galloway council undertook a large-scale budget consultation exercise last autumn to seek public opinion on the priorities for the council. The four major areas had one related to education: “Provide the best start in life for all our Children”. The top priority under that heading is: “Ensure early intervention, in particular to keep our region’s most vulnerable children safe”. Early intervention is the key and that requires support staff to ensure the children with Additional Support Needs have the maximum opportunity to gain the very best they can from their educational experience. Unfortunately, the size of the cut to ASN in Dumfries & Galloway is disproportionately larger than the cut to any other part of the education service. It is, in many ways, an easy cut to make because there is no statutory level of learning support required; it is entirely need led. It is, however, an extremely significant cut to the many children who have need of their classroom support person or learning support worker.

To ensure that learning support is adequately provided for in Dumfries & Galloway, it should be the aim of the national government to ask the council to adjust their plans and retain most of the staff they wish to remove (some 52 at the last count).

The situation in Dumfries & Galloway is exacerbated by some factors related to the size of the council area and the sparsity of population to pay for services. This means that grouped provision such as special needs schools are impossible (except around Dumfries itself) because of the great distances that pupils would have to travel. This means that the pupils with ASN must be given support in their catchment, or chosen, school setting. This is more expensive per pupil to operate than a special school approach. Again, relaxation of the teacher/pupil ratio, even by only 0.2 pupils per teacher to 1:12.9, would release significant funding to employ the necessary staff to fulfil the needs of pupils with Additional Support Needs.

An additional factor that many people feel is in play, is a ploy by the authority of delaying and avoiding suitable diagnosis, and initiation of support, for pupils who have identifiable special needs. Services of the authority that are called upon to make assessments of pupils, most often requested by concerned teachers and head teachers, can delay by months, and in some cases years, undertaking those assessments. Separate parts of the authority’s services that are responsible for identifying and supporting needs in ASN pupils often fail to attend meetings to discuss identification of the level of need; fail to respond to written and telephone communications, and delay putting remedial support action in place without good reason. Many children have, if the school and parents push hard enough, an IEP in place but the promised actions from agencies regularly fail to materialise and are put
onto the agenda for yet another meeting. The round of meetings and discussions continues; meanwhile the pupil gets little extra support and the teachers carry on trying to fill the special needs gaps themselves. Frankly, asking them to plug the gaps of 52 fewer support staff is asking too much.

The lack of coordination and cooperation between Health Service professionals and the Education Services is quite stark. While health staff; paediatricians, ophthalmologists and the like make sound recommendations about a pupil’s needs there is often a very long delay in implementing them, or in some cases a complete disregard of the advice.

I feel that it is time the Scottish Government developed a policy along the lines of the Renfrewshire judgement in adult social care. That is, if a person is assessed as having specific needs (in the Renfrewshire judgement an adult requiring a care package from the local authority) then it is incumbent on that authority to provide that package of support, without undue delay. In adult care, where single shared assessment is the norm, that package of support can be activated by health staff or local authority staff. The above principle should be applied, in some measure, to a pupil’s recognised special need in the education setting.

I realise that the issue of funding in today’s tight financial situation forces local authorities to make some unpalatable decisions. I cannot, however, see how maintaining the number of teachers in mainstream classrooms, especially when several authorities feel it is unnecessary, should be allowed to completely erode the educational opportunities of children with clear and defined Additional Support Needs. Simply telling local authorities to look elsewhere for cuts is not the answer; they need to be given a lead by the Scottish Government that allows some greater flexibility in making provision for mainstream and ASN pupils whilst expecting a concomitant improvement in outcomes for children across the board.

The fact that John Swinney has said that some funding is to be sent directly to head teachers is a step forward in making individual schools more accountable for the progress that pupils make, the two issues that they raise are: will the head have flexibility over staffing and who will monitor the school’s response to ASN pupils? These are issues that have been of great concern to parents in other countries; particularly England and Wales.

I look forward to reading the outcome of this consultation exercise and the recommendations that the committee will make. I am happy to appear in person if the committee wishes.

**ANON**

Not a huge contribution to the above, but the one grievance I have.

I am a Principal Teacher in an ASN school (severe, complex and profound needs). I love the autonomy and freedom ASN schools have in comparison to mainstream and other provisions, but we need a curriculum. After the abolition of the Elaborated Curriculum, we need to design our own. This is the biggest aspect of our
workload. The Experiences and Outcomes just do not work with our pupils. As early as Early Level, the Experiences and Outcomes say things like "As I talk and listen, I can." - Some of our pupils will never speak or listen.

While I realise the Elaborated Curriculum was out of date and no longer fit for purpose, its removal without being replaced was a disastrous decision.

**ANON**

I have been working in the Additional needs sector for 15 years as a teacher, I also have two sons with additional needs.

Both sons are dyslexic. The education system failed them badly by not recognising and addressing their difficulties. Both have underachieved.

It is my opinion that you need to educate the head teachers to understand and practice inclusion within mainstream. Dyslexic pupils should be seen as an integral, and welcome addition to the school population, not seen as a problem and marginalised. Inclusion must be practiced top-down.

Teachers need training in active learning to adhere to the philosophy of Curriculum for Excellence. There is still too much chalk and talk and copying from the blackboard going on.

My brother was completely failed by the education system 40 years ago and my sons were also failed emotionally, socially and educationally. All of the paperwork is in existence, but South Lanarkshire’s educational system did not 'Get it right' for either of my children.

I hope that this information is useful and the educational system does not fail another generation.

**Liz Clark**

I am an autism advisory teacher in the Highlands and it is my view that education for children with ASN is severely underfunded and also not given enough prominence in schools. Most schools are so focused on league tables that the needs of ASN pupils are swept aside. There are less ASN teachers and PSAs, therefore pupils with needs are not getting the support they need to fully meet their potential. Class teachers can have up 30 children in their class and in most cases will have at least one, and in many cases several pupils with a range of ASN needs. They cannot possibly deal with all those differences in class, but support is continually being cut.

Schools need to be aware and give status to the social needs and the need for life skills education for such pupils and for all staff to realise the importance of these skills. Many school staff do not understand that without these skills, pupils, such as those with autism will never be ready to learn and will be a distraction to others in the
class. There needs to be more emphasis on elaborated curricula and the staff and resources put in place to make this possible. At the moment schools are having to work in a reactive manner rather than being proactive in dealing with ASN pupils as they do not have the time, staff and resources to look ahead. We all know there are budget cuts and severe pressures on councils and the need is to save money immediately, but in the long term, more money will be spent because the right support has not been put in place to begin with.

I go around many schools, some are doing really great work and others are floundering in the dark. Secondary schools in particular are very bad at meeting the needs of ASN pupils. I am part of the training team on autism, and it is very occasionally that mainstream subject staff comes to training on ASD, despite the fact that the numbers are rising and they will have at least one pupil with ASD in their class. I think it should be compulsory for ALL staff in schools, including office, canteen, janitorial staff, to attend autism training and training for other ASN conditions that are common in classrooms today. If mainstream staff were more clued up on the needs of ASN and realise their responsibility for such pupils, then the burden on ASN staff would be lessened and they would be able to put their focus on the children who need it most.

**Alison Taylor**

I have been an additional needs assistant in the past and completed a PGCE about 14 years ago and started my career in teaching.

I am 0.5 Support for Learning across 3 primaries and 0.5 Access to the Curriculum (ICT) covering half an authority from nursery to secondary.

Since starting my career I have seen the support for pupils eaten away and stretched thinner and thinner year on year. Nowadays extra support is only really available for severe and complex needs as there are not enough hours employed for all the extra support required.

We are trying to Raise Attainment for All and Reduce the Gap but there is no staff to teach pupils in intervention groups. We are firefighting and not making a difference to all the pupils that we could.

Teachers in Scotland desperately need to be trained properly to teach reading through the Big Five, i.e. Phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. We desperately need to be trained in Systematic Synthetic Phonics. Research and evidence supports this as an effective method of teaching decoding and spelling. We need to eradicate multi-cueing methods of teaching decoding.

Without proper training of current and future teachers and enough staff we will not achieve our RAfA and RtG objectives.

Due to the lack of Supply Teachers it is not uncommon for Support for Learning Teachers to be taken off remit to cover classes for short or long term periods. This removes essential support and interventions for pupils with ASNs.
Due to the lack of hours for SfLTs some tasks in schools are being given to Additional Needs Assistants and other Support staff. This is not acceptable. Support staff are on low pay and poor conditions and are not qualified to do these tasks. They are being taken advantage of. It seems that schools think it is better than someone does a task rather than it not be done.

The crossover of skills in SfLTs from primary to secondary is not conducive to the development of pupil's skills.

I love teaching and supporting pupils with ASNs but am getting more and more frustrated as I feel I make less and less difference as time goes on because we are just skimming the surface.

We are in a desperate state and letting so many pupils down.

Inclusion will only work if we invest in training and professional staff. Our young people deserve better.

**ANON**

We recognise the huge number of successful integrations of children with additional support needs in mainstream primary school. The most successful and beneficial outcomes are achieved when there are good partnerships between school and parents. The GIRFEC approach can be used to successfully support children and achieves best outcomes when all partner agencies are fully committed to the approach. This level of involvement is not yet fully committed to by social work and health partners. In order to effectively support additional needs, there should be quicker, less bureaucratic processes to obtain specialist support for individual children and/or groups of children when it is required.

We are pleased to note the advance of medical science has seen more and more children survive traumatic starts in life but it can be argued that the provision of education eg training and resources does not fully match the advances being achieved in medicine. Advances in access to technology can impact negatively on children’s speech and language development and nurseries and schools are doing more work on helping children progress with these basic skills. The recent increased focus nationally on early years and parental support is therefore welcomed.

The integration of children with high levels of additional need impacts on the wider population of children in schools. Meeting the needs of some high tariff children can make a major impact on the learning and safety of the rest of children in the class and all too often this impact takes a lower priority than the needs of the individual child. Sometimes other children in the class can be physically hurt by children with high tariff needs and schools need to be supported to implement consequences for behaviour rather than being condemned for not supporting the individual. As a significant level of the teacher’s attention can be required for some individual children, this can be to the detriment of the rest of the class with a resultant impact on attainment levels.
Parents with children requiring additional support require improved opportunities for networking and information sharing to better understand and support their child both at home and in school. Quite often it is the parent with the ‘loudest voice’ who is able to secure the best resourced support for their child. There needs to be more equity for all parents, particularly those who may find the system challenging or threatening.

A significant proportion of devolved school budgets goes towards supporting individual children and as local councils make budget cuts, it is becoming increasingly challenging to provide the staff resources required to meet the needs of individuals and groups of children.

**Margaret Gilmour**

I am a ASN currently within a primary school in North Lanarkshire.

Staff within the sector are emotionally, mentally & physically challenged every single day.

They feel undervalued within Education.

The ASN sector are constantly fighting to GIRFEC.

Cut backs means staff are regularly working extra hours without pay to support the children & their families.

We have to take on tasks that are not on our Remit to allow us to meet the needs of the children ....We are fighting a long battle for equal pay with NLC. Our health and wellbeing is suffering with staff absences putting further pressure on staff.

It's time we got our voices heard

**Kim Lamont**

My Experiences:

I was a class teacher for 13 years in a reasonably sized primary school in the Highlands. I witnessed and experienced a rising level of ASN needs during that time, especially in levels of ASD and ADHD in class. Support was increasingly having to be directed at behavioural issues, and less at learning difficulties.

I am now an ASN teacher across 4 primary schools; 3 are part of a tri-cluster and one additional school. A relatively high percentage of my time is spent organising child plan and other solution focussed meetings with all the corresponding paperwork(around 80 each year); dealing with very high level ASN children within a mainstream setting; and carrying out assessments for children with unidentified learning difficulties. Most of my time is reactive; I would like to get to the stage where
I am being proactive, but at this time that looks increasingly unlikely due to the high workload.

I can only speak from a primary perspective.

My views on ASN provided in the Highlands (I don’t feel I can comment on any other region):

Positives:
- GIRFEC and social inclusion are great philosophies on which to base an education system.
- Hard-working, dedicated staff, going beyond any job description and who care deeply about the children in their care. Staff that want to get it right for each and every one of their children.

GIRFEC and social inclusion are two great policies and should be something of which to be proud. At this moment, however, as far as my experiences dictate, they are not worth the paper they are written on, and this is why:

Allocation Model:
The ASN management hierarchy take the SEEMIS information on ASN levels within the school and, supposedly, use the Allocation Model to help make decisions as to where the PSA and ASN teaching allocation is most needed. However, when a Head Teacher asks why their allocation is not what was expected they do not get an answer. They are merely told that is their allocation.

If the Allocation Model was used as it should be then transparency should be easy to achieve and allocations easily justified. This is not the case. The Model is tweaked and changed to suit, resulting in a postcode lottery. Three of the schools I work at have reasonable levels of support, but the fourth one, the one where the needs are highest, is woefully under-supported. This is the school in the highest area of deprivation, social issues and ASN needs and where the attainment gap is widest.

The Model also recommends 15 hours of PSA time per week per child at Level 4 ASN, and yet, by very definition according to the ASN matrix, most Level 4s can’t attend school without full-time one-to-one support. This means the rest of their time at school has to be taken from the rest of the school’s allocation. How is this fair?

Summary:
The Allocation Model needs to be reviewed and the resulting support put into schools needs to be transparent. It needs to be a fair allocation across the region.

Training:
Not nearly enough. I started as an ASN teacher, straight from class teaching, with no training. I am learning but I’ve made a lot of mistakes. It’s going to take time and in that time I don’t like to think how many children I could have done better for. Class teachers and PSAs are not trained enough either, especially to understand the demands and needs of ASN children. Dyslexia, ASD, ADHD, etc, etc, the list of needs goes on and yet training is patchy and insufficient.
One size fits all:
If we believe in GIRFEC then why do we try and make the children fit an education system that doesn’t suit them? There are too many round pegs trying to be hammered into square holes. Why aren’t there more forest schools, or outdoor learning facilities? We have some but the council won’t pay for them and yet the Highlands have a ridiculous amount of school refusers sitting at home, not even part of the education system. Why aren’t there more forest schools, or outdoor, expressive arts, etc, facilities that are better suited to those children who can’t sit in a classroom for one reason or another?

I have a P5 boy in my care who has clearly shown that he can learn well in an outdoor environment and yet, I am being told to make his target one of integration. He is ASD, ADHD, with a violent domestic home life and major sensory issues and yet I have been told I have to try and get him into a classroom. Why?

This contributes hugely to the rising violence in classrooms and assaults on staff, with resulting stress related illnesses for staff. To adapt the classroom environment so that children with SEBN and ASD can cope means additional support and resources, such as nurture groups, emotional support and training, sensory rooms, access to outdoor learning, and yet there are no finances to support any of this.

Nursery and Early Years:
Nurseries are expected to deal with many ASN issues without any additional support. Surely, if we get it right at this stage it should lessen the impact further up the school? Additional support should be put in right from the start if deemed necessary.

SUMMARY:
We have an education philosophy that has a lot of potential and amazing, dedicated staff. We should, in theory, have an education system to be proud of but we are failing both children and staff due to a lack of training, people and resources. I love my job and feel very passionately about doing the right thing for the children in my care but am increasingly frustrated by a system that lets us all down.

Thank you for at least looking more closely at the issue. We need to act NOW. PLEASE help us to do our jobs and get it right for every child.

ANON

Sadly, I went into teaching thinking I could help and make a difference and now I know that I can’t as I am only human and cannot get round a class of 31 in a 60 minute maths lesson when they’re are 4 groups to teach and all the add ins that a maths lesson should have.

I have heard children who have been diagnosed with dyslexia tell me how they have sat beside the child with Downs Syndrome and how the two of them play on
computers during maths rather than spend time with the teacher as she is busy teaching the rest—as they will be the ones who will be tested and accounted for.

I have been given folders of worksheets for my Syrian refugees in my class—some of whom have never attended school until the age of 10 so have never learned to read Arabic never mind English but are expected to fill in sheets. We had NO help from the local authority and now it transpires that our refugee children have seen and heard such horrendous atrocities that they now have the English to tell us that they are too scared to sleep as asleep brings them the bad dreams of what they witnessed. Where is the psychological support for them?

In the last 15 years the cuts have severe and the stressed teachers and minimally staffed schools bear testament to that.

Children with ASN need to work in smaller groups with specialised teachers and not just a token half slot once a week: I mean regular slots daily.

Education needs reviewed and the curriculum needs reviewed as it has no provision for children with ASN.

**ANON**

In my experience as both a class teacher and DHT I feel that over the last few years the ability to support pupils with ASN has deteriorated considerably due to budget cuts. There are very few opportunities for staff to develop skills and knowledge as there are hardly any courses provided by the local authority. Support staff and ASN specialist teacher numbers have been considerably reduced. Expectations of SMT to support class teachers with pupils with ASN means that strategic school work is neglected. I agree with the basis of GIRFEC but involving families and even releasing class teachers to attend ‘Team around the Child’ meetings with other professionals is almost impossible due to no money for supply teachers and no supply teachers available! Other educational agencies in place to support schools (e.g., Psychological Services, Speech and Language, Language and Communication services etc) are overburdened and often cannot offer the required supports. The process of referring children and eventually getting relevant supports in place is far too lengthy and there is very little support available for those (increasing numbers of) pupils requiring emotional and behavioural support.

In conclusion, all too often pupils with ASN are not being appropriately supported due to lack of essential funding. In some situations, high tariff ASN pupils are being supported but at the expense of the rest of the class’ learning. There are unrealistic expectations of schools to deliver high level learning experiences to all with ever decreased funding and support.

**ANON**

I think with many local authority inclusion policies across Scotland there has been an automatic presumption of mainstream as being best for all. This is not always the case. Many children are pushed into a mainstream classroom situation with no
additional support. The class teacher is suddenly expected to be able to deal with any additional support needs with little training or expertise. Often they are already stretched with a growing workload and find it difficult to fit in additional training, often in multiple areas of support as there are increasing numbers of children with a variety of needs.

With the closure of many specialist bases and schools, the expertise of highly specialised staff is being lost. This staff do not transfer into the school system. Children are expected to cope in a classroom where a class teacher is trying their best to meet the vast array of needs within their class without so much as an extra pupil support assistant.

With the presumption of mainstreaming, children who actually need some more specialist input in a smaller class environment, with access to specialist equipment and resources are not being catered for. Also the current attainment agenda does not sit well with children who are dealing with complex developmental delays. Increasing pressure that they meet attainment goals when they require a more specialised curriculum is ludicrous!

I have actually spoken to parents who feel that their children are not benefiting from a mainstream education but are finding it increasingly difficult to get what they need for their children.

Teachers are frustrated at the lack of support and are increasingly becoming speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, social workers and educational psychologists as well as teachers. The hours don't add up and it is becoming harder for them to get the job done.

As a parent I am concerned that children, both with and without additional support needs are not getting what they need. I don't think we are getting it right for them all at the moment. I feel Inclusion is being used as a money saving exercise instead of really trying to integrate

**ANON**

I work as an ASN in a local RC primary school & feel though children who need the most support are being let down massively. There is a lack of training, communication between head teachers & staff, understanding of child's specific needs & overall disregard of care. Violent & aggressive behaviour from children who have had a difficult upbringing is the main concern for me. They lash out at innocent children within the class, teachers are in a difficult position trying to calm them whilst the ASN tries to calm the situation. Head teachers response was 'it's your job, deal with it!'. Where's the support for us? Where's the duty of care from them? It's not there :,( I live in hope that more funding can be provided to train staff adequately & more units available for disruptive children to have the space to talk & cope in a more controlled environment.
ANON

ASN teaching time is continually being cut back every year. We have people coming in to schools who see a child once and decide if they have ASN. Nobody takes any notice of the views of staff who work with these pupils on a daily basis. Inclusion policies mean that virtually all auxiliary time is taken up working with pupils with challenging behaviour and pupils who struggle academically get very little help.

ANON

It is my opinion that children who are ASN are being failed by a system where there is a presumption of main streaming. Many children on the autistic spectrum cannot cope with the large classes and over stimulation of a class of 33. The other children, teachers, PSAs and SMT are being stretched to the limit. Everyone feels frightened and helpless; not knowing what might happen next, and how to react when it does. If our schools are to be truly inclusive, which I hope they will be, we need many more trained adults who can really work with these children and make a difference in their lives.

Please help.

Vicki Renton

I start with an extract from Dyslexia Scotland's 'Dyslexia and The Law' leaflet. It is against this I hope to demonstrate some of the current failings in ASN provision.

"The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended, provides the legal framework which underpins the system for identifying and addressing the additional support needs of children who face a barrier, or barriers, to their learning. This leaflet explains how the Act can support you as parents of children with dyslexia.

What are additional support needs?

The term ‘additional support needs’ applies to all children and young people who need additional support to enable them to benefit from school education. The term could, for example, include those who are disabled and those who are more able, as well those with dyslexia. The additional support required could include learning support as well as non-educational provision such as speech and language therapy, or support from social services or a voluntary agency.

How can the authority help?

If a child has dyslexia the education authority must make ‘adequate and efficient provision’ to meet the child’s need for additional support. However, in doing this the authority is not required to ‘incur unreasonable public expenditure’. Where an education authority refuses to comply with your request for particular support it must
explain the reason for its decision. It must also explain to you what steps you can take when you disagree with the authority’s decision (see below).

#closingthegap
I cannot believe that in this current climate of #GIRFEC #equality and #attainment we can be failing to provide regular, quality additional support for any child in a Scottish school. But in my opinion we are and it is scandalous.

A number of friends have children on the autism spectrum and they battle regularly with their respective schools to try and raise awareness and ensure adequate support for their children.

Another friend who has a child with ADHD struggles regularly as their local school fails to respect the impact that it has on the pupil's academic progress, but most importantly their emotional health and wellbeing.

Some schools are investing in training for ASN, hidden disabilities, inclusion, equality and neurodiversity. Even within specific schools some staff go above and beyond their workload to teach themselves about specific learning differences in order to better meet the needs of their children. But it’s not universal.

I know this from talking to other parents. I know this from my work as a primary teacher. And as of 2016 I know this as secretary of the Inverness branch of Dyslexia Scotland.

There are dyslexic children in the Inverness area who are not receiving adequate support. Some teachers want training but can't get cover for any. Some teachers don't think kids they've got are 'bad enough' for coloured paper or overlays. Some places don't have ANY support for learning staff and for others SfL time they do have is all spent on children with behavioural or more visible needs.

The new push for ‘closing the gap’ is admirable and I fully understand the impact that poverty and lack of nurture can have on a young child ...

But ASN is not just a poverty issue. Nice schools have lots of ASN. Affluent families can have children with debilitating difficulties and #PEF money won't come to that school.

Please please please fund adequate numbers of ASN and SFL teachers. Please provide quality neurodiversity training as standard across all Scottish schools. Please encourage all staff to respect the legal obligation to provide quality additional support. Please listen to overworked professionals who want to do the best for their children even though they have no idea how they'll fit extra personal CPD into their schedules. Please make sure that children with ASN, especially those with dyslexia and co-occurring differences have the same opportunities as their peers ... Please help make Scottish education a system to be proud of.

ANON
I find it very difficult to know how you can assess the situation without their knowledge. ASN are not in any way being met. Most classes have children inadequately supported because we have half the support staff we had a few years ago and this causes disruption and stress to the whole class. Who speaks for them? The children involved, some of whom are in desperate need of structure, help and support suffer too even with all the help I can offer. I am one person. Teachers are doing their level best to support as they can. For me the lack of adequate support for children with ASN is why attainment is so difficult to raise and indeed is falling. It is not the only reason. I spend a huge proportion of my time supporting a few children who constantly need help, are distressed or need one to one attention. This has a huge effect on lost learning time and guidance for others. It is a difficult thing to keep trying.

The evidence shows that it is the cohort of children in your class who are struggling a little that can be best helped with teacher support. This means they can access and push forward their learning to the next level in their zone of proximal development.

( Vygotsky) This group of children with help drive forward attainment. This group suffers because teachers are attending to the direct and distressed children in their class.

Personally I wish to know who audits the spending of councils education departments. Large sums of money are spent. No one never asks teachers what they need. Money is spent expanding QIO numbers QIM and on and on. How effective is the spending? Ask those in the class.

Times have changed, children have more complex needs: social, emotional and educational. Most teachers spend part of their day as a nurse, social worker and teacher.

Children need good teachers. The evidence is that good teaching gives the biggest differential to teaching outcomes. Not just learning but life outcomes. (Dylan William, John Hattie) I cannot be the best teacher I can be when I have most of my time taken by two or three children. I cannot ignore their needs but it is at cost to the whole class.

Give teachers back their very cheap and highly skilled PSA in the classes. Then watch children being happy, supported and learning. Watch teachers remain in teaching and thrive in the job they love. I was in school from 8am till 6 yesterday. I am not the best teacher I can be. I care deeply about those in front of me and their obvious unmet needs.

Change the scale format used to calculate support, it is a nonsense. Cut costs higher up the chain and focus all spending at the chalk face in support. PSA staff are extraordinary, cheap and overworked.

These are changed days, teachers are now parents, social workers, nurses and teachers if they can be. Listen to those who know and care passionately. As Dylan William says we ‘fail better every day.’
My apologies that this is written last minute, dashed off before work. Why were all teachers not asked in schools to fill out a reply. I was not aware, apologies if we were asked.

It really is not rocket science. Support should be grounded and based permanently in the class across the class and a learning environment grows. All things then are possible. Children can go outside and learn, do extraordinary things, learn. Then IPT are no longer needed, class teachers have the best and closest relationship with children. Ask them, listen, heed. Cut the cost from higher up the chain, the class is where learning is.

Finally thank you for taking a step to finding out but ask those in front of the class.

**ANON**

At my school the PSA hours are cut year on year. My autistic pupil has no support at times during the 3 days he is in my classroom during the week and this impacts the whole class, not just him. ASN teacher time is cut too and is being taken up completing ever increasing paperwork. These cuts cannot continue. I have been teaching for over 30 years and as I try to implement these CfE lessons I find the support needed for these pupils is just not there.

**ANON**

As a class teacher who has been in the profession for 13 years I have a wide experience of addition support needs in schools, both rewarding and challenging. I feel that many things have changed over the time I have been teaching making things even more challenging in the classroom. I have had experience of a range of additional support needs from complex needs to less complex ones. I feel that with inclusion in mainstream school being pushed over the time I have been teaching I have seen more and more complex needs within the primary classroom. This is not necessarily a bad thing and I feel that children from all walks of life bring so much to the classroom however there have been situations where I feel that mainstream education is perhaps not the right place for some children and I have known for parents to have tried to get a place for their child in a more appropriate school but have been denied.

Sometimes it can be incredibly challenging having children with additional support needs in a class, I say children as in my experience a class generally has at least one and usually more children of varying additional support needs. When teaching a class of 30 and in some cases more how can a teacher divide his/her time amongst all the children (as every child needs the help and guidance of the teacher) when the teacher may be having to spend all of her time working one to one with a child or small group. It can be difficult to ensure that the rest of the class are getting the support they need.
One of the biggest issues I feel that is problem is the lack of support within the class from pupil support assistants. Over my time teaching I have seen the level of support in schools decrease dramatically and this is a big issue. With ever increasing needs in a class how can teachers be expected to 'get it right for every child' with little or no support. In my present class I have 5 children with additional support needs and one pupil support assistant who is shared between 2 classes and is in only in the mornings. Her time is about to be stretched to be shared between 3 classes.

We have a wonderful support for learning teacher in our school who is stretched beyond belief to try to work with all the children. Who require extra support.

In my opinion of the many issues in education at present support within the classroom is one of the biggest. Teachers feel that they are not doing their best as they feel that they are unable to provide the level of support to all the children this in turn causes stress amongst staff which in turn causes absence. This of course is an issue as there is little cover for short or long term supply and teachers can begin to feel over worked, unsupported and undervalued. I think that support within schools needs to be addressed.

I hope this has helped to give a slight insight into working with children who have additional support needs. I think for anyone to get a true idea however they should be spending time in the classroom and seeing first hand how things are.

**ANON**

I just want to put forward a couple of points on ASN.

Lots of children with Dyslexia need ASN support time. These pupils are generally not disruptive and do not get allocated the time that pupils with behaviour problems get. They need just as much support too. Not fair to expect the class teacher to support these pupils when they are already dealing with several literacy and numeracy groups.

**ANON**

I'm all for inclusion if it is properly supported with the appropriate resources of training and staffing. However, inclusion of challenging children without an ASNA is challenging, especially on the open plan format when they can be loud, easily distracted and hard to manage.

It is a pity as this can be to the detriment of the education of the other children. It can, not all the time, negatively impact on their educational opportunities and experiences. It can also be very stressful for all involved and negatively impact on the pace of learning and the learning environment.

My LA requested we stop making specialist allocation requests as there are few places and because individuals need to learn how to function in society. We only make requests for those children whom we truly believe we cannot meet their
educational needs despite being as fully inclusive as we can be. Some children need specialist support to help them learn how to function in society!

How can one class teacher support a child with needs in a class of 33 children whilst maintaining and sustaining a safe environment and ensuring the pace of learning is being addressed? How can others learn around a seriously disruptive child who impacts negatively on the class as a whole?

Schools are told to use their support staff to aid inclusion. We do not have enough support staff to aid those who require 1:1 as there are too many in some mainstream schools.

Inclusion requires adequate resourcing. Children with medical and personal care needs appear to qualify for ASNA assistance. Their needs are visible. Children whose needs are not visible are expected to conform, try their best to survive in a world where teachers are doing their utmost to help them but who are failing miserably due to the demands of large classes, others with needs and the confinements of hmie pace and challenge. It is demoralising for all involved.

Inclusion requires resources. Resources require funding. Funding requires understanding from the powers that be.

I am concerned.

Jill Reeves

I have been employed for over 20 years as a music teacher in many schools for learners with Additional Support Needs across Edinburgh and presently in Inverclyde (Craigmarloch school). I have found the holistic needs of the pupils in this sector have been met much more fully at ASN schools than mainstream with its greater focus on cognitive learning.

Also, there is a much greater provision of expertise and facilities in ASN schools, for instance, physio or speech and language input, hydro therapy, rebound and other sensory provisions (sensory room, soft play etc). The pupils are more able to reach their full potential in this type of learning environment as opposed to being accommodated within mainstream in often very large classes with many learning and teaching demands placed on the over stretched class teacher. This, I feel is the opposite of inclusion—children with ASN often fail in a mainstream setting: their needs are not sufficiently understood or met creating an unhappy, under achieving and ironically, excluded child.

The expressive arts, in particular music, are also more fully recognised as being fundamental to the development of children in the ASN sector. Funding has been cut dramatically within mainstream settings, especially in the primary sector despite ample research which shows the benefits of a musical education on learning across all areas. In the ASN schools where I have been employed, music is seen at the heart of the curriculum, connecting, engaging and motivating all children to succeed, build confidence and develop specific and transferrable skills.
I hope my comments add to the case to support and develop the role of ASN schools in Scotland.

ANON

I am writing to you to give you my insights into the area of additional support needs. I am a primary school teacher who works part time teaching one day of P2 (class of 26 children) and P7 (class of 31). I am also a parent of a child with dyslexia. Firstly I would like to tell you of my experience as a parent of a child with dyslexia. My son’s P1 year was awful. He became very unconfident and unhappy about going to school, and gradually withdrew from the teacher in class. She took a long time to tell me about this, mentioning only that he was slow to get started and to get on with his work. I was quite worried and kept asking if everything was ok, but was pretty much fobbed off until I got his school report which was so negative. My son is well brought up, and behaves well in class, but there were absolutely no positives about him. I complained about the tone of the report and tried to find out what actually went on in class but only discovered that he did not really speak to the teacher. She retired that year.

I was so worried about his progress I made sure that he could read and that his phonics were good, and taught him at home over the summer holidays to make sure that he was not behind. P2 was almost as bad, but not quite. He was withdrawn again, and as I was teaching him I began to worry that he was mildly dyslexic, but the teacher did not agree. He was in the top group for reading, and they just thought he was not good at spelling. In P3 I insisted they gave him a dyslexia test and he was assessed as being mildly dyslexic. I then thought that things would change and he would receive some support for his learning, but as the year progressed I realised that this was not the case. He had no additional support for any aspect of his learning, nor did anyone try to build a profile of his needs as a dyslexic learner. I decided to ask a personal contact (an experienced SFL teacher) to build a profile independently. She clearly identified auditory and speech developmental issues, and I passed this onto the school. They did nothing.

Finally I decided to build my own teaching plan for him and used standard intensive, multisensory interventions that are widely available and tailored my teaching to his needs, and I did this in the mornings before he went to school. In P4 he made approximately 3 years of progress in reading and spelling in approximately six months due to these interventions. He has not continued to progress at that rate but has generally held his own. I am continuing to teach him myself and his confidence has grown massively and he is taking part in school so much more. I cannot get the school to tailor anything to his needs, all of his reading, spelling and handwriting learning is done at home. Occasionally the class teacher offers to try and fit something in but usually it does not happen. I feel he has been completely failed by his school, and had I not been a teacher he would be quite behind and very negative about school. His lack of confidence was encouraging people to bully him and had I not intervened he would have been very miserable indeed. It has become very clear to me that there is insufficient time in the curriculum dedicated to basic literacy skills
and maths and that if you need more of it (because children with dyslexia need lots of repetition, overlearning, to gain automacity) you are very unlikely to get it, and were you do get extra this is likely to be just a small drop in the ocean of need.

As a teacher I can see it from another perspective. In neither of my classes do I ever get the help of another adult and in both classes I have children with additional support needs, some children are what I would call severe (ADHD, autism, dyslexia and dyscalculia are all present). The children have been identified as having addition needs and some of them get occasional help from our part time SFL teacher and leave the room for 30 mins here and there for this work. However this is very, very little. PSAs who were planned to have been with my classes have been taken to work with a child in P1 who is a runner and has no regard for personal safety. The city council had assigned 7 hours of PSA time to this child, but it is clearly insufficient and simply for reasons of safeguarding adults who should be in my class have been reassigned. In my experience this is not uncommon. In addition spending on ICT hardware is restricted, often meaning that software which could be used to support the children is inaccessible, even if it has been subscribed to. The additional burden on me as a teacher to prepare and deliver lessons which support children with ASN is very great, even though I am personally motivated to do it and find working with children with ASN very rewarding. I cannot run the interventions for the children with dyslexia for the children in my class that I have so successfully run for my son as I cannot run them and teach the class at the same time. It is also very difficult to support the levels of differentiation, visual timetables, routines, strategies and behaviour management (personalized plans for many of the children) and handover consistently when I am a part time worker. My working days are very long and I rarely have a break to go to the toilet as I am often supporting children who need help with social interaction in my break times.

To be completely frank not only do I feel this education service has failed my son, I think it fails many other ASN children as the adult to child ratios just don’t work. As someone who often mentors student teachers I can see that they learn almost nothing on their training courses about ASNs, and have no idea how to support children in the classroom, and would take a long time to gain the experience they need. So not only are the ratios wrong, but also the adult is often someone who knows almost nothing about ASNs. I think the system is failing the teachers almost as much as it is failing the children. I am working on the assumption that we are intending to teach the children to the best of their ability. The current resourcing of the service does little to enable this.

I think class sizes need to be reduced or additional adults need to be provided to enable ASN children to make progress. I think student teachers need intensive training in all ASN areas as part of their teacher training. I cannot see that PGDE students receive any training about phonics, let alone synthetic phonics or dyslexia and this is a real draw back when they are beginning to teach.
Parents/Guardians/Siblings Submissions

**Jocelyn Hammer**

I would like to comment on the support provision in Scottish schools for ASL. I have being supported at primary level in mainstream school. They have received support from nursery onwards.

My understanding so far is that there are many resources available to schools but the biggest hurdle by far is funding. The curriculum for excellence emphasises above all having children teach their potential.

For example: a child is about to start high school. He receives 16 hours of audited support per week. He is very bright but needs more support as he does little or no work unsupported. He is not reaching his potential due to a lack of funding.

Further funding would provide equipment, training, personnel, resources. These children will grow into adults, and there is an increasing number of them. If these children are well supported, the whole class environment is calmer, leading to more learning. Your budget should be reconfigured to give more funds to ASL services.

**ANON**

I am writing about my experience with the school system. My comments can be published but I do not want my name published.

My daughter has Downs Syndrome resulting in a learning disability. I moved to East Dunbartonshire before she started school. She has been in a mainstream primary from the beginning and is now in primary seven. We started enhanced transition in primary six. Thank goodness we did. It has taken the catchment mainstream secondary a long time to accept that both she and us, as parents, want her to stay in the mainstream and attend it.

We have had four meetings and three visits to schools, two of which were special needs.

During our visit to the mainstream secondary the Deputy Head said that my daughter would be the most learning disabled student they ever had. While this might be factually correct it added nothing of value and was clearly said to put us off. It was highly insensitive and demonstrated that he did not 'get' inclusion. She will never access the same curriculum as her peers (she has an individual curriculum) but that is not the point. She should be there to continue to be part of her community and for her to add value as well as for others to realise that not everyone is the same.

She is not disruptive and while she needs support this extra member of staff has been of great benefit to the rest of the class and for teachers she has had.
During two of the meetings the member of staff who coordinates support for learning at the secondary talked persistently about staff shortages over the past year and a half (not something I can do anything about) and also said that my daughter attending could take away support from another child. This was an outrageous thing to say, almost blaming us for wanting our child to take her place in mainstream.

When discussing transport it was said that they would propose a taxi and escort. I asked if it would not be cheaper to put the escort on the bus and where was the inclusion of my daughter if she was in a taxi with two adults while all the 'normal' children were on the bus?

Unfortunately this has not been a positive experience so far. The secondary said they have never had a student with Downs Syndrome before and I can see why! As a parent It's very wearing and disappointing to come across these persistent attitudes.

However I will not be put off. It's my job to fight for the best opportunities for my daughter and if something doesn't work it should be because it's not right for her, not because people are scared of something different or don't really believe in inclusion. It's worrying when management have the kind of attitudes that I have experienced as this filters down to other staff. Unfortunately they seem to fail to see the benefits of inclusion to the school and its wider community. I really think that some training needs to be delivered at the highest and middle levels of education management, not just the teachers and support staff who work on a practical level. Until there is a shift in the attitude of management, parents will continue to face an uphill battle.

Practically in our situation Downs Syndrome Scotland will be doing some training and I have asked that the school use the Circle of Friends program.

ANON

Support must be available, forthcoming and suited around the child, not the management of the school. Schools should be meeting things like the legal requirement to allow a parent to attend IEP meetings without the need for formal complaints at council level and MSP involvement. Additional support needs teachers and teaching assistants are NEEDED, not wanted. They should not be being continually cut, or put under pressure to say a particular child is fine without support. Speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, paediatricians.... the rationing of the health professionals time lets the teaching profession down as they are not the health experts. There can be no team around the child if they are not available except in a crisis, not on rotation this term or the waiting lists are so long it becomes pointless as the child will have moved on in an unhealthy way. Bare minimum is not getting it right, it's the least bad job with the resources available

Yes there needs to be efficiency, but there is a massive need for staff, and for parents to realise the power they have. I point out whenever I can how unfair it is that my son gets the support he needs under GIRFEC, and their child doesn't. But parents don't like to be pushy or rock the boat. It's those children I feel worst for, at least my son has me on his side.
ANON

My son has an ASD diagnosis. Despite having additional transition input, his ability to cope in mainstream secondary school began to breakdown approximately 5 weeks into first year.

Our initial support was an 'Attendance Officer'. He was not experienced in how to approach a highly anxious autistic child. The approach aggravated things to the extent my son felt threatened so much, he threatened to hit the Attendance Officer.

This referred us to social services for an urgent 'meet'. One social worker and one social work assistant called me out the blue. It was terrifying. Neither of them had any idea he was diagnosed with ASD, and actually questioned me about 'who actually diagnosed it?' They also questioned alone my younger son. And referred to him after this as a '10 year old'. I informed them he was only eight years, and wondered how appropriate their questions could have been. Treating him as a full 2 years older. It was all very distressing.

Ultimately we had thereafter months of poor relations with social work. School did not seem to have any access to services to support a child getting into school. Enable worked with us for some time. An emergency 4 hours per week for 16 weeks service was put in, but to date it took till the end of second year approximately before an autism school specialist was involved at all. And her involvement is quite background. By this point the pattern was of extreme minimal attendance. School put many things in place there. But his fear of going is crippling.

We are now third year high school. Social work have put in temporary special measures of a worker coming to help support/take him to school. It's set up for 3 weeks. The individual is not autism trained.

CAMHS are involved. But there are no autism mental health specialists.

No one is specifically addressing his fear of going into school that is autism trained. My idea was a Scottish Autism support worker in mornings. But social work would not go ahead with this idea to date. And seem quite intent in saying that 'all approaches have been tried'. Even though to date, not one person specifically trained in autism has been through our door.

So the complete lack of integration between social care and education - for us specifically around supporting my son getting to school, has meant that we are now almost 2.5 years of almost no education. For a boy who is extremely clever. This leaves me mentally exhausted, trapped and unable to work. It had taken its toll both on my health and my younger sons too. My younger son had had bouts of low attendance, niggling health issues and also had to be referred to a paediatrician.
What if there were people there in the beginning to appropriately support my son before it all broke down? What if school had been much quicker to recognise he couldn't cope within mainstream? What if the education package now good, had been offered much, much earlier? So my son wasn't left to fester? What if there were people who were trained in supporting autistic teenagers, with mental health issues?

All those potential things might have meant we weren't at breaking point. A 14 year old who's very bright but now had virtually no education at high school level, and with increasingly out of sync social skills due to little contact with any peer group, social communication already being a huge challenge for someone on the spectrum.

Professionals spent a long time questioning and constantly aiming at modifying my parenting. Rather than listen and respond to my sons need owing to his disability. I got overridden.

I hope this helps gives some picture of both the failures past, and how that feeds into the current position. Which is that we have still made no significant progress to date. And as his mother, this is heart-breaking.

**ANON**

As a parent whose child attends primary school along with children with additional support needs- I'd like to share my experiences of additional support - all children are entitled to a safe education - but schools cannot cope and chose to bury their heads than deal with the problems.

My 11 year old daughter and her friends have had the following happened to them by a boy with additional support needs and as yet nothing has been done and my own daughter is terrified to go to school!

The boy with additional needs has so far:

- Pulled a P7 girls skirt down exposing her pants.
- Dragging another P7 girl by her hair on a few occasions now.
- Giving my daughter and 2 of her class mates a note with just 1 letter each on it. 1 got D 1 got I and 1 got E. this is unacceptable behaviour.
- Telling another girl he is going to be waiting under her bed and stab her and her family.
- He has already threatened to snap my daughters neck and tried to attack her on a couple of occasions.
- The boy is constantly running out of school disrupting the class.

The school justifies his violence and threats by saying he has additional support needs.

All children have a right to a safe education- not being attacked or threatened on a regular basis with no punishment to the child with additional needs.
I agree that the child needs help- but the easy way out is to say he has additional needs- but when will he get the help he needs?? This child is violent and unfortunately someone will have to be seriously hurt before the school takes action- unfortunately the children who don't have additional needs have to endure bullying, threats and violence and nobody is interested in the safety and wellbeing unless they have additional needs which I personally think is disgusting. My daughter has went from a happy confident girl to a nervous wreck and in fear of being attacked at school!

**Ginny Alderson**

Being a mother of a disabled child who is now 18 I have been through the education system like many other parents with frustration. There needs to be more special schools built as there aren’t enough places available in the ones we have got. A lot of children then get forced to attend a mainstream with disastrous results. Simply providing a 1-1 support worker often still doesn’t work if the set up and environment of the school doesn’t suit that particular child’s needs, and we live in England. It’s a problem everywhere. The government need to provide more schools suitable for these individuals.

**ANON**

I write as the mother of a ten year old son with high functioning autism.

My son is bright and intelligent and is doing well in class. However, he suffers daily in the playground, given his lack of social abilities.

I strongly believe that children like my son are placed in horrendous positions in terms of noisy, crowded playgrounds. This stress often leads to him being in no fit state to attend school.

He is often very upset and extremely stressed by what happens during break times. Children like my son need additional support to learn to mix with the other children. They need organised play during break times at school.

Children with Autism require structure, something that cannot possibly be provided by the current practice at break times in school.

I realise that many schools have quiet rooms, which is one option that does indeed help. However, where is the help and support to play? Where is the opportunity to mix with the other children in the class in a structured play environment?

Having taken my son to the MEND programme in Glasgow, where play is supported and led by a group of wonderful leaders, I can see that my son’s social skills are improving and he is becoming more confident every week within that environment. Unfortunately, as we know, this does not mean he has the ability to transfer these new skills to different environments, such as the school playground.
I would urge you to please look into support for children with Autism at break times in school that allows them to mix with their peers. Please take away the only options being to be hidden away in a quiet room or tortured by the noise/chaos of the playground.

Lyndsey Emmett-Liddle

I am fully supportive of learning support within schools. Having had two children who have required learning support I have seen 1st hand the benefits of early intervention within the classroom. My oldest son went on to become top of his class due to the support, structure and strategies given within school. My youngest son has had support from his 1st day right through until present P5. It has encouraged him greatly and he is making steady progress which has been great for him developmentally as well as academically. This is a much needed service which means that every child gets the best from their education. I cannot emphasise how evident the support for learning programmes success rate. I think more schools need to have such services certainly not less. If this service is not provided the future economic benefit for all children to be reaching their potential will plummet. Children who require more support want to go on to lead productive and fulfilled lives, as much or perhaps more so, due to the effort they and their teachers have put in.

Please keep all programmes running and provide more in areas that are lacking this wonderful support.

Jane McLuckie

Please consider awareness training for all teachers on the subject of developmental coordination disorder. It would seem that many teachers don't know about this increasingly identified condition and certainly don't know how complex it is in its presentation.

Sam Medley

I am writing to express my views on the additional support needs provision in mainstream schools. My experience of the provision comes through my son, he is currently in P7 at a mainstream school. He has a physical disability which impacts his mobility, fine motor skills and the associated impact those have on being able to socialise with his peer group. He has input from many medical professions including Physiotherapy, occupational therapy, neuro psychologist and assistive technology specialists to name a few.

His experience of provision has varied. He was in a small village school until P6. In the early more nurturing years he had 1:1 care but as the needs of the school took over, the care was sometimes diverted for other children / activities which did have a negative impact on him at times. As he went up through the school, his emotional and social needs changed which weren't always catered for. School seemed to treat him still as a younger child which had a big impact on his ability to make friends and
join in socially. This came to a head in his P6 Year when several of his closer classmates left and he became very isolated. This issue culminating in him being referred to CAHMS as his mental health was impacted.

ISSUE: Additional support needs provision did not look holistically at my son, his mental and social wellbeing were not always catered for even though communication between school and home was extremely good. In terms of GIRFEC and SHANARRI, education weren't getting it right!

In terms of accessibility, when he visited 2 different high schools both being fairly new, one of the high schools layout and doors meant he could not get around independently. He is a walker / wheelchair user and although the campus was fairly new, the design did not give him the freedom to move he needed.

ISSUE: even newer buildings do not cater for independent accessibility. Considering the environmental demands of physically disabled students does not feel well thought through.

We moved our son to a different bigger school which is attached to the high school which he decided he wanted to go to. His transition between schools was excellent and he felt looked after and listened to. Transition meetings worked well and his moving between schools was very positive.

POSITIVE: transition staff were very child focussed and areas of potential issues were discussed well before his move. A lot of this was to do with staff involved being highly effective, caring, having previous experience and listening to our son.

Since moving schools a different support model has been put in place, more in line with high school which will ease his transition. This has been good to help our son be more independent and freedom to make friends, something he still finds difficult. However, due to resourcing constraints areas such as optimising assistive technologies which he needs now, Physiotherapy needs such as placing him in a standing frame have been difficult as the resourcing just isn't there. The school tries very hard to meet his needs but with many other children also requiring help there are not enough staff. He went from having mainly 1:1 to more limited shared resource. Our son has a CSP which doesn't seem to reflect the amount of resource his needs dictate.

ISSUE: lack of resourcing at School level which comes directly from lack of Council funding.

Our son has been trialling assistive technologies to help with getting his thoughts and work published. He isn't getting the support at school to try to use this due to IT issues and lack of resource. He is a bright boy and if this isn't sorted his education will be greatly impacted. We have tried to push this from a parent perspective, have involved NHS OT but still haven't had any luck 6 months down the line. There is no funding for the device itself either. In his previous school, we were told there was enough technology in the school to support his needs, even though his needs had not been assessed. Trying to use resources such as the CALL centre were not permitted as there was no funding.
ISSUE: lack of resources and money for assistive technology. Schools too stretched to spend time sorting issues and allowing technology to be used.

Mrs Simpson

Let me first start by saying I have worked in social care and social work for 14 years. I have supported some of society’s most challenging individuals in the community and in prisons. I have worked closely with families when they have been at their vulnerable and been involved in child protection procedures. I have sat in children’s hearings and child protection case conferences, being involved in plans of support. Some of these families had children with additional needs. I saw referrals being made and schools speaking about the support they offer.

I have also, more recently been a delegate for Moray to be involved in the Early Years Collaborative, I also coordinated the Public Social Partnership funding for Moray, using it to engage with families that are vulnerable but don't meet the criteria for social work involvement, those children that struggle socially and emotionally. I have sat through speeches from the Children's commissioner, the children's Minister and other National Leaders when they have spoken about the need to get in early, support families before crisis and to ensure all children reach their expected milestones.

I know all this as a professional; I have read the books, listened and even repeated several of the ideas to families. And yet as a parent I know my children are being failed. I have twins who started school in August. I was advised by professionals and promised by the head teacher that they could meet the needs of my children. I trusted that their needs would be met and we could have an open dialogue about how to make education work for them. My children's needs aren't visible, physically they look the same as all the other kids in the school, however, their brains are wired slightly differently. They attend separate classes as they disrupt each other, like most siblings do.

The last 6 months, since entering education, have been horrific. I don't use that term lightly, the stress and upheaval caused by inconsistency, lack of communication, and failure to meet my child's needs is quite shocking. Moray has a policy of "inclusion", there are no separate schools for kids with additional needs. One child is certainly not included. He only attends school for half a day (he is yet to get his full entitlement to education hours, he has only attended mornings for the last 3 months), he isn't invited to assemblies or indeed the classroom. He spends the morning in a room on his own with 2 adults. That's right, no interaction with other kids, no time for playing with his peers. And this is the "specialist" school for the area in which we live, all kids with additional needs are encouraged to go there.

I can already see several issues

They are overrun with kids with too many varying needs, They don't have enough space to meet the needs of these children The staff are not given enough training in
how to meet the needs of each child. There aren't enough experienced staff. The staff are not given enough training on how to deal with challenging behaviour. Resources that could be available are not utilised, such as third sector partners.

I am now off work again as my child is excluded once again for behaviours that relate to his as yet undiagnosed condition. (He has been excluded 4 times already, in P1.) Which brings me on to another issue, not directed at education, but affects people's perception of my child and what they believe the issues to be. We are working through the long process of diagnosis, we have had to wait months, the diagnosis team tell me that they don't usually diagnose children before the age of six, and medication isn't usually considered until the child is seven or eight, yet school are working towards him no longer being in education before then.

The systems don't match up, there are no alternatives offered. The cuts to education are disproportionately affecting those children that are most vulnerable and most likely to fail in education because they don't fit the mould. I thought we were supposed to get it right for every child, what a joke, it would appear we can get it right if the child fits certain criteria or if the budget allows us to. These are the invisible children, the ones that when targets were set for the Early years collaborative, were missed. I expect it's too costly to really look at how these children's needs can be best met.

These children shouldn't be hidden away, they are part of society. The people that have most accepted my children and the other children in their classes. It's the adults that are too focussed on health and safety and risk assessment s to actually see the child and their needs. What about cost-benefit analysis rather than breaking my son's education down in to whether he poses a risk to others. Stop hiding behind paperwork and stupid rules that kids aren't even bothered about. The true meaning of inclusion would be having my child feeling like he was part of the school. I used to wonder why people would home educate their child, I loved school, I had so many great opportunities. Now I understand, these parents know that the education system as it is can't keep their children safe or meet their child's needs.

Jane Carmichael

My son is 10 years old and has been failed by the education department. We live in Perth and Kinross council. We adopted our little boy when he was three years old, from a background of abuse and neglect and has suffered intense trauma. In addition he has brain damage and has sensory processing disorder, and currently being evaluated for autism. In nursery it was known he had additional support needs and as his mother I asked for support to be put in, nothing was put in and with one week of school starting I was asked to remove him part time, Since then my son has not been in education full time ever and at times has been actively excluded due to lack of support staff and resources. We live in a rural area and the nearest specialist support is over an hour away. I have always asked and everyone has agreed that his needs could meet in his local area but still this is not happening. My son has had over 18 people involved with him on a support level and all support helpers leave due to lack of support and contracts. John Swinney has been actively involved in this...
case and it is now still not resolved. The policy of keeping in mainstream is a good one but one that has failed my son for 5 years due to lack of knowledge, resources and staff. My son has the ability to learn but is so traumatised by his experiences at school, which have been undertaken through lack of knowledge of his needs by being shut in room on his own, restrained and held numerous times.

The education authority seems to struggle to work in partnership with others in the child care system to support and provided for my son. Children services do not seem to work together and cannot seem to bring a package of care and education to my son that meets his needs. Scotland is currently failing children with additional support needs and such will create economic burdens for the future. Adopted children and their families are giving virtually no support or resources to support them. The stress on our family is enormous and one that we carry. To get the support the amount of effort and fight you have to put in to getting what my sons needs has proved incredibly stressful and I think if not for my resilience i feel The system would have failed our family in this Adoption and subsequent education provision. Still we are not there with meeting his needs but feel like staff do with to meet his needs but resources and monies are just not there.

ANON

It is my view that the national policy of the presumption of mainstreaming is failing learners on the autism spectrum. I question the effective implementation of this policy as there is a lack of substantial and consistent evidence for either the social or educational gains anticipated through inclusive practices in their current format, and there is much evidence that poorly managed mainstream placements can be harmful with negative long term outcomes for learners on the autism spectrum (as presented in a comprehensive review by Reed and Osborne, 2014).

Despite the existence of autism specific national and local policies, strategies and standards of excellence in autism practice (Scottish Strategy for Autism (2011), Autism Education Trust Competency Standards (2012), and National Autistic Society Accreditation, to quote just a few), learners with autism in mainstream schools repeatedly experience great difficulties in exercising their right to an effective and inclusive autism friendly education due to a lack of staff with autism specific training. Just as much as having a right to an inclusive mainstream education, an individual also has the right to the most effective education. An effective education for learners on the autism spectrum requires specialised knowledge and understanding of autism due to the unique learning, communication and thinking style of learners with autism. This means teachers need to have specialist training in autism, as indeed recommended by the Scottish Government (2008 and 2011), as recommended by Mackay and Dunlop (2004), and as recommended throughout the autism literature. Despite these recommendations, a Freedom of Information Request to a local primary school with a population of 450 children, 14 of whom have a diagnosis of autism, revealed that only half the teaching staff had a minimum of basic autism awareness training, and the Principal Teacher for Support for Learning had no autism training. Many parents report the same issue in many schools across Scotland. This is in clear contrast to the universal recommendation of specialist
training as a prerequisite for the successful inclusion and effective education for learners with autism.

The persistent lack of training of teaching staff is especially surprising as concerns regarding the poor level of training were already raised by teachers in 2003 (Audit Scotland), not long after the introduction of the presumption of mainstreaming 16 years ago, and confirmed in an extensive audit of training arrangements for autism in Scotland, by Mackay an Dunlop in 2004. And yet, even to this day even for those working mainly with learners with autism, the most common level of training received is only introductory, especially so in general contexts such as mainstream education.

It appears that in Scotland the education system has revolved around where rather than how children should be educated. Furthermore, education in a special schools with specialist staff is often considered a last resort or legal exemption, only accessible through additional support needs tribunal hearings - a lengthy and hostile process which is highly dependent on parental resources, inner strength, time and often money. Families do not have any choice about where their child is educated as the local mainstream school is usually the default option. The presumption of mainstreaming has led to limited options for learners on the autism spectrum to access specialist educational provisions to exercise their right to an effective education.

I would also like to comment on the financial implications of the Standards in Scotland’s Schools Act (2000), which saw the introduction of the presumption of mainstreaming. When the Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament is was accompanied by a financial memorandum setting out the estimated cost as a result of the passing of that Bill (Audit Scotland, 2003). The financial memorandum for this Bill reads: “In general...there will be few additional costs that arise as a direct result of the Bill. Those that do arise will tend to fall on local authorities”. The presumption of mainstreaming (Section 15) was inserted to the Bill at a later stage, without a robust analysis of the potential financial consequences and without adjusting the financial memorandum. However, Audit Scotland later identified that inclusion of pupils with ASN in mainstream was likely to lead to increased expenditure, and estimated an increase between £38 million and £121 million per year per council (which translates as an increase between 15% and 40% in annual council ASN budgets).

Furthermore, at the time of introduction of the presumption of mainstreaming, the number of pupils with ASN in Scottish schools was listed as 44,000, with the above calculations based on this figure. In 2015 the number of pupils with ASN had risen to 153,190 (Scottish Government, 2016). Serious financial implications are evident and are likely to have a significant impact on the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Out of the whole school age population of 673,530 children in Scotland in 2015 (Scottish Government 2016) 11,661 were reported to be learners with autism. If (hypothetically) these children were evenly distributed across a total of 2569 schools (including special schools) in Scotland, we could assume an average of 4 to 5 children with autism at every Scottish school. This in turn suggests that potentially every teacher has or is likely to have direct contact with learners with autism.
(therefore requiring specialist training as per government recommendation), which highlights the urgent need for schools across Scotland to be autism friendly, and more specifically, to ensure autism specific standards are applied to all areas of practice to reduce barriers to learning and enable participation.

I am therefore deeply concerned how current financial constraints are going to continue to negatively affect the implementation of inclusive education. The inclusion of pupils with additional support needs is particularly at risk in the context of declining budgets and austerity measures, with potentially disastrous consequences. Scottish education is a system with big ambitions but lacking the wherewithal to deliver. The ill-prepared movement of all into the same educational setting has not been conducive to ensuring the inclusion of all, especially so for learners on the autism spectrum.

**ANON**

I have a child who has autism and a global developmental delay; she has just started high school in a learning unit.

All through her primary years the teachers were fantastic regarding her support and education but since starting high school, they really do not have a clue what to do

There are so so many issues surrounding the education side of things. There is most definitely not enough training given to staff. Especially the PSA staff.

They have basically told me they don't know how to teach my child, which is disgusting.

At one point they wanted to put her behind a room divider, which in itself is disgusting! They are supposed to be focused on integration. The school most definitely is not autism friendly. Not enough awareness and understanding of the condition.

I am also founder and chair of an autism charity and many of our families are in the same situation. At a loss with the schools and it's as though they just want to keep the kids out the way. Shocking state of affairs. Definitely more training is needed. I could go on and on about what is lacking but these are just a few points.

**ANON**

I would like to start by saying I'm a parent of a child who would be deemed to have additional support needs. I have 3 sons. My oldest son who's almost 11 is on the autistic spectrum. My son has never had "additional support" in his school because he's never required it. He's highly intelligent and his only issues are that of a social aspect. Because he has no learning disability as such I think the school overlook the fact he is autistic. My sons behaviour is exemplary too. Only in the last year has he started having issues at school with regards to other children bullying him. The
school are not dealing with this adequately and unfortunately more effort gets put into the bullies than it does my son.

The issue of mainstreaming children with additional needs is one that divides opinion. In my son's case because his issues are more social mainstream school was the right and only choice and recent problems apart it's mostly been a positive experience.

As I mentioned I have 3 sons. My other two don't have additional support needs but my 6 year old has at least 3 children that I know of in his class with additional support needs and I have to say that it's affecting the standard of education he's receiving. The class is constantly disrupted by pupils demonstrating negative and sometimes dangerous behaviours. 4 weeks in a row my son's class could not complete their weekly spelling tests as there was issues that took over.

The teachers I speak to are overwhelmed due to having to deal with children with additional support needs. Support staff are too few and not trained to a high enough standard to understand and deal with complex behaviours. There has also been a large increase in children needing help with personal care during the day this means that two support staff may have to leave their class to tend to a child's needs so the teacher doesn't have the support in class to deal with kids displaying negative behaviour so she has to devote all her time to calming that child while the other children are neglected.

I'm a big supporter of mainstream schooling where appropriate but not at the expense of the other children's standard of education.

More support staff are definitely required and they need to be sufficiently trained in additional needs to support teachers effectively.

If something is not done I think it'll lead to fewer young people choosing teaching as a career. Teachers are there to educate. There's far too much being asked of them in my opinion.

**ANON**

My son is dyslexic.. I knew from him being very young.. it runs in his father's family. He was clumsy and forgetful. Primary one in Argyll and Bute was awful. Teachers told me he was slow and when I informed them of dyslexic tendencies, was told they didn't have any training in dyslexia. He was assessed by a school educational psychologist who wrote a report telling me he was a slow learner. We moved to Aberdeenshire in P2 and showed the report to staff. This school had a dyslexic specialist. Within three weeks we were asked to attend the school, where they were astounded by the report and how the child described in the report clearly did not resemble the child they were teaching. At this stage he would not hold a pencil nor engage because of the “trauma” of p1.
It took years for his confidence to regain itself and that has held him back. Primary school was incredibly supportive. He is now in S4 and secondary school has not been easy. Basic Dyslexia Toolkit resources are not used by most teachers and understanding of dyslexic teaching methods is a bit hit or miss. I have campaigned for Neil MacKay's Dyslexia Aware teaching to be implemented.... in all schools. Some teachers have shone; others still send him homework in Times Roman and expect him to copy from the board.

In this day and age Dyslexic aware teaching should be standard, not if you are lucky!

He is still "behind" and struggling. The system still does not adequately accommodate dyslexic kids, and when you consider at least 10% of our population are dyslexic, I consider it a national scandal. Yes things are improving, but not nearly fast enough.

Please just pay for Neil Mackay to train ALL staff as they did in New Zealand and parts of Australia, and make dyslexia aware teaching the norm for all students. We can do so much better.

ANON

My son is 11 and has dyslexia. He is taken out of class to help with this. Although the school have not been able to work with him as effectively as they should, because they don't have the staff to manage. The Scottish government has to give more money to fund more experienced learning support teachers. I have been told by the school that they are stretched in this department and I think in this day and age it's a sad state of affairs.

ANON

My son is 9 and in mainstream school with diagnoses of Tourette syndrome/atypical Asperger's/Adhd.

My experiences have been varied to say the least. He started p1 in our local primary school where he was not understood or supported and my husband and I were called daily to pick him up early and /or given a list of things he had done 'wrong'. He has sensory sensitivities and could not be in the classroom there at all and so was in a room with 1-1 from 9-12.30 (he didn't attend full days). He was viewed as a naughty boy there although his behaviours came from pure anxiety for want of proper support. This had a significant impact on his self-esteem which he has had to work hard to build again. At the end of that year I moved him to another mainstream school for p2 where he has thrived, adjustments were made initially and he is now in a class without the need for constant 1-1 support.

Every single thing he has needed I have had to fight for (esp p1) meeting with head of education etc. As I am sure you can imagine the extra strain the this puts on a family already working in a difficult situation isn't always welcome!
It is a lottery the understanding and support you get from your school - first school were not interested in understanding and any small adjustment caused an issue e.g. Several empty classrooms and suggested rather than tiny room he was in convert one to a learning zone where he could be with other children, gradually building this up. Teachers complained about this! School two converted room to said learning zone On very short notice and he used this for a year (to a lesser and lesser extent). Is now used by another child).

Through all of this we have had support from outreach team who have been amazing - I think there needs to be more of these staff who can work with the teacher and child and have ability to provide more intense support at stages it is required.

Staff awareness is also an issue sometimes - training on Adhd and autism is now there but not all kids are the same and this is not always understood - partly experience but could mentor? No understanding of Tourette syndrome at all and is very difficult to get training for this - this can lead to problem/min interpretation of behaviour.

On the whole I think there is a lack of the right support in many schools for children who fall somewhere in the middle - a speech and language base isn't the right home, can be happy and thrive in mainstream but better support structures need to be in place BEFORE there is a huge problem as very difficult to come back from something significant - prevention is needed.

Emma Smith

We first started to suspect our son was dyslexic towards the end of P3, he began to struggle at school as the work changed and became harder. As per the Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004 we put a request in to have him assessed. This request was ignored, not refused or any grounds for refusal given but ignored. So in December 2015 we had a private assessment done and it recognised that our son is Dyslexic with significant processing and memory issues.

Our school developed an ABLe plan but does not stick to it. There are permanent staffing problems which means our son does not get his specified SFL sessions, we are providing coloured jotters for the school despite the school saying they will. It seems that there is little or no differentiated class work for our son who’s spelling age is of a 6 years old. Comparing P3 & P5 INCAS results show little progression in most areas, with some areas having dropped below the P3 results. Our son now has significant school anxiety and is now struggling to get into school each day. He has panic attacks, passes out, vomits or just cries about going into school. In school he is often called an idiot or stupid because of his dyslexia and he feels like a failure at school. He works so hard and his work efforts are never recognised, his excellent behaviour is but never his work. He just wants to feel good about his work for once. We are currently looking at flexi schooling for him as the support is simply not there for him at school. We have even been told 'perhaps it's not the right school for him'
In my opinion a lot of teachers have no real training in additional support needs and how those needs can be met in the classroom. For lots of children to get help in the classroom is all they would need and some of it can be done without cost to anyone. Small simple things to help could do wonders for so many children with ASN.

**George Ferguson**

As a parent of someone who required additional support at school (and still requires this at the age of 36) and as a school support worker I believe I am qualified to make a statement on the state of play.

I have seen the need for fully trained staff at school to give the additional support required to many pupils with a variety of needs. I have personally been thrown into the deep end by taking on ASN pupils without training. This is common place in our schools. I had to learn on the job. The main reason for the lack if training is lack of money being made available for this. It could also be said that support staff cannot be "spared" to go for this training because they are needed in schools.

It is a catch 22 situation.

On top if all that school support staff have never been recognised by any government for the work that they do in our schools. These unsung heroes go beyond the call of duty for the sake of the children they work with be they ASN or mainstream. This has to be acknowledged at least. They are always ignored when there is any statement about education.

If a study is ever done regarding what school support workers do and what responsibilities they have it would find that they are underpaid...they are definitively under-appreciated.

**ANON**

I think it depends on the school / local authority in my view some children with SEN are not getting the support they need to ensure they reach their full potential I feel Teacher’s and support staff should be trained more in supporting children with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia etc. in my opinion they seem to be focusing more on children with ASD

My daughter has unilateral hearing since p2 and diagnosed as Dyslexic in primary 4 despite me showing concern from p2

She was on a Individual learning plan from P4 to P7

I feel the primary school did not give her the support she required they had spoke about what could help her but i feel they didn’t carry it forward e.g. Use of visual / discreet aids, a laptop, spellchecker etc.
She was on a toe by toe reading programme which required her to do it at least 3 times a week with an assistant she was lucky if she got it once a week / fortnight in P7.

A few comments on her last primary 7 report card, give me the impression they had forgot she had dyslexia or hearing loss writing comments like she should rely less on visual aids/ should memorise her times tables / takes too long answering questions / i have to repeat questions several times in her transition to Secondary Staff at her Primary 7 staff FORGOT to give the relevant information to her Secondary school that she had Dyslexia or had hearing loss.

Her Secondary school have known since September when i had phoned up to enquire what support my daughter was receiving and found out they didn’t even know. Even though they received the Relevant paperwork from her Primary school they said she would have to be retested, this dyslexia assessment test that was done in October.. it is now February and still no support in place for her despite them knowing she was diagnosed previously ! Despite me asking every other week if they have the results

This is my / my child's experience but i am sure i am not the only one.

The Hutton Family

Home Educating a Child (known as C) with High Functioning Autism/Speech and Language Impairment/Pathological Demand Avoidance/Sensory Processing Disorder due to our experience in education

We experienced discrimination from our first school of choice during the application stage. It was clear from the silence and non-engagement of management that our child was not welcome. We already had a neuro typical child doing well at this school.

We opted to stay at the school where our child was already attending nursery but this didn’t prove any better.

Following a particularly intimating meeting in our school, we raised a complaint with the Education Service (West Fife) in January 2014. In this complaint we advised that if actions were not taken to support our child with Autism immediately and improvements were not made immediately then we would withdraw him to home educate. We had never considered home educating previously but we had to do what was right for our child and that was to take him away from the system that was meant to educate him but was doing him more harm than good. We tried our very best to get him the right support at school but our efforts sent us in circles of endless grief and was having an impact on our family life/overall health/employment.

What we now know as false promises were made by Fife Council as a result of our complaint however we did not see an improvement in the support offered to our child who at this time was in Primary 1 but instead his health was deteriorating. He was
losing weight and becoming incredibly anxious adding to his existing challenges. Despite our efforts to assist him at home after school he was clearly already behind his peers due to lack of support but of course no one within our school would admit this. (They were scared to tell us) We are a family who have always been very supportive of education however we could see negative changes in our child by 6 months. Not being satisfied at our complaint outcome we contact SPSO who further upheld our complaint.

Teaching staff (at the threat of Fife Council) fed inaccurate information back to health services which meant there were massive delays in getting a diagnosis for our child. We now know (and have proof) that Education did not want our child diagnosed as this would then mean they would have to provide the required support. Two autism assessments involving feedback from education staff proved inconclusive in outcome, we now know that this was due to the inaccurate/inadequate information provided by Fife Council. A third assessment completed without education input enabled us to get a diagnosis less than 4 months after commencing Home Education, on this occasion a disability trained sports instructor gave feedback instead.

Fife Council done everything in it power to run us around in circles. We already had a child who needed an immense amount of additional help at home and from health professionals. Fife Council made our lives unbearable. Telling us they were there to help but in fact they were making our lives more and more difficult.

We applied for Mediation. Our council tried to avoid this previously. Instead of it being the impartial service suggested it was far from this. The Official even mentioned on one occasion she was a friend of the Head of Service at the time?! During the mediation meeting another official withdrew the little support our child was supposed to be getting at break times therefore changing the course of the meeting entirely. The Official told us that we were not going to get what we wanted, so what is the point of the mediator? It’s certainly not her place to say if we should or should not be able to access support. It’s a waste of time.

We then applied for Independent Adjudication. This was our last attempt to try and get the right support but we found the experience a waste of time and insulting to say the least. The adjudicator appointed just backed up Fife Council’s decision. It’s also a waste of time.

The overall impression we got is that councils will not provide correct support for High functioning autism unless that child has hugely disruptive behaviours impacting on the rest of the class, is that far behind it is unlikely they will ever catch up or indeed has no family support therefore their condition is not being managed from home. Support staffs have little to no training on high functioning autism or invisible disabilities in general so even you if get support its likely with a PSA who is without any form of formal training or who is being forced to do the job of 3 others at the same time!

Children with high functioning autism are not suitable for special needs schools as they are very capable with the right help. They need understanding and for the majority they can mask difficulties but this in itself accumulates to anxiety if not
recognised at an early age and if not dealt with correctly will result in severe problems in later life.

As a family we were disgusted with the treatment we got from Fife Education service and more so with the attitude of the two schools we were in contact with.

To summarise staff are forced by employers to hold back information for fear they will be disciplined, they are simply there to tick boxes not to truly listen and engage with parents and needs of children, none of the staff we encountered within education can accept constructive criticism but instead get very defensive also a common trend we noticed when dealing with senior education professionals when looking for support. The education system is causing additional needs children more problems by not embracing the need but ignoring it.

Wiping a problem under a carpet in the long term is going to cost more, the Scottish government need to address this. Our child will most likely continue to be Home Educated for the rest of his schooling years while we reside in Scotland but we will ensure that he does reach his potential.

**Heather Henderson**

I have an 8 year old son who has Autism.

The 'presumption of mainstream' education is completely detrimental to some children on the Autism Spectrum and is not 'Getting It Right For Every Child'.

We stay in Barrhead, East Renfrewshire and my son has a split-placement between mainstream school and communication centre.

I disagree with split-placements and how the education system works just now.

People with autism see the world completely different to the 'neuro-typical' - so that would mean they learn things differently, they understand things differently, they cope with things differently - and this is life-long! This is not something that can be 'fixed' by giving a few hours of the correct support in an environment that does work (I.e. Communication Centre) and then expecting kids to go into the complete opposite environment (mainstream) and be able to cope and integrate into the mainstream teaching environment.

A lot of children who are on the spectrum are being 'lost' in the mainstream environment and a large number (including my son) spend a significant part of their school day in solitary conditions and not in the classroom, either spending significant time in 'sensory rooms' 'safe rooms' 'softplay rooms' etc, but yet this seems to be acceptable and parents are told 'but your child is accessing the curriculum'.

In what kind of capacity though are these children 'accessing the curriculum' and are they fulfilling their potential?
I think not.

In my opinion, all local authorities in Scotland should have an autism school, with none of this split-placement nonsense.

I want my child to grow up in a class of like-minded peers, with peers that have similar needs and to build a relationship with all those in his class so they can learn and develop together, in the correct environment for their needs, not to be 'inclusive' taught (one size fits all) but to be respected and accepted that he does see and learn from the world differently and that is good! Not to be shipped about from class to class not really belonging anywhere.

(That's not to say that I'm against children with special needs being taught in a mainstream school, if that is the parents and the child's wishes then every possible support should be made available but the key here is choice, in Scotland that isn’t the case!) There should be a variety of education options for children with additional support needs and it should be parents who make the decision of where and in what environment their child with additional support needs is taught with advice from class-teachers, nursery staff, support workers and those who work with the child daily, not the decision of some panel who have never worked with the child and with no choice given to parents or to the child.

**ANON**

My daughter was diagnosed age 6 with agenesis of the corpus callosum, growth hormone deficiency and pituitary issues. She had struggled with certain parts of school since starting in particular physical education in p1 and p2. P2 was the beginning of her struggles with maths and anxiety around this subject.

I had to request a meeting at the school with Educational Psychologist as I had repeated told her teacher she was struggling. The ed psych said then she was coping with the curriculum and was being provided concrete objects for maths. I was advised this would be reviewed in a few months as they were unsure how much her condition impacted on her learning.

She continued to become more anxious at school especially if there were unplanned changes or a new teacher. I again had to request a meeting to see if the additional support had to change. It was over 6 months since last meeting.

This continued with the school. I was assured going into p3 all information about her condition that I had researched and handed into the teachers would be passed on to the new teacher. My daughter continued to struggle settling into P3 and anxiety levels increased. When it came to parents evening three months later I was told struggling with maths and is anxious all the things I had already stated. I asked the teacher if she knew about condition she replied no. I phoned the head teacher to complain about this and I was told the teacher was fully aware of her condition!
This sort of behaviour from the head teacher continued with my daughter receiving very minimal support and struggling on a daily basis. School saying they will do x, y and z and most of it didn’t happen.

My daughter became more and more anxious and her behaviour at home before and after school escalated.

She was diagnosed in p5 age 9 with Asperger’s. I called the head teacher to give her the information and ask for better supports. I was told a diagnosis doesn’t change anything.

She had been already school refusing. The teachers maintained she was coping "fine"!

Her mental health deteriorated rapidly and she was becoming depressed anxious and suicidal. She was then given a little more support which helped for a short period. Then P6 School refused for 6 months and had a mental breakdown.

We are now having to home educate our daughter as she was failed so badly she couldn’t leave the house.

Her mental health is improving and she is starting to engage in the world around her.

We were all put through a stressful horrific experience. School eventually contacted social services which caused even more family stress. The school failed her and caused her to school refuse then the school have the audacity to refer us to social services for non-attendance.

The school repeatedly said they would provide supports that didn’t materialise. Told blatant lies. Not once did they come up with any ideas or strategies to help my daughter. Every idea/ strategy came from me as her mum. School also didn’t always follow through with these and my daughter knew the school didn’t ever do what they said they would. She didn’t trust them and also didn’t feel safe in school.

This was a horrible time for my daughter and our whole family that could have been avoided if my daughter had received the correct support in primary two when I first told them how much she was struggling.

Jill Marshall

As both a parent of a child with additional needs and a teacher in a mainstream secondary school I can confirm that my views are we are not doing enough to support our pupils with additional needs. Funding and staffing has been cut to the bare bones and pupils are unable to get the support the both deserve and need. Class sizes are at their maximum and teachers are stretched beyond their capabilities trying to assure they might the needs of all pupils. It takes too long to get the support into schools once a child is diagnosed. My son has been diagnosed with Autism in November primary 1 and, while the school is doing everything possible to
support him, I have been warned if we are successful i getting him support hours it will be primary 2 before anyone would start.

It is vital more money is given to supporting the children who need it most as all these budget cuts have affected these children most.

**ANON**

I am dyslexic, and two of my children have been diagnosed with dyslexia also. My other child has not been diagnosed, but I suspect that is because the school do not want to have to provide him with any support as it would eat into their ever-dwindling budget.

When my eldest child was diagnosed in primary 2, the additional support teacher at that time was very knowledgeable and supportive. When my second child stated school the following year, she picked up his dyslexia straight away. However, she left the school a few years later and the support seemed to reduce. It clearly was considered a drain on resources by the then head teacher (in retrospect, I am not even sure he thought it was a thing). My second child who is more severely dyslexic had his symptoms (limited attention span and struggling to process information) repositioned as bad behaviour. His already low esteem at knowing he was different to everyone else made him very self-conscious. He referred to himself as stupid and an idiot, the teaching staff seemed to endorse this. He was in more and more trouble, was being bullied by other boys who even came to our home, broke the windows of our car and sent him death threats. The school dismissed this as being his own fault, because he was always misbehaving. He ended up seeing a councillor at CAMHS for low self-esteem. I saw this happen to another child, who was also severely dyslexic and classified as badly behaved. In high school, both he and my son have struggled to trust the teachers, neither of them have fulfilled their full potential. I am not sure how many other children are the same.

By the time my second child had left primary school, the school had decided he was not dyslexic and did not pass any information onto the high school. We did not release this until after his first parents evening, some months into the first school year; as a result, he went without support all this time. We had to press to have him tested again, where it was again confirmed he was dyslexic. Of course, all of this could have been avoided had the head teacher of the primary school not been so judgmental and arrogant.

During his last years of primary school, we paid for a tutor who specialised in dyslexia and he went once a week – he found this hugely beneficial and it helped his confidence enormously and he made progress in his classwork. It cost us £40 every week - £160 a month. As we have 3 children, we could not sustain this for longer than a few years.

Support is better in high school, but the approach of waiting to see how they cope without support does not suit all dyslexic children. When I was at university, I was given a bursary for equipment that would support me (like a lap top, reading software, proof-reader etc.), but pupils in high school or primary get nothing! They
cannot even use a laptop in class unless the parents provide it! The kids are offered an alpha smart, which is so clunky it really is no use at all. So, they have to struggle by themselves, with no equipment and no additional support. Although, they do get to use a computer for exams – but as they are not used to using one, this is not a smooth transition. I have had to spend time going over word, how to set it up, use it and access UK spell check (rather than US by default) as well as asking them to practice typing to be time effective and confident in their skills. They also get extra time in exams which are really handy.

But, although they can use the computer for exams, where work is written on word and spellcheck can be used, that is not true of French! If my kids can't spell in English, then what chance do they have in French! We were told that is spellcheck was used in French, that would be cheating – so no help at all for dyslexics in languages? Believe me, if it wasn’t for spell check – this letter would be tricky to follow! I still do not know how to spell, despite being highly educated.

In summary, kids with dyslexia have low self-esteem, are aware from a very young age that they are different and this makes them feel inferior, they get very little support in school and where in the worst-case scenario dyslexia symptoms are considered as bad behaviour and punished. There are very limited budgets for additional support in schools, in terms of equipment or staff. More one to one with staff trained in dyslexia would be useful, as would access to IT equipment. For example, in my elder children’s school all kids in S4 were given an iPad – very useful for my daughter in S4 who is dyslexic – but it could have been helpful to her in S1, S2 and S3 as well, when she had to struggle with no help. Similarly, my son in S2 has no access to IT despite this being useful to support his learning.

I did not realise I was dyslexic until I was 40, it was after my first child was diagnosed and I started reading around the topic, I realised I was also dyslexic. At the time, I was in 4th year at university and I went to the disability service where I was formally diagnosed. I could not have gone to university straight from school, I had to learn coping strategies to learn and study. I felt stupid all through school, was in remedial classes in high school and teachers spoke down to me because of my lack of ability. I too had a low attention span a spent a lot of time day dreaming, a typical dyslexic trait as concentrating is hard. It was not until I performed well at university that I started to think I may not be stupid after all. If we can help children avoid that through appropriate support, then that would be brilliant. I am not alone; I know plenty other parents who were also undiagnosed dyslexics and felt stupid throughout school and it has had a detrimental impact on their sense of self. Many of them have under achieved their full potential. Surely we can do better for the next generation?

ANON

I have 2 daughters, high school age, both with support needs. Daughter 1 has ASD, is impeccably behaved in school so her needs are over looked as she’s not creating a fuss. Daughter 2 has a variety of needs, a lot of her teachers haven't bothered to read her support plan & know nothing about her needs so she is misunderstood and judged unfairly. There are too many children in classes with additional support needs that aren't getting the support they need, the other children in the class (some with
support needs themselves) are suffering. Kids are disrupting classes constantly and nothing is done. How is a child with additional support needs meant to learn in such an environment? And as for keeping a child with additional support needs safe?!?! They don't!

**Karen McKeown**

I would like to tell u a bit about my own personal school experience, my experience in fighting for support for my son who has autism and also the constant fight my sister has had to go through for her children to get an education. The system has truly failed more than 1 members of our family and can't stand back any long I have started a online petition on a review how additional needs children are supposed in school.

My own experience at school being dyslexic always made feel stupid. I had little to no support at school until I went to them and ask for a reader and scribe for my exam as I could not read (no one had pick it up). I was told no and then has to fight for it. When it came to my 5th year I was put in a English class that would not allow me to better my grade. 15 years on and I feel still nothing has changed. It has took my 2 year to fight for my son support in school and I am still made to feel like I do not know my child. I would also say he still does not have all the support he needs to provide a proper education.

Now I will move onto my sister struggle with education. For year her son who has asd has been sent home and excluded from school for week. I would say this is not managing the situation and putting strategies in place they send him home. At 1 point 1 son was only receiving 2 hour of school a day and this was in primary. The incident on our petition has been the breaking point and do not want another child to go through this. I hope u find my comment useful as we want change. We want education to start getting it right for our children because at this point they are failing them.

**ANON**

My son is currently in primary 1 and is on the autism spectrum. He is mainstream as he did not receive a supported place in an autism base or enhanced provision unit as there are not enough spaces. He needs full time 1 to 1 support from a support teacher during class time and break time in order to attend mainstream school, but as there is no budget for him he only attends school on a part time basis when support teachers can be available. His desk is in the hallway outside the classroom door due to sensory sensitivities. He is gifted in maths and two points below gifted in reading but missing out on schooling due to a lack of available support. We are again applying for additional support for him this time for primary 2. The application was submitted in October 2016 and I am still waiting to hear back about whether he will get support next year. His current support has been put in place by the head teacher and not guaranteed for next year. Currently I am unable to work as my son attends school only in the mornings, and if he is awarded support to go full time I will still need to give him a home lunch due to a lack of support during lunchtime.
This situation has placed a great amount of stress on our whole family.

**ANON**

My daughter is currently in her preschool year of nursery. She was identified as having additional needs prior to starting nursery and was diagnosed with autism around three months after she began there.

We have had fantastic support for her in nursery and she has come on leaps and bounds. She has a one to one SFLA for five hours per week and input from speech therapy plus an amazing key worker.

However as she approaches P1, I am worried about how she will manage in mainstream school. I believe mainstream with support to be the best option for her but due to cuts over the last few years, there is barely any support for children with additional needs left in mainstream schools. I understand that Mr Swinney is of the opinion that these cuts have not been made but this is either a blatant untruth or he is worryingly unaware of what is going on in schools.

My daughter has problems with understanding and expressing language, motor skills, sensory sensitivities, attention, following demands, just to name some of her difficulties. She will in no way be able to reach her potential without additional support in school. Currently in P1 at the school she will attend, there is one SfLA for around 100 children. This then reduces as she moves through the school.

I also admin for a Facebook group for parents of girls with autism. There are countless stories on there of children's needs not being met in Scotland's schools. In some cases, placements have broken down completely and there are children who don't have any school placement at all. One parent was told there were hundreds of children in this situation just across Edinburgh.

GIRFEC is not being implemented properly due to lack of resources and poor training of staff in some areas. I understand this is a challenge but am deeply disappointed that this problem is continually denied in parliament and that Mr Swinney makes out as if improvements are being made, when in fact the situation is worsening each year. At least admit the situation exists so that moves can be made to rectify it.

**ANON**

My son is 6 and a half. We live in West Lothian. He has nystagmus and is registered partially sighted. He is not receiving any 1:1 support in class so is falling behind. He would benefit from touch typing and possibly CCTV and also some giant print books (at least font 36) and access to an ipad/ tablet which can be linked to Smart Board (he can't see board from his seat). A slope board and strong light would also help when he's writing. There also needs to be training for teacher and school staff,
including gym teachers, playground and lunch hall staff, so that they understand the social impact as well as the practical, which would in turn help raise more general awareness. I am considering a complaint to the ASL service and copying in our Education Board. I have been struggling to get him the right support and understanding since nursery. He's in P2 and I am considering home schooling but don't want him missing out on social side. He was excluded near the end of P1 for hitting a girl in his class but no one saw it or could tell me the circumstances. He has never hit another child so I think he has caught her accidently, maybe too close to her or mucking about. A complete lack of understanding of his disability.

**ANON**

I have 4 children from P1-P7. None of them have any support needs and we are fortunate as they are all academic with no numeracy or literacy issues at all.

The problem they have is simple. State education in Scotland appears to invest huge amounts, and rightly so, on kids who struggle and have learning difficulties. However, there seems to be very little time or investment given to stretch and challenge kids at the opposite end of the spectrum which seems to me to creating a Scotland where kids are being "dumbed down". I end up giving my children extra at home, just to challenge them. This could be as simple as playing more complex card games or learning a language. Their thirst to learn isn't being satisfied by their schooling. We often do activities on Friday afternoons as they do not need Friday afternoons off school and love learning.

Able children finish their work or tasks but there aren't the resources to take them further. In Edinburgh this means that families with academic kids feel forced to remove them from state and put them into private education which then has a knock on effect on state education.

All children in Scotland should have the investment to enable them to reach their full potential, across the board.

**ANON**

Our son has a social communication disorder and has received additional support since before he started primary school. On entry to primary school he received daily support and has made good progress with this support. However, this school year has seen a major cut to school support staff and thus he no longer receives daily support, his support is on one day only for reduced hours.

He attends our local village school which is a two-teacher rural primary. This means that he is in a multi composite class, primary 5, 6 and 7. The class teacher has no support for photocopying, making teaching resources and all the administration tasks previously done by classroom assistants, never mind the reduction in hours for learning support.
We have started to notice a difference in his confidence in different areas of the curriculum and his attainment levels have dropped. He has also moved down a group for spelling.

These final years of primary school are critical ones and we feel very strongly that he is being set up to fail by the education system in Dumfries and Galloway. We would like to see a reversal of the cuts to classroom assistants and learning support to ensure the continuing support and thereby the progress of all children including our son. Classroom assistants not only carried out administration tasks but supported learners under the direction of class teachers, they are an essential component of our primary schools.

We appreciate that the reversal of the above decisions may prove difficult in the current financial climate but if we want the best for our children we must invest in their education to ensure they reach their full potential. Therefore, we are asking for your help in this matter, we want our son to be literate, numerate and able to be active members of society.

**ANON**

My 14 year old son has recently been lately diagnosed with dyslexia and dyscalcula. He has been assessed at highly at risk of both learning difficulties with a spelling/writing age of age 9.

This diagnosis has been completely missed in primary school where he was in the top sets for reading and maths until he moved to high school.

I am shocked to be informed that for the whole academy he now attends there is only one learning support teacher for children with additional needs and therefore they are unable to offer any additional interventions.

I was informed at a meeting with the school that Scotland as a nation has low outcomes in maths, and furthermore if a child hasn’t gained the basic learning blocks by the time they leave primary school there is little that high school education can do to help.

It appears that my son’s education and future life opportunities have been written off due to lack of resources and interventions available to assist children with additional learning needs.

**Maureen Hawkins**

I have a son with Asd in mainstream school. He is 7 years old. His mental health is being affected due to; not enough support staff within classes or time to help my son academically. He is falling behind because they don’t have enough TRAINED staff in class to deal with meltdowns or to deliver different strategies. Not enough funding or enough teachers. Complete viscous circle. He hates school and begs not to go. We need positive improvements now!
Rachel Legg

I think the additional support for learning in children’s primary schools is a disgrace. My daughter suffers from a rare chromosome condition with this condition it affects her learning so she was getting 4 hours of additional support for learning every week. This has now been taken away from her due to staffing issues. She now refuses to do any work and gets it sent home at the end of each day for her to do it at home. This was taken away without me knowing anything about this for four months which is totally out of order. She now cries when we get her dressed in the morning to go to school because she knows she can’t do the work. She is only 6 years old and in primary 2.

ANON

Unfortunately it seems as though support is much less visible in mainstream classes in the current climate. This is undoubtedly down to budgets. Moreover, the latter has caused an increase in class sizes which is never a good thing for any child let alone one with additional needs.

My son is dyslexic and I had to fight to get an early identification. He had some additional support in school which then became non-existent when the learning support teacher went off sick.

He then received virtually no additional support until he was put in a class of 33 pupils five years down the line where he now gets some support with spelling.

As a family we felt no option other than to pay for private tuition to ensure that he wasn’t falling behind his peers. We have now done this for several years. He is a bright boy and it is not his fault that he has an additional need.

I am not alone in this scenario. A friend of mine felt no option other than to send her child to a private school as she did not believe that his needs were being adequately met. He is also dyslexic.

We have also had to spend a great deal of time tutoring him ourselves at home to ensure his grasp of literacy and numeracy is as good as it should be for his age and stage.

He is doing well now but I thoroughly believe that this would be a completely different story if he came from a different home. The agenda is apparently all about closing the gap. As far as I can work out that gap would have been an abyss had he come from a different background.

Sharon Alston

I can only speak from personal experience; however, if my experience is typical I would say there is a significant problem in our education system which is not enabling our children to reach their full potential. I have had experience of both primary and secondary, unfortunately both have been lacking.
I have two children, both with additional support needs. We have had to pursue ASN meetings for both children, and in two years of secondary education not one meeting has been prompted by the school. My daughter who is dyslexic and has dyscalculia is in second year, in secondary school the teachers don't familiarise themselves sufficiently with the children's individual needs. There is access to laptops, but these are not located in class but within the ASN base, to expect a child to go and collect a laptop (providing one is free) and return to a 50 minute class defeats the point. There are no prepared worksheets which mean the dyslexic children spend more time in class writing out the problem than actual working on the problem. A recent example, we were advised to buy a second copy of a maths workbook to save our child wasting time, this was only after our child voiced concern they were getting behind in class, had she not done so she would have just been left to struggle on.

In primary, we had to complain to the local authority to get our child access to read write gold, the school had licensing and IT issues which they weren't resolving. This issue was ongoing over two years.

In respect of actual addition support, this is non-existent; our son who is in primary seven and has an ASD diagnosis gets no additional support despite having issues with literacy. We are currently spending £30 per week for private tutoring to keep him in line with his peers. This has been in place for over 12 months and will be even more necessary once he starts secondary this year. When he did get additional support from the school it was for 1/2 hour per week in a group of 5, completely pointless as it wasn't specifically designed for the individual child so was no more than a tick box exercise.

We fully anticipate having to fund tutoring for both children long term, not to give them an advantage, but simply to fill the gap that isn't being filled by the education system.

To say we feel totally let down by the system is an understatement, the issues are long and I simply highlighted a few points.

We are letting these children down; they have potential that just isn't being realised. It's crushing as a parent not being able to help and feeling that you have to fight the system every step of the way.

**ANON**

My son is 8 and has brittle bone disease, and is a power wheelchair user. He attends a mainstream school with support. We are lucky that he has received unquestioning support since the beginning of his time in nursery. I help out now with children with autism and I'm very aware that they are being let down by inadequate provision and lack of support for their child. I believe this is purely down to finances rather than the needs of the child.
1. The matching of children with their 1:1 support. This is done based on the staff available rather than particular skills/qualities. Each child is unique but it always feels that it is just an exercise in juggling support staff and the finances involved. The experience most 1:1s have is in children with learning difficulties. What I want from a 1:1 is understanding of the importance of developing independence in a child with a physical disability. Instead they tend to be over-protective to the detriment of helping a child develop relationships and build their confidence. There is a child in my son’s school who is deaf whose parent has had to individually go out and find support for her son that can sign as the 1:1 provided by the school did not have this skill set!

2. Temporary contracts - this is an issue in East Lothian as most 1:1s are employed on this basis. This means that my son best 1:1 who was young and had specialised training moved on as she couldn’t get a mortgage with the uncertainty of her contract being renewed every 6 months. This means losing good members of staff.

3. Undervalued staff - as well being on temporary contracts 1:1s also don’t tend to get any additional training or included in in service training. This should be encouraged. I know of cases where this has again been arranged by a parent for a child with a specific condition where the school has not actively explored ways of working with that child that are most appropriate to him.

4. Lack of communication between 1:1 and home. There is no consistency in the way 1:1s communicate with home.

ANON

It was brought to my attention early on that my 8 year old son was intelligent and a very able pupil. It was agreed that he would be pushed and that he would be given more difficult work to maintain his interest and I was happy with that.

Last year however, his class teacher brought to my attention that my son was ‘exceptionally’ able and that he was struggling to challenge him. He had approached the head teacher asking for additional support e.g. additional classes for able students, to be told there was no budget to accommodate this. He was concerned as he had seen signs that my son was losing interest in school through boredom, signs I had also seen myself.

I decided to contact the head teacher myself who confirmed she was aware of my son’s abilities but was unsure of how to proceed. She advised she would consult an educational psychologist and assess the way forward after that year’s chem tests.

His chem test results 3 months later showed his understanding was several years ahead in almost all areas. Based on this she again said she would contact an educational psychologist. My initial contact with her was almost one year ago and I have received no further support for my child, nor any contact from the psychologist.

To be clear, my issue is not with the individual, my concern is that across the board, it appears to be the case that it is clear that if a child has ‘additional needs’ in the
traditional sense e.g. requires extra support to learn and progress, whether it be autism, ADHD, behavioural issues, the schools appear to trip over themselves to facilitate this, yet when a gifted child is looking for additional support and opportunities, there is a distinct lack of concern or accountability. I find this unfathomable—when did we stop encouraging success and excellence??

**Carolyn Casey**

My comments would be this lacks individualized support. It is very broad and not to the child. I have also some concerns re every child reaching their potential. This in my opinion is not entirely encouraged or supported. All a bit of a tick box exercise with no substance.

**ANON**

I am writing as a parent of a teenage daughter with a diagnosis of autism. I also work as a teacher. My daughter had difficulties adjusting to a mainstream setting more or less right from the start of her time in formal education, aged approximately 3 yrs. Since then, she has been in and out of mainstream school and has overall had a very difficult time.

Our daughter is academically very able, and throughout school her difficulties have mainly focused on social interaction and sensory needs. She can’t cope at all with very noisy environments, and struggles with group settings. This, as you can imagine, makes a number of aspects of mainstream school very difficult. Things that have caused difficulties included, but are not limited to:

- Being unable to handle classroom noises and smells e.g. chairs scraping on floors, smell of whiteboard pens
- Being unable to cope with crowds including crowded corridors
- Struggling with mean behavior
- Uniform - sensory issues made it difficult to find things that she could wear comfortably

Some of these things caused her to moan or yell loudly, and occasionally when very stressed to lash out. If you have ever experienced an autistic child having a meltdown or going into a catatonic state, this sadly was a frequent occurrence.

Nevertheless with support from classroom assistants, some adjustments to the immediate environment and frequent review meetings, she remained in this large mainstream primary for most of the time between P1-P5, though there were large stretches of time where it was quite a miserable experience and was certainly a stressful time for the family.

By P6 things had got so difficult that both us and the school were concerned about her mental health, and we removed her from school temporarily and homeschooled her with the help of family. She was immediately much happier and responded to this
well - the main problem was that as working parents it is difficult to also have a child at home. We briefly reintegrated her to P7 but again things went very badly and she was very distressed, leading us to pull her out of school again. For the remainder of her P7 year, North Ayrshire Council provided tutors home for approx 4 hours per week. This was quite a disorganised process - there was little communication with or among the tutors and it was never very clear what the learning objectives were; however she was undoubtedly much more comfortable being in the home environment.

We then attempted to settle our daughter at one of the nearby mainstream secondary schools, Largs Academy, but the same issues immediately flared up again, worse than ever - she was unable to cope with the interaction, noise and busyness of the school building, with the added difficulty of travel (although NAC did fund transport by taxi, but this was stressful for her in any case) and a new unfamiliar building. We rapidly withdrew her.

Fortunately soon after this we came across an online school - there are actually several, but we found one that seemed to fit our needs. Other than being based in Wales and therefore not using the Scottish curriculum, it seemed to fit her needs perfectly - a structured syllabus to follow in the company of peers, but done entirely via webinars from home, therefore eliminating the stresses of noise, bullying etc, but following a structured timetable, taught by professional teachers and as part of a class of peers. It is now a year and half since we enrolled our daughter at an online school and the change in her has been remarkable. Without the daily problems and stresses of the school setting, she is generally a lot calmer and able to tackle challenges that she couldn’t before, including doing a lot of art, coding, hiking and creative writing in her spare time.

Sadly, the local authority have not supported any aspect of this process. Given that the online school had led to a radical improvement in her education and wellbeing and she was unable to cope with the mainstream alternative, we made what seemed to be a reasonable request - that they pay the £3000/year fees for the online school, or find/provide an equivalent. This amounts to less than they were paying for taxis to transport her to an inappropriate mainstream school, and certainly less than the cost of a year’s mainstream or special needs schooling. We tried to argue our case, but they refused to see things from our point of view and in the end it was too stressful to continue to argue, so we signed a letter to say that we were homeschooling her. In our view we are not homeschooling our daughter - we have enrolled her in an online independent school that meets her educational needs, because the local authority failed to do so.

What are your views?
For me, the key aspect to supporting an autistic child well is to show some flexibility in how they are educated. Every child is different, but when you are dealing with ASN children they differ in ways that are not always predictable and their needs are varied and individual. It has always felt like the local council were only willing to use a set of pre-determined strategies to support our daughter such as visual timetables and structured routines, rather than getting to know our child or listening to us. Staff were hardly ever proactive, and the majority of the educational psychologists we encountered seemed to lack technical knowledge, with views that often seemed to
derive from 1950s behaviourist psychology - for example that our child’s behaviour should be modified by reward and punishment.

I think that there should be far better training and staffing, and ASN children should always have access to more than one educational psychology to improve continuity. Ideally, each school should have an edpsych in the building/support base, but an additional external psychologist should come to review meetings to provide another perspective. Teachers should get regular training updates in autistic spectrum disorders, including the issues that specifically pertain to girls on the autistic spectrum.

It also feels deeply unjust that we are struggling to pay for online schooling when it was not our choice, but is the only solution we have found that meets our daughter’s needs and avoids jeopardising her mental health. This is an example of how the education system needs to be forward-thinking and find new, creative solutions - if our daughter’s situation is typical, then the state is spending a vast sum of money sending children to settings which are inappropriate.

Another aspect of our case, as noted above, is that we were advised that special schools are inappropriate for academically strong pupils. It’s really not uncommon for pupils with Asperger’s/autism to be very capable academically, even much beyond the norm, and to have special interest that motivate them - children like my daughter are bright and should be able to contribute without being neurotypical.

It seems to me (as a parent and teacher, but also as a psychology graduate and education researcher) that we need to move away from a one-size-fits-all model of schooling and find a broader range of ways of getting the best out of children. Online schooling or a “flexi-schooling” fusion (some time in school and some at home) could be one potential model, not just for those with issues like my daughter, but anyone with problems such as chronic fatigue, social phobias, immune system conditions, narcolepsy or a host of other issues. And it could actually save the state money and make it easier to offer a broad curriculum. There are other models too, though - for example smaller/different school buildings, forest schools, etc. Online schooling doesn’t have to be done in the home - it could be run from a council library setting for example, or even a school library. Sadly there seems to be a lack of flexibility in the model of how schooling is delivered. The mainstream model didn’t work for my daughter - and clearly it is not working for a lot of other children with various ASN, or who lack academic support in the home - and it is time for us as a society to be more flexible.

**Anne Mitchell**

My son has significant difficulties producing, understanding and processing language which affects his learning all over the curriculum and often and can have challenging behaviour as he gets very frustrated he attended speech and language school from p1-p3 as they don’t take pupils older so he had to change school his additional needs profile was sent to inclusions who decided he could go to local mainstream and would be given all the support he needed and head of support for learning
where aware of the decision and a plan put in place this has not being the case at all in fact head of his mainstream school had blamed me they said I should have known this when I decided to send him to mainstream they have made it clear they don't think he should be there he has been allocated 1-2 a week specialist teaching and has been put in a class of 32 with 1 teacher was told they wouldn't bring another support teacher to give him 1/1 all day just for him which I never suggested they should but obviously they felt he needs none of the teachers in the school have any understanding of His difficulties and have no idea on how best to teach him in a way he understands he's often sent out during class to head teachers office or a room they call the grounding room or he's kept in at play time and lunchtime have asked them to involve edphsychologist which they won't I was told I would get review meetings regularly have asked 5 times since Sep each time told al get one soon still waiting at parents evening all the pupils works where laid out in folders for parents to see what they were doing no folder for my son I feel very let down that no one at inclusions has checked to see if he is getting the support he needs and if there is and additional support plan which I don't think there is why are they not informing me more needs to be done as my son like all the other children at the school deserves to be given the support they need to help their learning instead of ignoring the needs of a child because they need a lot of help.

Gayle Paris

Our daughter is 7 years old. She has Additional Needs (AN) due to her having cerebral palsy and attends a mainstream primary school in the Falkirk Council (FC) area. She receives additional support (AS) from Additional Support Needs Assistants (ASNA) to allow her to participate and fully benefit from Primary Education in the same way as her peers do. This report details our experiences with Local Authority (LA) provision,

THE SYSTEM

Enrolment
When enrolling in schools, many parents find their catchment school is not suitable for their child and they either have to look at specialist schools, or find a mainstream school which can meet their child’s needs. This means entering the lottery of placing request. This year particularly, the request system has failed. Many mainstream schools are refusing to take children who require a high level of support, adding pressure on the specialist places available.

When submitting a placing request, children with AN are considered as part of the overall placing for all children in the FC area. This results in parents being advised of a place with only 15 weeks to work with the school and their child’s professional team to make sure adequate support (and in some cases equipment) is in place. This time is eroded further if the parent submits an appeal. This is not long enough. Our daughter had to bring her own toilet seat with her on her first day at school. She
did not have the correct seating and there were no staff trained in the correct moving and handling techniques. This was due to the lack of time available to do effective transition.

Allocations
Within the Falkirk Council area, there are some fundamental flaws with the way AS is allocated to children. Previously, an assessment was done for any child identified as requiring support and a number of hours was allocated for that child. These hours along with an additional "general allowance" were given to the school. This changed just as our daughter was beginning primary school and now several Key Indicators are used to decide how many hours are allocated to the school. No assessment is made for individual children and the type of support they might require.

These include:
- number of children requiring support
- proposed school roll
- current staff to pupil ratio,
- number of children entitled to free school meals

According to FC, this allows the school to allocate hours as they see fit and avoids ASNA being prevented from assisting other children because the allocated hours are for a certain individual. Whilst it is always preferable to allow schools to have more autonomy, this system does not take into account the needs of individuals. A school which has 5 children requiring a relatively high level of support receives the same number of hours as a school with 5 children requiring minimal support. LAs need to be more proactive in assessing children’s needs on entering the system and review this regularly. I understand this assessment IS carried out and an allocation made for children if their needs are identified after they begin school, or when moving to a new school. This disconnect is difficult to reconcile.

The LA has struggled to place children appropriately and in my opinion, this has been a direct result of the lack of ASNA in mainstream schools.

Autonomy and Accountability
The current system across Scotland encourages autonomy. LAs have autonomy from the Government; Schools have autonomy from the LA. For the most part this is beneficial as micromanagement of Schools can be a real problem. The disadvantage of autonomy is a lack of accountability. When complaining about failures in AS, parents initially go to the school, who maintain they are unable to do more because of lack resources from the LA. When talking to the LA, we are told it’s all down to funding and actually the LA is meeting their responsibilities within the government guidelines. The Scottish Government has wholly refused to accept any responsibility and instead answer every letter with a standard message about what our rights are and that this is a LA issue. I wrote to John Swinney about this recently and the response was patronising, and offensive, and basically told me he was clueless about what was really going on in schools across the nation, which he is supposed to be in charge of.
Somebody has to be accountable for the delivery of ASNA in Scotland. The issues we face in Falkirk are replicated in every single LA in Scotland. Indeed, some have it much worse than we do, but very few have it any better. There is a systematic failure in the provision of ASNA all across Scotland and the Government must step in to address it. LAs need to be given regulatory standards for provision and budgets must be ring-fenced to avoid money being spent elsewhere in the LA rather than on ASNA in schools.

The lack of proper guidance and too much autonomy also results in provision within a single LA area being inconsistent. How children are supported depends very much on the attitude of the individual school management team. Sometimes there is a problem due to a lack of knowledge but more often there is a reluctance to engage with parents and professional teams to best support each child. There is a “them and us” attitude coming from the schools and parents are made out to be the problem rather than part of the solution.

RESOURCES

By far the biggest challenge faced by schools in adequately supporting children is the lack of available resource. The problem is twofold. A lack of additional support numbers allocated, and a lack of provision for auxiliary services generally.

FC has had a year on year decrease in the number of ASNA hours allocated to it’s schools since 2014. Last year the 2016 ASNA budget was slashed by 16% resulting in a loss of 2000 hours, saving around £740k. This was despite the education budget being underspent by £1.9 million. The money was allocated to Social Work, which was over budget. The Council is proposing making the same cuts again in this year’s budget. If successful this means that in just two years, the additional support provision within the LA will have been reduced by nearly one third. This is despite the number of children requiring support increasing.

Further cuts to School’s budgets also mean that auxiliary staff are being cut. People who carry out functions such as playground duty, medical room assistance, administrative duties, setting up for assemblies and shows etc. – these no longer exist anymore and so ASNA are carrying out these duties as well as having to support children with AN.

FC insists they are providing support for every child who is identified as requiring it. They denied publically that there was a cut to the support last year, saying those who need support are still receiving it. This amounts to the weasel words of a politician. It pushes the responsibility for supporting children, with a lack of resources to do so, back onto the school, who are then accused (by the LA) of failing to meet their obligations. The implication is – they just need to work smarter. The school our daughter attends is working as “smartly” as they can. But despite their best intentions, this still results in her losing out sometimes. That smart working includes teaching staff, and management staff taking on a significant amount of the support themselves to plug the gap.

The LA claims they are able to cut these resources because there is no, specific statutory obligation to provide it.
The budget allocated to the LA, and that allocated to the Schools is not enough. Money needs to be increased and, more importantly, ring fenced so there cannot be any more cuts. In addition, numbers need to be increased to 2010 levels as a minimum.

**EXAMPLES**
Some examples of how the lack of support impacts on our daughter’s school life.
- On more than one occasion she has been unable to go to the toilet because there is no one available
- Losing class time because she has to wait for someone to come and accompany her or help her move
- We are prevented from using the breakfast club because there is no support available
- Participation in after school or lunch time activities depends on management being willing to support her.
- We have to attend every single school trip because there is no support available to go with her.
- No support available for PE lessons meaning she cannot fully participate.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**
Vulnerable children are being failed because of the lack of support in schools. If the Scottish Government are serious about closing the attainment gap, they will take urgent action to ensure every single child receives adequate support. This cannot wait for another consultation, for years of discussion, for talking heads to discuss it ad infinitum. It needs to be done now.

The following steps need to be taken;
- Increase LA budgets for provision of ASNA support
- Ring-fence ASNA budget to avoid money being re-directed to other areas
- Issue standards of procedure for assessing and calculating the number of hours each individual child is entitled to
- Make it a statutory obligation that the LA must provide the number of hours required to support these children
- Monitor each LA and provide a single contact within the Scottish Government where parents wishing to report LAs for failure to provide can contact.

The Government has ignored this issue for far too long now. Our daughter is already three years into her education and the situation is rapidly deteriorating. Our children have no voice and as a parent body, we are not large enough to make enough noise with LAs. They are making politically expedient decisions at the expense of our children. The picture across the whole of the Country is the same.

If the government don’t act now, another generation will needlessly fall through the attainment gap, into an adult system which itself lacks resources to support them. That would be a travesty and will lead to a legacy that the Government, and we as a nation, should be absolutely ashamed of.
**ANON**

I am the mother of 2 children aged 9 and 11 who have additional support needs. My oldest son has a moderate level of dyslexia; he has received very little assistance at school. He does not receive any assistance from the ASL teacher or from a PSA. He just has to manage as best he can. He is in a class of 32 children so his class teacher has very little scope to support him. He is a bright articulate child but the lack of support at school has resulted in reduced confidence and him thinking that he is not clever. We try to support him as best we can at home; we have completed Toe by Toe, Word Wasp and other dyslexia resources which have helped. If he received some support in school it would really help him.

My younger son has a chronic medical condition, severe dyslexia, dyspraxia and a very poor working memory. He is 9 years old in a mainstream school and in a class of 30 children. My son is still on stage 1 reading books and finds numeracy really difficult; he still struggles with very simple addition. His school have been reluctant to accept that he requires any additional support and that he is struggling. My son is very reluctant to go to school; he says he "learns nothing there and it is boring". We have a daily struggle to get him there. He used to be an extremely sociable boy but he now appears withdrawn. He is falling further and further behind his peers and is not in any peer group for reading or numeracy. His peers have started to exclude/ignore him at school and call him "weird". The school does not have any strategy of how to deal with this. We feel our youngest son would benefit from a more nurturing environment but that just isn't available - we have been told that "he is not bad enough for a special school and there is no other option".

From our experience we feel that there is a severe lack of resources in schools for children with additional support needs. Teachers have a lack of understanding about these children's needs and have not received appropriate training on how to support them.

**ANON**

As parents of a son with ASNs (verbal dyspraxia/dyspraxia) we have personal experience of the support or lack of to date, provided by the education system in Scotland. Our son will be five this summer and it simply is not good enough to have to wait until he goes to school before his needs will be considered. Our son had a respiratory episode at 15 months, requiring intensive care, after which we noticed that he had lost all speech. With our perseverance and support from his private nursery we were referred to and received speech therapy and continue to see his paediatrician. However it was not until we requested a deferral to Primary one entry for our son (which in itself was not a transparent process, never explained and very difficult to navigate) due to his identified speech problems as well as global delays in fine and gross motor skills, which initiated a school review meeting, did we discover that up until this point no provision has been made for him regarding his additional support needs. This was surprising to us due to the professionals already involved in his care coupled with the fact that we even moved home so he could be in the catchment area of the resourced nursery/primary school for the county (Angus). At
the review meeting it was confirmed that the panel had declined the request to defer based on the fact that our sons additional support needs could be best met by entering primary one. On discussion of what these needs were it was confirmed that no assessment had yet been carried out, at which point we asked for a formal assessment to be conducted for our son.

We strongly feel that based our sons obvious history and current level of support it should not be the responsibility of the parent to have to formally ask for an assessment, especially attending a resourced nursery/school which is familiar with working with specialists. To date, even though formally asking for progress we have only anecdotally heard from his teacher that she thinks it has begun but was unable to provide any more information. We are extremely disappointed that despite our efforts our son may still not appear to be receiving all the help he needs.

A general observation we would make based on our experience to date is that while we agree there should be a presumption for all children with additional support needs to attend mainstream class this may not always be the best option for the child in question or their wider peer group. For most where additional support needs are identified and provided for this will be the case however for others it just does not work. We have witnessed some children get stepped on while in group sessions and interruptions can be common. You have to agree, this is not an ideal learning environment for anyone involved.

**Vicky Shields**

My name is Vicky Shields and, although retired I was a nurse for over 40 years. 20 of those years were as a Health Visitor. I have 2 grandchildren who are now 16 years old. Both were diagnosed with cerebral palsy. We can relate some horrendous stories concerning our Additional Support Needs in our Scottish Schools. The girls have experience in 2 Primary Schools and 2 High Schools and have had additional support needs as one is in a wheelchair all of the time and one uses her chair when she gets tired.

As a past professional nurse, I have been appalled at the incompetency of the system. We have met with some good PSA’S, some bad PSA’S but what I see in the system is a lack of understanding of the individual child's needs, a lack of sensitivity and empathy from some significant quarters as regards the child's requirements which are necessary in order for them to access their educational potential.

I would welcome the opportunity to share these concerns with someone who has the authority and the will to improve this provision.

There are a few simple measures that if implemented would help teachers, pupils and psa’s to provide a vastly improved service and avoid some of the stress to the pupil user that is currently caused in the present system.
Julia Main

I would like to contribute to your enquiry on parents/carers views on additional support needs support in schools in Scotland. I have 2 sons who have autism and other related conditions; they are now 11 and 15 years old.

We live in Edinburgh and during their education between them they have attended mainstream schools, language unit, and special schools and been home-schooled.

My younger son started in a special school full time, and has been transitioning to mainstream over the past 4 years and is now attending mainstream full time and will be going to a mainstream high school with support. I feel that it really helped him to have the extra support in the special school early on, with their total communication approach, and I feel he would not be now going full time mainstream without that early support. However, it has been a challenge for him to transition to mainstream mainly because the academic level at special school and the low expectations meant we had to provide private tuition and work with him at home to fill in the gaps for him to cope in mainstream. The mainstream school have been excellent in supporting him, but I know that many families have different experiences of mainstream.

My older son started in mainstream for 3 years, but we moved him to a language class in a different school for P4-7 as he was really getting behind his peers socially and academically. He really benefited from the extra support at the language class and I feel this is the time when he progressed well. However, his experience in secondary school has been a real challenge, leading to mental health problems, as the education authority put him into an autism school where he struggled with the behaviours of the others due to his sensory issues and then we home-schooled for 6 months, while applying for a place in a different special school where he is now, but despite the school trying really hard to support him, he struggles with the unpredictable behaviours of the other pupils and particularly finds moving class to class for subjects very difficult. We are now discussing pulling him out of school at 16 to explore other educational and work options as the current and previous environment has led to him becoming very stressed and depressed, and he is being see by the mental health team, and about to go on anti-depressants directly because of his struggles with the school environment.

The main issues we have had are that there are not enough places in special schools, and not enough staff particularly in the secondary special schools, and it was a real battle to get our sons into these placements, resulting in us going to appeal 3 out of 4 times, which was very stressful on top of the already difficult job of bringing up 2 sons with additional support needs. Also the academic level in special schools and low expectations make it difficult for children to transition from special to mainstream placements. Also, the model of secondary special schools having to follow a mainstream model academically can put real stress on some children with sensory issues, and there is not enough staff to ensure individualised support for those who need it.
ANON

Firstly, I must apologise for the strong wording here, but I want to be as direct as possible with my response. My son is 3 years 8 months old, he has ASD. As far as I can see there is no Additional Support Needs services provided in his nursery, or much in the school that I am aware of. My son attends Duddingston Nursery, and other than having a key worker who looks after him and makes sure he is happy and some one-to-one work with an early years practitioner for 1 hour, once a week, that is all I am aware of. In the one-to-one session, they will do an activity together with some turn taking or singing etc. My feeling from these sessions is he is not challenged enough, they don’t expect much from him, and yet at home he can do so much with me. My son does not access the curriculum, and not enough is being done to help this situation. What he needs is a real assessment of his abilities, then progressively working on these targets every day. We have two child planning meetings a year, which is inadequate to make any progress at all. His needs and abilities change so much in 6 months, he is not the same boy. By that time of course he has made what seems like a lot of progress, and the meeting is spent, mostly saying how well he is doing. But this is a major failing, his life is passing by and his potential is being wasted.

I am a stay at home mum at the moment, I gave up my work and business to look after my son. If I did not, I don't know where we would be today. Every aspect of the day is a huge struggle. Getting dressing, eating breakfast, leaving the house. I also have a 5 year old boy, who suffers greatly in this situation. I can only give my attention to my youngest. This morning like most consisted of my youngest screaming and crying because he does not want a nappy change, does not want to get dressed, brush his teeth, put his clothes on, I have to man handle him or we would not leave the house. My oldest boy then starts crying, because he can't stand the noise. Try to imagine how he must feel everyday listening to this, a pretty miserable start to the day for him, and us all. Sometimes he lies down in the middle of the road and won’t move, I have to pick him and move him, my shoulders are incredibly painful. I give this example to make the point for two reasons. Firstly, I am expected to teach my son how to communicate (according to ASL and Speech Therapy) but as you can see with such a struggle to do everyday things, there is little time in the day for me to sit down, evaluate his needs and work on them. Also, to point out that he needs help with basic day to day tasks, some teaching and help on this would be good. Nobody can understand how difficult it is to teach a child with ASD unless you have one. The only way to teach is with repetition. To give you some idea, it took us almost a year to teach him not to throw his cup on the floor. Every day saying no, pick it up. Then eventually he started to understand. The responsibility at every turn is on me, and I feel guilty if I don’t work with him, but I am exhausted! I feel angry that it’s my job to be his speech therapist and ASL worker. With ASL, SALT, Psychologist and Occupational therapy, the advice is given to me, then I have to implement it, there is nobody else. It's little wonder there are so many women on anti-depressants.

I attend an ASL group once a week. He is given different tasks to do there, and they are asking him to move from one to another. But it's not done in a controlled way. If he doesn't do what he is asked there is no consequence. There is no teaching. We
do the same thing every week, what is he learning here? Studies have shown that children have the greatest ability to learn up to the age of 6. Then their rate of learning slows a little and every year as they grow to adults. If you can affect change in a child before the age of 6, his ability to learn in later life is vastly improved. If they can speak at two, their language skills/communication will be far greater in future, if they can speak by 6 most children with ASD will have better prospects than those who speak after the age of 6. I feel that this precious window of opportunity is closing fast; he will then be at school with this ‘assumption to mainstream.’ To give another example, I was told of a boy in one of the special schools who was of around 9 years of age, who wanted an iPad, he screamed and started tearing the place down, all teachers were running about looking for an iPad, eventually they got him one. What lesson has he learned, it turns out he was never told ‘no.’ That is something which should be tackled when he was young, so he might have had a tantrum when young, now he is old enough to cause physical damage to people and things. The point I am making is that it is better to take this opportunity when they are young and not waste it.

My son needs a tailor-made programme to fit his needs, which is delivered daily for at least one hour every morning by a trained therapist, preferably at his nursery, and evaluated every week.

I have become my son’s therapist at home. I have undertaken one course at great expense. I am also attending Hanen “More than Words” training once a week, which is free. Only by the time and effort put in by myself, have we seen some change in my son. He is starting to use some words for the things he wants. But his pronunciation is not clear and so I am using cards with different sounds to correct this. I make a note of the vowels he can’t say then we repeat them over and over every day. I should get more help from a speech therapist, but we see her once every few months. Her advice to me is mostly common sense. But he needs ‘talk tools’ to work his mouth and exercise it. I will have to fight to get this next for him. Working on my son’s progress every day is a full-time job. I have given up my work and now get £220 a month carer’s allowance. My husband has cancer and has been unable to work or help enough with looking after our son. ASL services have to work better, he will be an even bigger problem and burden on the system if he is not helped now, when it is easier to affect some change in him.

I will continue to fight along with other mothers to get the proper, appropriate level of service and therapy for my son. I can see it must be a question of money, but I have seen the progress which can be made, when I have time to invest in his learning and when I got the skills to teach him properly.

ANON

As a co-opted member of the local Primary School Parent council, I have taken a great interest in the education of young people to-day, especially with grandchildren now growing up within the system. In answer to your prompted questions I have given some responses below
Outline the strengths of Education Establishments in supporting additional support needs in schools

With a modern society of either two working parents or partners living apart, children may fall into a less well supported family environment, where they are less supervised when support in learning would be so beneficial.

Outline some of the challenges for Educational Establishments in supporting additional support needs in schools

The curriculum for Equality and Excellence in schools is a hard criteria to achieve when the needs of children will range from those who need to catch up to the required attainment level to those who have achieved this and need to be stimulated to maintain a learning interest

What should Education Establishments continue to do to support additional support needs?

An assessment of the needs of all the children in each peer group and to ascertain the model number of children in a class in order to gain the best from each. Enlisting volunteer adult help where necessary is being used to effect but perhaps more needs to be done along these lines

What could Education Establishments do better to support additional support needs?

As commented above

What should the Local Authority continue to do to support additional support needs?

The Local Authority needs to look at the wider picture in terms of new building plans and the impact this may have on local schools; not just the increase in likely pupil numbers but how children get to & from school, extra curricula interests, how the local community interacts in a wider sense and stimulates involvement of schools in the local activities.

What could the Local Authority do better to support additional support needs? The after school clubs appear to work well and this may give further opportunity to address support needs in a wider sense.

What should the Scottish Government continue to do to support additional support needs?

The Scottish Government needs a committed team to constantly assess the outcome and achievements of children as they pass through the system. The successes and failures will give an indication of where more must be done. This should include learning opportunities, not just in universities but in apprentice schemes and technical training environments
What could the Scottish Government do better to support additional support needs? Little is voiced on the needs of parents with children who require additional support. Schemes for them would help in encouraging and supporting their role in ensuring the best opportunities are provided for their young people.

Additional comments
Having been through several educational systems throughout my life, I do feel I am qualified to make valued judgment on how to “get the best” from a learning situation. One thing that stands out is the inspirational effect of a teacher or colleague who is completely committed to their field and one therefore wants to try and emulate. I have a son in P6 of our local primary school. He was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome 2 years ago after 2 years of assessment and waiting. Two years seemed like a long time but no one in my local area appears to be getting diagnosed right now due to a lack of resources so maybe I should be grateful that it only took two years. We were also lucky that the school worked with us at every step to ensure that his needs were met. It was hard going and I know more than one member of staff was on the receiving end of his aggression. I’m relieved that is in the past as right now I’m not sure how they’d cope after two waves of cuts specifically targeted at Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Assistants have left them with more children with ASNs but fewer ASL staff to try and meet their needs. What message does that send out? Cope and we’ll take your staff away?

Claire Phillips

What terrifies me is that we are starting to look at secondary schools. This is going to be a massive transition and without the proper resources, we risk undoing all the hard work up to this point in getting my son ready.

I’m fed up of ASL funding becoming this political football between Westminster, Holyrood and Local Government. We are not a poor country yet we allow the most vulnerable in our society to feel the full force of austerity. Holyrood many be getting less from Westminster but that does not mean those cuts needed to be handed directly to local authorities.

I live in a county with next to no services for disabled children. Mainstream works for my son at the moment but I know plenty of children for whom it doesn’t. Because we have no services, these children end up not in school meaning parents cannot work. I myself have had to reduce my hours because of all the meetings, phone calls and extra demands of having a child with a disability. If provision was better, more parents would work meaning more families being able to contribute to the system instead of being made to feel like they’re just taking. Better provision would also save money long term as children and young people would be better equipped to lead their lives as independently as possible.

If Scotland is being judged by how it looks after its most vulnerable citizens, I’m not sure that judgement would be favourable right now.

“I wheeled with the stars, my heart broke free on the open sky” Pablo Neruda
I have two learning disabled grandsons, both adopted by my daughter. Both have thrived in her care, but the support in school is failing both, particularly the elder one.

M (almost 12) has a brain malformation which prevents him from reading handwriting easily and writing well himself. He can, however, read print and use an iPad. This is backed up by several pages of diagnosis from the examining surgeon. Nonetheless he is often required to revert to struggling with handwriting and at times has spent his school time writing out work he has done the night before on the iPad under his mother’s supervision. In seven years of education he has certainly not reached his potential. He is now in P7 and has been deprived of support one day a week.

Now about to transfer to secondary school, it seems that the likelihood is that his education will stall again. The new school wish to do an assessment. This happened when he moved from his first primary school to another; the process lasted two years, during which he learned nothing much. Also he will not be able to have an iPad, just some other kind of tablet which the school IT network uses but which cannot be used by the pupil to do work.

M presents (visually) as normal, but his ADHD, attachment disorder and the above-mentioned brain problem and underlying learning disability all conspire to hold him back. Yet this is a child who can control a pony and carriage in competitions, can bake, is sporty, and is certainly not stupid. With the right help he could do so much better in life. Intervention now would save the country money in the long run. Luckily he does have a volunteer helper with proper qualifications who has done more for him in a year in an hour a week than school life has done in seven years, but he needs more.

R (10) also has a brain malformation which has visual consequences of a different nature. He has little peripheral vision and can’t see anything on the floor unless he remembers to lower his head. He is clearly syndromic (the precise syndrome has not been discovered), has very weak muscles (it was thought he might never walk or talk), and is currently under investigation by the neurologists at Yorkhill Hospital.

School has been a little more helpful to him but his level of support is now one worker between two boys. Although he is a fairly good reader and is reading large tomes by children’s authors at home, he has been kept on P2 level books at school. His inability to deal with number work could be addressed by using solid objects but he is left to struggle with trying to use mental concepts. He too drives ponies, is a good swimmer and will try any sport at least once despite the inevitable tumbles and collisions.

R will probably fare better than his brother in later life as he clearly presents as somebody who will need lifelong support, whereas M, as far as I can see, could be left to try to live in the “normal” world, with possibly disastrous consequences.
Intervention comes far too late down here in Dumfries and Galloway. M was 8 years old before he was tested for autism, whereas my granddaughter E (4) in the Falkirk area was diagnosed with both autism and a speech problem by the age of two and a half, since when life has greatly improved for her because of early interventions by speech therapists and at nursery. Sadly, it seems that that area too will now defer diagnosis in order to defer the resultant costs until children are older. Do people really think that these conditions magically disappear when the children are older?!

I have also learned that learning support workers in Scotland do not have the same training framework as in England and Wales. My niece in Wales had to do a proper course of study and pass exams in order to take up this work, and I believe she had to repeat the process when she wished to work at a higher level. Not that I wish to demean the work of the best learning support workers here – some are very good with the children, but I think they lack the necessary understanding of the many and varied conditions they may encounter. Education departments seem to have a “one size fits all” attitude when it comes to teaching disabled children.

The knock-on effects for the mainstream schools are already starting to be horrendous. A class teacher, perhaps without much specialist knowledge of disability, can be confronted by several “special needs” children in a class. If there is under-provision of support workers and one such child has a meltdown, what is the teacher supposed to do? Remove the child him/herself and leave the rest of the class without a lesson? Or try to minimise the disruption in class and carry on? Parents of “normal” children will realise eventually how much their children’s education is impacted by such events.

I am disgusted by the Government’s lies on the subject of “maximising every child’s potential”. These children are often already compromised by health problems and their parents are exhausted by the constant battle to obtain the help they need.

Our disabled children deserve more. A society’s claim to be civilized can only rest on its treatment of the most unfortunate in its population. Already we see many vulnerable adults in the prison system. Money saved at this end of the children’s lives will mean trebled expenditure when they are adults.

**ANON**

I am a parent of a child with ASN and also an ASN primary teacher, so have an interest in the Scottish ASN provision experience both personally and professionally.

My comprehensive view is that ASN provision is not consistent or well defined. Training is lacking, provision is lacking and staffing is far too low for any effective delivery of support to the children who require it. ASN schools and services have been cut for a number of years as the nebulous idea of ‘inclusion’ became more popular.

Unfortunately, ‘inclusion’ is difficult to define and means very different things to and for different children. Simply placing children with ASN into mainstream environments (whilst simultaneously cutting levels of support staff and raising
attainment expectations for the entire cohort of children they share that environment
with) is not ‘inclusion’. Inclusion in education has to mean placing a child in an
inclusive environment where their communication needs and appropriate access to
learning can be best met. A mainstream classroom meets this need for very few
children. Teachers thus spend a disproportionate amount of time in a mainstream
classroom dealing with the behavioural problems that arise from overwhelmed
children who cannot cope with their environment or do not have the right level of
support to access that environment in a way that meets their needs. This has a
direct effect on the educational experience of not only the children with the additional
needs but their mainstream peers. ASN children deemed able to join the
mainstream (particularly at S1 level) change rapidly during their high school
experience. My own child has ASD and DCD. He has struggled to cope with
mainstream high school but once the decision is made to place a child in mainstream
at secondary level, it is exceptionally difficult if not impossible to change their path
due to a lack of spaces with appropriate support.

GIRFEC is a well-meaning piece of legislation but without the right level of support to
implement it, from within and out-with the sphere of education, teachers cannot hope
to do so for every child in their class. Despite a massive projected increase in
figures from pre-school services in education and medicine, the level of provision for
children requiring a place in special additional support settings is woefully
inadequate leading to parental anxiety, anger and confusion as allocated places are
insufficient to meet need and children are placed incorrectly. For teachers working in
this sector, there is then the backlash from parents to deal with as they believe you
are withholding placing information you must be party to as a professional within the
education sector. Although this seems a reasonable assumption, the truth is that
ASN teachers are unsure where they will be working in the next academic year, what
the make-up of their classes will be and how much bad feeling they need to reduce
in their new parent group to establish and maintain an all-important working
relationship based in trust that the teacher will try their utmost to get it right for their
child.

Despite ‘Team Around the Child’ meetings being part of a care plan for a child with
ASN, there is a distinct lack of information sharing from other professionals to those
in education. A child in nursery receives a lot of support and several professionals
can be involved – this support often dwindles by the time children reach school age
but parents are not kept informed of this change. There is also a lot less support for
parents and the onus is then on the teaching profession to answer questions and
worries for parents that cannot possibly be within our field of expertise or
professional scope.

I have found as a parent of a child with ASN, my entire experience of assisting my
child through his educational process has involved fighting to be heard and battling
to have his voice acknowledged. In my role as a teacher, I have had different
experiences dependent on the location of my post at the time. In mainstream, the
lack of support for children who clearly needed it was simply heart-breaking.
Children by the end of P1 who should have been placed in at least an Enhanced
Provision setting were struggling and their futures were being mapped by a system
failing to support them sufficiently – their peers had not had the experiences they
should have either as learning was constantly interrupted by distractions from
beleaguered ASN children who could not have helped their reactions to an overwhelming environment. Support for Learning Assistants have been reduced in number drastically over the past few years at a point where children with ASN are increasing in number. In any educational setting, additional adults are utterly crucial to successful learning for all when there are children with additional needs to be met. A lone teacher cannot be all things to all children regardless of how much they would desperately love to be able to.

Staffing, resources and school buildings need to be considered very carefully for ASN provision to meet the needs of all Scottish children. Training needs to be relevant and understood by staff to differ for each individual child.

**Nicola Smith**

Our experience of trying to ensure our dyslexic son is supported in school has been broadly inconsistent and hampered by miscommunications (often a complete lack of any) despite our continuous attempts to do what we can to support him from home. We discuss the same strategies at every ASN meeting yet the practical application in the classroom always falls by the wayside. It’s a very frustrating and repetitive process with very little progress being achieved.

Our son was initially diagnosed with dyslexia (somewhere in the middle of the scale) and a short term memory deficit in P6. This only came about because a new teacher flagged it up due to personal experience of dyslexia with her own child. Our requests for assessment the year before had been denied, our son’s lack of progress already being put down to ‘behavioural’ problems, a mind-set which many teachers still seem to share due to a lack of knowledge of how dyslexia affects children.

Our son flourished with support in P7, leaving primary with a glowing report and a plan in place which was then completely disregarded when he moved into 1st year at high school. We were advised that he would be better off in a mainstream class with some support available as there were a few other ASN children in this class. In reality, the support (which consisted of one support teacher in some classes – not all) went to others whose needs were considered greater and he was left to struggle. At his first parent’s night, it became apparent that several of his teachers were oblivious to him being dyslexic in the first place. Most alarmingly, his French teacher completely disregarded his plan (apparently because he had too many reports to read) and had been making him read aloud in class, then humiliating him and calling him ‘stupid’ due to mispronunciations. He then punished him for making ‘silly noises’ which were nervous tics (diagnosed by Ed Psych) which he displays in times of stress. At parent’s night we were subjected to his scathing and ignorant opinions of our son (who was with us) whom he viewed as ‘lazy, stubborn and awkward’. (This was followed up with a disparaging written report which the Head Teacher apologised profusely for and explained should never have been allowed to go out). When asked what support he could give – bearing in mind his struggle with English, never mind French – he shrugged his shoulders and basically told us that wasn’t his job. Eventually after involving the local council’s education dept, we managed to get him out of this class (due to the negative effect it was having on his well-being) and
instead he spent his time in the support base catching up on other subjects which
obviously benefited him. It was only after this that we saw him start to enjoy school
and his confidence improved again.

Aside from French, reports in other subjects have been inconsistent. Written and
verbal reports are often dramatically different and parent’s night always comes too
late in the year to do anything with the information given. We rarely see the same
teachers twice. The constant changes in staff and teaching methods are not helpful
for children with dyslexia who struggle to adapt to change. A change of teacher in
the run up to exams can present a real setback for them.

It’s worth mentioning that there have been teachers and staff who have been helpful
and supportive but unfortunately their involvement was either too brief or their
methods not seen through after a changeover. Our son had a very good English
teacher in 2nd year who advised a number of strategies (including use of a laptop
and other technology) and urged us to speak to learning support to put them in
place. Unfortunately, this was pooh-poohed due to a ‘lack of resources’. (Our request
for further involvement from Ed Psych was also pooh-poohed as apparently she
‘doesn’t work directly with pupils’. Our son did eventually meet her and she
conducted a useful exercise with him in 3rd year about barriers to achieving his goals
(exams). Unfortunately, he hasn’t seen her since.)

His current English teacher, whilst supportive and whose teaching methods he
enjoys was absent for a long period in the run-up to his prelims which she herself
acknowledged had probably set him back. We had tried for some time to obtain
information on course work and exam topics as we had a tutor lined up to help him
but the supply teacher seemed to have no knowledge of what they were studying. By
the time we had an answer, it was too late and at parent’s night, his teacher
discouraged us from going down this route anyway as she felt confident that, now
she was back, she could get him through it. He was unable to answer any of the
prelim paper and has now been moved down to Nat 4 level – although we are
assured he will get a certificate of literacy which will be ‘recognised by some
employers’.

We have also seen inconsistency with over-inflated reports in other subjects. For
instance, we were given a glowing report of our son as being ‘one of the top 3
students in the department’ in CDT in 3rd year. A year later, following a change of
teacher, we were told he will be lucky to scrape a low C. We understand his former
teacher had given the same report to many others and is no longer employed.
Understandably, this is no longer our son’s favourite subject and again this
information comes too late in the day to do anything about it.

The upshot is that there is an illusion of ASN support but in reality it’s just not there.
Resources go to those with severe needs and those with mild/moderate learning
difficulties are left to get on with it. We’ve spent 4 years repeating the same
information, expressing the same concerns and listening to the same assurances
that our son will not leave school with no qualifications. Predictably, we are now
going down the road of Nat 3’s/4’s, practical subjects and suggestions that we
source our own ‘work experience’ options. He is currently being persuaded against
subjects he enjoys and would like to pursue which the school feel are ‘too
challenging’. As parents, it’s devastating to see the totally unfulfilled potential in front of us. Our son is bright, imaginative and creative but will come out of school with a handful of certificates which don’t reflect his ability in any way.

Having worked on past papers with him at home, it’s obvious he has a good knowledge of some subjects, particularly evident in Art which he enjoys and is good at. He can give detailed verbal answers but unfortunately fails to convey this in written form. His issue has always been where to start with his answer (especially with lengthy questions presented as a chunk of text and not broken down into stages). He ends up overwhelmed with barely anything written regardless of how much extra time is given. IT doesn’t help as the issue is the construction of a written essay and typing doesn’t alter this. This form of testing, which is more suited to an English exam, doesn’t allow him to evidence his knowledge of the subject. We queried alternative testing (e.g. verbal) which was to be discussed but have heard nothing. How hard can it be to offer a verbal form of testing? This doesn’t even need extra resources in the form of scribes (although these should surely still be an option if need be). Surely there is the possibility of technology where they can listen to audio questions (in a dyslexia friendly format) and record their own verbal answers which can be transcribed and marked? Why should children be discouraged from subjects they enjoy because supporting them in assessments involves too much effort on the schools part? ‘Lack of resources’ and ‘cost’ shouldn’t come into it. This is not the child’s problem and schools legally have an obligation to support children with ASN needs regardless of cost. It is not acceptable for schools to simply offer the easiest option or to discourage children who want to pursue a subject they enjoy.

The system doesn’t work for dyslexic children. No matter what the subject is, the form of assessment always involves a written essay component so each exam is essentially a test of their written English skills which in most dyslexic children are very poor and so they are set up to fail regardless of subject choice, knowledge and skill. The education system as it stands doesn’t allow these children to show their real potential in a way that is necessary for university admission or career progression. They are thus destined to underpaid, manual jobs and low self-worth. This is a real shame as dyslexic children view the world differently and can come up with very creative solutions to practical problems. If supported properly and given the chance to shine, these kids could be making an enormous contribution in the workplace. It wouldn’t take much to change this but instead, our education system writes them off as it’s the easiest option for the educators.

David McKellar

Around 60% of all ASN lies within the Social Emotional and Behavioural Needs sector (SEBN). Significantly there remains poor advocacy for the children who experience SEBN. It would be a significant move forward for SEBN to be recognised and publicly supported like other areas of ASN are.

SEBN often relates to poor early life experiences, trauma, abuse, neglect, welfare, child protection factors etc. Unfortunately when I read some newspapers we see the
children referred to in very negative ways. Sadly the pathways can end with children being placed into care and/or having a pathway to courts and prison.

I often find that ASN (Complex needs/ASD/Hearing Impairment/Visual Impairment etc) rightly have well designed and resourced schools. Within SEBN this rarely is the case. Equity across ASN could be a new focus.

Mary Matthews

The most important issue regarding the future of ASN within our schools is funding. There has been a rise in children who require additional support needs during their time at school. However, there is not enough resources available to meet all of their needs. There is an urgent demand for more learning support teachers. The limited number of human and practical resources is not sufficient to meet the growing demand. Teachers and classroom assistants, who are already under strain, cannot be expected to 'fill the gap'. On a smaller scale, if there is a child who has recently been identified as requiring ASN, the application process to get the funding is far too long and time-consuming. Even if the application is successfully granted funding (and often it is not), precious time has been lost, in some cases a whole academic year that may have been crucial for that child's academic achievement and self-esteem. So, to summarise,

1) There is a need to increase the number of learning support teachers in schools
2) The process for applying for funding needs to be simplified and more efficient

ANON

I am writing this in relation to my direct experience. My son attends a specialist facility - the Base within a Primary School. It is an excellent facility and is very well thought of and sought after within the Falkirk area for children with ASD. I and my son have had mainly positive experiences here but there have been some issues.

Trying to get a suitable school placement for a child with additional support needs is a fight. It is complicated, stressful and very inconsistent. There is a definite lack of communication around the process, varying levels of support - when I applied I was more or less on my own and felt I had to justify why my son deserved an education. He was initially refused a place in Enhanced Provision despite every professional who had given a report stating he would not cope in a mainstream setting; thankfully on appeal (which I did entirely on my own) he got a place at the primary school.

I feel children within ASN settings are still seen as separate to those in mainstream - definitely not 'inclusion' and at times very definitely 'exclusion'.

I feel that educating ASN children is not given priority. In my own experience, my son - who is intelligent and capable - was left with academic activities far below his ability. He was upset and demoralised and struggling but was unable to articulate
why. I worked with him and complained to the school, as a result, he is now working on far more appropriate activities and progressing rapidly. I have arranged tutoring for him privately though as I still believe he is far below the level he can and should be working. The fact I had to push for this - at a school which is excellent - is very worrying.

Staffing levels are dropping and experienced, capable educators are overstretched and leaving. ASN children with challenging behaviours are not being managed appropriately and other students are struggling to cope with the disruption and at times are being physically hurt.

Wendy Herkes

As a mother of three special needs children with Autism aged between 6 and 16, I have had varied experiences of support in school.

My youngest son is 6 and is in a special need school and his care has been fabulous. He is provided with therapy, play and intensive interaction. His needs are met in ways that are appropriate to him as an individual and he has one to one attention.

My middle son is 8 and he attends an additional support unit attached to a mainstream school. He has access to basic sensory stimulation and very little intensive interaction or therapy. He follows the main curriculum regardless of whether it is appropriate or not. He doesn't have one to one support even though he often requires it. The unit struggles financially and often uses second-hand and donated equipment.

My eldest daughter is 16 and has just left school. She was in a mainstream high school and struggled terribly. She was offered no support at all until a period of no attendance of 6 months resulted in crisis talks. Even upon her return she was offered learning in isolation with very little support at all. She left as soon as she was able and has received no support since.

Provision for special needs children varies widely. Mostly it could be a lot better. More trained staff and more funding into resources is badly required.

I have 2 children on the autistic spectrum, my daughter attended beatle school nursery where I can't praise them enough. The school is excellent. The problems we faced though was when it came to our daughter moving onto school the panel known as sorg gets to decide her fate, some being on the panel who has never met the child. Autism is on the rise and local authorities need to have more provisions for these children, our daughter was lucky to get a specialist school place but some were not. We now face a nervous wait to hear about our sons provision from the council.

Siobhan Blair
There is not any playschemes for children with additional needs in the Renfrewshire area during school holidays and no autism clubs in Renfrewshire also nearest ones are Glasgow. The local sports centre has cut sports camp to one and a half hours per day which does not suit working parents.

**ANON**

As a parent of a dyslexic child. I feel that a child who needs educational support to learn to read and write that don’t follow the normal path of understanding phonics and but who manage to get by are not given enough support to meet their full potential. I feel that there is not enough resources to meet the needs of a child who behaves well but needs support and that the resources go to the child with behaviour needs as they are the biggest problem in the class and affect all learners. I feel that it depends which school and in which authority you live affects the support your child gets and how that support is managed. There is a big pressure put on teachers to meet all learners’ needs but not the resources or specialist to give the help needed. I feel that dyslexia/ or mathematical dyslexia is not given enough funding and that pupils with great potential are being lost in a system where the child feels nobody cares. As it is not the right kind of additional support need to get funding.

**Michelle Stewart**

It is with great hope I submit my concerns and experiences on additional support needs in school. Hope that my view and experience will be taken on board in order to help my own and other vulnerable children who are being failed in the most shameful manner by our education system.

There is currently a policy of inclusion in Scotland which assumes that all children will be educated in mainstream school except in the most complex cases. This in theory is brilliant but in reality does not work. The reasons;

1. School environments are not set up to cater properly for children with additional needs.
2. Teachers have little to no training in a number of conditions and therefore do not have the ability to get the most out of these children.
3. There is a severe shortage of Additional support staff in schools.
4. Class sizes are too big to accommodate additional needs.
5. Often by the time it finally gets recognised by education that additional support is needed it’s too late.

I have three children 17, 9 and 5. All three of my children have autism spectrum disorder.

My eldest has had no formal secondary education. Her mental health deteriorated so drastically on starting secondary that she began to refuse to go to school, began self harming and attempted suicide. She ended up spending 6 months in a psychiatric
hospital. She hasn't attended school in 3 and 1/2 years. The only form of home education help she has had was 6hrs of tuition

She couldn't cope with school because like all mainstream schools they are not set up for children with autism. They are too big, too noisy, the lights are too bright and communication is not autism friendly.

My 9 yr old has learning difficulties along with ASD. Despite still having a reading and maths capacity of a 5 yr old, he remains in a class of 30 pupils, with one teacher. There is no ASN support in his class despite there being another 3 children with learning difficulties at his level. The reason; no budget.

My son is starting already to school refuse and is physically sick most mornings, he has asked for a brain transplant so he can be smart like the rest of his class, he is 9 and has said he wants to die. He is terrified to go to school because the noise is too much for him and he is terrified when his teacher shouts. I am currently fighting to get him moved out of mainstream school.

This is a very small snippet of some of the issues I have had with my children's additional support needs. Children spend a huge part of their time at school and so if the environment is not tailored properly for them it impacts on every aspect of their life. I can't convey in this email all my opinions and experience as it is too vast. I would be more than happy if required to expand further.

I hope this exercise leads to real positive change for children with additional needs because my experience is that the current system is failing them miserably.

ANON

Views and experiences on Additional Support Needs provided in Scottish schools.

My experiences are as a parent with children with moderate to severe dyslexia accessing mainstream primary and secondary schooling in the north east of Scotland. I request that my comments are not put on the website and any names are made anonymous, thank you.

My view and experience of additional support in primary school can be described as the following:
- Reactive
- Inconsistent
- Not pupil centric
- Non differentiated (despite curriculum for excellence or local authorities statement on learning support)
- Not individualistic, or planned, measured, evidence based or accurately recorded.
Learning support works in isolation away class teacher and class room which results in a fragmented approach which benefits no one and does little for the education or social emotional health of the child.

Accommodations and adaptations to facilitate the learning in the classroom for children with additional needs are not transferred into the classroom or to the class teacher.

There are not enough Learning Support Teachers or specialist pupil support assistants in school. Regardless of the high need, my child's school is only provided with 2 days of learning support. This means that those who quietly struggle or who’s parents assume school are supporting get no help and are prioritised with little acknowledgement of true needs and appropriate prioritisation.

Learning Support teachers and class teachers require better, formal, recognised and regular training on additional support needs and current thinking and practice.

My views and experiences of additional support in secondary is extremely poor. The above issues raised continue to be present but actual additional support for learning is non existent.

Previous input from primary e.g. IEP ‘s are ignored, adaptations and accommodations are not made by teachers and children are left to struggle and set up to fail. This is made significantly worse due to the secondary’s inability to retain staff and as a result supply teachers that are non discipline specific are used, who don't know the children or their additional support needs.

In both primary and secondary settings with every new academic year any previous progress made, adaptations finally supported, understanding of condition and best practice are lost and we are back to square one again. Approaches to additional support for learning vary wildly from school to school within local authorities despite this being highlighted years ago by Education Scotland. Local authority pays lip service to additional support requirements and has no true understanding of what happens in the classroom or the challenges faced by children, parents and teachers.

Early diagnosis and rethink on how additional support needs are accommodated, effectively supported and an open honest dialogue with parents is required. Best practices from around the country and expert input should be used nationwide to avoid postcode lottery.

Eileen & Stephen Grant

Our son has a diagnosis of autism and is due to start school this August. We have made a placement request for an ASN Unit attached to a mainstream school, because we are concerned that a mainstream placement would not be the right environment; and he would not receive the specialist assistance that would be necessary to meet his needs and development. However, the number of spaces in ASN units are extremely limited and we may be faced with the possibility that
Hamish will be placed in a mainstream school, that is likely to be detrimental to him. We know that many other children and families are in a similar situation. Whilst inclusion may be the objective there has to be recognition that this will not be suitable for all children and suitable alternatives ought to be available. Parents should not have to fight for their children to receive an education that is ‘getting it right for their child’. It seems that there is a lack of resource when it comes to ASN children, both in terms of budget and also suitably qualified, specialised and experienced teachers and classroom assistants. We understand that some units are over prescribed and are struggling to recruit the appropriate personnel and this is something, which needs to be urgently addressed. Specialist nursery provision should also be looked at as a precursor to a primary school education. Early intervention is key, as is widely recognised. There should be more specialist nurseries and the availability in current specialist schools should not be restricted or compromised as this delivers an important service in helping to prepare children with ASN for school. We would be happy to be involved in any consultation involving children with ASN.

**Fiona Tait**

There is not enough ASN provision nowadays. I have worked in this area for 18 years. Provision has been cut with the presumption of mainstream, teaching staff reduced and support staff cut even further. Many of the pupils I teach can barely cope for an hour or two a week in a mainstream class and when you ask them about it they prefer to be separate. Let’s consult those most affected and not just the staff and actually listen to what they have to say. I am also the mother of a child with ASN, specifically Asperger’s, so see it both as a parent and professionally.

**ANON**

I can’t give information on the support provided in councils out with the council I live within but I can tell you that that getting assessment for any young person at primary school. Secondary school or even at college is nigh on impossible, in the council in which I live.

I know from family experience that private assessments have had to be paid for because the school would not refer. I also know from family experience that even when school would not accept that a referral would be required and we by passed the educational route and went via the medical route and the GP referred, the school still have not accepted the diagnosis given at the first assessment by the medical expert. This diagnosis was ADD, the school report given after this diagnosis stated there was no symptoms of ADD showing up at school and in the next paragraph described a typical ‘melt down’ associated with ADD and noted that the teacher(s) had no idea why this happened.

I can also state that young people who are obviously dyslexic, have never been diagnosed, through school, can attend college, request to be assessed for dyslexia and can still leave college after 2 years and still not be assessed.
It would be interesting to see what the percentages of assessed CYP for SEN per head of population is in Fife compared to a similar population in other council areas in Scotland.

Teachers are not given training on Dyslexia (Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, etc) whilst training and if they do this is very recent and as far as I know they receive no training as ‘spotters or refers’ for ADHD/ASD/Dyslexia/Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia/Dyscalculia. This would be especially helpful for females as it has been thought till recently that it was mainly males that had ADHD. New research shows this not to be true, the symptoms tend to manifest differently in females.

Indeed sadly there still seems to be teachers coming through teacher training willing to say they don't believe there are such a thing as people being Neurodifferent?

New research also shows that there are adults who went undiagnosed as children who are having huge problems in their adult lives because they are having to unknowingly deal with AD(H)D symptoms. Had they been diagnosed as children they would have had the opportunity to work on strategies to take them into adulthood.

It cannot be that expensive to assess and in the long term will allow children who are diagnosed to start strategies which might allow them to deal with the symptoms and behaviours and potential co-morbidities that might crop up. Around 60% of ADHD'rs will also have dyslexia/dyspraxia etc. Even if the cost of medication is taken into account if a CYP is medicated, this might prevent, mental health illness in adult hood and the costs that would attached to multiple medications attached to co- morbid mental health issues that often accompanies undiagnosed adults e.g. E.g. Anxiety, depression, bi-polar etc.

It all seems so short sighted, that for the want of adding training at the early stages of teacher’s training, we could have teachers trained as spotters and referers, who could then have a child assessed and with the proper support from an early age, this would help level the playing field after all being neurodifferent doesn't mean you lack intelligence it generally means you learn differently in a classroom system that was set in place around 200 years ago and despite the changes in technology, the workplace and society, hasn't really changed that much. The sad part is if all children were taught in a way which supported nurodifferent children every child would learn much more easily and enjoy learning much more.

I hope this can help in your consultation

I am Dyslexic and an ADHDr

Tori Wilkie

I am writing in response to your appeal listed above.

I live in the county of Angus with my 5 children. My daughter who is 7 has additional support needs as she is diagnosed with High Functioning Autism.
We are in a small rural school of 32 children and there is neither provision and no understanding from the teachers with regards to my child’s needs and requirements. Academically she is very bright and is ahead of her peers, but as with so many girls on the spectrum she masks her anxieties very well and struggles hugely with the social side of school.

I have put in place numerous strategies to try and alleviate some of these problems for her and had absolutely no resolution as the staff either do not use them or do not always let her use them. I am constantly banging my head off a brick wall.

I am meeting with the new PT in Support learning this afternoon (who I had no idea existed before I put in another complaint) to try and get some sort of resolution for my daughter.

The Angus Council Autism Support Strategy reads very well however it is just a worthless piece of paper if nothing is actioned and teaching staff are not better educated in the needs of both boys and girls on the spectrum. It is a complex disability with a range of similar difficulties although no two children are the same. Teachers have to understand that our kids are not be naughty, not trying to get attention and need a huge amount more extra support than they are currently getting.

Detailed support plans should be in place for EVERY child with ASN and all staff should adhere to the directives. I say this deliberately as my school and council refuse to use an IEP for my daughter and so how can I ensure we are all using the same approach?

ANON

I have heard you would like to hear about our experiences within the education system. We are in the highlands. My son has autism, dcd, extreme anxiety and attends high school.

It has been a disaster. The last 1 1/2 at central primary school damaged my child. Examples of things that would happen, here is your safe area[name of child], he then went onto get hit over the back by a metal table leg, that was your fault [name of child] you should be in class not in your safe area. Another time you can use this base any time you want if you need to leave class he started to go there two days later you can’t use here we need this room for other children. He was told he wasn’t capable of doing maths. Was continuously bullied by the same children nothing was done about it. The teacher used to lie to him by saying he would sort stuff out, he never did but when children took a photo of him using his mobile phone in class they got into trouble for putting it on social media. A parent told me (as they were visiting school within school hours) that my son was out in the playground by himself, she reported it to reception, when I confronted the school it was denied. School trip they seemed to think autism has a day off left my son to be bullied on the bus, when he reacted he got into trouble, asked my son where was the teachers when this was happening they were sitting chatting, when I asked the head she said it wasn’t her
fault. He was on crutches at one point he got told to put his crutches down as he didn't need them so he could carry his lunch tray, obviously I reported this to physio who contacted the school. He has had lots of anxiety going into this school due to them not having understanding and compassion, this is only a very brief description about what happened. I was also confronted with anger if I challenged/asked for anything to change. I believe primary schools need to go back to a more structured environment.

Secondary school, well there wasn't much of a transition done, we got told the day before he was going and I only found that out as I was in a meeting with the head and education board. He was put up and into classes with those who bullied him, instead of with friends (which was meant to happen) he tried very hard in the first term all was going well until a teacher gave him responsibilities that he should not of had, due to them he lashed out at a child as the child told him to f-off, he was asking the child to do what the teacher had asked him, I spoke with his pead at the time and she reassured me and said that the school need to learn how to manage his autism, as someone in the school told me they have the power to contact social work and get him taken away from me if he doesn't behave (i also told social work about this statement). We had lots of walking out of class, leaving school coming home, most of it was due to his triggers not getting recognised, strategies not getting followed or not in place, getting pressurised, not getting listened to etc.

I think one of the worst experiments that happened (I've got the paed report as evidence and support from the educational psychologist is that due to stress from the school my son ended up in bed for months with chronic pain syndrome. The final straw for him was when a special needs teacher was shouting and upset his only friend in their base (because she wasn't doing her work the way she wanted her to do it) she has not returned to the school since and needs to be home schooled due to this incident. My son's perspective of it was ignored and it seemed the school were in acceptance of her behaviour. All I asked was for them to explain her actions, say she behaved in a way that wasn't acceptable, we all make mistakes but I bring up my son by getting him to apologize if he does wrong I don't know why the teacher couldn't have done this, then he could've moved forward quicker. Because I am sure of it was him shouting and upsetting someone he would have to apologize.

Fortunately at the moment things are going well for him, there is new management in Inverness high school and I have noticed a huge difference, they are positive towards him, supporting, encouraging etc unfortunately this might not last and he is still only on a part time timetable. I would like to highlight that many a time I have heard we have got no money, no staff it's all the cutbacks, yes I know that can be difficult but many a time it's because compassion and understanding has not being shown, this can be a prevention and also could lead to less mental health problems which would mean less children using camhs, having to attend services out with the school etc. Being on the autistic spectrum myself I see a lot of it as common sense which isn't getting displayed by those in their professional roles. Everyone working in the education environment should have a understanding of additional needs, courses should be mandatory and followed through.

I have only given you tip of the iceberg examples, if you wish for further information please do not hesitate to contact me.
I find it hard to know where to start with the failure of the education service in respect of my son. It's been an absolutely horrific experience for him and for our entire family, taking us to the point of breakdown many many times.

Our story begins in preschool. His first year in a small independent playgroup was fantastic. 1-2-1 funding was sought and they supported him brilliantly. His second year he was due to transfer to the local school nursery in preparation for school. They refused to meet with the playgroup, refused to consider any of his paperwork and refused to offer him any support within nursery. He was non-verbal and had only recently started walking. He had severe anxiety, behavioural difficulties and was completely incontinent. He has pronounced sensory issues, which made busy environments challenging. He was moving from a class of 12 children to a class of 40. He was unsurprisingly extremely distressed the whole time and unable to access any of the curriculum. The nursery refused to even discuss any support for him and after six weeks of him being completely hysterical I removed him. We found another small independent preschool where again he was allocated 1-2-1 support.

He was then assessed for starting school and despite by this stage it being evident he was seriously delayed in his learning and not coping in group environments he was assessed as a "level 2", requiring differentiated support from the class teacher, nothing more. I warned the school that both nursery and I felt it was utterly ridiculous they weren't being given extra support for him and right enough they couldn't cope. It took them till Christmas to get appropriate 1-2-1 support in place but by then the damage was done. He had had an extremely poor start and hated school. Even with support in place it was evident the school did not have the expertise to teach him, which we had been assured they did! So in primary three we were looking at a move to a nearby school with a learning base. This school absolutely assured us that they could meet his needs. By this stage he was diagnosed with severe ADHD, attachment disorder, communication disorder and had been referred for assessment of his visual impairment and a strong suspicion of ASD. We were assured the IT based learning that had been recommended (he can neither read nor write) would be available to him. Plus they would be able to meet his sensory and emotional needs, with 1-2-1 support and experienced staff.

And here our nightmare truly begins. Despite agreeing everything in meetings and having a CSP in place, upon moving to the school they declare he doesn't need any of the adjustments as outlined in the considerable volume of professional reports. He was allocated insufficient support hours and the promise of IT based learning was withdrawn. Token attention was paid to any of his therapeutic support, despite us involving every professional we could muster. Gradually the external professionals gave up, citing the waste of their clinical time given that the school were not listening. My son's mental health declined rapidly, he began self-harming and talked frequently about dying. He became violent and aggressive and getting him to school became almost impossible. Negotiations with the school became fraught, particularly due to one member of staff who was threatening and rude. Eventually I withdrew him.
Over the next two years we homeschooled, relations with the school only improving after a change in the staff. We've had three references to tribunal, all of which the education authority have settled prior to tribunal and agreed to our conditions and revised CSPs. Gradually we built up the time he was able to spend in school and after two years returned full time, with guaranteed support in place. I would point out that during this time it was agreed that the school would provide his curriculum for me to teach at home, but not once in two years did I receive even ONE piece of work to do with him.

During this time our family life was very difficult. I'm a single parent with two disabled children and was forced to be with my son 24/7, to be responsible for his education on top of everything else. The stress was often unbearable and did eventually result in me experiencing a nervous breakdown and seeking care myself. Social work had to become involved to provide respite for my son because it was the only way I could get a short break from him. It made our relationship very confusing for him as I was mum, but I was suddenly teacher too and he couldn't cope with that.

Despite the revised CSPs and agreements very little has changed. Lip service is paid to any of the agreed provisions. He finally got an iPad after three years, but it's rarely used and not for any of the things it's agreed for. His support has been cut to three days a week and on the other days he just sits. Agreed initiatives are sometimes tried but within a term they've been discontinued. Most of the time they don't even try. An example being, they were advised he could not learn phonics in primary 3, due to his combination of visual impairment and hearing difficulties. Various other recommendations were given to the school on appropriate reading systems. He is STILL on phonics in p7 and has made no progress. IEP targets are ridiculous. They are seldom reviewed and either appear year after year after year but are never met or disappear never to be seen again. His reading, spelling and maths scores have remained exactly the same as they were when he joined the school four years ago. We have had various professional assessments over the past twelve months and four separate professionals have concluded that it is not an organic Learning Disability that leads to his borderline IQ score, but an educational failure. The psychologist has warned that he will end up with an acquired learning disability due to lack of appropriate education.

I've been told by professionals since he was seven that he requires a special needs school, but of course we don't have them because we moved to presumption of mainstream many years ago. That policy however did not change the level of need that many disabled children have, that makes mainstream completely impossible for them. A policy that has meant my son has been denied any education at all.

We've secured an experienced ASL teacher to tutor him now one hour per week, but we cannot afford to go further than this because I had to give up work years ago to care for my second son who is severely disabled.

Socially mainstream has also been devastating for my son. He has NO friends. The children at his school are pleasant and kind. Bullying isn't too awful and kids will occasionally speak to him. But he has NO friends. There are no other disabled children in his class. He has been invited to ONE party in four years, by a new girl who invited the whole class. He has never once been asked to another child's house.
or out for a play date. This isn't lost on him. He knows he has no friends and is desperately unhappy. He knows he is different. He knows he is "stupid" and that's why people don't want to be his friend. His peer group is other young disabled people, NOT children in the mainstream. Yet here he is, forced into this life of failing in his work and failing socially.

For three years now I have campaigned against the destruction of ASL services in Dumfries and Galloway. The service was already horrific, lack of educational psychologists, no special needs school's, no pupil referral units, no experienced staff, scant attention paid to things Like CSPs etc. But the cuts we've experienced in the past two years have destroyed the service almost entirely. Our school is now full of unsupported disabled children. Some children had to stay home, or go into part time timetables or just sit in class getting upset or struggling to access the curriculum. All the vital things that enable them to cope in mainstream, like movement breaks, hydrotherapy, sensory therapy, OT programmes, communication work, nurture groups, just gone because there is no one to run them. We've been trying to talk to the Scottish government for THREE YEARS and no one will speak to us. Meanwhile a generation of our young people are being failed. Will grow up to not fulfil their potential, not have the skills for employment or to function ably in society. It's a national disgrace.

I really hope that you LISTEN. I really hope that you care. I've watched every parliamentary debate on ASL issues this year and watching the governments msp's and education minister standing up repeatedly denying there is a problem turns my stomach and breaks my heart. Please DO something. And not in ten years when you will have a lost generation. But right NOW. Save my son and the thousands of others like him.

ANON

Personally I do not feel that there is enough additional support for learning within our schools in Scotland. Due to recent cuts I feel our special needs children are at a severe disadvantage to other children. Personally I have not found our entrance into the special educational needs platform very good.

Our son is autistic with a speech and language delay (which was severe), learning and development delay and other health issues (hypermobility and failure to thrive). During his nursery years we had a fantastic team around us who could not do more for our son if they tried. However when we started the transition up to school we had nothing but issues. Our education visitor was pulled out early with absolutely no warning leaving us as parents with no help dodging the minefield of trying to get the help our son required. Advice given from the education visitor in her transfer report was completely ignored and our concerns as parents were also completely ignored. We were met with a teacher who could not have cared less, brushing off all of our concerns, and very little access to the learning centre due to underfunding. This made the first year of school very traumatic for our son. One of the special educational needs helpers that he did have was awful in our personal opinion. Not once did they chat with us to find out any of our sons triggers and behaviours or how to help him. They did in fact make matters worse for times such as entering the
classroom at the beginning of the day when they took his hand from mine and forced him to enter while distressed. I had to be confrontational and point out that this was not acceptable and we would NEVER force our son in these situations. There was also no support provided for big events such as sports day when I had to physically remove my son from the event and school due to how distressed he was and not one teacher or helper was paying any attention to him. We also had issues trying to make the classroom teacher understand that our son would NOT come forward to her when he needed help, she would just push the issue that he had to go to her not the other way round. Not the best start to school life and completely Unacceptable.

After meeting with the head teacher and now into primary two we are having a much more positive year. A main classroom teacher who knows how to cope with a special needs child and is actually willing to work with us to get him the help he needs. He now has a helper for some parts of the school week and his teacher supports him above and beyond when his helper is not in the class. He has come on leaps and bounds and this is only because of their support. We now finally have access to the hydrotherapy pool after a phone call to school from occupational therapy.

We do have major concerns due to the school having to re-juggle their sen helpers as funding is cut and children like mine are the first to have the support removed. We don't know if we will have such a great teacher next year and if not everything will fall to his helper to help him settle BUT he may not have a helper if they do not have enough to go around.

I feel that since the school is supposed to be a normal school with a learning centre attached it is disgusting that they have had funding cuts! You cannot run a learning centre and deal with all the children's needs if they do not have the staff and funding &a training required to do so!

All of our children regardless of whether they are "normal" or special needs deserve to have a good education. Scottish schools are failing the GIRFEC guidelines and it needs looks at immediately.

**Maria Harkin**

I am a mother of 2 children. A 6year old son diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and a 20mnth old daughter currently beginning her autism diagnosis journey and process of support need placement. I will start this email off positively and say that it's great parents/guardians of those with additional support needs are finally being asked our view.

I will stay positive and say that when education get it right, they truly do get it right. For my sons school (a language support centre) has been the best thing for our family as a whole. This is solely down to the staff that work and run the support centre. Who have moved mountains for my son and built his self esteem. We get daily emails all about his day, positive, negative and funny little things he has done. We are made to feel he is their top priority when I know they are supporting so many on a daily basis.
However the journey to get him placed at the language support centre was not an easy one.

He started mainstream local nursery where the ratio of staff to kids was too low. His needs could not be met and the council would not provide asna for him. However the staff worked tirelessly to the bet of their abilities and we got a asp, pre 5, slt all on board fast. He was also a early placement at 2.5yrs old. I am a mother who is highly educated on autism and have thrown myself into the world of autism, including supporting other families along this road too.

So with no chance of a asn for this nursery we were advised to put a placing request in. Result being a Language and Communication Support Centre nursery.

This was by far the biggest regret of my life. He was majorly let down by staff. My high functioning son was in with all non verbal peers with challenging behaviours. My son is a very laid back and highly intelligent boy who has never had a tantrum or even meltdown. His behaviour began to regress as he did not have the right peer models and to make matters worse. Staff forced him into situations he was not comfortable.

I launched a complaint but nothing was done about it.

Next came time to put a placing request in for his primary placement.

I had viewed some support centres and fell in love with my son’s school. It is the only one of its kind where my son can be taught in a mainstream class but can access a support centre when he needs it. Especially for so each therapy and 1.1 therapy.

After a agonising few months we were offered a Language and Communication Support Centre. Which is identical to the nursery he was in.

I could not be guaranteed that my son would be placed with kids on a similar level to him and since he is very academically bright I knew it was not right for him.

So I appealed.
My appeal was supported by my paediatrician, slt, private slt and hope for autism charity.

Each stating that my son has no challenging behaviors, he’s academically above his age level and only needs emotional and social support due to very high anxiety.

We finally won our placement and he got what he deserved.

Since then our educational journey has been plain sailing and within 6 weeks of being at my son’s school. We had a meeting with head of the support centre. Who confirmed to me that my fight was the right one as this was definitely the right placement for him.

I even sent an email to the education authority stating that sometimes a mother is right.
What I will say now I venture on this very same journey with my daughter is this.

There is not enough support schools and especially nurseries.

More asna staff are essential. My son could thrive in mainstream with constant 1:1 support from a trained professional.

This journey should not be so hard for parents. We fight day in and day out for our children and their difference. We are reminded every day of just how different or children are. Education is a basic human right but in the words of girfec....getting it right for every child. Unfortunately Scotland is not getting it right for every child.

**ANON**

I live in the Highlands with my 3 children aged 14, 12 & 9 the youngest has a diagnosis of ASD/PDA. Diagnosed aged 8 April 2016, in Glasgow.

Primary school was abysmal from P1 he was called a bad boy, continually restrained, both legally and illegally excluded the longest being aged 6 for 3 wks. Was put down to my parenting.

I removed him from that Primary and enrolled him to the specialist mainstream school for kids who have additional support needs. He has never attended full time education there.

He goes to a farm 4 mornings a wk 9-12 and received 1 HR a WK in a mainstream school. The 1HR a WK has been for over 2 years now and he should be in P5. In his hr at school he isn't on the classroom except for maybe 5-10 min and then he goes to the gym with some children from his class. He has a ratio of 2:1 ASLT and PSA.

It has taken me 5mths and 6 meeting to get 1 extra HR a WK so bringing his mainstream education to a total of 2HRS a WK.

My son will have left Primary education with relatively NO formal education at all. My son is not a school refused he actually wants to go to school, have friends etc

The additional support needs have not been there for him and neither has the duty of care of the local council been in providing him with an education which is every child RIGHT.

I am ashamed of our education system in relation to children who have additional needs but who cannot manage within a mainstream school but yet who have no learning disabilities so don't meet the criteria for a local School that supports asn. What happens to these children, their futures etc

In Highland we need a specialist educational provision with outdoor learning etc for kids who can't manage within mainstream. Inclusion isn't that you get through the
door INCLUSION is being part of something, feeling like you belong, feeling like you are wanted there, knowing that you have something to contribute etc I could go on and on

But suffice to say my son has been FAILED by a system that on paper/policies etc should be there to help and support him.

Mr and Mrs Paterson

We are grandparents who look after our granddaughter who is 14. Our granddaughter has been a problem since she was about 5 at her first primary school. She lived with her mother at the time who had drug problems. Our granddaughter was dragged about from drug house to drug house at all hours of the day and night, so she would go to school tired and late and would cause problems in her class. She missed a lot of lessons by being suspended for being disruptive and she was well behind other pupils in her class. That particular school couldn't wait to get rid of her to a behavioural school then they moved her to another school within weeks. She was again moved to another behavioural school, I don't know if you know anything about behavioural schools but you don't have much actual schooling taught and she learned very little.

Her gran went to them and asked them to get books and we would help her at our home as by this time we were giving parental authority over her.

We then went to our local primary school and asked them if they would take her in, and for the 2 years she was their they were great with her but she was still miles behind the class.

She went to the high school and we arranged an appointment with them to explain the problems our granddaughter had.

But the last 2 years have not been great. She sometimes has a support teacher but not as much as our granddaughter needs and the teacher isn't always with her.

The high school would put her out of the school if they thought they would get there way but we fight our granddaughter's corner.

Only today we had a phone call from a another school who deal with kids with learning difficulties and they suggested to us that our granddaughter go to there school but we said no way that would happen.

Our granddaughter has been tested for different things and attended CAMHS who don't find anything wrong with her.

Our granddaughter's problem is she has missed to much schooling and is embarrassed when asked to do things in class that she can't and causes problems when the teacher tries to force her to do it and things have snowballed through time getting worse so they want to permanently eject her.
We have also went to our local councillor who happens to be on the education committee but his hands seem to be tied. We have sent her to a place for tutoring to see if it can help her at our own expense and it's not cheap and we are pensioners, some subjects at school she is great at and behaved as she had confidence to do these subjects and this proves she has the ability to learn given the right support and tuition.

**ANON**

My son first started the long journey that is autism when he was just 20 months old. We had to have pre 5 learning support in place from the age of 2 and by the time he went to nursery there was no way he could go to main stream without addition support.

My son was one of the first children to get a personal additional support needs assistant (asna) assigned to him for main stream nursery, without a diagnosis but had it not been for the asna he could not have attended a main stream nursery where he thrived. The ASNA wasn't specialised in autism when she started with our son in January 2014 but she worked and trained hard and with th3 help of the staff at the nursery the asna was worth her weight in gold.

My son has now progressed to his school at Primary School and the asna's haven't disappointed in there either. My boy has thrived again learning new things and being able to do things we never thought possible because the Asna's work so hard with him and repeatedly go over and over and over the same stuff day in day out till he grasps whatever the new skill is that they are teaching him.

Additional support needs is a must for schools like my sons without the level of additional support our kids could not begin to develop the way that they are.

I know from friends that my experience has been completely positive where others have not been so positive.

My son has had a lot of input from ourselves, the teachers and the asna's and without this he wouldn't have accomplished half what he has.

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS DESERVES TO HAVE A PLACE IN ALL SCHOOLS IT'S**

**SO IMPORTANT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE**

**ANON**

My daughter needs support in school. She attends High School in Dunfermline. D has Di George syndrome, chronic lungs and has had five heart operations. The school do their very best, but there is a break down on the understanding of her condition. She has support at school some of the time. Sometimes shortage of staff
through not enough or sickness. Or just forgetting, she has none when it comes to
homework it is very difficult to get the right level for her if the support do not add in
foot notes to inform us, so if no support no foot note sorry she also has partial
paralysis of the vocal cords which makes it difficult for her to explain her day at
school.

Ann Whitton

My name is Ann Whitton I am the parent of an almost 9 year old little girl who attends
a mainstream primary school in Glasgow. For the last 4 years I have had to
continually fight to obtain the supports my child has needed while attending school.

I had a meeting with the then outgoing headteacher during enrolment explaining to
her my daughter’s specific needs and challenges which had not been identified
during her two full years of nursery education despite showing clear signs of distress.
Hitting other children and taking undue risks in situations. She would also soil herself
and be allowed to come home like that! During this meeting I was assured that the
school would be able to deal with all problems my daughter may present with. It was
also explained that my daughter has encopresis and required laxatives dails so may
could have accidents whilst at school. My daughter was and indeed still is attending a
clinic now based at the new hospital.

During primary 1 – There was multiple challenges presented regarding my
daughter’s behaviour and ability to not sit still. The school again said they would deal
with this, they helped her focus by using my daughter’s love of nature to help her
complete her work. One day her dad picked her up from school and was told “we are
really sorry, the teacher feels so bad” my daughter had cut a massive chunk of her
own hair in the middle of the class in front of all the other children while the teacher
had popped out! Also it was made clear that there was NO-ONE in the school able to
help my daughter if she had a soiling accident while at school, so for the first year
whenever my daughter soiled herself we would be called to go clean her and bring a
change of clothing! Leaving my daughter to sit outside the school office for upto 20
mins in her own faeces while one of us went to change her!

Primary 2 – My daughter was allocated a teacher who simply could not cope with my
daughter in her class! I was told repeatedly that she was having behavioural issues
at school and would not allow anyone to touch her things in the class. She would
refuse to do her work so was left to do nothing as long as she was quiet and
behaving! Imagine my horror when I went to parents evening to look through all the
work my daughter had completed in primary 2 only to find it all empty! There was
only one a4 sheet of paper which had been partially filled in for a whole year! It was
during this year she was allocated theraputty and play therapy in the morning before
class. After my insistence we had a meeting with the first educational psychologist,
who explained the whole class was lagging behind and that she thought a “wow”
programme would be of benefit, Only three session ever took place! With no
feedback to myself given except that she was “really busy”.

P3 – a new headteacher took over, finally after two years it was established halfway
through this year that indeed they could provide someone to assist when my
daughter had a soiling accident at school. Theraputty and nurture groups where formed to help a group of children who where struggling. My daughter was included within this group, she had two part time teachers both of which where able to engage my daughter in the learning and indeed her education improved dramatically during this year. My daughter's work was chunked down to enable her to only deal with one problem at a time, with brain breaks of 5 mins inbetween. Still behavioural issues regarding people touching her things and people shouting at her.

P4 – Again had two different part time teachers for the first half of the year, one of which struggled to engage my daughter in learning, even while using the older strategies which had been successful and used in p3!. In the 2\textsuperscript{nd} half of the year she was given another class teacher. My daughter was again engaging in education with the teacher while still having behavioural difficulties regarding people touching “her things” and people triggering her senses. However at the end of the year my daughter had completed the majority of her work and she was caught up to the standard needed.

P5 So far this year my daughter has had countless teachers! At one point she had 5 different teachers in one day!. Again she is not engaged in learning, She is having behavioural difficulties which are growing dangerous to both herself and other pupils! Shes been suspended twice so far this year and I have been in constant contact with the school working with them to achieve strategies which might help. I am constantly being told that my daughter’s behaviours are not acceptable and that the expectation is that my daughter should be able to control her behaviours with regards to when people are teasing her and shouting. In November of last year my daughter was finally diagnosed with autism – aspergers. There has been a multi agency meeting with the head, dep headteacher. Educational psychologist and my daughter’s own clinical psychologist where the current plan is to still chunk down her work and give her brain breaks, she also has fidget toys as her desk and has a picture reminder on her desk. I have told them that my daughter requires emotional support from an adult at all times at the moment, as she is simply unable to control her behaviour in the heat of the moment. However this has been refused constantly. I’ve been told “ shes not bad enough for that” when I asked about any other schools that might be able to help my daughter or indeed have smaller class sizes and more emotional support. She is currently being assessed by the educational psychologists trainee. Although I haven’t been told what they are assessing or what the outcome might be, let along when its happening and who is doing the assessing.

I have written to the education board regarding my issues with the provisions at school and that my daughter’s needs have not been met, this has resulted in someone who doesn’t even know or bother to check the facts send me an almost identical reply to two of my enquiries. I have had two councillors phone and try and help with no effect. I finally put a complaint into Glasgow city council regarding the education department failing my daughter by not providing adequate support to enable her to complete her school day!. This was not upheld and the only other course of action left to me is to complain to the public ombudsman!

Needless to say if my daughter is to stay in any kind of mainstream environment for schooling then the issues need to be dealt with NOW, and this is NOT HAPPENING. I fear for my daughter's ability to be able to cope in the wider world without being
able to do the basic of things for herself and nobody seems to care! As a parent I am at my wits end with worry and stress because of the current situation. It’s common for people to think my daughter is just the bad kid as all they see or hear is her having a meltdown in the school. The staff although they help deal with the children in the speech and language unit seem to have a very narrow minded view of people on the autistic spectrum, let alone how to educate the children who have it!

I hope that this helps support other parents in this situation to know that they are not alone and not to give up the fight to get the help for your child!

ANON

What are your views on Additional Support Needs provided in Scotland’s schools?

Nowhere near good enough, not every child has the ability to fit into mainstream and bases can be just as bad but then they don't fit into special schools either what's needed are ASD specific schools too many children are being failed and being excluded due to behaviour directly linked with their condition, SALT and OT are a must for Children on the Autistic spectrum, if they are lucky enough to get any it's not much and they are generally out to sign them off as soon as they can, my personal experience. Schools don't relay important information to parents about anything significant that has happened to the child while in school which then manifests in a meltdown when at home and they know they are safe.

What have your experiences been?

Shocking to say the least, my son has Classic ASD, learning disabilities, hyperacusis and as picked up by an independent OT dyspraxia (undiagnosed as NHS say falls inline with his LD's independent OT says outwith for developmental age).

I first approached head of base to enquire about a CSP and was blatantly given wrong information I was told these were not for children like my son but rather for children in care who required someone to coordinate their services for them. I initially accepted this but later found out this was not correct and applied direct to the council. While I was in the process of composing my email to request a CSP be opened for my son his DLA renewal came in, there is a specific question which asks if your child has a Statement (EHCP) or a CSP I had written next to it that I was in the process of applying. I had taken it into school for Head of base to fill in school section and professional who knows the child while she was reading through it she came across my comment about in process of applying for a CSP and asked if I hadn't taken into consideration what she had told me at my sons last review. I said yes I had which is why I didn't apply at the time but I had since found out she had given me wrong information she then refused to fill out the part on the form professional who knows the child claiming it should be the person coordinating his support plan who fills in that section!

I requested a full assessment of all of my son's needs which to date has still not been done and our LA seem more interested in making sure CSP's are removed
from children who have them as they don't want to be held accountable, they ignore
government guidelines and put immense stress and pressure on the parents who are
left to fight through tribunal if necessary to try and ensure their needs are being met.
I am currently awaiting his current CSP being sent out again our LA going over time
limits not adhering to government guidelines. Inclusion are set up under the guise of
supporting our children when in actual fact they are there to ensure costs are kept to
a minimum forget GIRFEC because that isn't implemented.

My son went swimming in a block set every year while in primary and as he loved
water and being in the pool. I went to pick him up from school on a day he had
swimming and the bus arrived back while we (taxi drivers/escorts and myself as I
transport my son myself and claim parental expenses due to his sensory issues).
Staff and children walked past us into the base to get their bags and when my son
came out he grabbed my car keys and ran to the car screaming I couldn't stop to
question school as I had to run after him, I got him into the car and still screaming he
wouldn't get out the car I had to take him to my dads still in meltown when we arrived
and for a further 2 hours after we got in he then completely shutdown and lay curled
up in the foetal position for over an hour. There was NO entry in his home/school
diary to tell me anything about his day.

We arrived home just after 9pm and I had a message from a friend who's children
are also on the spectrum to say she had seen my son while at the swimm

I was told by a friend staff in the pool had been trying to flip him onto his back and
swim a width and this had distressed him. I emailed head of base that night and
when we arrived at school the next day she asked me to leave it with her and she's
find out what had happened. A few emails went back and forth regarding this
incident and end result was I was getting accused for sending someone to "spy" on
swimming lessons. This would never have happened if GIRFEC was being followed,
was my son listened to? NO was he safe? NO

After the swimming incident a no of signs went up on the doors and walls on the
entrance to the base about childrens rights and another sign which was a large
emiticon face with a finger in front of it's mouth, most of the signs were eventually
removed but the sign with the emoticon face remained I have attached a not very
good picture of said sign taken with my mobile phone but the words are forever
ingrained in my mind. The sign read: "Shhhhhhh

There are so many of us here that if we all talk in our normal voices it could hurt our
ears! " and underneath the emoticon pic was a picture of a small boy standing with
his head down and his fingers in his ears.

This was how I and others witnessed my son anytime he was in the playground
stood with his back against the wall head down fingers in his ears (unable to cope). I
have school reports which point out my son was making initial sounds during phonics
lessons, he would also use his own vocalisations to drown out environmental noises
he couldn’t cope with. During the CSP process my lawyer had an independent SALT report done for tribunal she saw him in school and at home and on receiving a copy of this report I again became duly alarmed as it stated “[name of son] made no sound in school which was in complete contrast to how he was at home!” I had an appointment for parents night so I voiced my concerns and asked his teacher when my son stopped vocalising in school? her reply was that she had never heard him vocalise (she had been his teacher for 2 years) yet no one had bothered to tell me he had fallen silent in school. As my appointment was finished I asked her to walk me out as I wanted to show her something and when we got to the doors I pointed to the sign and told her that it needed to be removed she looked at the sign and said my son does follow the rules in school and said she would speak to head of base. Arriving at school the following day the sign was still in place and I said to his teacher it’s still there she said she had forgot and would speak to head of base that day. It was still there the following day and I asked the teacher if she had spoken to head of base which she replied she had and when I asked if it was being removed she just shrugged her shoulders. I was going through mediation and decided to bring it up there with the head of inclusion, he initially stated he would speak to staff but I pointed out that wasn’t good enough that my son had been making initial sounds during phonics lessons and had been silent for over 2 yrs and no one had informed me of this and that I could now put this into the same timeline as my son controlling me talking (or rather him not allowing me to talk and becoming distressed and more worryingly aggressive if I continued to talk) He said he would see to it again I reiterated it wasn’t good enough simply taking the sign down would not be enough as this is embedded into my son for over 2 years that he is not allowed to talk/vocalise in school and I believe he needed Educational psychologist and intensive SALT if there were to be any chance of undoing the damage that has been done. needless to say neither has happened and my son remains damaged from his years in primary education a supposed ASD specific base. Although my son transitioned to high school this year he still remains silent in school and I am still not allowed to talk. He receives very little almost zero salt and no direct SALT in relation to working on speech has ever been provided. Even though his CSP stated he should have one to one sessions as long as their was a clinical need he received none which I only found out about when I specifically questioned this.

LA’s are letting these children down and getting away with it and it’s abhorrent!

These are only a few of the issues I have faced and obviously some issues are still ongoing.

I refuse to allow this failure to meet my sons needs to continue and I am forced to go to tribunal. Hopefully our government will now address these issues and implement laws to ensure the vulnerable are getting the right support. GIRFEC is good on a website but unless it’s put into practice and LA’s are held to account and overseen by an independent body then these failings will continue.

ANON

My son started at Nursery in Falkirk for his 1st year. We moved so I transferred him to another nursery in Falkirk where it all began.
He had social and communication difficulties, was biting children and was not at all focused within the nursery setting. Despite having had Speech and Language Therapy working with him no one looks at ASD. When he was transferred to a new speech therapist she picked up on it straight away. I received numerous phone calls from the nursery asking me to collect my son as they could not have these behaviours as parents were complaining.

He was finally diagnosed with ASD and the authority assured me that by placing him into an Enhanced Provision unit, where he would receive the best level of support !!!!! What a joke !!!!!

I have had 2 1/2 years of living hell since making this decision. The lack of support, knowledge of ASD and care has been heart rending.

I was still receiving numerous phone calls surrounding his biting and behaviours.

I also received 2 letters from transport asking me to explain to my 6 year old ASD Son what behaviour was expected of him or they were removing transport.

My son is almost 8 now and recently I attended his Form 4 meeting where I was informed by his class teacher that he was educationally at primary 2 level but would be at primary 3 if they had the time to spend with him. This was the first I had heard of this.

Despite many meetings, lots of paperwork and hours upon hours of worry I have been left with no other alternative than to seek legal representation in order to gain help for my son as the local authority does not seem to care.

He has currently been removed from the school due to many issues.

They clearly cannot meet his needs and have not been able to from the offset it has been in short a LIVING NIGHTMARE !!

I would ask that do these children not deserve the best possible start in life, with competent and well trained people surrounding them. To be given support where necessary to set them up for a better life in the future ?

I could go on and on and on about this whole sorry system !!!!!

Fiona Laird

My son attends mainstream school in a rural primary school in Aberdeenshire. He is classed as learning disabled and is under investigation for autism. He attended community nursery for two years and excelled in that environment. We trusted the local education authority when they advocated mainstream. He is 6 years old and in p2. Your system is a nightmare.
My son started exhibiting new behaviours last year. Anxiety based, self-harming all surrounding his inability to cope with mainstream. I have attended numerous meetings and by that in excess of over 30 since April 2016. Noise causes my son pain and he cannot learn in the conventional sense. His class has tripled since December 2016. He now refuses to go to school. When he is there he plays with Lego and draws. He has stagnated in education for over two years.

Today yet another meeting. I asked for a blended placement with a special hub. We yet again have to wait for ever more strategies before that can be considered. Till the next meeting. In short the system pushes parents to homeschool. My son has been miserable for over a year now and nothing has been done and yet ever more useless strategies. Parents wishes are never considered neither has my sons wishes. So in essence mainstream has caused more problems with my son than existed in the first place. Your system sucks. I've not met an ASN parent who does not feel the same as myself.

1: system slow
2: agencies don't work together and rarely attend meetings
3: parent needs to read legislation in order for it to be implemented.
4: not enough resources and people to deal with volume of ASN pupils in mainstream
5: ASN pupils are suffering
6: system set up so as a parent you have to fight to get anything in place
7: parents and pupils wishes are not taken into account as budgets are top priority.
8: talk yet no or little action.

My experience has been so stressful, I had a heart attack at 42. The system is not fit for purpose and fails everyone. Paper trail nightmare. Do I think this email will be heard, probably not. System is designed to break pupils and parents.

ANON

My son is 13 and has been diagnosed with ASD and ADHD and has sensory processing problems. From August 2015 to March 2016 my son was a pupil at the ASD base in a High School, in Midlothian.

The ASD base is an additional needs provision within a mainstream school. From the beginning of his placement my son had problems coping with his school place. I was regularly phoned and asked to take him home from school as he was not coping. In March 2016 I was again phoned to take him home and was told by base staff that they could not guarantee my son’s safety in school, so I made the decision to remove him from school and put in a placement request to our local council (Midlothian) to ask them to consider a more suitable placement.

I had a meeting with the Educational Psychologist who was going to take our request to the MARG committee. Our placement request was denied in June 2016 and Midlothian currently has no other placement for my son. My son has not been to school for 11 months now and although multi agency meetings have been taking place since November 2016 there is no long term plan in place and other than one
hour per week outreach teaching nothing else has been planned and no next steps have been put in place.

I have taken advice from Enquire, who have been really helpful. However, the strain this situation is putting on our family (my husband and I both work full time) is immense.

I really hope someone will take the time to read this as I have no idea where to turn now and Andrew is being failed by our council.

Social workers use Getting it Right for Every Child as a basis for their assessments and person centred practice, but in this case they are not getting it right for my child.

This is a very brief overview of what has gone on over the past 11 months and I am happy to give any further information needed.

I sincerely hope this reaches someone who can possibly point us in the right directions to get things back on track for my son.

ANON

I have a daughter age 5 that should be attending school but in my eyes they don't meet her needs have made serious mistakes and I can't trust them for her safety.

It's a very long story as nothing has been done properly from the start for my daughter as her condition is rare and doesn't fit into the NHS guidelines and my council squeeze every child into them with no though for the individual as much as they are telling me they do, I can guarantee if someone from above that actually cares to look into my daughter's case without covering up for the people who behind the scenes are pushing all these poor children with complex health care needs into a system that doesn't always work for every child.

This is my response to an official when he decided my daughter was best placed at [a specialist school].

The school that didn't want to do chest Physio, give afternoon antibiotic, wouldn't let my daughters emergency meds be with her even when seizure management plan states meds as soon as seizure starts and call ambulance.

And prefers to only change nappy once a day when leaving for home unless dirty. This is a fully assisted needs school.

They missed her oxygen cylinder was missing on second day and when had seizure in playground didn't give meds as had stopped shacking and was in part focal seizure that school nurse didn't identify I was told had just came 2 on entering hospital grounds by ambulance driver.

Once these mistakes were made they changed there ways to what I had asked for on first day but there was no organisation or preparation for my daughter starting this school and I feel they don't understand her condition which is life threatening.
I have lost all trust and am disgusted by there system and rules for children with life threatening illness, my daughter should be in [a special needs school] and if properly assessed before entering primary 1 with her health care needs and the amount of attention she needs it's clear she doesn't fit into this school as not enough staff to properly care for her.

They also do not have On site professionals, Speech and language, Physio, educated school nurse, they drop in on certain days and say they train the classroom assistants.

Not good enough in my eyes for the seriously vulnerable kids.

my daughter has missed her education up until now. I also don't no what I will do if I lose the tribunal as I clearly want her to go to school. with the proper support I know she will benefit and her life will all fall into place but if left in the hands of these so called professionals at her school I will be fighting for her every need as it arises.

They talk a good game but in reality they are letting down a lot of children.

**Fiona McAinsh**

Am not sure if the following information will be of any benefit to your piece of work, but here is my own experience of the issues I have encountered to date:

My daughter was three in December 2016 and therefore eligible to attend nursery. She has dystonic cerebral palsy, is completely dependent and fed via gastronomy tube.

Due to personal circumstances, I chose for her to remain at the partner provider nursery she has attended since she was 9 months old. The nursery she attends has been fantastic and had already arranged for a playfriend to provide one to one support for her - this was funded by a charity CSNIPS. I live in Fife and am the sole carer for my daughter and her elder sibling (6).

Since my daughter was a baby, she has participated in the early intervention programme at the Scottish centre for children with motor impairments in Cumbernauld, which had been hugely beneficial to both my daughter and myself. It has provided continuity of therapy and a holistic approach to her care.

The cost of this was previously met by charitable funding however now she is eligible for nursery placement I am faced with having to pay for this continued input personally. I did apply to Fife council to have her nursery funding transferred to SCCMI however this was refused, the reason given being that my daughter would be similarly supported in her own community. This is clearly NOT the case.

At present, I am funding this myself but cannot understand why if all children are entitled to 15 hours nursery placement each week during term time, the parent
cannot choose where this is utilised. From a financial perspective, the cost of the SCCMI weekly group is less than her nursery entitlement.

I am now embroiled in a lengthy appeal process which has required me to contact the education authority in Fife, attempt to arrange a co-ordinated meeting with all agencies and then consider an independent adjudication process. This is on top of providing 24 hour care for my daughter, attending numerous medical and therapeutic appointments, maintaining a job and the daily responsibilities of being a parent.

I personally feel that because I have chosen not to follow the usual route of sending my daughter to school nursery, she has fallen through the gap and I am now left trying to resolve these issues myself. This is very difficult as I have no knowledge or previous experience of this field.

There has been no mention to date of an integrated support plan or co-ordinated support plan for my daughter but after doing research myself I believe this will be required given her complex additional needs.

My personal opinion to date is that there does appear to be a good framework for additional support needs in education, however if a parent chooses to take a slightly different route there is a distinct lack of information, advice and support available. I would not like to think that this is the case, but I do wonder if this is a tool used as a deterrent to discourage families from trying an alternative?

At the end of the day, all parents are trying to ensure their child is provided with the most appropriate care to enable them to benefit as much as they can from their education.

Victoria Dunnett

My son was diagnosed with Autism and selective mutism whilst in nursery before starting primary one, he has been in three different educational establishments throughout West Lothian Council, however he currently is a pupil within Boghall Primary School. He joined them in primary two and is now in primary three, he has went from not talking not responding to being able to stand up in school assemblies with parents present and talking out loud, Boghall primary school are above and beyond any other establishment set up I have experienced their knowledge and acceptance of every child is amazing, what they have done with my son is phenomenal he can read and write he can count and now tell the time things all parents with normal functioning children take as an expected from a child, things I thought were never going to be possible, he has went from sitting outside a classroom by himself as the teacher in the previous school did not know how to deal with him. To now being excited about school and learning. My son has made a special group of friends with the help of the school he also attends football club and after school clubs, he now copes in social situations out with his control, as the school have provided him with these tools. This school has a total understanding of how to bring the best out of a child with differing needs and what they have done with my son is unbelievable we are so blessed with the teachers and staff at my son’s school. These teachers truly care I know that his future will be a brighter one
thanks to understanding and knowledge. The education he now receives is second to none and overall compassion for a child that is different is amazing. Boghall Primary school is a beacon in West Lothian for a child with special needs and requirements. The IEP meetings are organised and information updated immediately his progress is amazing. I truly believe so strongly that this primary school could teach many establishments how not to fail a child with different needs by following in their footsteps. What has been provided to my son so far is life changing and will be invaluable to him in the future. I really think as a parent you should have a look at this school as it truly is a hidden gem and the children within the school are receiving an amazing education that will in future years provide champion young adults for Scotland with special educational requirements and also without.

**Alison Thomson**

My son is 5 years old, autistic, and started mainstream school in August 2016. He had previously been at a Local Authority Nursery and we had held Child Planning Meetings there to prepare for his transition to school. The Nursery Headteacher had applied for full-time one-to-one support for him. We heard, very close to the summer term ending, that this had not been granted. I have since found out that the allocation of one-to-one care had changed significantly, in that only pupils with physical conditions would be eligible. Autism does not fall into this category (although I disagree, as it is neurological and not behavioural) and so we were told the school would support my son through their devolved budget. We were told that this had increased, however, as the individual support had decreased, overall there was less available hours. i.e. the devolved budget increased but the individual budget decreased and the overall total for the school was less in 2016/7 than it was in 2015/6. In addition, the school were gaining several children with additional support needs into P1, but hadn't lost any from the P7s who went to Secondary School.

Despite all these barriers, the school (Gracemount Primary) have supported my son fantastically well and ensured (at my instance) that he got 1:1 Pupil Support Assistant (PSA) allocation. They now know that this has been absolutely necessary as he needs an adult at all times (except during outside break times) to ensure he is focusing and participating - something which he finds very difficult. However, I do not doubt that another child lost all/some support in order for my son to get his.

Although he has had the absolute best start to his school life, I am already concerned about what will happen in 2017/8. Again I will have to plead his case, competing against other children/parents for the best support. There is simply not enough to go around. This will be a battle every academic year. My son requires so much support and is extremely vulnerable, but he is happy, settled and learning (beyond my expectations). Now he has started mainstream, I do not want him to go to a special school, where he will be surrounded by many challenging behaviours, which could prove detrimental to his own. I want him to be around children who display behaviour better than his own, so he can learn from this.
On another point, I feel the role of the PSA is not now what it was planned to be when first introduced. It seems to me the PSAs are dealing with the kids with the most complex needs and challenging behaviours, carrying out tasks set by professionals such as Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists, Psychologists etc. They are not given the recognition or pay suitable for the work they are doing.

I feel that it is beneficial to the children with additional support needs to be educated in mainstream if appropriate, and I would imagine that this is a lot cheaper than funding a place at special school where the pupil/staff ratio is very high.

To summarise:
- I feel that the previous system of needs allocation needs to revert back to individual pupils with ASN, not just those with physical disabilities.
- This funding needs to be realistic, based on what schools are applying for and not cut back
- PSA salary should be re-assessed and increased appropriately
- The planning for support needs to be decided and schools informed with ample time to plan for the upcoming academic year

**ANON**

I have a daughter who has ASN who attended mainstream primary school which was sadly closed and now other children with a religious denomination are schooled in the very same building just a few years later. Anyway I digress.

During this 5 year period of time, my daughter learned to read proficiently, her favourite author is David Walliams – they tried various methods of teaching numerical skills and finally found one in P3 and for the first time my daughter had time for numbers.

She fully took part in all activities – learned all about cities of Scotland – played piano in the virtual travelling school band – and most importantly had brilliant peer models around her. With time they learned how to support my daughter in an easy and caring way.

Due to the closure my daughter ended up going to Special School... They told me her educational detail would be passed over and her learning would continue in the same style.

Well my daughter has been there now for 3 years. I have endeavoured over those years to find out exactly what my daughter is learning with little success. I went on a training course which empowered me to be able to push for time and communicate in a way that the school had to listen to and take into account. I have had 3 meetings with the school over the last 5 weeks.

My daughter will now finally start back on her Stern Maths method found at mainstream primary and pushing for more challenge in many area’s, particulary
reading. She was given homework just a few weeks ago for letter recognition – she can read and understand full novels.

The expectation level’s for children at ‘special school’ is so incredibly low. It’s actually heartbreaking. How about we close all the special school in Scotland put all the money into additional support at ALL SCHOOLS.

Supports do not need to look like directly hourly PA’s, there are numerous ways of including children that are effective and also cost effective.

As a parent in this situation – I am pushing and pushing to get my daughter the education she deserves and I fear that she is just slotted in to fit with the school’s way of working with no long term thinking or aspirations for prospects.

I also have numerous friends who have children with ASN at mainstream school. The overall theme is that there is not enough money to fund what these kids need to learn. I was very lucky in my daughter’s mainstream placement and never had to push for anything from the school, in fact they helped and did my daughter proud.

We need to be teaching children that it’s ok to be different, the only way is to include them otherwise we continue to create the gap in understanding and compassion. As a society surely that’s how we should be thinking?

Anyway, glad I got time to respond.It really is a sad state of affairs

**ANON**

My daughter is nearly 10, in mainstream P5, diagnosed with Autism, Dyslexia, Hyperkinetic Disorder, visual impairment, enuresis, anxiety, SPD, partial precocious puberty. Her life is not easy! Her working memory assessed as very poor! She wants to leave school!

Why? Well the system is set up so she fails! She is in an environment where she doesn't feel included, responsible, respected, nurtured, achieving or mentally healthy! Her anxiety before & after school is severe; the probability that the enuresis is down to that looks very likely!

For the last 6 years I’ve let school take the lead, thinking I was being guided in the right direction! Wrong! School states she gets the most help available. 1-1 is approx 2hrs per week. The Rest of the time she sits trying to keep up, copying her peers & masking her frustration. Their assessment is she is 2.5yrs behind. But in literacy alone she is still on p1 books. The very same level books as my p1 niece! That makes her almost 4 years behind in literacy! She needs specialist support & urgently!

She has a limited voice within the environment of children who are succeeding and they openly see her as the weak link, unable to voice her opinion & making her feel
in her words 'dumb'. There is no direct malicious bullying going on her but clearly she feels indirectly bullied. They just don't understand.

The world outside looking in sees just a child but it's a sad world with no friends, rejected by her peers, words such as 'go away [name of daughter]', 'shut up', 'weirdo' & 'crazy'. She has a feeling of inferiority, shunned by her peers & bottom of her class. Worse still her poor writing, spelling etc displayed on class boards.

To thrive, and I firmly believe she has a chance, she needs to be in an environment which is academically & emotionally more suited to her needs. The current classroom environment is not suitable to her Sensory or visual needs. Mainstream was never ready for Autistic children. She needs to be around children like herself & needs to feel the success of ability, within a smaller group & more support. She has many strengths not being utilised. As it stands she is angry, anxious, upset, and distressed! As a parent it is my job to ensure that her wellbeing is of the utmost priority, education are not helping me achieve this.

So, after a few debates with school & being informed there is no funding for support, I put in a placing request for an ASN base. SLC missed their own deadline to get back to me; they clearly hadn't looked into her case as crucial information was missing & still hastily sent a refusal letter out the same night I called them. This letter was a copy & paste job with another child's details! The 2nd still wasn't correct!

[name 1 removed] called me on the 16th Dec 2016. He said when he checked that They had already put my daughter to panel, to work out best place for her, he had to refuse [name of centre/school redacted] as no place there at the moment (7 are leaving the base this year??) He made apology for the letters of course as it wasn't acceptable & he had personally signed them. So he said they'll get back to me in Jan to tell me 1. How long I had to appeal (something he should have known but apparently had to ask the legal team) & he'd be sending an ASN teacher from a base to monitor my daughter & report back to him. He also said he would speak to the panel regarding his discussions with [name 2 removed] on her SPD & visual issues. I am really concerned that I've heard nothing.

This is now Feb 8th 2017. Despite the calls I've made to inclusion I've had nothing back. The school haven't heard what's going on & certainly don't know anything about her case going to panel. Where does this leave us? Who will help? GIRFEC is not happening! I have worked & paid my taxes for 30years! The most vulnerable are being failed yet again!

This is in no way an issue with the mainstream school she attends, they just aren't equipped, don't have the funds, support or trained professionals required to help her. Until Autism & other conditions are made part of the curriculum where staff & children understand their differences then our kids should never be dumped into Main Stream.

ANON
I just wanted to take the time to email you about our experiences with trying to access additional support for our 12 year old daughter. While in Primary School our daughter was assessed and diagnosed with Global Developmental Delay after only one appointment and they signed off on her. She had already been diagnosed with Dyspraxia at that point by local OT. OT recommended our primary school let our daughter use a writing slope, a pencil grip and to use a keyboard for longer pieces of writing but they informed us the school didn't actually have to do anything they recommended, it's down to each school. They did let our daughter have a writing slope and pencil grip but nothing happened as regards to her using a keyboard for longer pieces of writing until P7, after their third request. Our daughter did receive learning support within the classroom in P3 from SfL but it was discontinued in P4 - we were never given a formal reason, budget cuts etc mentioned. The School also never told me how far behind her peers my daughter was. One of her teachers said "[name of child] is bottom of the class, but someone has to be". It was only when she was leaving Primary School that I found out by accident that my daughter was not only behind but "significantly behind her peers" when I was quoted part of a report made by her teacher.

When it came to our daughter moving up to Secondary School I knew we would have a problem as our daughter already hated School and often refused to go. We had a LIAP meeting between the Primary and Secondary school. The Secondary school seemed extremely helpful, having us over to see their Support for Learning base, telling us all we wanted to hear about the things they would do to make the transition as easy as possible. We were told our daughter could use the base whenever she needed, she could go there at break and lunch times to avoid crowds etc etc. They asked us specifically what our daughter was interested in and where she struggled. They said they would get her the electives she wanted - blogging and soft toy making. When it came to it, they gave her graphic novel writing (our daughter struggles a lot to write, they knew this) and Band Together (she doesn't play an instrument) all her other school mates got their first 2 choices or at least 2 from their top 4 – our daughter didn't get any of the 4 choices she made. Our daughter was referred back to the specialist Centre as an emergency by the hospital due to severe anxiety. We were told she would be seen as a matter of urgency, definitely within 2 weeks. It took 6 months for them to see her and a second request by Paediatrician. Before she moved up to Secondary school we finally got a diagnosis of ASD (again through the specialist Centre, different person seeing her this time over a period of several months and WISC testing). She was also diagnosed with Working Memory Disorder. Our daughter was suffering from severe anxiety and we asked if they could help us and they said they would find someone to see her - then denied they said they would do this and signed us off.

So our daughter started the Academy and it went downhill quickly. She was told she couldn't assess the base when she wanted and she had to stay in mainstream classes until at least year 3. She had SfL in Maths, one assistant talked to her on too adult a level confusing her more while another just gave her the answers instead of trying to explain. Our daughter couldn't cope with the other children staring at her for having Learning Support causing her anxiety levels to soar. Gym was a big issue for our daughter so the deputy head teacher (who has now left) said she could stop PE and go to the base instead. Our daughter was made to feel she was not welcome in the base with most staff ignoring her, only one ever spoke to her and she was
seldom there. During the hour she was there she would text me constantly begging me to come take her home, winding herself into panic attacks and getting herself sent home. The school does have a base for children with ASD but there were 2 boys there with violent tendencies so while being in a base for children with ASD would have benefited our daughter massively the School deemed it unsafe and unsuitable for her.

In November last year after several days of panic attacks and begging not to go to School our daughter refused to get on the bus. I had to go take her back home and she said she wasn't going back. I had a meeting with the School a few days later and that was the last I heard from them. I had to phone Educational Psychology myself and ask for help. In January I took our daughter to a special needs school near Aberdeen for children with learning/social issues. She fell in love with the place, people who actually listened to her and said they could help her without forcing her into mainstream education. I was told I would need to approach Ed Psych about it as they would be the ones to arrange funding through our Local Authority. Ed Psych basically told us no and that we would need to exhaust other secondary schools in our area instead. So I looked through all local schools handbooks to see if any could accommodate our daughter's needs - to arrive/leave slightly early or late to miss the crowds of pupils, to be taught in one classroom and to stay in at break/lunch times. We found one we thought could help but their SfL Deputy Head is off and they don't know when she will be back and no one else can answer our questions. So our daughter has not been in school since November, she wants to go to a particular school she isn't allowed to go to while we wait indefinitely to find if another school can accommodate her and if they can't we have to try another School. Our daughter is very good at hiding how much she is struggling. She used to go in at playtime and copy the work of others to hide the fact she didn't know how to do the work. All her teachers complained she was painfully quiet, wouldn't take part, had problems making friends etc but none of them saw just how much she was struggling.

So at the moment she hasn't been in School since last November and I have no idea when she will be back in school. She doesn't cope in mainstream education but they insist she stays in it. The policy of GIRFEC is not getting it right in this instance. Our daughter needs the safety and stability of one teacher, one classroom where she feels safe and supported and we are trying to find a secondary school to enable this.

Camphill in Aberdeen offers her everything she wants including counselling, support, life skills etc but she is not allowed to go there until we force her into other secondary schools in the area which is causing her extreme anxiety just thinking about it. The Secondary she was attending told me not to try to do any academic work with her at home and I may have to accept that school just wasn't for her. Come the end of January I asked for some work (through Educational Psychology) and they said they would provide some art, something nice for her to do. Instead they provided her with the 3 subjects she struggles with most, Maths, English and French. They also knew that death is a subject that causes severe anxiety for our daughter and the book they provided was The Boy in The Striped Pyjamas. I am probably over sensitive but their lack of understanding borders on cruelty at times - when our daughter saw the work they had sent home she had a massive meltdown. Since she has been off they have never once asked how she is but daily send three texts telling me she is absent and send home new timetables school letters etc. I have been reported for not forcing her
to go to school. I've been asked if I am willing to go back to OT, to see the home school link worker, school inclusion worker, the autism team etc etc and have told them I am happy to see anyone who can help but no one is actually doing anything to get her into school.

School puts a massive strain on my daughter mentally and physically. She has been bullied verbally and physically. She struggles with the work despite trying exceptionally hard. She doesn't bother anyone, stays quiet so everyone thinks she is ok when she is dangerously unhappy. Since she has been off school her meltdowns have been virtually nil, her temper has eased, her panic attacks have eased, her talking of self-harm has stopped. The only time she gets agitated is when school is mentioned. I am trying desperately to get her help and support but feel she is just another child that the system is failing. Thank you for taking the time to read our story (am sure I have missed out loads but you get the idea).

**ANON**

Getting it right for every child is a good sentiment if only this was being implemented. I was raised in a family who fought for years for inclusion, my first memory of when I found out my sister had Down syndrome was when I was seven years old, we had went to the YMCA summer club. We were told to stand in the corner, I could see all the adults whispering and couldn't understand why. One of the organisers walked towards us and told me I had to take my sister home that they were no one to watch her. I was puzzled by this, that night my mum sat me down and explained that my sister had Down syndrome, that she needed us to help and support her throughout her life. Why I thought she was able to do what I done, she liked the same things as me, I didn't see the difference only that I wasn't allowed into the summer club because she was with me. The next week I went on my own but missed my friend, yes my sister was my best friend we were inseparable, somehow I was told the following week by my mum that I could go with my sister. We spent all our time in the summer clubs and had a great time together.

Only now that I am older do I understand how she must have felt, when people used to stare at us everywhere we went, out shopping with our parents, in the swing park other parents used to move their children away from us. I became her protector and remember getting told off by my own parents for saying to other parents why are you staring at her, but it worked, often they would look away ashamed of their actions, if it was another child, I would say “this is my sister”.

My sister never went into main stream education, that was just not doable back in the early seventies, she went to a resource centre which she loved, we used to go to her school a lot as they were always putting on shows, having fund raising events, My sister loved acting, and often kept me awake at night going over her performance, when she knew my parents were sleeping.

Both my parents worked we went off to school and my sister got picked up in the morning and by the bus, we had a good childhood and I never ever heard my parents talk about or worry over my sister's schooling. The only thing that concerned them in their ageing years was, who would take care of my sister if anything would happen to them.
In adulthood I was still very protective of my sister and it was agreed that if anything happened to my parents my sister would come and stay with me, but unfortunately my sister passed away at the young age of forty.

Several years later, I became an adult placement carer and realised the lack of resources available for someone with complex needs, someone who has sensory overload, who needs specialised support, nothing was available to meet their individual need with the North Lanarkshire area.

Six months ago my granddaughter was diagnosed with ASD, she is a loving wee girl, who needs to trust and feel safe with you before she will interact. She has had speech and language visiting the house for the last few months due to her being non verbal.

When she turned three in January she started a unsupported placement at nursery, which in itself is a transitional period for any child. The few days my daughter had to remain in the building and go away when my granddaughter was distracted, but when we went to get her from nursery, through communication with her nursery teacher, we were being told she had quite an unsettled hour, she was locking herself in the toilet, as a family we are horrified about this, spending up to forty minutes playing in the toilets, coming out soiled as she would let them maintain her toilet needs. When my daughter went to collect her last week she was approached by another nursery teacher who was looking after my granddaughter’s group that day to say that she was concerned that my granddaughter would harm herself. As it turns out my granddaughter is in a nursery with fifty other children, she will often take herself away from the group and not interact with anyone not even the teachers and often becomes very upset. This is sensory overload, when in she is having a melt down, in the confusion, she was banging her wee head off the floor, flinging herself backwards, running into the toilets and locking the door, crying uncontrollably, as a coping mechanism, she was taken into the garden, trying to lessen the sensory overload, but refused to allow the teacher to put on her shoe that had fell off, so it ended up her running about the garden in the rain with one shoe on. We are very upset by this and are at present trying to get support in place but have been told that, this isn't possible, she is just three years old, we have nurtured her, kept her safe, so why are we having to worry when she goes to nursery, why have we had so many sleepless nights worrying if she will be okay or if she will get the support she needs. She is not being able to enjoy nursery or be taught anything due to various factors, lack of support for learning, environmental factors causing sensory overload.

More placements are needed in a safe and controlled environment with people that specialise in Autism. More supported learning should be made available for children from a young age. As a family we are heartbroken that we feel we have let her down. We cannot afford private education, action needs to be taken now before our children are let down by the system

*Brian and Lynn Murray*
Experiences
Our daughter attended Mainstream (MS) Nursery school following Child and Family Centre which she attended 2 days a week. The routine of the Centre probably helped with settling at Nursery where our daughter had the benefit of one-to-one assistance and input from Physiotherapy and SALT. Nursery was, generally, a positive experience for us all.

Due to successful Nursery experience, we decided to apply for our daughter to go to MS school. The idea was well received by support staff and Primary school; a transition plan was put into place. The only issue we had was that when the transition was in full swing, people took on actions at meeting, it fell to us (parents) to suggest that someone should co-ordinate the meeting actions to ensure that all the necessary steps were being taken. The psychologist took this task on and co-ordinated everything. We fed comments back to the psychologist who was starting out on supporting children with Downs syndrome in MS Primary schools. These were suggestions around what we thought were useful pointers considering our experiences.

Our view is that transitional planning could be more business-like.

Our daughter attended MS Primary school where she also had one-to-one assistance. This was a very successful experience with one or two early behavioural issues early on (such as scratching) which settled down/were brought under control.

Pupil’s educational achievement levels are recorded, unfortunately, we felt there wasn’t consistency around this from one teacher to the next. It was as if, as the teacher changed, each new teacher had to revisit our daughter’s abilities, with a result that she wasn’t always building on the work done in the previous year with the knock-on effect that some skills were lost as a teacher might start on another strategy. We think that teachers suffered from a lack of understanding the way in which children with Down’s syndrome learn, and that neglecting a skill previously gained could mean that the skill was lost as a teacher strove to determine how to proceed educationally with our daughter. It feels like extra teacher training/support was needed. Whilst the psychologist was supporting, her time was challenged by people who had more issues or challenges than our daughter, therefore teachers were not trained or supported as much as we would like to see in order to help pupils like our daughter to fulfil their potential. In addition, Speech therapy outreach is something that has been rationed throughout our daughter’s whole school career, it has been exhausting at times to try to justify the investment. Communication issues hinder education.

Our view is that teaching staff need to have more training and support to teach children with additional support needs, and they also need to understand that consistency and seamless transitions are even more important for those pupils.

We also think that it is very short-sighted not to realise that the input of allied health professionals (who often have lots of experience working with children with additional needs) is still needed for school age pupils. Research has shown that the speech of children with Down’s syndrome is still developing.
even in their teenage years. One size does not fit all! Investment in allied health professionals in schools is an investment as much as a cost. Communication is key for all of us.

As High School (HS) transition approached, we began to think that mainstream HS might be a challenge for our daughter that would be worth taking up. Ideally, we wanted our daughter to go to the same local high school as our other kids had – and local authority mainstreaming policy appeared to lend itself to that.

We looked at all the HS options in Edinburgh. We concluded that our daughter would not receive a better education at special school nor indeed benefit from additional ‘therapist’ input there because these budgets had been cut at special schools too!! Life skills we were told were what these schools were good at teaching. My opinion, au contraire, is that reading and writing are life skills too.

Sadly, we found that many people seemed to fear the idea of our daughter going to MS school. Teachers from both primary and secondary worried about our daughter being bullied, however, we felt that any school pupil is a potential target for bullies and that keeping our daughter from the mainstream for that reason would mean that there would still be bullies unless that sort of behaviour was addressed by schools anyway. Another wise young friend also pointed out that some young people might also want to meet and help people like our daughter and this made us think of a more positive side to mainstreaming, which meant that others (staff included) might benefit and blossom from meeting our daughter.

The Speech Therapy department and the MS HS Learning Support department were against us sending our daughter to the MS HS! I assume the former didn’t want to keep our daughter on the caseload and the latter felt that she was a support for learning step too far. As we persisted in pursuing the idea, they did their best to discourage us. A perceived extra workload for them was the only other reason we could think as to why they would discourage us from sending our daughter to MS HS.

Our daughter was being discriminated against, it wasn’t an easy time for us because the HS Support for Learning dept. didn’t make much effort to find out our daughter’s capabilities and put up barriers at meetings. In fact, it seemed that a brief meeting with our daughter, was enough for the MS HS rep to go back to support staff and tell them that our daughter couldn’t speak. (Our daughter’s ability to communicate therefore took support staff by surprise when they did meet her!). The HS staff did not visit our daughter very much at Primary school as part of the transition process. The head teacher wrote us a letter pointing out all the negatives about our daughter going to his school. To be honest, we could have probably sued the local authority for discrimination offences. We faced a choice: sue, and walk away; or persist in the idea of sending our daughter to the local MS HS.

Fortunately, the psychologist and the local authority support staff member understood why our school request should be supported. Downs syndrome Scotland was also a great support to us in a difficult meeting climate. So, we committed to the idea of sending our daughter to local MS HS. This decision led to the school Learning Support dept., trying to get a shorter school day officially
organised before our daughter even got to the school gates! For all the reasons stated, the transition from primary to high school wasn’t as good for our daughter as it might have been.

Despite some bad attitudes, we sent our daughter to the local MSHS in August 2012. We swallowed hard and realised that it was going to be down to our daughter to ‘sell herself’ to the school. Thanks to the Local authority support staff and Downs Syndrome Scotland, the right level of support was finally put in place. The first few months held no particular problems, but there was tension from some of the school staff, they had obviously not been reassured that they could manage a school day with a little girl with no behavioural issues but who was challenged in her learning.

School staff should realise that many pupils are challenged, and that children with Downs syndrome are not so different. Discrimination is a strong word but we feel that our daughter, who had every right to attend her local MS HS, was discriminated against on this occasion.

4 years later, the story is very different. Our daughter is valued by staff in school who are very protective of her and some of whom go the extra mile for her. We have no regrets about not sending her to special school.

Differentiation of the curriculum has been an issue for some teaching staff and we think that’s something that school teaching staff should learn more about and be prepared/given more time to ensure this happens for our daughter and any other pupils who would benefit too.

Due to a difficult start at HS - we feel that our daughter could have done better educationally, however she is still learning at school and, we believe, will continue to do so.

If you would like to speak with our daughter about her recent school experience, I’m sure she would be happy to speak in this regard.

In our view, more children with Downs syndrome should be accommodated and included in MS schools. Our transition experience has enlightened us as to why most children with Down’s syndrome attend special school instead. There is a definite lack of investment and equality in local authority schools for children with Downs syndrome many of whom could be accommodated with the right level of support.

Exclusion disables. In fact, research tells us that children with Downs syndrome who attend mainstream school are more enabled.

The Scottish Government need to do work to ensure that Public sector staff respect pupils with disabilities and additional support needs. Now that Scotland has ratified the UNCRPD, the status quo is unacceptable.
Arlene McAinsh

I have a 13-year-old son who has high functioning autism, ADHD and general anxiety disorder. He is currently in S2 at a mainstream high school and has a place in their Enhanced Provision unit after going to a panel in P7.

I have had various experiences of Additional Support for Learning since he started primary school within the Dundee City Council area. These are my observations and comments.

1) I have constantly had to keep contacting both primary and secondary school staff to get the support that my son is entitled to and that has been identified that he needs.
2) IEPs and ABLe plans are very rarely updated or all action plans implemented by the school.
3) Frequently schools change what support is in place and/or agreed without notifying me. For example, putting all additional support children in mainstream either with or without support and doing away with EP classes.
4) It has been identified that my son needs additional support and that is why he has a place in EP unit at mainstream school, however, when he goes into mainstream class that he can manage academically but not emotionally he rarely has support due to a lack of support staff. I now have a problem that if he stays in EP classes he can only do NAT 3s or if he goes into mainstream where he can manage academically to do NAT 4s or 5s he will not have the support that he needs and he might not cope emotionally. I think that this is a ridiculous position for us to be put in!
5) I know that the Scottish government wants to integrate disabled children into mainstream education but this is not suitable for all children especially those with conditions such as autism and ADHD. The problem is it's not one rule for all and each child should be assessed and supported on their individual needs. This is not happening due to the guidelines and the lack of support staff.
6) Lastly, I would like you to consider the lack of specialist out of school support for our children. As a single parent and carer for my son and previously my mother who had dementia there was no suitable/specialist childcare after school and during school holidays. In addition, our high schools finish at 2.50pm on Thursdays and Fridays, they assume that high school children can be left alone but this is not the case for children with additional needs. I would love to get a job but I’m unable to this for these reasons.

Jan Warren

I am writing as a parent of two children who have additional support needs.

I actually have three children, the eldest of whom is a straight ‘A’ student. She is currently in her final year at University doing a Masters degree. I tell you this so that you will appreciate that I have an understanding of the wide range of achievements.

My second child has dyslexia. She was diagnosed in early Primary school. This diagnosis was achieved through our persistent requests for assessment by an
Educational Psychologist. My desire for an early diagnosis was fuelled by the need to get our daughter the support she needed. Early intervention was the buzzword yet we met with some resistance. The support thereafter was thin on the ground and decreased every year throughout my daughter’s Primary education. We went to great lengths to make sure that Secondary school was made aware of my daughter’s additional needs. Unfortunately the response from some of the staff she encountered was less than sympathetic. At an age when she was very self conscious anyway she was embarrassed on several occasions in school by teaching staff highlighting her reading difficulties through insensitive actions or comments.

I should add that my daughter’s self confidence remains very fragile where her academic abilities are concerned but that through her own determination she is currently in her second year of a Nursing course.

My youngest child is severely autistic. He left school last summer. He is non-verbal and has a severe learning difficulty. Providing meaningful education was always going to be a challenge. We were very lucky to have a school in our town which catered for severely learning disabilities and he attended this place for nursery and Primary years. It was quickly established that the traditional education achievements would be ridiculous for our son so our focus was on developing basic self-care skills, accessing the community and exposing our son to a variety of past times to stimulate his enjoyment within the parameters of what he could cope with. The ‘integration’ trend at the time was not appropriate for our son due to his behavioural problems. He progressed into Secondary education in a unit attached to a mainstream school where he was mainly in solitude with a 2:1 staffing ratio.

That is the background of our experience. My frustrations throughout were only occasionally with the front line staff. In general our frustrations lay with the attempts to implement education policy when it was a poor fit for our children. Policy in principle is one thing but becomes ridiculous when it is applied in a blanket fashion and becomes inappropriate in the extreme. As ever sparse resources didn’t help and I believe my daughter suffered more with this than my son. My daughter now shuns all attempts at support by her University because her experience is that she feels patronised. She isn’t stupid but is made to feel that way with traditional support methods. My son’s time in education would have been helped massively with greater planning and support by the decision makers (by that I mean the one’s controlling the budgets). His needs are so complex that time was needed to prepare him for every new step and while those working with him always agreed early on how best to achieve this they were thwarted by sluggish decision from those in authority who were driven by budget rather than need. This is the biggest challenge that government faces in my opinion. Policy dictates that ‘NEED’ is the driver but is it really?

ANON

I am a parent with 2 dyslexic children, one age 13 & one aged 10. My 13 year old is in first year of Fraserburgh academy & is getting some help but I have to constantly be on the phone complaining as some teachers won't give her a reader when sitting test! Which has resulted in her failing a few & knocking her confidence. I find that
teachers aren't educated very well in working with dyslexic children as they forget/don't bother with there needs but they disrupted/badly behave pupils are receiving more attention thus taking it away from children who want to learn & do well. Both my children suffer from memory/reading/spelling. My son is in primary school in Fraserburgh & he gets help 3 times a week but when he goes into p7 that again will change & he might get none. Am fed up having to phone & fight with schools for my kids to get the help they need & deserve as they are entitled to proper education.

*Lorna Graham*

I am the mother of a child who attends High School in Argyll Lochgilphead Campus. My son has complex needs and he is limited life due to a failed transplant 3 years ago. He is on Dialysis at home which i do myself, he is in a wheelchair as he has cp and has severe learning delay, can’t speak and needs care and 24hr support, he is on a feeding pump.

My son has support at school, and from what i know is it is a struggle as they are limited with support and for health and safety they have to have 2 people to help while care is needed and moving and handling my son at school. He is a big boy now at 15 years old. My son needs someone with him at all times while in class and interacting and joining other classes, luckily he can take part in his favourite class music on the ground floor, but he is limited due to fire risk in taking him to the next floor which he could have taken part in art etc.

For a while the support was cut and i know it was a struggle and juggle for them to keep my son at school, luckily he kept going, with other pupils in class which need support as well, they were having to think well in advance where everyone was and how care was going to take part as 2 people were needed which can take a good 20-30 mins for my son alone, then he would have to wait for that extra support in care for the next child to be seen. The pupils including my son are missing out on classes. My son also gets picked up by bus which also needs support on the bus, it just takes one to phone in ill and everything is up in air just to have support on the bus.

If support was less in school for my son, i don't think he would be able to go, and as we live remote and not much else to do, he loves school, and meeting people and his fellow pupils and routine, and not going just because of lack of support in place would be devastating for him as well as for myself, as i only get a couple of days in Hospice for him every couple of months.

*Patricia Morrison*

I am sending this email to give my comments on Additional needs in school.

All 3 of my children have, 1 still does, experienced school with added needs.

I will give you a brief overview.
My eldest son had a diagnosis of Aspergers. He also had health needs, Asthma and Epilepsy. He attended Kilsyth Academy where he was given excellent support. There were issues. Inclusion is difficult. School kids, teachers and parents alike need to be educated so a child with Additional needs is fully involved. He missed a lot of school due to his health especially when hospitalised. He was also bullied regular and often. Assumptions were made, ie my son will never attain, my son will not be able to sit exams. Well he did sit his prelims but sadly died of SUDEP before his results came in. He passed most prelims.

My daughter didn’t do very well when it came to exams. She worked very hard but her nerves always got the better of her. The school missed opportunities with my daughter. They failed to record that she was a carer to me when my health was poor and that she provided support to her younger brother. They did provide support to her when her Brother died. I think special arrangements could have been made for my daughter when it came to exams either assistance during exams or when days were bad and she struggled an average grade. My daughter has Dyspraxia and had severe mental health issues which sadly were not always dealt with properly by some teachers. I think as my daughter didn't recover from the trauma of losing her brother quickly they soon got tired of her issues, not all teachers but some. My daughter lost her self-confidence and really changed understandably.

My daughter has now left school and is still trying to get employment. This could have been sorted at school, Glencryan do thorough transitions before the pupils leave and most leave with somewhere to go eg college or work. This model could be used across the board.

My youngest attends Glencryan, an additional needs school, He has since nursery age, is in 5th year and is appropriately placed. He is given a lot of support to do well. He doesn't do as well academically as vocationally. My son has many interests in school. It's not perfect, it's not main stream thank God as my son would have been lost in that system. 1 day funding will come to provide more than enough support within mainstream situations to ensure children like mine will be fully included. Sadly that is so far from the truth.

ANON

As a parent of a child with Dyslexia I feel very strongly about voicing my opinions in regards to the schools provision of additional support.

I can only put across our battle to get to the point we are at now. My son is 9 years old, we live in an affluent village in East Lothian. The school is small and as a whole pro active.

It was first noticed that my son had 'dyslexic tendencies' at the age of 6/7. We were told this was still within the range of perfectly normal and average. However, very quickly we realised that he was different. It then took us a full year of meetings and emails with the school to see any progress, firstly getting him tested, then implementing any form of support. We were told by the deputy head teacher (that has since left the school) that it is policy not to test a child until aged 8. We spent a
lot of time reading up about dyslexia, and every bit of literature we read said you can test a child from aged 5. The school would not back down on this. In the meantime, our son was falling further behind and starting to notice he was different, as were his peers. After a year long fight, we ended up getting in touch with our local authority and spoke to the education department, they informed us there was no blanket policy for the age of testing, they contacted the school, who later admitted it was a budgetary issue, and then tested him. The results were that he is indeed dyslexic. We felt as though we had been banging our heads against a brick wall to even get to this point.

For the following year our son received two sessions a week of extra support, he class teacher was great in giving him extra help and we also did A LOT of extra work at home to support this. By the end of the year, the school had decided that he no longer needed any support. This utterly baffled us, he still has dyslexia, it doesn't magically fix itself, but apparently he was level with his peers and therefore 'fine'. So our battle began again. I would like to add at this point that the support for learning teacher is absolutely great, she only gets two days in the school in which she has to work with many many children. She expressed to us how there just isn't enough time to give every child the support they need. Again, lack of budget comes in to play. She was very aware that our son needed continued support, but felt she was in an impossible position. She then suggested going to see an eye specialist that specialises in children with dyslexia. So WE PAID privately to see the specialist, upon which we learnt that our son has not only 'standard' Dyslexia, but also Visual Dyslexia, Visual Stress and Binocular Instability. Here's the crazy part, upon returning to the school and informing them that he has a 'physical' problem additionally to his dyslexia, all of a sudden he is entitled to the support for learning again! (why does a physical problem make a difference?) He was also re tested and found to be worse than they thought and alongside that to be very bright. Again, there was a struggle to find a suitable programme of support for him as the support for learning teachers' timetable was full up. He has since been put into a group of older kids which is not proving that successful. This takes us up to our current situation.

Over the past few years we have had to fight for every bit of extra support for our son, something we believe the school, council and government have a duty of care to provide. We have been advised by many people including teacher friends that unfortunately this is just the very start of the battles, we will always have to fight the system to get this support. This should absolutely not be the case. Luckily for our son he has parents that are able and willing to do this, but the amount of children that slip through the net because they don't have parents able to, and a school system that is so squeezed and pushed to its limits. As it currently stands it is just not possible to give every child the education they deserve.

I hope that this is useful information, and I hope in some way it goes to help find a way to improve the provision of the much needed and over stretched additional support needs situation.

ANON
Hello, I am writing as a mother of a 23 year old man, 19 year old daughter and a 4 year old boy.

My eldest was constantly told how clever he was in the first two years of primary but from primary 3/4 he began to struggle. I knew he was smart but he just wasn't able to keep up, he was 'put down to the middle group' with regards to reading and writing. This was a confidence blow.

Fast forward to high school. A few months in and one of his teachers said he was showing 'classic' signs of being dyslexic. It was unbelievable he had been missed all these years, sad. Anyway, everything changed and he received learning support. A scribe and a laptop. It was amazing.

Although this was a few years ago, I now have another son who is going to go through the Scottish education system. He starts school in August. He can struggle with language and has already had a little speech therapy. He is only young and who knows if he will need additional help. I hope early learning has improved and if my son has additional needs it will be spotted.

Just yesterday in the Scottish news it was reported that Scotland's brightest children were below average amongst other developed countries! Education is the key for our kids to make it in a difficult working world. With zero hour contracts, low wages and poverty.

**ANON**

I am a parent of a child with high additional support needs. My experience of this whole process has left me very upset with the system that I work in and promote. My daughter had to go through an exclusion from primary school because the adequate supports were not in place and specific plans where not followed. My daughter was sexually explotied by a child twice her age whilst in the care of a school that could not admit they did not have the experience or provisions to support and safe guard her.

My daughter was failed by the system for almost two years until I removed her from the school role and refused for her safety to send her back to school. I have seen my daughter being manhandled ignored and treated as a problem due to her additional support needs.

My daughter was born with a major heart condition and this deprived her brain of oxygen for a short period of time. This was enough time however to re wire the way her brain works. At the age of six after 3 years of saying we as her parents believe she may have autism or O.D.D still have not been told. We know she has a sensory processing disorder and hyper mobility but no formal diagnosis of autism ect.

As a family we made the choice she has autism and we fight for her rights to have an education that everyone else has. Note my words fight because this is what we have been through. As a family we do not trust the services that are supposed to support.
And when a head teacher expels our daughter for having a meltdown but admits she
did not follow the plans well I'm sure you can have an understanding of what I feel
that this lady is a named person!!

At last we as a family managed to access an additional support need school
however this was after a year in mainstream school. However this was after my
daughter experiencing neglect and mishandling of her education.

I don't wish to bear on the negative however I feel the Scottish Government need to
be aware of the extremes that family's go through.

**Susan Pirie**

We have a child at Primary school in P5 diagnosed 3 years ago with dyspraxia and
sensory processing disorder. There are multiple children within the school with ASN,
at least another 6 in my son's class alone. Despite this the school has an allocation
of 2 days a week with a learning support teacher and many of these days she is not
in school attending training courses to learn how to do the job. We have not been
informed of our right to request assessments by school and have been told
Occupational therapy, educational psychologists, speech and language and many
other professionals no longer work with individual children but only offer generic
strategies to teaching staff which disregards their individual needs with a one size fits
all approach. No multi agency approach has been adopted.

Class support staff were cut last year so there is little teacher support with ever
increasing demands. The lack of understanding of the physical difficulties faced by
our son has led to non implementation of the accommodations necessary to help
him. This is not helped by numerous staff changes (3 teachers to date).

Education Scotland recommend 1-2 terms to complete a dyslexia pathway but 2
years later our school have not given us a completion date. An early implementation
of strategies from this would have provided a better outcome. PKC inclusion team
are unwilling to listen to issues and accept responsibility. Calls to Enquire have
confirmed the lacking in his provision. Within the terms of all statutory guidance and
Girfec, no policies and obligations are adhered to.

**Gail Paterson**

My son (I feel) is being let down by school as he needs extra support as suffers
anxiety and sensitivity to noise. Its a very long story but started about p3, he is now
p6. A lot of outbursts, 2 exclusions which stay on his record and is still ongoing.

I had to fight with the school for them to realize there was something wrong but took
a year to get appointment with chalms (after I hounded my GP). He also had
suffered a bereavement and eventually got counselling which was great. These
services have all stopped as my son felt ok and his outbursts had ceased at home.
We are still having them at school and had multi agency meetings at school and meeting after the exclusions as his behaviour was 'violent' he threw a pen and plastic cone.

I have explained that chalms have said my son suffers general anxiety but the teachers have no training on dealing with anxious child. We have on top of that sensitivity to noise and at 10 he just cannot cope. They have made a room for time out but not always helps for various reasons i.e my son has already reached explosion point, teacher instructs him to leave class without asking what has happened etc. My son does see a behavioural guy who comes into at school once a week but Jack needs more help in class playtime etc.

I feel if it is a physical disability then they get 1 to 1 support but mental health gets nothing. I have realised over years it's not bad behaviour he is struggling to cope. Yes there are times the school say "he is not in crisis" but silly things like making noises etc but that's kids.

I asked for educational physiologist 3 years ago but was told we dont have that service go to your GP!. Now they doing referral for it.

Sorry this may be a lot of irrelevant information but more support definitely needed for more non-physical issues .

ANON

I welcome the opportunity to provide personal feedback on the failure of the Scottish Government to ensure that the excellent Additional Support Needs Act amended in 2009, the associated Code of Practice 2010 and the Scottish definition of Dyslexia (2009) was implemented successfully in every school.

In short, our 8 year old son has been emotionally and academically harmed by the Scottish Education system's failure to proactively identify that our child has the hidden disability of dyslexia. As parents we have never been educated on how to identify the early signs of dyslexia however we knew our son, prior to starting school, was not as advanced as he should be with holding a pencil and writing his name. Our concerns were raised to school staff and we put our faith in the 'educational professionals' to identify the root cause of his difficulties. After 26 months of failure to act on our concerns we eventually demanded that our son be screened for dyslexia, and it was confirmed that he has severe dyslexia and now has an attainment gap of 1.5 years. No parent should have to hear their child say 'you would be better off without me' when they are sobbing their heart out going to bed and begging you not to take them to school the next day. I now know that a parent told the 'Making Sense' report in 2014 about their child making the same statement. This report was a follow-up to the report HMIe report on Dyslexia in 2008.

Our child goes to school in South Ayrshire that introduced Dyslexia Friendly Schools. It took me a long time to realise that this is a misnomer, the theory is that every child in the school is taught as if they have dyslexia. In a lot of schools, the children who actually have dyslexia are being defined as having 'dyslexic
tendencies', contradicting the directions given by the Scottish Education, and are therefore not reported on the Pupil Census (see attached spreadsheet). For example, a large local primary school has not reported one child, in the past 3 years, as having dyslexia since becoming a Dyslexia Friendly School.

The Scottish Government produces good Educational Laws but then 'washes their hands' of their implementation by delegating this task to 32 local authorities. No monitoring systems are put in place to hold Education Directors, Head teachers and School teachers who fail to follow the Law to account. The Scottish Government is fully aware of the wide variation in the reporting of dyslexia from the Local Authorities. Over the past 6 years the number of children reported as having dyslexia in primary schools has remained unchanged at around 1%. It is known that 10% of the population has the disability dyslexia with around 4% being severe. It is clear that schools are still not reporting 75% of children with severe dyslexia to their Government and most importantly to the parents.

What I find incredibly frustrating is that my professional background was in the Pharmaceutical Industry and Clinical Trials. This highly regulated field is centred on monitoring/accountability and the same methodology could be applied to the reporting of children with Additional Support Needs. To see the abject failure of Government systems to protect vulnerable children and know that it could be prevented is incredibly frustrating.

To help ensure that the Scottish Government get the message that they are continuing to fail our children with Additional Support Needs I have reported our sons case to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Also, I will be reporting 3 teachers to the General Teaching Council and raising a Section 70 Complaint. There is a simple solution to the monitoring/accountability for this issue and the Scottish Government are welcome to contact me to discuss. I am more than happy to work with South Ayrshire Council to ensure that 'Every Child Gets Recorded'.

_Helen Brown_

My views on additional support needs in schools is that it is a service that is very underfunded and unresourced. It took over 2 years for my son to be diagnosed with dyslexia, and that was only because I constantly fought with the school for additional input and screening for him. Management plans were put in place and never adequately followed through, so the staged intervention model did not work. His additional needs teacher, who he is supposed to see once a week went off sick a couple of weeks into term and was never replaced for that year, so he effectively had very little additional support. This year he has now been allocated another addition support teacher from East Ayrshire Council, however I believe this teacher has 26 pupils on her list that she is supposed to see every week. This is not physically possible!

I feel that the education system is failing my son who is a very bright little boy that just happens to have some literacy problems. This puts a lot of pressure on the
parents to take things into their own hands and as this is not my area of expertise I find it very difficult to know where to start.

**ANON**

My son has dyslexia. The school were good and identified his dyslexia in p 6. They have tried to offer additional support needs but my son was still really struggling and had reduced confidence. I therefore sought a tutor through dyslexia action which he attends once a week for an hour. This ONE hour a week (which isn't a one to one session)with a tutor has made a significant improvement in his academic work and confidence. The school say they have noticed this improvement as well.

This tutor who makes a significant difference to my son academic ability cost me approx £200 a month.

However I really struggle to pay this and I don't feel I should have to pay this for my sons education. A child education should be free and they should be given ever opportunity to reach their full potential through the state system.

It angers me that the school system is failing my son.

What angers me even more is that my second son also looks like he has dyslexia and I will then find myself looking for approx £400 a month in order for both my sons to maximise there potential. This is something I don't know if I will be able to afford as I struggle to find £200 a month. So I am left with the prospect of cancelling the tutor for my eldest son (who has made a significant difference to his education) because I don't know if I can afford the tutor for both and wouldn't want to favour one son over the other.

What I would like and think should happen if education if free for all children to reach their potential is for the school or government to pay for a specifically trained dyslexia tutor to come to the school once a week to help my sons and other children within the school.

I am tired of hearing education is free for all in Scotland. It is NOT if your child has a learning disability and needs extra help.

**Jackie Morgan**

My son is dyslexic and we have found the school he attends to be very helpful however at times it feels they are good at talking the talk with ideas and approaches but that they don't always follow through. There also needs to be more joined up thinking so regardless of what school a child attends the support available and how the parents are involved is the same. It varies greatly from school to school in the same small town.

For children with more complex needs a specialised facility must be a godsend. Teaching staff have a tough job as it is without having to divide their attention even further.
Lianne McInally

I've sent you my blog about my Son's journey he's happy to share his experience [available through the Living Well in Communities Newsletter dated 14th November 2016]. I'm an allied health professional and have spent a fortune getting help for him. I often wonder if I lived in a socially deprived area how I would have been supported or navigated the services as I've had to research myself and navigate the system. He has dyslexia and Meres Irlen. He can't write well but has a high IQ school can't supply a laptop but I can't take his in I've bought due to health and safety. We have to 'make do'. All schools should be dyslexia friendly like Ayrshire examples. His school St Mary's Hamilton are incredibly supportive and have tried to support him as best they can. He has had additional support throughout his timethere.

Samantha Kearney

My daughter was a bright and confident 3 year old who met all miles stones age appropriate. Then out of nowhere my daughter changed, she became more timid, less confident, couldn't concentrate and wasn't meeting those mile stones quite the same. I'd love to say that there was a defining moment that this happened, a reason or illness that set these changes in motion but there was nothing.

The nursery teachers voiced concerns about her not grasping colours/numbers and day of the week that well, but no major concerns for her starting primary one. She is a July birthday.

Primary one continued much the same as nursery, few concerns voiced but maybe and bit more time to settle in was required! By the end of primary one and numerous meeting with the class teacher, I came to the decision I wasn't happy and I myself called her paediatrician, and voiced my concerns to them. I then phoned educational psychologist and asked for her to be assessed.

Primary two came and went, we were still awaiting assessments, input from anyone else to help work out what support was needed. The 1 x 30 minute session with learning support just wasn't cutting it. She was not keeping up, falling further and further behind. I by this point had had several meeting with teachers, head of school still no success.

Finally a teacher who seemed to give a damn!!! The primary three teacher couldn't believe that there was no IEP in place, couldn't believe what little support she was receiving, eventually I thought we were going for make some head way, but staff shortages, waiting times and budget cuts meant that help just want available!!! Off the school scene my daughter had several assessments done. An assessment, put her roughly 3.5 years behind her age. Global developmental delay was diagnosed - still made no difference the support!!!!

Primary four was a big change for everyone, new school due to house move (I was offered no support from previous school for transition) this is a small school, composite classes with only 46 pupils in the whole school. What a joy it has been to deal with staff that seem to genuinely care. Who fight our corner for additional
support with No luck. The progression has been slow, currently p4 but working roughly late p1 early p2 level work. 1 x 30 minute with additionally learning support teacher and some teaching assistant available within the class but nobody is there to solely assist my daughter. We decided a deferred year would be best.

Off the screen they have found a chromosome deletion 22q13p.

Half way into this school term I have a soon to be 10 year old who cannot count to 100, who cannot construct a sentence and is still learning to read, write basic words and doing primary 2 level work, but not even keeping to the pace of those children. Educational psychologist can't see what else can be offered, dismissed my request for a wisc assessment as the outcome wouldn't effect support offered?! The paediatrician is happy to carry out this assessment and we currently wait for this appointment.

The school desperately want somebody 1:1 for her, but budget cuts won't allow. They pay for an extra day and half for classroom assistant just so there is extra support in the class if required. We have a team behind us fighting our corner, willing to put measures in place to make a difference in my daughter’s academic future. But without funding and trained people this is impossible.

My daughter is a quiet hard working child, she isn't a problem child who is disruptive or gets distracted easily, she is an example of why additional support exists. There is nothing more soul destroying than watching this small window of primary school be wasted, they are young, impressionable and willing learners for such a short period these days, it paramount that we do our best for these children, and right now we are not even lifting denting the surface.

As a mother I feel that because these problems weren't addressed in nursery, we lost the input from health visitors. She was over looked and now without any diagnosis we are just left in limbo.

**ANON**

My daughter is 4 years old & due to start school in august. She has severe autism & is non verbal but with early intervention & the right support has the potential to flourish. Despite this we still have to fight & jump through hoops to get her a place in ASN school because the Scottish government want every child to have the right to an education. What about the right education??

**ANON**

I My 6 children have had a hard time in F school, from nursery up to high school, school one - primary, the nursery teachers think it was ok to pin my asd/adhd, hypermobility, d.c.d, sensory issues, severe learning disabilities to the floor and then laugh at him cause he got aggressive with them when they let him go, i was watching them all through the window and seen everything they were doing to him, i took him out of the nursery and went straight to the head teacher and got called a liar
and that didn't happen, there was other parents there aswell watching it all happen, i refused to put him back in nursery but my daughter was in the other nursery class and the same teacher that pinned my son, kept going in her class to taunt her for a reaction and was told by her teachers to leave her alone as she has additional needs aswell,

after that i went round all the classes and took all of my kids out of the school and refused to put them back untill she was sacked which didn't happen again i went to the head teacher and still nothing done so i moved them to another primary in and it was all fine to start with untill 2 members of staff from the previous primary school joined the staff in the school, one was bribing my son with sweets to get him to do what she wanted him to do i.e school work etc which we didn't like him getting alot of sweets with his complex needs and she knew that already as she was sold by the class teacher so was doing it in the cloakroom out of view untill i caught her bribing him one day and told her straight to her face that if she did it again i was reporting her, but the class teacher heard the conversation and dealt with the matter straight away and then she moved back to her old primary school, the next issue at was when the support staff dragged my son along the corridor by his elbows and that was the last straw with the school, i put a formal complaint into the education board bare in mind the support staff are not asn trained or calm trained so the shouldn't be putting a hand on my son and the reply i got from the education board was that they would sent them for training which they should of had in the first place i know he's not the only child they have done this to, so again i take all my kids out the school and now they are teaching in another primary school still supporting kids. I moved my kids to a new primary and I can't praise that school enough for what they have done to help us from getting formal diagnosis instead of hearsay and false promises, they got the people into the school to see him and also helped my daughter with her learning disabilities etc and also helping us deal with our youngest going through the process of adhd assessments etc and meeting his needs in school. High schools - my oldest daughter has sciatica and hypermobility and called a liar by teachers and that she was faking a slipped disc and couldn't walk without crutches and they still wanted her to do P.E which she wasn't able to do she was also seeing the doctor at the hospital which they knew about as i phoned them and sent a note in with her,

even when the doctor wrote to them they didn't believe it until i phoned the doctor while i was at the school and they spoke to him on the phone and then took it seriously and gave her the help she needed, short while after she got her slipped disc fixed by reflexology she found out she was pregnant and again another battle with the school to get her in the ASN department, all this going on and the headteacher was nowhere to be seen he was hiding in his office refusing to talk to parents face to face or on the phone so he was none the wiser to how his staff were treating the parents and pupils in the school, but she went on attending the school with help from her guidance teacher and did her exams with no faith from some of her teachers, but she passed her exams 6 weeks after giving birth to her daughter and left school only to finally see the head teacher on her leaving day to have a catch up on what she was planning to do after she left school, she to college for 3 years and now she's a qualified early years officer with our support all the way through this ordeal, my oldest son has dyslexia and severe alopecia which he lost all his hair from he was meant to get a PSA in his classes to help with reading and writing which he never got all the time apart from 2 classes, with our support he
managed to get through school without the schools help and he was meant to get a
scribe in his exams and never got that either bare in mind he had an ISP in place
stating what he needed, but he went on and done his exams and come out with
mainly all nat 4's and now attends college, my 3rd child suffers from flat feet and this
affects the lower part of her back which she gets physio for, she now suffers from
anxiety and panic attacks from being at that school,

she's also being assessed for asd now that she left there and they wouldn't help with
anything would rather put a block to everything we tried to get done for her instead
they stood back and watched her get beat up in school and the staff would gang up
on her and then they would expel her every time for reacting to it, even when it
wasn't her fault so i took her out of the school and home schooled her for a while till
she got a place in pupil support services and they have been brilliant to her and her
needs and she gained qualifications there aswell and is now attending a learning
centre to further her studies, i refused to put any more of my children in that
school. The High school which my 4th and 5th child attend and are in the DAS unit
with some mainstream classes and they have been good with the kids and dealing
with their complex needs, my 6th child will also be attending Ghs in august this year.

ANON

I am writing to you as a parent of two children with additional support needs. I feel
very strongly that they have not been catered for in their school, but I don't blame the
school as I know that they just don't have the resources and have far too many
needs to meet.

My middle child is about to turn 18 and was diagnosed, aged 10, with ASD.
After diagnosis, the provision made for her was a space in the learning support base
when she needed quiet, and some social skills support via speech and language
therapy.

On arrival at secondary her needs were not seen as severe enough to require any
support other than extra time during tests or a scribe.

Over the past six years I have watched as she has shrunk away into an almost adult
who may not be able to function in everyday life without a lot of support, as she has
not had the individual support and time from staff that she has needed to grow into a
strong, self-sufficient person.

She has had to be re referred to CAMHS due to severe anxiety and feelings of
worthlessness, and is about to leave school believing school have done nothing to
help her.

They have done nothing to help her! But they didn't have enough resources to do so,
she was at the bottom of their list of priorities when they had violent children, more
severely autistic children and the downright antisocial children who disrupt classes
so badly that they need to be given one to one support.
My son is 14, dyslexic and gets zero support. He is heading for a similar route in life as his sister. The mental health alarm bells are ringing already.

When are the government going to realise that if we continue depleting schools of their valuable staff and cash to implement strategies, we are setting the country up for a lifetime of expensive social support for adults who weren’t given the right support at school to become independent, emotionally balanced tax payers.

ANON

My daughter is almost 14 and diagnosed with high functioning autism and hypermobility.

Primary school was 7 years of hell. Teachers are not sufficiently trained to teach or understand pupils with ASN. My daughter had fidget toys refused, work sent home repeatedly to be rewritten neatly (she was seeing an OT due to her lack of fine motor skills that made handwriting very difficult and painful). Any suggestions our OT made were rebuffed by class teachers, out Speech and language therapist was treated so badly when she made suggestions the school stopped her from helping her. The head teacher refused my daughter the use of a computer in class as handwriting is a skill she MUST learn. The educational psychologist noted she had no working memory but no support was given for this. The Ed Psych had no training on asd except a course which lasted a few hours. My daughter had no support in school from a support assistant. I contacted the school continually about my daughter’s struggles, cried continually about her struggles, contacted the educational department, and the inclusion departments autism expert about my daughter and still the school did nothing to help or support her. Every year I would have to meet with the new class teacher and explain about my daughter’s difficulties due to her disability as information was never passed from teacher to teacher. Her support plan consisted of a few sentences that I was made to sign in the middle of parents night without being able to read or discuss it.

I could send you pages and pages of written evidence about how bad her primary years were. GIRFEC and SHANARRI are not followed for children with ASN.

Schools blame the councils due to lack of supports staff, councils blame the government due to lack of funding meanwhile a whole generation of children are being lost within our school system, being let down by their teachers.

Teachers and all staff working in a school need in depth training about disabilities such as autism. This should be part of teacher training at university.

Kids with special needs need to attend special needs schools as inclusion rarely works due to the lack of support they receive. I could introduce you to many many parents who have children with additional support needs and school is horrendous for their children. It is affecting the mental health of the children as well as parents. Our kids believe they are stupid because school is such a struggle. Watching my daughter repeatedly hitting her head while screaming she is stupid is heartbreaking yet the school did nothing to help support her.
My daughter has been bullied throughout her school years and cannot make friends easily. Again the school would not do anything to help her socially even when I asked for help.

I could talk about our experience for hours as this is just the tip of the iceberg. My daughter is now at secondary school and will come out with no qualifications due to her receiving no support in classes. She desperately needs support but the school does not have the money or staff to provide it. The government need to change this now and invest in school assistants in mainstream schools urgently.

ANON

My daughter has had a mixed experience. She has dyslexia. The school started to pick up in p1, but then she had 2 very experienced (close to retirement) teachers in p2 whose position was that she was of borderline intelligence and just gave her extra homework when I asked for help. In p3 she had a graduate teacher and she spitted straight away that there was an issue and she received learning support from then on.

There seemed to be a question as to whether to diagnose, but I soon realised that without this she wouldn’t get ongoing support, so the school did the tests. I think this should just happen. I’ve also spoken to many other parents whose children have some support for learning needs, but have struggled to get the school to assess their children. They have often got their children tested elsewhere and the school has refused to recognise the result, I’m presuming this is about funding. My child has had a very positive experience and has now started high school and immediately been offered use of a laptop. The school also has dyslexia awareness week and has suggested to some ‘undiagnosed’ children that they may be dyslexic. Very positive that they are actively looking to help children.

I'm sure we're having such a positive experience because we're in a good catchment in Edinburgh. My daughter also goes to a tutor, who has helped a lot. Because of all the help she has received she now does very well at school, her spelling will always be atrocious, but she is able to keep up with her peers.

ANON

What are your views on Additional Support Needs provided in Scotland’s schools?

Resources and support for additional support needs does not reflect the diversity in additional support needs. In Highland there are only two educational paths, a mainstream school, or a school for children with severe learning disabilities and complex needs. There needs to be mid-way schools for children who need the sensory environment of specialist schools, but with the academic curriculum of a mainstream school. One size does not fit all and leaves children without access to education. There needs to be mainstream, bases attached to mainstream, smaller schools with low sensory environment but following a mainstream curriculum, and
more specialist schools with low sensory environment and a more specialist curriculum. The availability of education needs to reflect the diversity of children’s needs.

Currently children are being failed by a lack of appropriate education provision. There should be flexibility and fluidity between these schools for children who may manage different support settings at different times. No child should be left without education provision because there are no resources.

What have your experiences been?

I have a daughter with Autism and ADHD who attended our local mainstream primary, and currently attends the local High School with access all day to the support base. She follows a reduced timetable, with some lessons in the support base, and accesses the base at breaks and lunch times, and at any point in the day where she is struggling. Academically she is very able, but she struggles with the social and emotional side of being in school. The support base attached to the mainstream school has enabled her to access education and to achieve her potential in a way where she experiences life positively and has the support she needs when she needs it. For my daughter the current access to mainstream school through a support base has been hugely beneficial and positive.

In contrast my son’s education has been dismal. He also has Autism and ADHD, and also suffers from DCD and Tic's. He was permanently excluded from our local mainstream primary at age 7. He was not able to cope in the busy environment, and despite 1-to-1 support indoors and 2-to-1 support in the playground the school could not keep him safe. The school did not fail in anyway, they were fantastic in trying to support him, but they could not remove all of the other children, and the sensory overload of the busy school environment was too much. He had been given his own classroom but he wouldn't stay in it, he was the only child like himself, and he wanted to be like the other children and part of a classroom, but he just couldn't cope in a class of 25. When he was excluded, he had already been on a part time timetable for several months and there was no alternative placement, the only other schools were mainstream like the school he had just left, or the school for children with severe learning difficulties and complex needs, which he was too able to attend. After 6 weeks of no education placement we were looking at residential schools out of area, but who wants to send a 7 year old away from home? Eventually the special school made space for him. This is a school that was built for 60 severe and complex pupils, and currently has a role of 90 pupils, as there is nowhere else to educate children who cannot manage in a mainstream school. To make space for him an office was emptied out. It took a further 12 months before he was attending school full time again. This school managed him for 4 years when at the age of 11 he started questioning why he was there? Why was an able boy in a school for the severely disabled, his solution was to attempt to get himself suspended so he could be sent somewhere else. Unfortunately there is nowhere else locally. Combined with deteriorating behaviour at home, and in respite my son went away to a residential school. He has now been there for 8 months and is flourishing, the school of 14 pupils has enabled him to be successful and have a positive experience and education. Sadly it's a primary school and he must leave soon, it's also 3 hours away from home, which limits his inclusion in family life. I'm now looking for the next step.
Unlike my daughter he can't cope in a busy environment in a mainstream school, if asked if he's going into a class of 4 or a class of 30, he will opt for the class of 30, but his behaviour deteriorates in any large group and we know he won't cope, but he wouldn't choose to go into a base attached to the school as my daughter does.

Whilst my daughter sees the base as a means for inclusion, for my son the opposite applies and he sees the base as excluding him. It's perception, if when you attended meetings you weren't allowed to join in but were made to access the meeting from a separate room, would you feel included or excluded? It would depend on whether you choose to go into the separate room, or whether you wanted to be included. My son needs a small school where he feels included, with the low stimulus sensory environment of a special school, but with access to a mainstream curriculum. But that currently doesn't exist.

ANON

My son has autism and ADHD. He has been failed by our education system from when he started nursery until the day I removed him to home educate him last October.

At nursery my son didn't have a diagnosis but struggled at busy times. He would tip out boxes of toys and try to get away. An educational psychologist assessed him and advised the nursery that he could manage small groups and one to one interaction but not busy times. She recommended that he no longer went to assembly, and when children were tidying up at the end of the session that he was taken somewhere quiet with a member of staff. This was not done. Instead my son was made to sit on a chair in front of other children and told he was naughty. His hours were cut as I was told he could not cope.

At one time he was placed in the corridor outside class with no supervision for being naughty. He got out through the fire escape door into the playground and would have got on to a busy road if I had not arrived early and managed to stop him. In another incident he was picked up by the arms roughly by the class teacher in front of pupils and parents because the teacher thought he was going to damage another pupil's art work.

When it came to choosing a primary school we were advised by the Nursery Head Teacher that she thought my son would need extra support so we applied for and got a place at a mainstream school which had a supported base. I thought my son would get the support he needed there.

To begin with all children in primary one start on reduced hours for the first two weeks. My son was kept on those reduced hours throughout primary one and into primary two. It was only when I submitted a formal complaint that this was changed. This was in effect an illegal exclusion as my son was not receiving the full time education which he was entitled to by law.

My son has sensory issues common to children with autism. He finds noisy busy places overwhelming. Noise can be painful for him. He also disliked the lighting in
the school. The school made some adjustments. He was taught in a small class and was given sensory breaks or quiet times to recharge and recover. Part of my son's disability is that he does not know when he needs the toilet until he is absolutely bursting. His behaviour is heightened at this point until he goes to the toilet. I had many conversations with school about ensuring he went to the toilet regularly. When he was overwhelmed he would react by going into fight or flight mode. This is not a choice but a chemical response. When this happened he would be placed in a quiet room (essentially an isolation room) and I would often be called to collect him as I was told he was not coping. He would have often urinated in the room as there was no toilet in there and on one occasion defecated. It is highly likely that on many occasions when his behaviour was deemed challenging and he was placed in this room it was because he needed the toilet and then had nowhere to go to the toilet. I was told by staff that he was doing it deliberately because he was cross and that he had made a choice to do so. My son was terrified of the quiet room and begged me not to let them put him in there. I spoke to staff about this several times. It did not de-escalate his behaviour and served no purpose other than as a punishment or means of control. My son very recently told me that he was carried into this room by two adults against his will and either locked in or they held the door closed. I was never told by staff that they had done this.

After my son was finally given full time hours he was regularly excluded from school due to behaviour which was part of his disability. I was told this was to protect staff and other children. If my son's needs had been understood and met then there would have been less challenging behaviour. During the time my son was at school there was hardly a whole week went by without me being called to pick him up (illegal exclusion) or official exclusion. This had a massive impact on my life and I was unable to take a place on a teacher training course I had been offered as I never knew when I would be called to take my son home. I could not go anywhere without my phone and I could not go far from school in case I received a phone call to collect him.

I was told by staff that my son was by far the most difficult child they had ever had in their school and that really it wasn't the right place for him but we were offered no alternative placement. The special school in our town was not deemed suitable for my son's high cognitive ability and there were no other schools that were suitable for children like my son who have high functioning autism. He is very clever but needs a quiet, calm place to learn. School did put him on an alternative curriculum with horse riding and trampolining but he still spent most of his time in an environment that he could not cope with.

My son worked best with staff that knew him well, knew how to read him and that he trusted. When staff were changed this would trigger a lot of anxiety and incidents would spiral as staff did not understand how to defuse the situation.

My son was most often taught one to one. He struggled with noisy playtimes and the lunch hall. He took lunch on his own with a member of staff most of the time. I would argue that it is not really inclusion if a child is on their own away from other children in a school. Rather it is exclusion within the same environment as other children. Throughout his time there I had repeated meetings with staff discussing my son's challenging behaviour. Autism and ADHD both affect executive function, emotional
self regulation, and impulse control. On top of this my son had sensory overload. This led to very high levels of anxiety which manifested itself as challenging behaviour. Yet I was told repeatedly by staff that he was choosing to behave in this way and that because he had made good choices in the past he could make good choices all the time. This showed a fundamental misunderstanding of how an autistic/ADHD brain differs from a neurotypical brain. My son's consultant psychiatrist wrote to school explaining this but he continued to be blamed for his disability. One example of this is when my son had an accident in the playground which knocked out two of his front teeth. My son has a very high sensitivity to pain. He struggled to do as he was asked for the rest of the day. Because of this he was told he was not allowed to go on a day out for ASN children which is organised by the rotary club. He had been told he had to get a certain amount of good behaviour points every day to be able to go. This caused a great deal of anxiety on his part making it more likely that there would be challenging behaviour. Despite that this was the only day he did not get that amount. My son had been looking forward to this day out for a year and was devastated that he could not go. He wanted to kill himself. He was seven years old. School refused to change their minds. In the end I contacted the Rotary Club and took him myself. School were very cross that I had undermined their authority instead of recognising their mistake.

After this incident I spoke to school about the importance of quiet times for my child, regular staff that knew him, sensory breaks, and understanding his disability. I was assured that when he started primary four this would all be in place. Instead he was assigned a pupil support assistant who had never worked with him or any child with ASN before. He lost his quiet space and was expected to cope in a large class. He was expected to join his class lining up in the playground even though he had not done it for years because it was overwhelming. The inevitable result was that he couldn't cope and was excluded for challenging behaviour. He became highly anxious about going to school and refused to get dressed to go. I started going in and sitting with him for half an hour every morning to help reduce his anxiety. He was given back a quiet space and his hours were cut at my request to rebuild his confidence at school. This was supposed to be a time of building him back up. Instead he was told off for not coping and tried to run away. At that point I realised how much damage was being done to my son's mental health and how much stress I was under and took my son out of school to home educate him.

I hope this consultation leads to positive change because at the moment many families and children are being failed by the education system.

Dr Francesca Moroni

I am afraid to report that support for children with ASD in nursery schools is little and variable. It is also hugely inter individual dependent and often it is solely due to the caring individual, like in our case the head teacher in our nursery. Despite this in over 4 months we have seen no specialist intervention for our little boy with ASD. In nursery school there is no presence of SLT or occupational therapist. Waiting times are long. Scientific evidence as you know support early intervention as key for favourable outcome (Pickels A et al. Parent-mediated social communication therapy

I urge the government to invest resources for early learners. These may be children with ASD but will also be adults with ASD and if we do not invest into changing their future most of them will not grow into independent human beings and be a significant economical burden for the government and the tax payers.

ANON

My daughter was born in England and educated there for the 1st years of her life till age 8. She was in a pure mainstream Church of England aided school. They supported us from her starting nursery class there, to get the support she needed to thrive in an educational environment, her Statement of Special Educational Needs was quite extensive and she had 1 of the highest 1:1 provision awards in the county for a PDA(pathological demand avoidance a spectrum disorder on the a-typical part of the autism spectrum) diagnosed by NHS Derbyshire, over 22 hours 1:1 which was provided by local authority funding and topped up to 30 by the schools own budget, she had written in SALT provision and SSEN specialist teaching support, the school and myself worked very closely and we found an outreach pda interested specialist teacher who came in to work with my child and the staff. School from their own budget sent her TA to the PDA specific conference ran by NAS when It was in Manchester, nothing seemed too much bother to actually GET IT RIGHT FOR MY CHILD!

In July 2012 we moved to Angus, it took them till the October/November to place her, she has never been entitled to a CSP apparently even though she had significant SEN in England and has numerous agencies involved in her care and wellbeing from education, healthcare and social work. I quickly realised that the local CAMHS did not endorse PDA and Angus take their lead from them so I hit a brick wall and the placement was not suiting her, she had no real 1:1(Angus dont do 1:1 as a rule apparently), school was reluctant to use the education depts resource staff, I had to find contact details and ask an official to get involved, it was like everything fell on to my shoulders. 2014 I found finger print bruising on my child, Angus also have a "hands off policy" they don’t and aren’t trained in restraint, at this point I was also unaware that a padded cell/seclusion/timeout room however you want to butter it up, existed for kids to be imprisoned in! They might say the door isn’t lockable but my child told us the same male staff member who hurt her held that door shut on her and she was scared! There was a police investigation which concluded "although the injuries were consistent with the allegations, just not to the extent of the allegations" those words will haunt me forever, if I had inflicted excessive force on my child and harmed her, I would be held accountable, why are these people protected? What did a small 10 year old little girl do to a grown man to make him hurt her, drag her along carpeted floors and hold a door shut on her to a padded cell! IGNORANCE thats what! Also just because he could! My child was happy, engaging, thriving in a pure mainstream English school. Moved here and it was a nightmare! The last 4 years
have been absolute HELL in Scottish education. She was secluded from other kids on a daily basis, villified, branded violent and dangerous, secluded from trips, the ONLY child left behind in that schools base, "because they couldn't take the risk" could they do that to an epileptic child because they couldn't take the risk of them not having a seizure! Course not, its all defined under the Technical Guidance For Schools In Scotland document on the Equality and Human rights website!

My experience of ASN in scottish schools is 1 of neurologically disabled kids are brats who WILL give staff a quiet life and conform to demands or ELSE! That is NEVER going to happen and is totally the wrong attitude and approach for a PDA child in Scotlands seemeingly 1 size fits all education system from my experience! My child is now traumatised and psychologically damaged, she has Trichotillomania, so has no eyebrows, eyelashes and bald patches in her hair, she also pulls hairs from other parts of her body, this started after the 1st time she was abused in school! The other week we drove towards that school, not thinking she hadn't been near since she left for high school last summer, my child had a full blown panic attack in the car, begging us not to take her back there! High school are trying and listening which is more than the so-called specialist resource primary for the area did! However wasn't perfect start as they too used a seclusion room and I removed permission for that method to be used in writing for my child. We don't seclude and manhandle her at home or anywhere else, why is it legal for it to be done in the name of education! My child isnt naughty, she isnt violent, she isnt dangerous, she wont learn from being punished, you cant punish a neurological disability out of a child! Another sad thing, educationally I dont think she has made much progress if any since leaving Y4 primary english education to now, everything she does learn is from us taking her on educational trips during our holidays. she will never learn being forced to read and write at a table, she is a sensory, anxiety driven auditory/visual learner, she picks up things quicker than most neurotypical kids, has a fantastic memory, quite an interest and gift for anything music wise, but school just cant figure out how to work with her and are still trying to get her into music somehow, also staffing is an issue, they did try for stage 4 funding which was apparently refused. Primary school denied her that chance also, is it not better our children are allowed and encouraged to do what they excell at rather than forcing them to do things that make them frustrated, unhappy and unwilling to engage? 4 years ago I saw a bright future for my complex but lovely daughter, all her staff at her english school loved her, they miss her and were distraught when I told them her experience at the hands of Scottish education, they were disgusted at how anyone couldnt see the child we all do. Of course if you cage our kids and treat them like animals they will start to act as taught, violence is learnt behaviour from constant escalation due to unmet needs. When are the Scottish government going to not just talk the talk but walk the walk and stop failing our vulnerable disabled children, who just want the same as anyone else, to be happy, included and treated with respect, to help them thrive! Not what we have experienced a fight to survive! GIRFEC and SHANARRI dont seen to exist when these kids are at school!

Ive seen and experienced how SEN/ASN should be done and unfortunatly in my home country how it definatly should NOT be done, that makes me very sad, dissapointed, disgusted, disheartened, angry and a whole lot more. Whats even sadder is our experience is just 1 of 100s in scotland alone! Getting It Right For Every Child.........WHAT A JOKE!
Anonymous

I have been asked to email our families experiences of education for our children with additional support needs, I will try to give a brief overview but can give more details if requested, our experiences date back to 2010 and still ongoing we are situated in Perth and Kinross.

My oldest son is 11 years old and started school in 2010, prior to this he was in nursery from 2008, he attended 1 private nursery where he was asked to leave due to them being unable to cope with his challenging behaviour, the second a local authority nursery where he was supported and concerns were raised, about his communication sensory issues and mild challenging behaviour I can only assume as the nursery was flooded just prior to the date he was due to leave records from this time have been lost as I have received no reports from this time through my FOI request.

My son started a mainstream school where the head teacher was made aware by the nursery and by parents that our son had emotional regulation issues, within months issues became apparent and that our son was not coping in school he was formally excluded once within six months and sent home several times, he was being physically restrained on a regular basis, after his formal exclusion the school suggested a nurture provision, we requested an assessment for autism and educational psychology support both requests were denied we refused the nurture provision but was hit with the first of many threats we have encountered over the years, accept the nurture or we will have him removed from our school and sent to a unit for children and families with parenting problems and social issues, feeling that we had no option we agreed to the nurture group, on a part time basis, during this group he would have breakfast, then carpet time I am unclear what exactly happened in this group other than to work on social skill please thank yous etc, the purpose explained would be for a term and get him back into class, after a few weeks things did not improve, and he was then put into nurture full time, in the afternoon alone with 2x staff he was still being physically restrained on a regular basis and sent home, by the middle of 2011 the school agreed to support a referral to the child development and occupational therapy and speech and language, in Dec 2011 he was diagnosed with sensory processing disorder and PPD, they left items for him to use in school which I wasn’t told about until some time later, they still refused our request for educational psychology input.

In Jan 2012, he was seen by CAHMS who agreed that an ADOS (autism assessment was required) and he appeared to have unexplained aggression towards the school, I fed this back to the school and began to question things and complain to the school things got worse he was being restrained more coming home bruised with finger marks on upper arms, the school were in touch on an almost daily basis claiming our son had said we had hurt him Chinese burns being hit, smacked kicked, eventually in March 2012 after numerous calls to social services by the school both our children were removed from our care the school talked about parenting classes, were needed and we were to blame for his behaviour, we had
damp in our property that the school were well aware of this was now being blamed on us, no injuries were found at a medical as no abuse had taken place from parents it took 6 months to get our children returned in the first 3 weeks they had 7 different placements, eventually they were sent to a foster carer who could not cope with both boys needs and our eldest sons escalated behaviour, at no point was he recognised as having additional needs he was just a badly brought up boy, in the may he was removed from the foster carer and sent to a residential unit for troubled teens he was 6 years old, at the unit he was physically attacked by an older child on several occasions, he was restrained by adults, a social worker lifted him from a taxi and shouted at him and restrained him in public, he ran away from school barefoot and was picked up by the police several times trying to get home both boys were returned to our care in September 2012 and he was diagnosed with autism in October 2012

When the boys were returned I removed my son from school and contacted the education department, after 6 months a placement was found and agreed in a mainstream school, with full time 1/1 support and access to the autism outreach team, initially he started in April 2013 on a part time timetable agreed by an employee of the education department who then left he started on an hour a day with a very slow increase tactics were tried and established things that did not work eg visual time tables, by Christmas he was on half days and after contacting NAS we discovered that part time tables were unlawful, between April and December 2013 there was 2/3 recorded incidents where the school could pinpoint what had gone wrong things were put in place he was happy he was making friends and he was learning although he wasn't in class very often he lined up with them in the mornings, the major issue was part time table, a plan was put in place then the head teacher left, the new head teacher from day 1 appeared to have an issue with him, spoke to him lacking in compassion and empathy for what he had gone through, put a stop to an increase in time, used increase of time as an incentive to behave his time was up and down, incidents occurred more often, (I found out later his 1/1 was being used as support for other people at the times my son wasn't allowed to attend parents accused him of stealing their child's support but his 1/1 was specifically contracted to our son) he was being sent home regularly, and formally excluded, he only went full time in May 2014 as we refused to pick him up and told them he was to be in school full time even then they took 4 weeks to allow him in full time) he was being restrained on a regular basis and put in a room of his own, his 1/1 was injured during a restraint during a school trip, which required regular time off during which time our son was often not allowed in school or only allowed in if parents were able to support him, he was continually put on a pre exclusion notice, In October 2014 my son was deregistered from the school after an incident involving both our boys escalated into a serious incident, older sons 1/1 was off premises younger sons 1/1 was at other end of play ground and play ground assistant was around the corner, from what we can gather from witness statements and both boys series of events younger son was instigator, staff blocked them selves into a door way (came out that door despite school having many exits) threatening to call police pulling mobile from pocket, another panicked picking up younger child running inside, times and events proven to be lies in acting heads statement but nothing done about this, police called after event and turning up 2 days later not being informed he had autism and the exact series of events, the education authority set up a programme
of swimming and going to the park with his 1/1 but a parent would have to support he
did not cope with this and wanted back to school on several occasions the acting
head walked down the road to the meeting point and told my son that if he did not
behave this would be taken away, in November 2014 she reported us to the
childrens reporter for our son not attending school (we were not aware of this at this
point) she removed the 1/1 , the education authority offered a autism unit based at a
local school we were told if we did not accept then we would be reported to the
children reporter , feeling we had no option we agreed despite the fact he had had
no assessments from anyone in the education department something we have
continually asked for , after agreeing to placement we heard about the referral from
the acting head social work investigated no further action

March 2015 he started the base one week half days then full time very quickly it
became apparent he was not coping with the needs of the other children , and the
attempts to use the techniques , previously tried but all this unit did as according to
them it works on all autistic children , it was in may 2015 educational physiology
were eventually tasked with assessing him by which point the education authority
had decided the placement was not working and they needed to look at an
alternative this assessment was not a full assessment , education decided that a
private specialist provision was where he needed to go , and mentioned 4 schools 1
was for very complex disabilities , 1 was over 40 miles away and again for very
complex cases, 1 he was not old enough for , the last 1 was the only option , so we
visited and gave feedback by august we had not heard anything and as he was still
registered at the school he would go back, but they were told by education that if he
turned up then to turn him away he today is still registered at his school but not
allowed to attend he has had no formal education since July 2015 he has not been
excluded or removed from register

I have put in numerous placing requests for mainstream and a general support base
rather than condition specific , all of which have been turned down , the education
department has passed over information and files to private schools without consent
, when I informed one school of this they withdrew from communication with the
education department , they were found guilty of this through the information
commissioner , another school turned him down for various reasons difference of
opinions in our views of our sons needs and the education authorities , and allergies
he has making the school unsafe , in January 2016 we were told to accept he was to
go to a private school or be reported to the children reporter , we chose to ignore this
threat and continue to fight for our son to access a local school , the reporter again
asked social work to write a report , this time the most horrendous report was written
with personal views inaccurate information , taken from files that had been proven
false , this report surfaced in July 2016 the social worker left , since then it has been
continual threats of our son being removed from our care or agree to him going to a
private school ,

we have been through court panel etc and still not in school , we have been unable
to get legal aid due to being over the threshold by a few pounds , we are still trying to
sort this out and in the meantime our son is still deprived an education , we have
given reports from clubs on how he is when he is supported and outside education
despite the fact he has autism he leads a mainstream life , and is developing

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Independence skills, he has friends, and is a completely different child to the child described by education, we have had to agree to him attending a private school, although we had never refused anything as no place had offered a placement, there is a possible placement at one of the original schools suggested that he is now old enough for, but education are taking the lead with communication and we have no idea what's being said or passed over, he has had assessment days in January that we have had no feedback from or any correspondence on the last 7 years have been very stressful for not only our son but or us as a family we have been bullied, threatened, coerced into doing what they want regardless of the consequence, our son has been bullied by staff, physically abused (through restraint), emotionally and physiologically neglected/abused by staff we feel he has been failed on many levels.

Son 2 age 7 started mainstream school August 2013, prior to starting deputy head attempted to secure 1/1 as through discussion (son had not gone to nursery due to the amount of time spent trying to sort out older son's education and him being part-time) agreed he would struggle at school he was on waiting list for autism screening a referral done through his consultant for health needs he has

Education department said no, from day 1 he struggled, and by the end of the 1st week it was suggested temporarily that until 1/1 funding was secured, then for safety reason could he go to nursery in the afternoons, (he was a hider and runner) we agreed to this temporarily, 1/1 was sorted but he remained in nursery despite our and his objections, he was continually restrained or put in seclusion, when his brother was removed from school the acting head then began threatening him with exclusion, he was assessed by educational physiology as being 1-2 years behind his peer group, he was put on a pre-exclusion, we received calls to say he was in distress but when we got there he was calm, he was then put in nursery full time, he refused to go to school as he was upset about nursery, they allowed him back into class for mornings only, by the end of his primary 1 he had, had nearly 100 incident forms filled in, going into primary 2 the acting head was removed and the deputy took over, his 1/1 left, and another employed shared between 3 people so he did not become dependent on the same person like his brother had, over the course of primary 2 he went from strength to strength, he accessed class full time with support, and started to learn, made friends and became less dependent on his 1/1, now in primary 3 he has no need for 1/1 has proper things put in place for when anxiety or emotion runs high he is slowly catching up with his peers educationally and is included and well liked in the school, the staff are professional, know what they are doing and being allowed to do what they know he till has support needs at school and at home and needs more support than his brother but after such a turbulent start he is thriving.

ANON

We are a loving family with an 11 year old son who is diagnosed with autism. We currently live in Aberdeenshire where our son’s educational experience has been dreadful. Currently he is unable to attend Primary school due to high levels of anxiety, lack of trust in educational staff and an inability to cope with the demands.
placed on him in mainstream education. His Primary School education spans three schools, these include (described as 1,2 and 3).

Our experience in trying to support our autistic son through mainstream education is extensive having experienced over the years:

- teaching staff attempting to self diagnose class room behaviour.
- it taking until age 9 for my son to be school referred and assessed for autism.
- bullying of my autistic son being disregarded by teaching staff in 2 of 3 schools.
- teaching staff untrained/incompetent to handle our child with ASN.
- inability for schools to modify class environment to support sensory issues.
- my wife sitting in a school cupboard for 6 weeks whilst my son could go out to play.
- inconsistent provision of Educational Psychology support.
- exclusion from after school sporting activities.
- lack of adequate supervision during school trips resulting in my son being bullied.
- under handed tactics by a teacher to get our son moved school.
- my wife closing down her business due to episodes of school non-attendance anxiety.

As parents we are fully committed to providing our son with a suitable education - our coaching and support as parents to our son attending school during January 2017 has only but made his mental state more fragile. Recent contact with Social Services has led to no support being identified for our family. As of February 2017 we are focused on helping our son improve his mental state and we are pursuing support through the School Doctor and our GP. We currently await the outcome of a request to be referred to the Aberdeen hospital children's mental health team.

The inadequacies in additional support needs in mainstream school education has over the years had an immeasurable toll on our family. We are a professional hard working family with sound principles and ethics. Our son is highly intelligent and funny yet has a different ability to others. His now fragile mental state regarding school attendance can only but conclude that the current Scottish Government Policy of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIFREC) is failing to adequately address a significant number of additional support needs children in school education.

**ANON**

Both my children received ASL support at their last school, I moved them 6 weeks ago after numerous educational failures.

Both my children are formally diagnosed as dyslexic. The ASL lady who ‘worked’ with both my children stated that the word dyslexia should not even be in the dictionary.
She stated my children's work would not change with a dyslexia diagnosis. The schools head teacher also restated the ASL ladies opinion about dyslexia being in the dictionary.

I complained, obviously, and was told I had clearly picked up the comments made, wrongly. I was making a complaint about a member of staff with 30 years in the education department. My reply, how much dyslexia training has she received. No answer. Dyslexia Scotland were able to tell me Dumfries and Galloway Council are one of the few councils not to take free Dyslexia Scotland training.

My son has maintained 2 years behind his age group for his reading and spelling after working with this ASL lady. I am told this is proof of progress, no, this is proof that my son has maintained 2 years behind.

The ASL lady also said that grey paper wouldn't be purchased to help my son, cost prohibitive. I was able to get my son an appointment via an optician to an Orthoptic clinic. It was discovered after testing, a grey overlay helps my son read. After my sons formal dyslexia diagnosis, the school should have made the referral to the Orthoptic clinic. I raised this with the ASL lady and was told, “good for you mum”

I was told that my son would not receive further ASL support as progress had been made and they wanted to see how he faired in the classroom without ASL support. The ASL lady clearly did not enjoy her time with my son especially and even said to him, if you don't want my help, get your mum to write a letter and I'll stop helping you. My son has been left on the scrap heap, there were no teaching adjustments made unless I fought for them. He switched off, lost interest and even had suicidal thoughts, my son is 11.

My 8 yr old daughter struggles and I was told by her class teacher she didn't need a speech and language referral. Last year I was told my daughter does need a speech and language referral, she has an appointment tomorrow. I was told my daughter would benefit from having a scribe as she struggles to put the information in her head down on paper. The head teacher said “she'll get a scribe at secondary”

Dyslexia is not a new phenomenon, my children get 1 shot at an education. How do I explain they are behind their peers, their confidence and self esteem is rock bottom, but its ok, there's nothing wrong with you?

Happy for you to share my experiences but I do not want my address details used. I have had poison pen letter before when I was battling Dumfries and Galloway education department.

ANON

I am a mother of a girl, aged 9 who is currently attending school a special needs school in Dundee.

I am writing as i have found the education my daughter has received at this school to be severely lacking. Her lep's have been focusing on very basic tasks but are not
focusing on my daughter’s strengths. My Daughter has Rett Syndrome, so she is quite profoundly affected, though very mobile, but non verbal and her hand use is affected, so she is locked in effectively but bright inside.

There are ways in which my daughter could learn to communicate through use of an eye gaze computer and more low tech eye gaze. I have been battling for this for five years as my daughter is in primary 5 now to not much affect. It was very hard to get this equipment from the NHS as they don’t give it out unless the person can prove they can work it, but as there are no other ways my daughter can prove her intelligence clearly we were caught in a catch 22 situation, as you just need to give her the opportunity to be able to learn to use one throughout the day. Without this opportunity of course she isn’t going to be able to learn to use it. We had to find the funding ourselves and it was around £10,000. Even after we have funded for this device for our daughter, the school have had no training in being able to use this in the best way for my daughter. Only the speech therapist that our daughter currently has, knows how to use it. I had to find someone who lives in England but was up in Scotland visiting, to come to the school to train them and us which i had to pay for out of my own pocket. Even then the school were quite unhelpful and would only let the teacher be there for 40mins in her free time. This is quite upsetting when i have spent so much money from our pockets for my daughter to receive some basic fundamental education.

They are only able to implement using the eye gaze for about 20 mins a day which is quite a bit less than the recommended time. At least they have agreed to this and thats ok to start off, with but won’t be eventually, it should be there for when my daughter is doing activities as it is her voice not just something to do. It should be immersed into daily activities as much as possible. There has been very little training in how to use it for someone with rett syndrome also, which can differ a lot from other disabilities, far less general training it seems. They have been very reluctant to do this previously, and are complaining that there is not enough time in the day and not enough staff to be able to help my daughter to use the eye gaze to communicate. The timetable is very much play orientated and life skills. While a lot of the life skills may be of use to other children, they are not of much use to my daughter. and although you need a bit of play in the timetable i feel it is very out of balance to all play and no time for formal learning.

My daughter is quite capable of learning literacy skills and my main aim is for her to learn to read and write and develop her communication skills through the use of her eye gaze skills. But when asking for this at the school the principal teacher of the primary department responded, “what would be the point!”. I find their ethos and ways very old fashioned and quite shocking, They are also denying her her human rights!

The children are being dramatically underestimated, as is my daughter, they don’t seem to be bothered to even try to educate them. The kids really aren’t pushed at all or helped to their full potential. Thus my daughter and I’m sure a lot of the other children there especially non verbal, are becoming increasingly frustrated. Then behaviour problems will emerge, as they are with my daughter, as she is desperately wanting to communicate with us her needs, and has no other way of doing so, so therefore they are being very much neglected.
If she is taught literacy and using an eye gaze computer it could open up her world and this would be the best way to meet her needs and give her the freedom of speech, which again she is being denied. And I hear of this time and time again which saddens me greatly. This only brings long term problems in the future with very frustrated kids or adults who can only lash out to communicate instead of much better ways that could be utilised. They are focusing on getting my daughter to use her hands which is incredibly difficult and frustrating for my daughter and her hand use is probably likely to get worse, which leads me to believe they don’t even try to understand different disabilities, and just continue with what they know with all the kids which of course isn’t suitable. No research into individual diagnosis’ is being done and they are also not listening to parents such as myself, who have done a lot of research and I talk to other professionals which are recommending totally different ways of teaching the kids, which have been proven to work much more quickly and effectively. They are continuing with very basic goals which are not age appropriate and not going to help my daughter communicate at all. They are not currently teaching her the alphabet and phonics in the required way which would allow my daughter to learn to read and write through her eye gaze. It is all far too simplistic, they quote that she is not ready but they are measuring her in ways that are totally unsuitable to a child with affected hand use, relying on her hand use as a marker for her intelligence. They just need to give her the opportunity to use the eye gaze, which we have now bought, as you would not say to a typical kid I’m not going to give you a pencil as you can’t write with it yet, no you let them scribble, you teach them to write, my daughter is not getting the chance to scribble, how on earth is she going to learn these things if not taught!. I am currently thinking the only way my daughter is going to learn anything of any benefit is taking her out and homeschooing her! as there are no suitable mainstream schools in my area. I am even considering moving house so she can get into the mainstream school with a base in Angus.

Professionals on the whole need to presume intelligence and give disabled kids much more opportunity to learn than they are doing now. These kids are getting left behind when they are intelligent and fully in there. Rett syndrome affects the body greatly but not the mind, but just because a child cannot speak does not mean they have nothing to say!. Also there is a window of opportunity for learning which if not received, will cause many more problems for these kids later in life which I find very sad indeed!. There needs to be more training in more up to date methods of teaching. I know my daughter understands everything!. I hate to see her being left behind!. This needs to change.

Anon

I am a mother of three. My 2 eldest, now aged 29 & 23 are high achievers. My Son graduated with a 1st class honours degree in Computer Management and my daughter was a pupil at The Dance School of Scotland then went on to study at one of the top performing arts schools in London with a full scholarship. I am in no doubt whatsoever that the nurturing and education they both got in school enabled their success today.
My youngest son, is 18 and due to leave school this summer. He has complex medical and additional support needs including Epilepsy, Autism and Learning Disabilities.

My submission is about how he has been cared for and treated in schools.

He started school aged 5. There was little understanding of his condition, the staff had no training or understanding of disability. I got a telephone call every single morning when his 1:1 went on her break to come and pick him up. He wasn’t allowed in the playground nor was he allowed to stay in school for lunch (they cited health & safety reasons) In his primary 2 year, he spent just 36 full days in school. His educational “file” had practically nothing in it.

We moved to another education authority area in 2006 and my son went to a mainstream school with learning support base. This worked well and he thrived for 4 years. The headmaster fully embraced inclusion and my son was happy, he had friends and even managed some time in mainstream. The staff worked hard under some very challenging circumstances, but by the end of primary 6 my son was reading beyond his years, and was doing P4 numberwork. It wasn’t perfect, especially when the old head retired and the new head lacked his expertise, understanding and ethos. The new head made unpopular changes, but I believe it reflected the economy at the time when cuts needed to be made.

In 2010, because our local authority had no suitable Secondary school provision, we accepted a place in a “Special School” elsewhere. We had various meetings before and during his 1st 6 weeks at the school and we were told my son was doing very well. However, this suddenly changed when he went into a new class and there was an incident in the gym hall where the teacher (in her own words) “pulled” my son off a specially adapted bike he was riding by his shoulders. My son reacted (out of fear and anxiety- no one had manhandled him before) Thus, four adult members of staff took my son to the floor in a prone “restraint”. Medical evidence shows that our small 11 year-old (he wore clothes for a 7 year-old) lost consciousness and urinated. My son suffered over 60 bruises as well as something called “petechial haemorrhaging” all over his chest. These injuries were consistent with positional asphyxia. Another incident followed a few days’ later with similar results.

I watched my son deteriorate rapidly whilst he was at this “special school” for 3 years.

My son had little “education”. On his school timetable, there was just 2 x 20 minute periods a WEEK of literacy and numeracy skills. Instead, there were 2 mile walks to the local Tesco supermarket (my son often collapsed with exhaustion by the time he got to Tesco)

There were also various bus trips each week to a local playground. My son eventually lost almost all the skills he’d gained at his Angus school. He was extremely unhappy, not only did he beg not to go to school every day, he had nightmares about his experience. He spoke of children being “hurt by bad teachers” and was petrified of something he called “the scary blue room” The school inspection
revealed some serious concerns and was rated “very poor” by the Care Inspectorate in 2014.

By November 2012, my son had lost so much weight and had such high levels of anxiety, that we sought medical help and in January 2013, CAMHS diagnosed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder with school related anxiety.

I, myself witnessed some terrible things in that school. Staff would drag children by their wrists, frogmarch them (2:1) along the corridor and I saw 3 staff slam a small autistic child against the wall and forcibly restrain him. These people did this just because the child flapped his hands (a very common behaviour from a child with autism) I reported these incidents to the Police, but the results were always the same. “No criminality”

In the end, we removed my son from the school back in to our previous education authority area in May 2013.

Since 2013, my son has been in High School. He spends most of his time in the learning support base, but once again, due to the excellent culture and attitude of staff, he has thrived. He hasn’t quite caught up with where he was educationally before he went to the “special school”, but he has stopped having nightmares, and above all, he is happy, has friends and enjoys school.

As a parent, I trusted the “system” yet I feel that my son has been totally failed over the years. Not all schools are as good as his High School. If only he’d had the kind of nurturing and care he enjoys here in all his schools, maybe he would have managed to achieve more.

The culture and attitude in schools varied greatly. The lack of expertise and understanding goes hand in hand with extremely poor to non-existent training. However, no amount of training can teach empathy and mindfulness.

Louise Strachan

I would like to put forward my thoughts on the lack of support offered to pupils with Aspergers sitting their exams.

My 16 year old son left school in October as he felt it was an absolute waste of time. And I would agree with him.

He sat his prelims after studying very hard, but unfortunately failed them all because he does not understand the wording of the questions in the exam papers. He found this very upsetting and frustrating. My son knew most of the answers, but just doesn't understand the way they are worded. This is a very common factor with people who has Aspergers.

The only help offered to my son was a scribe - which he doesn't need as he can read and write perfectly well, or extra time. You can give these pupils all the time in the world, they still won't understand the way these papers are put.
I would have thought in this day and age, that the Government & SQA could easily provide help to these pupils, perhaps someone to sit with them and make sure they understand the question, obviously without giving them any kind of an answer.

I think the fact that 75% of adults with ASD are unemployed in the UK, including my son, shows that there is a serious loophole in the system here, which starts in education and has to be looked into now.

ANON

The current inclusion policy in schools does not work. Children with needs are put into mainstream classrooms which often are not suitable. The local councils are struggling for cash and deem that many of these children don't need a support assistant so the class teacher who is not specially trained in the child's needs is left to try and address these needs as best they can whilst trying to juggle the other children in the class who also require attention. Often this makes for a strained, stressed teacher who feels like none of the children's needs are being met. I think that as children have the right to learn, feel safe and happy at school and by including children with a variety of needs and behavioural problems it often goes against these rights not only for the children with ASN but for all the children in the class.

ANON

I am a single parent of a 10 year old child who went through 6 years of education at an Aberdeenshire primary school happily and until a change in approach due to the departure of a Head Teacher. Under the temporary Acting Head’s management my son was treated in a way which exasperated the very behaviours they flagged up to me as ones they wished to stop. He got stuck in a very negative vicious circle and his whole school experience turned very unhappy and unmanageable for him overnight and it had a very damaging impact on him and our family. His behavioural challenges are ADD related and may have their basis in being on the autistic spectrum. Now a new Head Teacher has started and things are changing for the better for my son. My comments are also based on experiences by parents I know or have heard of.

I feel that some Head Teachers do not want the ASN children in their school as they see them as more time consuming, likely to be disruptive and are covered by additional legislation. I am worried that Head Teachers/acting heads may be able to influence critical questionnaires such as for ADHD – that the teachers are given to fill out when an assessment is required, which can result in the children not receiving a conclusive diagnosis as they do not want to be concerned about the additional rights or resource implications that the child may present to the school. However as I hope to show, these can sometimes be unfounded as in many cases, simply a change in tact and perspective can really help some children on the autistic spectrum or with specific behavioural challenges.
Elements of GIRFEC in the hands of educational staff who are not behavioural specialists, can work against the wellbeing of the child as it is far too simplistic. Using GIRFEC as the only framework allows for children who have ASN needs/ on the autistic spectrum/ ADHD, to be seen is at risk and it is too easy for educational staff to use the framework of explaining these behaviours by poor parenting.

Specifically the GIRFIC “risk factors” such as “child behavioural difficulties” and “difficult temperament.” There is an appalling lack of understanding of autism spectrum characteristics by educational professionals as well as mental health workers, and they can therefore be used to come to the WRONG conclusions about the child and therefore prevent the right assessments taking place or the right support strategies being put into place in schools.

Additional Risk Indicators under GIRFEC which I believe can easily be used in a discriminatory way to vindicate parents are: “Parent has a different perception of the problems/risks” It is very common when the parent feels and knows the school is not doing the right thing for their child to have a different perception to the school and is a core requirement as part of discussion and getting to know the child. This should not be counted as a risk indicator.

Another risk indicator is “inability/unwillingness to make use of supports”. I turned down a school proposal for a someone who I felt was poorly qualified to work with my son due to her not having the experience and qualification level to properly get involved to support him, especially as the context with school had become complex. Parents have the right to request more qualified and alternative professionals to be involved if they feel existing ones are not the right solution – which is also very common – and without the fear of being labelled as a “risk.”

I see that being a “single parent” is a risk factor in GIRFEC. That feels to me like discrimination and is offensive.

Educational Psychologists can be ineffective, and show a lack of impartialness. I felt my son’s was on the side of the school who were being too severe, making him unhappy, and were not prepared to view my son’s behaviour as being anxiety based. I understand that schools do not have to follow advise from the Educational Psychologist which surely has to be wrong and a waste of local authority resources. Presently I also believe that they do not have to take on board suggestions by clinical psychologists either – how on earth can this set up be constituted as “getting it right for every child”?

Another problem is that the education authorities including the Educational Psychologist can take the approach of ignoring that a child may have a form of autism until proven.

Leading on to the suggestion:

Many children on the spectrum, in particular the high-functioning autistic spectrum (such as Aspergers) are not getting picked up by the system, and, when they are, assessment times are too long. Schools, depending on the culture and intention by senior management, can currently choose to treat a child as totally mainstream...
(neurotypical) until proven otherwise by assessments. In schools they do not seem
to know all the signs of a child being on the autistic spectrum and so cannot identify
it early enough on, or even ever, that the child should have a referral.

In this period of time, as in my son’s case, a huge amount of damage can happen
(bearing in mind he also was diagnosed with ADD in 2014 and was on the waiting list
for CAHMS for an autism spectrum disorder).

Many education professionals do not understand the anxiety levels and triggers of
children on the autistic spectrum, and so they choose to implement standard
strategies centred on compliance, separation and withholding rewards. This
happened in my son’s case, and the way he went downhill emotionally, with his
relationships and in his self-esteem in a very short space of time was dramatic. I also
suspect that academically he went downhill too yet I was not told of this. Sometimes
I could not get him to school on time and some days and mornings he was off
school. This then had a major knock-on effect on our home life, and my ability as a
single Mum to go out to work. The school, and the Educational Psychologists as well
as the Quality Improvement department of the local authority were made aware of
his school phobia, anxieties and how this impacted negatively on my life, and
seemed uninterested in helping, leaving the acting head to continue to with the same
rigid approach which was upsetting my son and making the situation worse.

It becomes a very scary situation for parents, in particular single parents, when you
have a child who is fearful, emotional which plays out in aggressive behaviours, and
is stuck in a vicious cycle as the school seem to want to use those behaviours as
evidence to continue to separate or take out of mainstream, where in fact the right
thing to do would be to reassure and support the child.

The way in which my son had to gain points to allow him to be included in normal
parts of his daily school life, was not going to be achievable for him whilst he felt
unaccepted, exhausted, anxious and unhappy in school. I pointed this out in
advance of the system being implemented and was ignored.

Leading on to another key area:

Ed Psychs and school management need to be less focused on their own theoretical
based perception of a situation, and give the parent more credibility. They need to
stop so easily being suspicious of parents being responsible for their child’s
behaviour. I found that both concerns/fears that my son had told me about and my
concerns about what he needed and how the school could help, were glazed over
and the full information was not recorded in meetings.

A key area which has to change quickly, is that of how parents are viewed and
treated when their child ends up missing a lot of school/some school time on a
regular basis.

My school knew of my struggles every single day. I called and stated that I was
having difficulties. I did not get any support on this. I even raised in a meeting that I
was worried about how I would be seen as a parent, and if there was a risk of me
being reported, and this point was not answered nor minuted.
Once a child is off school to such an extent that thresholds are met, the school can flag this up and the parent can end up facing a panel. Not only does this add to increased pressure and unhappiness on the parent (who, at the same time is dealing with an unhappy and anxious child) and who may have ended up having to give up their job or reducing their hours to cope with their child being at home, it is also a waste in many cases of public resources.

There is a Scottish Govt policy guidance in place see “A Guide for Parents about school attendance.” It refers to the fact that parents should have support but I find that they mostly do not and schools get very defensive very quickly when a child misses school or is regularly late.

For a parent, the reality of the situation is that unless you grab the child and drag them out of the house, (which you would use physical force for and also you are knowingly increasing the chance of them getting hurt, and so implicating yourself) you sometimes just cant get your child to school. At times I had to take my son out for a drive in the car just to be able to help him calm down and feel he could cope with school. This time spread over 4 months and was the most upsetting, traumatic and emotionally and financially destabilising time in my life.

It is easy for professionals such as Head Teachers, Educational Psychologists and Social workers to sit around a table and look at the amount of time your child has missed school and then decide it is the parent who is at fault. I know a woman whose child is currently off school as she cannot cope with it. The woman was told that she wasn't able to qualify for social work support, yet at the same time was advised by a nurse that she is running a risk of having her child taken away from her for not getting her to school, when the parent has been doing as much as possible to try get support from the school and professionals. The authorities and main professionals should be having continued open and constructive conversations with the parent and be working with them constantly to help their child in to school. Messages to the parent should be properly managed and consistent. MAP meetings once every 3 months are no way enough for this type of situation. Perhaps one professional to help manage all the different perspectives and information would be helpful.

I also have heard of a woman who has had her two children taken off her, to undergo assessments for autism as the school assumed the parent was responsible for the children’s behaviour. I know someone else who ended up in front of the panel 3x, and whose son was made to go into hospital for anxiety related symptoms. When the mother took him out after 3 days as she was concerned about how he was being treated by the paediatrician who was in fact putting even more pressure on him, she had to then fight to not have her son taken off her (he has autism and therefore high anxiety-related issues).

It is not just referral times which are the issue. There is prevalence in Scotland of professionals who do not understand the child, sitting around tables without the parent and making decisions which end up stigmatising the parent. The Risk Indicators in GIRFEC allow them to do this. A GIRFEC risk indicator which causes me concern is the “Child’s behaviour unstable or unpredictable”. Many children on
the autistic spectrum have difficulties regulating their behaviour and in the wrong
environment, with people upsetting them those children will show unstable and
unpredictable behaviour. The actions by the school made my son feel anxious and
he was on edge, and most children will show erratic behaviour in these
circumstances.

Only recently does it look like things will improve for my son at school. This is only
due to the fact that there is a new Head Teacher, who understands the link between
a child who is anxious and unhappy and the ability to regulate their behaviour and is
happy to implement changes at a pace that my son can work with. It appears that
the Head Teacher is willing to assume that my son may be on the spectrum so has
put in place strategies which address that, before demanding proof through a final
assessment. My son’s comment about how school went yesterday 20\textsuperscript{th} Feb was
“amazing.” Last term he was shouting, crying and saying he hated school and
constantly looking for reasons to not attend.

This change has managed to come about without need for additional one to one
support. The main factor is a more holistic and understanding attitude and approach.

I do think that educational and health professionals need more training in the autism
spectrum, however this will NOT solve the problem in itself. It is a mindset shift,
towards being supportive and open, willing to consider that underlying health (e.g
autism/ADD or other) issues may be causing the behaviours, and take a constructive
and respectful approach to the relationship with parents.

Informed strategies centred on the child are critical.

There is a petition currently to the Department of Education. This petition has the aim
to “Train Educational Professionals, disorder specific guidelines, introduce & adjust
policies and provide support for families.” It says that it is so important to recognise
that children with School Refusal, School Phobia and Separation Anxiety
receive mental health support and are not over-ridden by adults, professionals
and supporting staff.

It says in GIRFEC that professionals should engage with the parents but I do not feel
this occurs in practice. I felt that I was “permitted” to speak up in meetings but this
not mean that my views despite the fact that I am the child’s mother and know him
best, were given any credibility. I feel it was nothing more than going through the
motions. There was little point in me being at meetings as, before you walk in, the
professionals have in more cases than not decided on the actions to take and then
they ask you your, then pretend that they have listened to you and tell you what they
are going to do. But they already decided around a table before you walked in.

Proper taking on board of parent’s views, and being open to working with a parent –
even when the parent disagrees with the schools approach - needs to be enforced in
the system. Jumping to conclusions that it is parents fault that their child behaves in
a way needs to be stopped.

There needs to be more rights for a parent built into the processes before they are
put in front of a panel. E.g. if the parent has shown that they are calling in to the
school and seeking support, if they are (attempting to) liaising regularly with Ed Psych/clinical psychologists/social work, then a parent should never be placed in front of a panel. These could be seen as safeguards for parents. The parents who present a risk to their child are those who do not do anything ever - although even this can be misconstrued, as many parents feel intimidated contacting professionals. The awful practice of children being taken away by these people from their parents for missing school needs to stop whether it is temporary or not. Not only is this damaging to the child and the family, children do NOT tend to get over such traumatic events and it only sets them up for escalating mental health problems in the future.

GIRFEC needs to adapt to prevent professionals to understand the role of anxiety within children on the autistic spectrum and put qualified help in place, not focus so much on “risks”. Schools need to change to not fear children who have ASN but embrace them. The way local authorities handle parents about their children missing school, should change with the first port being rapid support to help the child and parent. The cost of taking a parent to panel and removing children must be very high – wouldn’t it be better to channel resources into prevention?

I suggest that this committee takes as a blue print the outcomes of the Rapid Process Improvement Work led by the Highlands NHS due to pressure from a parent whose child has ASN and suffered for a long time due to lack of diagnosis and subsequent lack of support in the education system. A multidisciplinary team have generated ideas to transform the current service for identifying, assessing and intervening with children and young people.

http://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/News/Pages/Newpathwayforchildrenandyoungpeopletoberesources.aspx

Anonymous
North Berwick is an area of increasingly high additional support needs but in an area of low free school meals (3%), combined with an increasing school population. So funding is disproportionately low for ASN children within our school. This means we have all seen the school struggle to provide sufficient support for our children due to tight financial constraints. The school is unable to provide every class with a teaching assistant (TA), even though the majority of classes have at least one child with a recognised ASN. The increasing size of the population in North Berwick, as a result of extensive new home building, has meant many classes are full and there is a shortage of classroom space. Though this is being addressed by a building expansion project, our children are often taken out of class, due to sensory or behavioural issues, to be supervised in corridors or converted cupboards as there is no designated area for additional support needs. This means the children are isolated from their peers and are effectively excluded from their class, which is in direct opposition to the idea of inclusion within schools. There used to be a designated ASN base, but this was closed as the children at the time moved through the school. ASN numbers at the school are at an all time high, but even with an expansion there are still no plans to incorporate a specific area for children with additional needs. This area could be multi-purpose as a sensory and nurture space

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for younger children, a quiet space for those children that become overwhelmed by emotional or sensory issues and a room for visiting physios and OTs to use.

In addition, parents have had to petition the management team and council to have basic adaptions made to the school building to enable those children with physical needs to have suitable access to classrooms (e.g. rails) and adequate toilet facilities to meet their child’s needs. PE lessons are also difficult for those children with physical and sensory issues to participate in, many teachers do not have the training on how to enable these children to fully participate in these lessons and are instead side lined or isolated.

There is little training for teachers to understand the challenges and learning requirements of our children and only one Support for Learning Teacher employed within the school. The TAs do their best to support our children, and many go above & beyond, but again they have no training and there is little one-to-one teacher time for those children who arguably need it the most. Resources used for dyslexia provision are limited and dated and there is no regular time set aside for these children. Social skills and nurture groups are also rare, and many of our children are struggling with friendships and the playground environment. The shortage of TAs within the school also means there is sparse playground supervision and a lack of inclusive play opportunities, which is resulting in increasing incidents of these vulnerable children being bullied.

We all try hard to work in conjunction with the school and to achieve the best outcome, but are constantly told there are funding and resourcing issues. Many of our members have been put under considerable stress as they feel a lack of understanding and empathy from the senior management team at the school, who sometimes appear to view our children as an additional problem and the parents as being overly demanding. The group was set up to help parents feels less isolated and to encourage the school to treat us with respect and understanding. The school on the whole does the best it can, but all too often it is only when a child hits a crisis point that we see things begin to change. We all want our children to flourish in a nurturing and inclusive environment and to be able to access the same learning opportunities as every other child, but this is rarely straight forward. Unfortunately, we continue to have to negotiate with the school and the system to provide our children with the support they need to access a good education and to genuinely see that “every child matters”.

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Dr Jonathan Sher, Independent Consultant

Thank you for soliciting views on this subject. From 2005 until 2013, I was the Director of Research, Policy and Programmes for Children in Scotland. For most of those years, I had oversight/supervisory responsibility for work on Additional Support Needs in Scotland's schools, including:

- Enquire (the SG funded helpline and national information service on the ASL Act);
- A research team commissioned by North Ayrshire Council to gather and analyse parental views of ASL services;
- The 'Access All Areas' multi-year project on pupil perceptions of inclusion, funded by Scottish Borders Council;
- Membership for several years on the Scottish Government's Advisory Group on Additional Support for Learning;
- Commissioned by NHS Education Scotland to write the UK's first on-line course/resource of fetal alcohol harm (including the educational implications); and,
- Engaged with CiS' nationwide membership, MSPs and the SG on the 2009 amendments to the ASL Act.

These experiences generated a variety of insights into the legislation, as well as lessons learned about the implementation of the ASL Act across Scotland. Based upon all of the above, the following are my main observations and recommendations to the Education and Skills Committee. Since space limitations do not permit including detailed evidence or explanations, I would be happy to answer questions, provide further information or engage directly with the Committee on this important topic.

1. The ASL Act was, and remains, one of the Scottish Parliament's landmark legislative achievements. Within the UK and other OECD nations, its most distinctive feature (its 'magic') is its inclusiveness, as captured in the Act's first paragraph: "... for whatever reason, the child or young person is, or is likely to be, unable without the provision of additional support, to benefit from school education ..." That definition is much better than the (inevitably incomplete) list of eligible beneficiaries found in other nations' legislation and their drift into the Animal Farm world in which 'everyone is equal, but some are more equal than others'. Subsequent Scottish legislation -- including the Children and Young People Act 2014 -- has not rendered the ASL Act obsolete or left it any less important than it was originally.

2. As is the case with much legislation and policy, the quality and extent of implementation of the ASL Act has been, and continues to be, patchy and an example of the oft-cited 'post code lottery'. Additional support needs for children do not respect either geographic or socioeconomic boundaries. They exist everywhere. And yet, there are inequities in the distribution of affected children and relevant resources. One rarely discussed problem is the extent to which schools that, in fact, have a disproportionately high number/percentage of ASN pupils tend to undercount
and underserve them because their needs are weighed against those of their classmates, rather than national norms. Consequently, children who would definitely be treated as having additional support needs in a 'leafy suburb' can get overlooked in their own school.

3. Another laudable feature of the ASL Act (upheld in the legal system) is that necessary extra help cannot be denied or artificially limited on financial grounds (except in truly 'unreasonable' and extraordinary circumstances). Nonetheless, it is commonly acknowledged that ASN services and support for ASL eligible children are routinely being decided by money, not need or entitlement. The statutory obligation here was supposed to put sufficient extra help on the 'have to do' list for public bodies at all levels, instead of allowing dealing well with additional support needs to stay on the 'nice to do' list. That should be unacceptable, but it appears to be accepted too often.

4. Because it was originally education legislation, rather than children's legislation, the ASL Act only drops eligibility 'for whatever reason' in the case of Scotland's youngest children (who generally are not within the traditional remit of education authorities). In 2004, that may have seemed sensible. In 2017, with the parliamentary and governmental priority on preventative spending -- and a far greater professional and political understanding of the crucial importance of the earliest years -- this barrier to eligibility and assistance is a costly mistake in human, educational and financial terms.

Scotland does pretty well in assisting babies who have obvious special needs at birth or in the first six weeks (when universal health visiting occurs), but not so well in identifying or intervening in less obvious or early onset conditions. For example, many neurological, speech/language and non-extreme sensory impairments only develop, or are noticed, during the first 2-3 years. Under the current ASL Act, these children and their parents/guardians have no entitlement to support and assistance (including a proper diagnosis). Allowing such developmental problems to 'settle in' during early childhood only makes treatment once they reach nursery or school age more difficult and more expensive. The proportion of children first diagnosed after enrolment underscores this problem. It is better to nip such problems in the bud. There was a proposed amendment to the C&YP Act that would have corrected this historic error. It was rejected on the grounds that this problem could be solved through the ASL Code of Practice. That was an 'alternative fact', since no legislation can be substantively changed by subsequent guidance. Thus, it still needs to be dealt with by the Committee.

5. Roughly 22% of pupils in Scottish schools have additional support needs. How will Scotland's Education Attainment Challenge ever have a hope of succeeding if these 22% -- i.e., the ones already identified as struggling to meet their learning potential in schools -- are not having their needs fully and meaningfully met? Downplaying the importance of meeting additional support needs (and/or under-resourcing the efforts to assist these pupils properly) will predictably undermine the Challenge. One other crucial point here is that students in the ASN/ASL category are not just 'problems' to be handled. They are also young people having considerable strengths, assets, aspirations, positive characteristics and talents to nurture and upon which to build. The philosophy of Curriculum for Excellence is terrific and should apply equally to
students eligible for extra help under the ASL Act. There are wonderful small-scale efforts underway in Scotland with these children, but they are not yet the norm.

6. The challenges facing children across Scotland who have been adversely affected by fetal alcohol harm are profound, far more common than realised and specific in what constitutes appropriate responses from the adults in their lives, including those at school. Professor Sir Harry Burns rightly called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Scotland’s largest known, preventable cause of learning disabilities. His successor as CMO (Dr Catherine Calderwood) agrees and has convinced the other three UK CMOs to all issue 'No alcohol' advice to pregnant or potentially pregnant women because of the risk of FASD. Based upon the most conservative epidemiological evidence from other OECD nations (Scottish/UK data do not yet exist), more than 500 Scottish babies each and every year are born with fetal alcohol harm. Thus, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) adversely affects roughly 10,000 young Scots right now. Across this spectrum, it causes some degree of irreversible brain damage that cannot be outgrown, but can be better managed if known and understood. Stunningly, FASD is not one of the 20 categories of 'reasons for ASL support' about which data are compiled by education authorities and reported by the Scottish Government. Playing 'ostrich' will neither help these pupils nor close Scotland's attainment gap.

7. If FASD were added to the ASL list, then schools would have to take seriously the need for a proper assessment -- and the pressure from schools would, in turn, make other professions take seriously the need to train and deploy competent FASD diagnosticians. The ASL Act could and should be used to trigger this chain reaction - - not unlike what was true in relation to Autistic Spectrum Disorders less than a generation ago. There are two big roadblocks here. In real life, co-morbidities are common when neurodevelopmental problems are present (e.g. having ADHD does not preclude also having FASD). Meanwhile, in school life, assessments often stop when a diagnosis of only one condition is made. Overcoming the barrier of stopping assessment when the first condition is established is something that the ASL Code of Practice can do.

8. Regular (if not annual) reports to the Education and Skills Committee about implementation of the ASL Act -- a statutory requirement that ended last year -- should be reinstated and dramatically improved, rather than discontinued. There are two major improvements that should be reflected in this report. First, as the example of FASD revealed, the current categories of 'reasons for support' are inadequate. Children having FASD as part of their story are usually labeled as either having a 'Social, emotional or behavioural difficulty' or as needing extra help because of an unspecified 'Learning disability'. These 'catch all' categories are where the 'leftovers' in the school/system are placed; not students for whom there has generally been serious assessment, action and follow-up evaluation. Note that more than one-third of all excluded students in Scotland are from these two ill-defined groups. Second, the reporting is neither robust, nor very revealing about the results obtained. Not providing significant qualitative or quantitative evaluations of the impact of the ASL services/support provided begs the 'So, What?' question. It does not have to be this way.

http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/237841/prepared-for-pregnancy-j-sher-may-2016.pdf

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ANON

I would like to express my views on what we could do more for our children and the future of our society and Scotland.

Considerable efforts have been (and are being) made to improve the quality of the education and the learning experience of our children attending primary, middle and high schools. However, this is only the beginning of the effort to develop an inclusive educational system and constructively implement additional support for an improved learning experience.

Currently, schools in Scotland (and specifically in Glasgow e.g. Antonine Primary) need urgently additional support if we want them to achieve the above aims. The *staff : pupils ratio is low*. The number of staff is low to the point that the implementation of a modern curriculum which will promote the development of wide range of skills as well as knowledge in a way that will assist our children reach their potential and be competitive in a globalized market, is *extremely challenging if not impossible*. The Scottish Government Education and Skills Committee needs to take into consideration the fact that a modern and brilliant curriculum will be of no use if we do not have the means to implement it.

An additional point that needs urgent attention is the promotion and *implementation of inclusive curriculum* which will give the children of all backgrounds, genders, religions and *special needs to reach their potential and have equal opportunities*. The promotion of the inclusive curriculum is essential in a modern and forward-looking society; however its implementation needs additional support in order to really help and not *disadvantage children with disabilities*. More specifically, children within the autistic spectrum (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are not supported properly by the schools. The *lack of staff with actual expertise* on the conditions is urgently required in order to help these children to be functional members of our society, contribute constructively to it and reach their potential. Currently, the schools in collaboration with the local councils offer limited training to the teachers. This introduces two issues: a) The training takes place during the school hours so the teacher is away for a few days which makes the *situation of the understaffed schools unbearable*; b) The “training” offered to the teachers *does not render them into experts* on such complex and challenging mental disorders. If we want the schools and the local councils to support children with special needs they need to have a dedicated member of staff who is *specialized therapist and expert on these conditions* in order to help these children to improve their social interaction, language development and provide the necessary mean for inclusiveness.

This is an urgent and desperate request for the consideration of the Scottish Government Education and Skills Committee for the *constructive support of children with disabilities either with additional physical or mental needs*. It is of fundamental importance in a modern and progressive society the proper implementation of
inclusive curriculums which will help our children to diversify and shape a bright future for Scotland

I would like to express my views on what we could do more for our children and the future of our society and Scotland.

Considerable efforts have been (and are being) made to improve the quality of the education and the learning experience of our children attending primary, middle and high schools. However, this is only the beginning of the effort to develop an inclusive educational system and constructively implement additional support for an improved learning experience.

Currently, schools in Scotland (and specifically in Glasgow eg. Antonine Primary) need urgently additional support if we want them to achieve the above aims. The staff : pupils ratio is low. The number of staff is low to the point that the implementation of a modern curriculum which will promote the development of wide range of skills as well as knowledge in a way that will assist our children reach their potential and be competitive in a globalized market, is extremely challenging if not impossible. The Scottish Government Education and Skills Committee needs to take into consideration the fact that a modern and brilliant curriculum will be of no use if we do not have the means to implement it.

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This is an urgent and desperate request for the consideration of the Scottish Government Education and Skills Committee for the constructive support of children with disabilities either with additional physical or mental needs. It is of fundamental importance in a modern and progressive society the proper implementation of inclusive curriculums which will help our children to diversify and shape a bright future for Scotland.
Firstly Additional Support Needs are not provided in Scottish Education. Your wording of the first question is utterly inappropriate! Education for children with additional support needs (ASN) is provided within Scottish education. Remember to keep children at the heart of what you are doing!

There is a time and place for some children with ASN to be educated within mainstream schools if that is appropriate for them. Currently I believe educational support for children with ASN is underfunded. If you were able to put well trained pupil support assistants into schools to work with individuals or small groups, or to allow the teacher to work with individuals or small groups, then for many children they would be able to reach a greater standard of attainment which would minimise the impact of their disability/support need and enable them to make a greater contribution to society and lead a positive and happy life for them.

Integration is a great ideal if it is well funded as children with needs become part of the life of the school and society. Equally, it must be considered is that location/type of education inclusive for that child – i.e. does it allow them to access their education to reach their potential? If being integrated doesn’t meet this requirement then inclusion is not being met and alternative placements should be considered for those children.

Remember integration and inclusion are different – it often feels that these terms are misunderstood in order to spend as little as possible!

Rachel O’Neill, Programme Director MSc Inclusive Education, School of Education, University of Edinburgh

I am writing in a personal capacity as a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, previously a teacher of deaf children and young people for 25 years in Greater Manchester 1981 – 2006. In this work I only worked in mainstreamed settings with deaf students, though often in resourced schools and colleges where there were larger groups of deaf students learning specific skills such as English through British Sign Language.


I have recently contributed to a consultation response in relation to the Government’s Governance review, a submission I made with colleagues from the deaf education pathway through the MSc Inclusive Education. Many of the observations are relevant to your review too: [http://bit.ly/2kF1U7C](http://bit.ly/2kF1U7C)
You are collecting views on the current arrangements for the education of pupils with additional support needs in Scottish schools. I would like to divide this response into two parts: provision in schools and the professional development of teachers.

1. Provision in schools – particularly in relation to deaf children, including deaf children with additional impairments. By deaf I include the full range of deafness from mildly to profoundly deaf. I am aware of these issues because of my role particularly in relation to the placement course on the postgraduate diploma in inclusive education (deaf learners pathway).

The current arrangement rests on the Standards in Scotland's Schools (2000) Act which suits many deaf children because it allows them to attend their local school and forge local friendships with their peer group and siblings. Peripatetic provision for deaf children developed in the UK from the early 1950s, long before the Warnock report. Unfortunately, the patterns of support available have changed little in ordinary schools, and too often the visiting teacher of deaf children pulls the deaf child out for one to one speech and language work without enough reference to what the child is doing in class. However, there are good examples of much closer collaborative working with class and subject teachers. These happen more often in local authorities with better ratios of specialist teachers of deaf children to all children. In the best examples the class teacher is able to work in a small group with the deaf child while the specialist teacher takes the class; or the specialist teacher takes a group including the deaf child in the ordinary class; or team teaching occurs in resource based schools such as St Roch’s Primary School, Glasgow.

Specialist teachers of deaf children also support families in the pre-school period 0 – 3 by visiting families at home or visiting early years settings. There is currently no government advice on this crucial first stage in deaf children’s lives: the Scottish Sensory Centre 0 – 3 guidance document is currently being revised with a wide range of stakeholders, and endorsement would ensure that the benefits of the newborn screen are realised in all areas of Scotland. Currently some local authorities have poor liaison with health and most have no provision for intensive early intervention in sign, though intensive early intervention in speech is generally well supported.

Peripatetic services for deaf children, including this crucial early years work, are not inspected, which is an area that needs urgent attention. Deaf children's long term outcomes are strongly influenced by what happens with language development during the 0 – 3 period, and successful co-working with families.

Informed choice is the default model put forward by local authorities since the introduction of newborn screening in Scotland in 2005. However, this choice has not been examined closely, because to acquire a language means a serious amount of contact with fluent language users is needed, and 95% of parents of deaf children are hearing, rarely having had any contact with British Sign Language in advance of having a deaf child. There are great benefits of bilingualism, both cognitive and social, yet BSL is usually seen as a fullback position for deaf children who have not developed speech. We know that fluency in BSL at a young age can support deaf children in learning to use speech, and when implanted to transfer vocabulary knowledge to speech. There are mental health advantages in being able to
communicate with ease with peers, teachers and deaf role models. Since Scotland now has a BSL Act (2015) we may be in a much better position than the rest of the UK to ensure that deaf babies, particularly those who are severely or profoundly deaf, are offered bilingual early years settings in practice, not just as a theoretical option. This issue needs urgent attention. Each region could set up a resourced school where bilingual BSL / English approaches are used. Early years sign intensive environments could be set up in each region with taxi transport and support for parents to continue to learn BSL, using the Gaelic Medium education initiatives as an example. Qualified BSL/English interpreters could work in school settings. All these approaches would make the rhetoric of informed choice into something approaching a real choice – and one where deaf children did not have to choose either sign or speech, but both.

An initiative which I would like to draw the committee’s attention to is the co-enrolment model where a third of the children in a class are deaf and use sign language, and a deaf and hearing teacher teach each class so that both languages are available to all children. This model has been most effectively investigated in Hong Kong by Professor Gladys Tang. Her PhD supervisor, Professor Antonella Sorace from the University of Edinburgh is keen to research a similar co-enrolment project in a Scottish primary school. The benefits shown in the Hong Kong example include social, emotional, speech, sign and academic advantages for the deaf children with age appropriate achievement.

The number of local authorities in Scotland means that some services for deaf children are extremely small. This means it is difficult to maintain the range of specialist staff needed to support deaf children, who vary a great deal. Regional organisation would be a great advantage and could also mean it would be possible to implement incentive schemes for higher level of BSL skill or specialist educational audiology or early years expertise.

Speech and language therapy is now delivered in much more imaginative ways in Scottish schools, for example when NHS services are bought in to work with English teachers at secondary school to develop hearing children’s confidence with speaking and listening. However, specialist SLT has not kept pace in relation to deaf children. For signing children support is non-existent, and in many areas only children who can show evidence of progress with speech or language over a 10-week intervention are eligible. Speech and language therapy for deaf children could include confidence building about adjusting the language environment, using speech or sign, and assertiveness to make face to face communication work for the young person. It is difficult for SLT to support deaf children who are scattered across many schools, but the current spending cuts in the NHS are hitting deaf children hard. More specialist SLTs are needed with BSL skills at level 6.

There are issues about assessment both in the new national tests and in SQA exams for children who use sign of any sort – Sign Supported English (more often used by teachers, and therefore deaf children) and British Sign Language. The rollout of the new computerised assessments would benefit from a centrally translated version of the tests being available for signing children. This is because the specialist teacher of deaf children workforce do not have fluency in BSL or SSE or translating
from English. Recent consultation with additional support for learning teachers did not include discussion with adults who are deaf or who have disabilities. The government’s intention so far is to maintain current teaching arrangements in the tests. Similarly, for SQA exams centres provide their own translations, but this means some deaf children receive better translations than others, and teachers are often nervous about doing the translations, aware that they have not received any training in how to do it. Centrally produced exams and tests are technically possible, as the Scottish Sensory Centre pilot project for the SQA has shown.

2. Professional development of teachers

First in relation to the professional development of all teachers, courses such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Inclusive Education can provide easily accessible blended learning opportunities to teachers across Scotland. The core course in the MSc Inclusive Education (and diploma / certificate) is called Inclusive Pedagogy. This course provides opportunities for class and subject teachers to reflect on how they can teach all students, collaborating as necessary with specialist services. Scotland already has great success with an inclusive education approach; if more professional development were available, it would increase the self-confidence of the teaching workforce. I would suggest scholarships for Postgraduate certificates, with competitive applications from teachers across Scotland to encourage high motivation and completion rates.

In relation to specialist teachers of deaf children, recent Scottish government research (Ravenscroft and Wazny, 2017) has shown that a third of teachers of deaf children use sign of some sort with pupils but only 12% have fluency in the language, taken as equivalent to Higher or above (Signature level 3, SCQF 6). Furthermore, the same research shows that most teachers of deaf children come into the profession in mid-career, meaning they are less likely to have time for immersion in a new language. What is more, in Scotland the proportion of teachers of deaf children who hold the mandatory qualification is about 65% (CRIDE 2015, http://bit.ly/2lUQQ8i), far lower than other parts of the UK. This is not a new issue and was also true in the 1970s. I have a number of proposals in this area which I think are important for the committee to consider in relation to the more effective support of all deaf children. They all involve funding.

- More routes are opened to deaf people who want to teach, particularly focusing on better support during placements in ordinary schools, and for English language and literature on initial teacher education to ensure deaf applicants meet the Higher required in English by the end of their initial teacher education period.
- The government advice saying level 1 BSL is needed by teachers of deaf children or more to suit individual needs of deaf pupils is revised immediately following consultation. I would propose a third of teachers of deaf children must achieve level 3 (SCQF 6) within a year and level 6 (SCQF 10) within 5 years. Government support would be needed to provide more BSL tuition for this group, which could include distance learning as illustrated by the Victorian Deaf Education Institute in Australia (http://bit.ly/2l02ss4)
- The government finance a recruitment campaign to attract younger applicants with strong language learning skills into teaching deaf children, particularly if
they already hold Signature BSL level 2 (SCQF level 5), rather than authorities choosing mid-career teachers to enter the profession. There are assessments which can predict success with learning languages, including sign language.

- All teachers with the PG Diploma from one of the 5 UK universities offering this award by given a £500 increment each year. Teachers of deaf children in the rest of the UK have this increment. I would propose that teachers who have SCQF level 6 or equivalent BSL receive an additional £500, rising to £1,000 for SCQF level 10 equivalent. These increments will be particularly important for rural areas where numbers of BSL users will be low, but authorities must be prepared for them, under the Equality Act (2010).

- In addition, teachers who hold an additional postgraduate qualification in the early years support of deaf children receive an additional £500 increment, and for educational audiology or auditory verbal therapy, an additional increment of £1,000. This approach would ensure younger teachers felt more inclined to enter the profession because currently there are very few promotion opportunities. It would also ensure that Deaf people entering the profession have their fluent BSL skills highly valued by the education system.

In relation to staff who use BSL or electronic notetaking to support deaf children in schools:

- The job descriptions of support staff who use sign or electronic notetaking should be urgently examined to ensure that these highly-motivated staff are afforded respect and the correct payscale for their skilled jobs. Currently BSL/English interpreters often do not wish to work in educational settings because of the complexity of the job, the very poor pay, the extremely low status as indicated by current job titles (e.g. specialist nursery nurse, personal assistant), and the lack of opportunities to converse in BSL with deaf people in the workplace. Adept Scotland has many case studies available of support staff who have paid for level 6 BSL courses and interpreter training (SCQF level 10) while their employers pay them as untrained support workers.

- The government fund the training course for electronic notetakers and facilitate remote and face to face electronic notetaking for deaf children in schools across Scotland. This course could be developed by the Scottish Sensory Centre on a distance learning basis, which would make it self-supporting, but it needs development funds.

Bill Colley, CLC Consultancy

I am an independent educational consultant specialising in support for children and families affected by additional support needs. I have a particular interest in neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism and ADHD, and while supportive of the principles of educational inclusion, have a number of concerns about the way this policy is implemented in practice;

1. There appears to be an inconsistency in the way that authorities determine which pupils are identified and recorded as having additional support needs.
2. Certain authorities make it clear that they have a policy of, “not labelling” pupils with additional support needs and specific learning difficulties; thus
making it extremely difficult for parents, and staff in schools, to provide the direct support that is required. This also means that they may not qualify for additional help in examinations, for support when leaving school, or for additional adult services.

3. There appears to be an inconsistency in the way that authorities determine which pupils qualify for Coordinated Support Plans, Individualised Educational Programs, and other forms of educational planning.

4. Whilst it is understood that strategic planning for additional support needs should take place at a local level, this has resulted in a ‘postcode lottery’ for pupils requiring more specialised educational environments.

5. Pupils with the most common neuropsychiatric disorders of childhood (ADHD) do not appear to be included in the school census, monitored, or tracked in any way; thus making it impossible to judge how well they are supported in schools. Given that such pupils tend to be very vulnerable and at high risk of school exclusion, academic under attainment, and poor mental health, this appears to be a major flaw in the monitoring system(s).

6. Whilst Education Scotland has a key responsibility in improving educational outcomes across the country, they currently provide no advice or support on helping schools to improve attainment for children with ADHD; in sharp contrast to the considerable resources made available in supporting pupils with autism. This appears to be unbalanced and thus unfair, especially when longer term outcomes for ADHD are now regarded as poorer than for ASD.

7. As noted by Audit Scotland, the monitoring of educational performance at local authority level, by elected members appears to be very inconsistent across the country, and this is particularly true with respect to additional support needs.

8. Objective measures of local authority performance (with respect to additional support needs) do not appear to be available. For example, the number of pupils placed on part-time timetables, who are not attending school at all, or who underperform relative to their cognitive ability.

9. A convincing body of anecdotal evidence suggests that there is considerable underreporting of physical restraint and incidents of violence and aggression in schools.

10. Incidents of peer-on-peer aggression do not appear to be routinely recorded or reported.

11. The challenge of supporting pupils with additional support needs, especially those with more complex difficulties, tends to fall upon ASN teachers and support assistants. There appears to be no means of recording or reporting on their level of qualifications/training, nor does there appear to be any recognised form of career progression for either group.

12. A legitimate measure of performance at school level, and thus across an authority, would be rates of parental and pupil satisfaction with the support received. It appears that few authorities undertake or report on such auditing.

*Professor Luke Beardon*

*For the love of inclusion?*
I thoroughly enjoyed the coffee I had with a parent of an autistic child earlier on this week. I was far less enamoured, though, with the subject matter of our conversation. I say conversation – mostly it was the poor parent relating to me what the current circumstances were for her son who ‘attends’ a mainstream school. I deliberately put attends in inverted commas – I guess you’ll soon see why.

- He (the autistic child in question) has a place at a mainstream primary school.
- He is very bright and frequently demonstrates that his academic abilities are way higher than might be expected for his age.
- He appears to be under massive amounts of stress and it takes a monumental effort to get him into school.
- While at school his ‘behaviour’ is such that he is not allowed to be within the vicinity of other children.
- He is frequently barricaded in a room.
- He frequently injures himself such is his distress.
- When he is unable to make the considerable effort to force himself into school he is classed as a ‘school refuser’.
- The Local Authority tell his parents that they have a policy of inclusion, and that he should be attending the mainstream school.

This is not an isolated example; he is not the only child in the country having this experience. I’m not saying most autistic children experience anything like this – but no child should have to suffer like this.

The dictionary definition of inclusion is ‘the act of including’ or ‘the state of being included’. This child is not being included; quite the opposite – he is being segregated in possibly the most extreme manner imaginable. In fact, the very policy of ‘inclusion’ in this instance seems to be leading directly to exclusion. I thought that the days of assuming that inclusion meant ‘integration’ were long gone – sadly, not for this child.

At what point will Education Authorities understand that ‘mainstream’ schooling is not always the aspiration? That in fact, what we should be striving for is far less tangible and yet far more meaningful – first and foremost, the well-being of the child; the education must surely come second to that and if well-being is not being met then surely there must be an acceptance that the placement is not the correct one for that child? When I deliver training for Inset days I am so often told by teaching staff – ‘we simply can’t provide the support/strategies/environment that the autistic child requires’ – at which point I tend to think, ‘well, if that is case, why is the child still here?’ It seems to me that teachers are openly acknowledging that their school – for whatever reason – is not the appropriate environment for the child – so why is it that there is so much pressure on the child and the parents to do everything in their power to continue to go to that school – and, far more importantly, at what cost to the child’s well-being? However important education is, good mental health must surely be a priority. And make no mistake – traumatic experiences at school can certainly have a longer term impact on an individual’s mental health. We know, for example, that suicidal ideation and attempts are higher within the autism population – and levels of pathological anxiety are vastly higher within the school age population compared to non-autistic peers. If simply being at school is contributing to those levels of anxiety, then shouldn’t something be done about it?
The impact of a child being forced into an environment that is ostensibly ‘inclusive’ but in reality is anything but can be devastating. And if the alternative is to brand the child a ‘school refuser’ – this sends a very clear message. The message is that it’s somehow the child’s fault; they are the one to blame; they are the ones refusing the school.

So – what is the alternative? If we are going to accept that the autism spectrum includes a vast range of individuals with differing needs, we equally need to acknowledge that those needs may require differing teaching and learning opportunities. Alternative schooling need not be expensive, nor need it be exclusionary – as the National Autistic Society note, ‘some children will be able to have a more inclusive experience in a specialist setting’. Specialist need not be synonymous with expensive.

The point being, inclusion should no longer be measured in relation to accessing a mainstream school. So when a child is clearly not in an appropriate setting, please don’t assume that inclusion in mainstream is the ‘gold standard’ – for some children, nothing could be further from the truth.

‘Real’ inclusion should be based on well-being, equality, happiness – these matter. Being shoe-horned into a mainstream environment under the auspices of ‘an inclusive society’ without taking those things into account – that isn’t what autistic children should ever have to face. Mainstream can be ideal for some; but traumatic for others.

**Baroness Mary Warnock**

For a child with Asperger’s, the transition from primary to secondary school may be traumatic, even catastrophic. Such a child may no longer even pretend to keep up, feeling defeated by the inevitable demands of the school environment: the bustle and clamour, the pushing and shoving, the rushing from one classroom to another, the need to top speed whatever the activity, the teachers who are different every hour of the day, and many of whom are in the school only temporarily. Some of these horrors can be mitigated to such children if they have a personal assistant, but it is unlikely that any school can provide the level of assistance they need, all day and every day. Moreover, excessive reliance on assistant can present its own problems, not least feelings of dependence and inferiority.

The tragic result some children with autistic difficulties is trauma and even regression. I am convinced that for such children, and for those with ADHD and other behavioural problems, what is needed is a mixture of care and small class teaching in the environment of a small school. Without such an environment, education will be impossible: they will constantly be too anxious a miserable to learn. They may begin to refuse school; they may become self-destructive or suicidal; they may be induced to stay at school only by antidepressant drugs. For such children inclusion is a nightmare. If they are to flourish and benefit from education, they need a relatively protected environment of a small or smallish special school. It is really not enough to say that the mainstream schools must so change as to accommodate them.
However tolerant in support of the policies, and however understanding the members of staff, there are limits to what can realistically be achieved in mainstream schools, given the diversity of children's needs in a finite available resources.

Mary Warnock

The Scottish ADHD Coalition, UK ADHD Partnership, Perth & Kinross ADHD Support Group

Summary

1. 5% of school pupils have ADHD. Across Scotland, only 1% are currently diagnosed and treated (a shortfall of 32,000).
2. The Scottish Government does not record ADHD in the school population, nor measure their attainment, rate of school exclusion, school leaving age, or health and wellbeing.
3. ADHD has a significant impact on attainment, especially in the early years. Any drive towards improving attainment requires an informed approach to supporting pupils with ADHD. Education Scotland currently provide no guidance on the teaching of children with ADHD (c.f. autism).
4. Education Scotland conducts no research into the impact of ADHD on learning.
5. The strong association between ADHD and offending appears to be best explained by;
   a. The early disengagement of learners from the education system
   b. Substance misuse
6. Treatment for ADHD has been shown to significantly;
   a. Reduce family break-down
   b. Reduce school exclusion
   c. Reduce substance misuse
   d. Reduce incidents of violence and aggression in the home, school and prison settings
7. The lifetime costs of ADHD have been calculated as between £70,000 and £130,000; excluding costs to the criminal justice system.
8. There is currently no requirement for even a basic awareness of ADHD for professionals (social workers, teachers, school support staff, police) involved in working with children.
9. Untreated ADHD in adults is strongly associated with;
   a. Unemployment/underemployment
   b. Substance misuse
   c. Anxiety and depression
   d. Offending
10. Untreated ADHD in children is strongly associated with;
    a. Poor parental mental health
    b. Poor sibling mental health
The Impact of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) on Children and families in Scotland

Briefing Paper

ADHD affects around 5% of school children and this means that approximately 37,000 pupils in Scotland experience difficulties as a result of the disorder. Of these, around 11,000 will have the most severe form of the disorder requiring specialist treatment.

ADHD is the most common neuro-psychiatric disorder in children. Based on current estimates, only 5,000 children in Scotland receive treatment for ADHD.

In some parts of Scotland, fewer than 1 in 7 children with 'severe ADHD' receive any treatment and less than 1 in 25 of those with the broader definition of ADHD have received a diagnosis.

ADHD is associated with:
- Academic underachievement
- Unemployment and under-employment
- Anti-social behaviour
- School exclusion
- Learning difficulties
- Early and continuing substance (nicotine, alcohol, narcotic) use
- Youth offending
- Family breakdown
- Admissions to Accident and Emergency for fractures, burns and cuts
- Fatal road traffic accidents
- Poor mental health

Young people with ADHD are 5 times more likely to go to prison or young offenders institutions than their typically developing peers. Adults with ADHD are 10 times more likely to be incarcerated than their peers. The average annual cost of supporting an adult prisoner is c. £45,000 and this rises to over £275,000 p.a. for young people in secure accommodation.

The social costs of untreated ADHD is difficult to calculate but recent a recent study in Holland estimated the annual loss of tax revenues alone to be around 1 billion Euros. Family members of ADHD patients were estimated to incur 29-33% of costs and education costs reflect 42-62% of the total.

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31 NHS Attention Deficit and Hyperkinetic Disorders Services Over Scotland Final Report November 2012
32 As 2
33 As 2
Around 40% of children diagnosed with autism and thought to have ADHD as a co-morbid condition.

What is ADHD?

ADHD is a neuro-developmental disorder which interferes with the way a child develops in, and interacts with, his/her environment and as such may be best thought of as a "neurologically based, but environmentally driven condition". It is characterised by 3 groups of symptoms which, for a diagnosis, must be so severe that they lead to significant impairment in a child's life;
1. Hyperactivity
2. Impulsivity
3. Inattention

ADHD is a complex disorder which results from differences in the way the brain develops and functions.

Although ADHD cannot be 'cured', its impact on an individual can be managed through carefully planned treatment programmes and the provision of appropriate supports both at home and in school. Early intervention can reduce the risks, and the costs, associated with anti-social behaviour, academic under-performance and economic inactivity, and poor mental health.

It is not a learning difficulty *per se* but can impede academic progress because it is associated with problems in utilising working memory, accessing higher order cognitive functions and in sustaining attention in school and college. Children and young people with ADHD struggle with;
- Concentrating
- Following directions
- Remembering & retaining information
- Managing time
- Organising tasks
- Completing work within time limits
- Losing / forgetting things

Children with ADHD, especially boys, are at high risk for school exclusion. ADHD is also characterised by difficulties in establishing and sustaining appropriate peer relationships, self-regulating behaviour, and in relating to significant adults such as parents, carers and teachers. As such, it interferes with, and compromises, family life and school, by reducing the effectiveness of those protective features of childhood that in typically developing peers, help to build personal skills and resilience.

It is a long term disorder which in most cases persists into adulthood. If the risks associated with ADHD can be reduced through careful management and treatment, children and young people can enjoy successful careers and personal lives. A number of well-known celebrities, entrepreneurs and public figures have achieved high levels of success because they have been able overcome difficulties during the early years and to then exploit the positive features of the condition.
Why should the Scottish government care about ADHD?

If affects more children than any other childhood psychiatric disorder. Untreated ADHD is extremely expensive in terms of;

- The cost of providing mental health services for adults with anxiety, depression, alcohol and substance use dependencies.
- The impact on academic attainment of pupils with ADHD who are excluded from school, placed on part-time timetables or who miss out on broader learning opportunities because they are prevented from participating in school trips and after-school clubs.
- The impact on parents who are unable to work because they must be available during the working day to support their child, and on siblings who have to become carers.
- The disproportionate numbers of young offenders who reach the judicial system.
- The consequences on individuals and communities of anti-social behaviour and crime.
- Academic under-achievement and economic inactivity.
- The dependence on social care and welfare of families affected by ADHD.

The high costs of untreated ADHD could be avoided if the condition was;

- Identified and diagnosed at an early stage.
- Treated appropriately.
- Professionals and services involved in supporting children had a good awareness and understanding of the condition.

Getting It Right for Every Child means that we must 'get it right' for children with learning difficulties and mental health disorders and this means improving services for the 37,000 children in Scotland with ADHD.

A healthier, more economically active population will not only reduce the cost of providing expensive treatment and care for the adult population, but increase tax revenues for spending on other national priorities.

What could the government do to reduce the costs of ADHD?

1. Ensure that all schoolteachers have an understanding of the condition so that difficulties are identified at an early stage and so that appropriate support can be provided in schools. This could be achieved at little additional cost by;

   a. Improving Initial Teacher Training Programmes.
   b. Improving early identification and assessment in schools by screening the 'at risk' population (e.g. pupils excluded from school).
   c. Providing information and Continuing Professional Development opportunities via Education Scotland.
   d. Identifying ADHD as a discrete Additional Support Need in the national school census.
   e. Ensuring that Local Education Authorities record all pupils known to have been identified with ADHD in their areas.
2. Improve the training of professionals working in primary health care settings (e.g. doctors and health visitors) in recognising the early onset symptoms of ADHD

3. Ensure that police, social care professionals and all services involved in supporting children and families have access to high quality training in ADHD and other childhood disorders.

4. Ensure that the regulatory authorities (e.g. Education Scotland, The Care Inspectorate) scrutinise services in their support for children, adults and families affected by ADHD.

5. Improve the access to, and provision of, mental health services for both children and adults with ADHD and associated disorders.

6. Recognise the importance of ADHD in legislative programmes and initiatives aimed at improving the education, health and welfare of the Scottish population.

7. Provide funding for research into the social and economic costs of ADHD on the Scottish population and on public spending at local, regional, and national levels.

Dr Andrew Pates

Too often in the past, homeless children have struggled with their learning but have been overlooked. They also need additional support to thrive. Schools across Scotland have not been shown to be addressing the ASN realities of this population comprehensively and well. In part, that is because their vulnerable housing arrangements and frequent shifts in locale mean that these students are not kept in any one school long enough for their problems to be effectively addressed and their potential as learners developed. They simply become 'some other school's' responsibility. Homelessness itself is not the only ASN with which these children are burdened. Back in 2012, Shelter Scotland and Children in Scotland commissioned me to conduct research on, and make recommendations about, this unwelcome and unproductive situation. One of the most promising discoveries was that there are a wide variety of simple, 'cheap and cheerful' actions that schools could take that would truly help these children. However, I am unaware of more recent evidence indicating that these steps forward have been taken in more than a scattering of schools and communities.

As a result, I encourage you to read this report, Homeless, Not Hopeless: How small changes can make a big difference in the quality of education for homeless students -- https://www.celcis.org/files/5614/6651/4964/Homeless-Not-Hopeless-June2012.pdf. Perhaps you will make it findings part of your deliberations and eventual actions.
Dr Alan Clarke

The current system is overly legalistic and bureaucratic, to the detriment of supporting children and young people’s education.

In trying to guarantee the rights of children and young people to receive the supports they may require, the system has focussed too heavily on paperwork procedures and appeals. The very use of a Coordinated Support Plan as the central feature of the system in trying to address the support needs of the children and young people, echoes the older system of a Record of Needs, both in style and the content required. This system leads to significant amounts of parental and professional time in attempting to set the paperwork appropriately rather than focus both groups on how to address the children and young people’s effective learning.

All children and young people encounter ‘barriers to their learning’ during the course of their pre-school, school and immediate post-school careers. It is clearly the role of professional educators and parents/carers (along with allied professionals) to address these ‘barriers’ as they arise or are encountered. The action of recording these barriers should always take a secondary role.

Although the original Additional Support Needs legislation and subsequent amendments proved to be a significant shift away from the ‘Within Child’ model of needs, the focus, in practice, has been largely on the Additional Need aspect rather than the Support aspect. This has led, as indicated above, to a bureaucratic system of paperwork and associated appeal systems to support this bureaucracy. [Although subsequently amended, there were originally 13 different appeal measures for parents/cares in the Additional Support Needs (and associated) legislation].

In reality what all parents/cares want for their children is to receive the supports necessary to help them make continuing progress with their learning. Most parent/carers are also very aware that timely intervention with the appropriate support is the most effective means to address any ‘barriers’ which their child may encounter. From the child and young person’s perspective, early intervention is also highly valued because it reduces their sense of failure to learn, and therefore helps maintain their motivation to continue with new learning challenges. So far there is no need for any particular bureaucracy required in this apparently simple system.

The biggest challenge for both the professional educators and the parents/carers is the timely introduction of the specific Supports required. These may include the following:

1. Additional support to the class teacher in relation to clearer identification of the child’s difficulties.
2. Additional support to the class teacher in specific areas of learning which need to be addressed as a result of (1). This may include Learning Support Teacher, Head Teacher, Parents/Carers, and advice from external professionals.
3. Additional Support from professionals external to the school e.g. Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Social Workers and/or other therapists.

4. Additional resources to the school e.g. equipment not generally used/needed by the school; additional adult support; resources not generally available to that particular school (for example - high adult to child ratios of support).

All of the above interventions can be instigated with the minimal paperwork. For example:

A. In (1) and (2) the internal school recording system can deal with aspects of concern raised by class teachers. The level of concern will determine whether parents/carers should be alerted at this stage by the school, and engaged in active partnership to help address these concerns.

B. The alerting and engaging of external agencies in any efficient and effective system should be seen as an extension of the partnership which already exists between the school and these professional organisations. If there already is a partnership involving the offering of advice, as in (2) above, specific targeted meetings with the school staff, parents/carers, external professionals (and often the children/young people) should be easily set up.

C. Where significant extra resources are identified by a meeting as in (B) above, a representative of the local authority can attend a follow-up meeting to discuss the allocation of these resources.

It is assumed that at each of these steps through (1) to (4) and (A) to (C) reviews of the progress of the child/young person will have taken place to, hopefully, acknowledge the success of the Intervention. Also at each stage, clear records noted as Minutes of Agreement by all involved at each stage can be maintained by the school and shared with the local authority at any appropriate stage. The monitoring of this system can be carried out as part of the local authority schools’ Quality Assurance process and support.

External monitoring of the local authority Quality Assurance can be undertaken as at present by Education Scotland inspectorate teams. Additionally, some standardisation of the Staged Intervention systems operated in almost all Scottish Local Authorities would allow for some effective remote monitoring of the supports being allocated to children and young people across Scotland.

The combination of the monitoring of the above two systems could be the basis for funding allocations to councils in combination with their indices of deprivation. Some of the work by the HMIe from Education Scotland could focus on the support offered and allocated to the low incidence, high support needs of some children, for example those who may require external placement and higher levels of funding.

The above systems would focus the time and resources of teachers, schools, parents, councils, HMIe and the Scottish Government on supporting the needs of children rather than bureaucratic, time consuming, resource intensive legalistic
conflicts. There is no objective definition of a NEED in relation to children’s education. It is the continuing partnership of staff and parents with their children and young persons which addresses how they can and should be supported. Resources, both local and national, should be focussed on building and supporting these partnerships.

As you may gather from the above, the present ASN legislation needs to be completely redrawn to reflect the view above, a difficult, but not impossible task.