

Additional Support Needs (Second Tranche) Submissions Pack

Treatment of evidence

The Committee issued a brief call for views running for just over two weeks to inform the roundtable on 1 March 2017 on ASN. The Committee was provided with a [submissions pack with their papers for that meeting](#). This pack comprises of submissions received after the deadline of 21 February.

The Committee has received a large number of responses, including lots of accounts from parents of children and young people with additional support needs.

As these submissions are sensitive in nature they have been anonymised wherever requested and the names of children have been removed, as have textual references that may lead to individuals who asked to remain anonymous 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.

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Organisation Submissions

Kindred

Additional Support for Learning

Kindred supports over 1000 families of children with disabilities each year. We provide advocacy relating to education to around 25 per cent of these families (i.e. around 250 families a year). This includes assisting around 70 families each year with placing requests. A high proportion of families requiring assistance with Additional Support for Learning have a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (for example, in Edinburgh, 60% of families requiring ASL support have a child with ASD). We provide an ASL Helpline for City of Edinburgh Council and we run Let's Talk ASN, the national advocacy service for the ASN Tribunals in partnership with Govan Law Centre.

ASD Autism Spectrum Disorder

ADHD Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

ASNTS ASN Tribunals Scotland

ASL Additional Support for Learning

The following are issues which arise with regard to Additional Support for Learning:-

PRESCHOOL

1. When children are diagnosed very young with conditions like ASD, parents can find it difficult to process information and require support to make decisions about future schooling. Education staff (preschool teachers and educational psychologists) are instructed not to express a view about placements in special schools or language units and this can be bewildering for parents. It is difficult for parents to understand the special school set up and issues such as transport without independent information and support. The role of the Educational Psychologist is constrained by their location within local authorities who need to limit expectations about specialist resources.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

2. The presumption of mainstream can be interpreted by local authorities to mean that children should start school in mainstream even when they have very high level needs. The problem arises if the child is not able to cope and the process of seeking a place in a specialist provision can take many months or even a few years. Some of these children are very distressed by the mainstream environment and end up being taught separately, often in makeshift spaces within the school.
3. Where young children are not coping well, their parents may be ostracised and abused in the playground, with other parents taking it on themselves to give advice about parenting. This is very distressing for parents who are already under a great deal of pressure. The problem is particularly difficult if the child hits or kicks other children and parents feel guilty and unable to defend themselves. It is quite common for young children to become fixated

with another child or children in the school and this is particularly difficult to manage. Parents often report that children are not invited to birthday parties and find friendships difficult in mainstream.

4. Some children with high level ASD or other disabilities can flourish in mainstream with appropriate support. For example, one primary school was very supportive and gradually built up the length of the school day for the child, while supporting the parent to explore other possible provision. The process of assessing which child will succeed in mainstream is time-consuming and can require a trial period which can be unacceptable for parents.
5. Where a child is inappropriately placed in mainstream the placement may be reduced to as little as an hour a day. The parent(s) have little choice and have to accept although this is a breach of the authority's duty to provide education.
6. School staff often do not acknowledge the impact of a diagnosis of conditions like autism, ADHD or other cognitive difficulties. The Child Planning Meeting is a useful format as medical staff (paediatricians, neurologists, psychologists, psychiatrists) attend on occasion to explain the impact of diagnosis. Parents relate examples of the medical staff arguing with school staff about whether behaviour is the result of poor parenting or of developmental conditions. Parents of children in mainstream are often blamed by staff and other parents and told to go on parenting classes. Medical professionals play a role in explaining that it is the environment that causes the child to react.
7. There is a particular lack of understanding of children with ASD who do not have cognitive impairment. These children require 'reasonable adjustment' such as being allowed to sit in the same chair each day, to opt out of assembly, and to be tolerated if they behave differently. These children may need more logical explanations, the use of literal language and more concrete instructions. Children with ASD are often excluded from mainstream primary school because of a failure of the school to make reasonable adjustments.
8. Children with complex medical and physical needs tend to be offered special school places at an early stage and are often very well supported in special schools, and Kindred receives relatively few requests for advocacy for parents of these children. However, there are issues for children needing physiotherapy and speech therapy as there is noticeably less therapeutic support provided within schools even where this is clearly an educational need. Sometimes relations between schools and family breakdown where the child has input from many professionals and the parent(s) can feel that the involvement of many people is overwhelming and unsupportive. The enormity of parenting a child with complex needs can sometimes be overlooked by school staff. There is relatively little choice available to parents of complex needs and children often travel quite long distances to school, losing out on involvement in their local communities.

9. There are increasing numbers of children with complex and life limiting conditions surviving into adulthood (as evidenced by a recent report by Children's Hospice Association Scotland and the University of York). As a result, special schools are managing children with higher level of medical needs alongside children with extremely challenging behaviour. Another consequence is that children with challenging behaviour who may in the past have had a place in special school are increasingly expected to cope in mainstream.
10. In the later years of mainstream primary school, children with challenging behaviour and/or mental health problems and/or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia struggle. Some schools are very supportive, and other schools lack understanding. This is often dependent on individual teachers and particularly the leadership of the Head Teachers. For some children, neither mainstream or special schools are suitable environments. Special schools and even language units are not an appropriate placement for children who are cognitively able (i.e. who do not have learning disability) but Primary 6 and Primary 7 can become increasingly stressful as pressure to perform increases.
11. At primary school level, there is no provision for children who are cognitively able and do not have ASD or ADHD but experience extreme anxiety and cannot cope with the busy mainstream environment. These children can end up out of school for many months or even years.
12. Teachers in primary schools are often struggling to cope with children who require additional support. A teacher described how relieved she felt when a certain child left the room for an hour for individual support because the class could at last concentrate without his distracting behaviour. But she later mentioned that this child had to 'make a choice' about whether to see his mother again because she was such a negative influence in his life.
13. Mainstream schools have increasing resources available to them (such as the Autism Toolkit). There is much wider use of learning techniques for dyslexia, and for ASD (such as social stories, visual timetables, and uncluttered environments). Support for specialist ASL staff is greatly appreciated by schools and parents report real progress when their children receive specialist interventions.
14. Many children who coped in mainstream primary school will not cope within big, busy secondary schools. Some parents also believe that children with conditions like Autism Spectrum Disorder require a specialist environment.

PLACING REQUESTS

15. Placing Requests for secondary school places are particularly fraught because parents begin to feel that time is running out for their children. If a child is struggling to cope with a mainstream environment, then often the only option is a placing request for an independent day or residential school. Independent schools must offer a parent a place before the parent can make

a placing request to their local authority for funding. However, independent schools can take many weeks to come to a decision and there are no statutory requirements on their decision making processes. This can be very difficult and frustrating for parents and can result in a breakdown of the process.

16. If a placing request is refused, then advocacy and legal support is provided for references to ASN Tribunal. Placing requests have to be made before 15th of March and a decision made by the authority by end of April for a placement starting in August. However, this deadline is too late for the ASNTS process. Many parents are not allocated a tribunal date until well into the autumn term. In some situations, this has led to withdrawal of offer of a place by an independent school due to the escalated needs of the child/young person. The system is unfair because it is 'first come, first served' – so parents who have submitted an early placing request may reach tribunal before the summer and in time for an August placement.
17. Education staff and other professionals can behave with hostility to parents who make placing requests even though this is their statutory right. The system is adversarial and parents are expected to withstand questioning of their character and judgement. Mediation is extremely helpful in encouraging dispute resolution.

SECONDARY MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

18. There is a lot of demand for placement at inclusion bases in high school. Many parents feel their children are not coping and need some structured support. It is very difficult for a parent to evidence that their child is not coping unless there are drastic consequences such as school refusal. Once young people start refusing to go to school it is very difficult to restore their confidence.
19. Secondary schools struggle to provide support and supervision at break times and quiet places which pupils can attend. Some children and young people struggle to behave appropriately in the demanding high school setting without supervision and this leads to exclusions, even where all professionals are aware that the young person does not cope without adult guidance.
20. Understanding of ASD is patchy. Sometimes can be very good. Inappropriate use of exclusions which lead to school places breaking down. High schools can be defensive and hostile when challenged. Good knowledge seems to be within the bases/or particular staff rather than throughout schools. Senior management of some schools admit to having no understanding of ASD and need the input of an ASL Team. There is a noticeable difference in ethos and attitude in secondary schools with some schools willing to problem solve.
21. Transitions between schools are often well planned with an understanding that children can't be moved from one environment to another without preparation. But where children move school individually this often falls

through and visiting child and parents can be treated as an inconvenience. This can be very damaging and there have been a number of cases where the placement has broken down as a result.

22. There is a lack of ASL expertise within the private education sector. Children who are educated in the private sector sometime cope due to small class sizes and a quiet structured environment. But when they are not coping staff do not have the experience to spot the signs. These children can then require very high levels of statutory support in the public sector (such as admittance to the CAMHS Young People's Unit).

SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN WITH EXTREMELY CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

23. There is a lack of provision for children with extremely challenging behaviour in Scotland. This means that a high proportion of these children are sent to residential schooling far from home. As a result, they break their ties with home and with their communities and become very costly to support later in life. Often there is a long drawn-out process of break down before the child is sent away. This is very costly and damaging to school staff, to families and to the child.
24. Some local authorities are working to develop individual packages for children using staff who are highly trained in Positive Behavioural Support alongside investment in specialist respite care. This approach prevents crisis and family breakdown. There is a great need for increased CAMHS learning disability staff (at present there are one tenth the recommended number of staff in Scotland) to develop Intensive Treatment Services across Scotland so that families receive the behavioural support and treatment to prevent breakdown of school placement.
25. When children are sent to residential schools far from home due to challenging behaviour, they do not always have the CAMHS support that they require because they remain under the care of their home CAMHS teams.

MENTAL HEALTH

26. Counselling within Schools (Place2Be) is highly valued by parents and children/young people but is not consistently available across Scotland.
27. There are excellence policies in Scotland such as GIRFEC and Curriculum for Excellence which place importance on the wellbeing of the child. These policies promote joint working and effective use of meeting time and information sharing. Parenting classes are very popular amongst parents and peer support groups such as 'Seasons for Growth' are an effective way of encouraging children and young people to develop emotional resilience.
28. Parenting courses like 'The Incredibly Years' and generally very welcomed by parents if introduced as a support and not a criticism of parents who are already under pressure.

The National Autistic Society Scotland

About Autism

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while there are certain difficulties that everyone with autism shares, the condition affects them in different ways. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives, while others will need a lifetime of specialist support.

About The National Autistic Society Scotland

The National Autistic Society Scotland is the leading charity for autistic people in Scotland and their families. Around 58,000 people in Scotland are autistic. Together with their families they make up around 232,000 people whose lives are touched by autism every single day. We are there at every stage to help transform the lives of everyone living with autism.

We provide local specialist help, information and care across Scotland to children, adults and families affected by autism. We offer a wide range of personalised quality support at home and in the community, both in groups and one-to-one. Our branches in Scotland offer families and autistic people help and mutual support, and our employment team support autistic people in work and their employers. We also have an autism-specific school, Daldorch House School.

Views of autistic people

Autistic children and young people (and their parents) are clear about the need for teachers to have a better understanding of autism: in a survey we carried out in 2015 on what our charity's priorities should be in relation to our work with Government, 70 per cent of Scottish respondents identified teacher training as the most important change that needed to happen in our education system. This compares to 63 per cent of English respondents.

In addition, in 2015 over 20 per cent of the families who contacted our Education Rights Service, the only autism-specific education advocacy service in the country, said their child's additional support needs were not understood, and 12 per cent had issues with their child's placement. These families express a clear wish for their child to be educated in a place where autism is a specialism and is well understood, demonstrating the importance of greater autism understanding and expertise throughout the system

Autism training for teachers

Having a teacher who understands autism has a significant positive impact on the school experience of children on the autism spectrum. Our [School Report 2016](#) asked parents and carers of children and young people on the autism spectrum about their experiences of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) system, introduced in England in 2014. Our survey found that fifty eight per cent of parents said schools' knowledge of autism is the single most important factor in meeting their child's needs. When asked what would improve their experience of school, two thirds of children and young people themselves said "if more teachers understood autism". This shows the importance of making sure that every teacher has a basic understanding of autism.

Currently, there is no requirement for new teachers in Scotland to learn about autism. The 2016 [Pupil Census Figures](#) revealed that of the 170,329 school pupils in Scotland with an Additional Support Need, 13,423 are classified as being autistic: that's 1.96 per cent of the total school population.

The vast majority of these pupils are in mainstream schools and so every teacher will have autistic pupils in their classes throughout their careers. It is because of this prevalence that we believe that autism should be included as a specific topic in Initial Teacher Education in Scotland.

The National Autistic Society Scotland also believes that we should better ensure that teachers who are already qualified have access to training in autism as part of their continuing professional development. We know that teachers themselves believe that they do not have enough training to enable them to meet the needs of pupils on the autism spectrum. A survey by the trade union NASUWT showed 60% of teachers in England believe they do not have enough training in autism (NASUWT, 2013, 'Support for children and young people with special educational needs'). We believe that it's imperative that these teachers, and the schools they work in, have the training and resources to meet the needs of autistic children and young people.

How and why should teachers learn about autism?

Suitable training resources for teachers already exist and wouldn't need to be developed from scratch; the training materials produced for teachers by the Autism Education Trust in England (and funded by Department for Education) could be adapted for Scotland. It therefore needn't be expensive to implement autism training for teachers.

Strategies that are good practice in supporting autistic children are also often good practice for children without Additional Support Needs. We also know that autistic children who are not well supported are often in trouble at school: autistic pupils are three times more likely to be excluded than those without additional support needs. With the right support, autistic children can make good progress and gain skills that will allow them to thrive and individual teachers play a crucial role in this.

New teacher training framework in England

From 2018, autism will be included in the Initial Teacher Training framework in England – meaning that all new teachers will learn about autism in their initial training. Until this point, there has been no requirement for new teachers to learn anything specific about special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This framework states clearly that all trainee teachers should learn how to adapt their teaching strategies so that pupils with autism are fully included and helped to succeed.

This was a direct result of a concerted campaign by parents and teachers, supported by the National Autistic Society, called Every Teacher, which called for all new teachers to be trained in autism. As part of the campaign, MPs, members of the House of Lords, leading figures in the education system, and over 7,000 supporters signed an open letter to Government calling for autism to be included in initial teacher training.

Teacher training providers will determine exactly how this is delivered and our charity will be working with them to make sure the training developed is of high quality. We

believe that autistic children in Scotland should also be educated by teachers who really understand the condition.

Conclusion

The National Autistic Society Scotland wants to make sure that every new teacher is trained to work with autistic pupils. While autism can present some challenges, we know that a child who is understood and supported can make excellent progress. Having teachers who are properly trained and have the necessary tools to support the inclusion of autistic children and young people in mainstream education services is a vital component of this.

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The Royal Blind School

If the education of blind and vision impaired children is to be as effective as it should be, there is a requirement to meet all of their needs and to give the right help, in the right place, at the right time. In mainstream settings the level of service for children and young people with vision impairment varies significantly, for a number of different reasons but important to all cases is the allocation of resources. As we reported to the recent parliamentary inquiry into the attainment gap for children and young people with sensory impairments, there is a lack of clarity regarding what is effective and appropriate provision for a child with vision impairment or Complex Needs/VI. Decisions are often subjective with a poor understanding of need, which can lead to inadequate support and consequently failure of attainment.

The resources required to support a vision impaired child include:

- Frequent and regular direct intervention by a Qualified Teacher of Vision Impairment to maximise timely support.
- Ongoing Habilitation (Orientation, mobility and independent living skills) input from a Qualified Habilitation Specialist. Currently there is no mandatory requirement for local authorities to provide this specialist input, consequently young people are being disabled by this inaction. Over time this will cost local authorities financially due to the need to support these children and young people (CYP) in adult life.
- Assistive Technology with equal access to school networks (enlargement, speech software, braille access).
- Appropriate learning resources in the individual child's primary learning medium, e.g. large print, audio or contracted Braille, provided at the same time as sighted peers.
- Support with health and wellbeing
- Development of social and communication skills and general confidence
- Where required, counselling.

- Access to professional and health support: Psychological Services, Social Worker, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy in an integrated, multi-professional approach to service delivery.
- The opportunity to be part of a peer group; particularly those with additional support needs/Complex Needs. Young people and their parents have described their school life as a “co-existence” with their sighted peers.
- Opportunities to engage effectively within their local community. Local services (after-school clubs, sports centres, youth groups etc.) may be unable to support specific needs.

Delays in providing early intervention can lead to developmental delay and prevents successful inclusion. Young people and their parents have informed us of feeling excluded and ill-equipped within their mainstream environment. This is resulting in significant mental health issues and young people not fully prepared for successful adulthood and employability.

We regularly encounter examples where provision is falling well short. These are but three recent ones:

- In one local authority with 270 children with vision impairment, three of whom are learning braille, there are only three teachers and only one of them is fully qualified. Another member of this team is leaving to go on maternity leave soon and that will leave them with only two teachers to support these pupils.
- A particular mainstream school has two children with vision impairment. We asked what support the pupils were receiving and were told that one pupil is receiving three hours per week and the other is only seen intermittently.
- Many teams are managed by someone without experience, knowledge or qualification in the field and consequently cannot understand the Vision needs of pupils, which takes experience and time.

The need for a spectrum of provision

Royal Blind School supports the presumption of mainstream education, if it meets a child's needs. We believe that there are hundreds of children in Scotland whose needs are not being best served in this setting and that this under-provision needs to be addressed quickly by a combination of strengthening of supports to mainstream settings and improved strategies for the use of specialist provision.

The Doran Review underlined the importance of national provision, including the Grant Aided Special Schools, and the environment this enables of availability of provision for pupils with complex additional support needs.

Responsiveness to individual need and the proper exercising of parental choice is limited under the current governance relationship. There is a requirement for firmer oversight and guidance at a national level to ensure that resources can be planned, and utilised in a strategic way to ensure that the principles of GIRFEC are applied without specific cost issues preventing the placement that is best for an individual.

There are some authorities who don't have suitable provision for young people with vision impairment or Complex Needs/VI. We believe that Scotland must have a spectrum of provision to ensure that the needs of all children are catered for effectively. By enabling a 'wraparound' service we can work in partnership with local authorities to support their input and to cater for the individual needs of the child. Support at the individual level should be needs-driven, not cost driven. Central funding for such placements should mean that local budgetary constraints do not prevent use of a national resource such as the Royal Blind School. The present arrangements give the potential for this, but local financial considerations currently weigh too heavily on individual decisions and there is a vacuum where there should be national strategy and oversight.

Other issues:

Scotland would benefit from a **central facility for the production of Braille** and other alternative formats to ensure learners can access materials at the right time

Information to enable informed choice: Families do not always know about the range of provision or what is appropriate for their child's needs. Local authorities with tight budgets for external placements are able to withhold information from parents that might lead them to identify a national resource as right for their child.

The **Tribunal process** is extremely arduous for parents and time consuming and costly for those involved. It puts undue pressure on families, forcing them to prove local services are inadequate. Many do not have the skills to do this. In the true spirit of GIRFEC, they should have a stronger say in what they believe is an appropriate educational placement for their child and support the parent's and the child's preferences. The panel do not have enough understanding or knowledge of the field of vision impairment and the impact of this on the young person as a learner. The decision is final – there is no right to appeal for families. The decision rules to be applied by the tribunals are not at all clear – there seems to be little accountability. Parents ask for a place at the Royal Blind School for their children for various reasons; the main ones being lack of progress, lack of friends and social isolation, and most are turned down. The **presumption of mainstreaming** for all children requires review as to what degree other goals (attainment, inclusion, happiness...) are to be sacrificed in order to satisfy that presumption.

Our contribution

If pupils' potential is not to be lost, it is imperative that the very highest standards are set. We believe that Scotland can and should aspire to this. **The Royal Blind School provides the benchmark** for quality provision. More children need to be given the opportunity to benefit from it. Our presence as a source of support, outreach and training for classroom staff across Scotland through our **Royal Blind Learning Hub** is invaluable, and it can be most successful as part of a thriving centre of excellence.

Over the past decade while strategy has been lacking we have sustained and improved the school despite very significant funding shortfalls, using our own charitable reserves. Scotland's education system should not depend on this. We seek support from the Scottish Government in safeguarding this valuable provision for the future.

The Nurture Group

Executive Summary

- The Nurture Group Network welcomes the general principles surrounding Additional Support Needs in School Education, in particular the focus on identifying the needs of learners' early and addressing them with timely and effective interventions.
- Nurture Groups are an impactful intervention for children and young people with additional learning needs whose barriers to learning fall into the category of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They allow children with social, emotional and behavioural additional learning needs to stay in mainstream school and develop the skills and resilience they need to make the most of learning and school.
- As such, Nurture Groups should be considered by local authorities, schools and AGASL as an additional learning provision support option. All children and young people who would benefit from this provision should have access to a Nurture Group at their school, or at a neighbouring school through a cluster model.
- The Boxall profile, the online tool used by teachers to assess children and young peoples' social, emotional and behavioural needs, should be used as part of the Individual Development Plan (IDP) process for all children with an ALN. This can help teachers to understand children's levels of emotional and behavioural functioning to enable them to target impactful interventions and monitor progress and outcomes.

The Nurture Group Network

The Nurture Group Network is a charity that aims to break cycles of low achievement and tackle social exclusion by ensuring that an unequal start in life does not mean an unequal chance to engage with learning. We work to ensure that every disadvantaged or disengaged child has access to a nurturing intervention to equip them with the skills and resilience they need to make the most of learning and school. We do this by supporting the development of nurturing interventions in schools through training, resources and support; making the case for nurture in schools with policymakers and politicians; and has an on-going research and evaluation programme to monitor evidence of outcomes. For further information please visit: <http://www.nurturegroups.org>

1. Evidence of impact of Nurture Groups and Nurturing Interventions

There is a wealth of evidence showing a variety of positive outcomes from Nurture Groups for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. These include: greater academic attainment¹ including improvements in metacognition

¹ Reynolds, S., Kearney, M. and MacKay, T. (2009). Nurture Groups: a large – scale, controlled study of effect on development and academic attainment. *British Journal of Special Education*, 36 (4): 204 – 212; Seth-Smith, F., Netali L., Richard P., Fonagy p. and Jaffey, D. (2010). Do nurture groups improve the social, emotional and behavioural functioning of at risk children? *Educational and Child Psychology*, Volume 27, No 1.

skills² and language and literacy skills³; improved behaviour and social skills at school⁴ and at

1.1 home⁵; improved attendance⁶ and reduced exclusions⁷; and long-term improvements to mental health and resiliency⁸.

1.2 The most recent evidence of the benefits of Nurture Groups is an independent evaluation by Queen's University Belfast into the Northern Ireland Government's 'Nurture Unit Signature Project'⁹, in which Nurture Groups were set up in twenty primary schools and a further ten existing Nurture Groups were supported. The evaluation found the provision to be "highly successful in its primary aim of achieving improvements in the social, emotional and behavioural skills of children from deprived areas exhibiting significant difficulties". It found that, whilst 77.7% of children who entered nurture groups as part of the trial were exhibiting difficult behaviour this reduced to just 20.6% at post-test. However, for those children in the control schools, 62.8% of children exhibited difficult behaviour at the start of the year and this remained largely unchanged at post-test (61.9%). The study also found that in comparison with the estimated costs of providing other additional educational services to children with behavioural difficulties, Nurture Group provision presents direct savings to the education system and that investment in Nurture Groups is "cost-effective and represent significant economic return to society".

1.3 The Boxall Profile is considered a "highly regarded diagnostic and assessment instrument by a large number of teacher and educational psychologists who have used it" and is a measure of children's levels of emotional and behavioural functioning, as well as enabling staff in schools to highlight specific targets for intervention within a child's individual functioning. The Profile grew out of the experiences of teachers working in nurture groups, and was the creation of Marjorie Boxall, an educational psychologist working for the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) in Hackney, a borough with high levels of social deprivation, in the 1960s. Schools were experiencing an unprecedented rise in the number of children they found unmanageable, and were referring them in overwhelming numbers for assessment for special schools as 'maladjusted' or 'educationally subnormal', as failures, which could

² Gerrard, Brendan (2005). City of Glasgow Nurture Group Pilot Scheme Evaluation. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, volume 10, n4, 245-253

³ Hosie, Claire (2013). An Evaluation of the Impact of Nurture Provision upon Young Children, Including their Language and their Literacy Skills (Unpublished PhD thesis). East London University, United Kingdom

⁴ Cooper, P. and Tiknaz, Y. (2005). Progress and challenge in Nurture Groups: evidence from three case studies. *British Journal of Special Education*, Volume 32, Issue 4, pages 211–222

⁵ Binnie, L.M., and K. Allen (2008). Whole school support for vulnerable children: The evaluation of a part-time nurture group. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, volume 13, no. 3: 201–16.

⁶ Estyn (2014) Attendance in secondary schools – September 2014 <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/329401.8/attendance-in-secondary-schools-september-2014/?navmap=30%2C163>

⁷ Cooper et al (2001). The effectiveness of nurture groups: preliminary research findings. *British journal of Special Education*, 28 (4), 160-166

⁸ Cooper, Arnold, R. and Boyd, E. (2001). The effectiveness of nurture groups: preliminary research findings. *British Journal of Special Education*, 28 (4), 160–166

⁹ Queen's University Belfast (2016), The Impact and Cost effectiveness of Nurture Groups in Northern Ireland: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/nurture-provision-primary-schools>

have lifelong consequences. The Boxall Profile introduces a way of understanding what lies behind the exhibited behaviour of children who seem quite unable to conform to standards that present little or no problems to the majority. The Boxall Profile enables teaching staff to see where such behaviour comes from, what lies behind it and how it can be altered. It has been in use successfully in both primary and secondary schools for many years.

Socialist Education Association Scotland

Key points

Socialist Educational Association Scotland recognises the successes in our local authorities and schools in identifying, assessing and making provision for those with additional support for learning needs.

SEAS values regular reporting of the data about additional support for learning. SEAS would like to see greater depth in reporting of this data to assist the transfer of good practice across education authorities.

SEAS welcomes themes within the reports to Parliament and suggests the next report is on the theme of inclusive education. Inclusion and equalities will deliver on children's rights in education and the rights of those with disabilities to access inclusive education. Such a report should include monitoring the levels of staffing available to support additional support for learning.

The SEAS is concerned about over-identification of children and young people with additional support needs in some authorities such as Perth and Kinross and Aberdeenshire.

The SEAS is concerned with a related issue of possible abuse by private schools and their over-representation of the number of pupils in those private independent schools who use the facilities of the additional assessment and support arrangements

The SEAS supports the social model of disability which includes the learning environment as a potential barrier to learning that underpins the legislation.

Identification

Education authorities and schools have been successful in identifying and assessing children and young people with a broad range of additional support needs including young carers, more able children and those with English as an additional language. SEAS believes that some authorities, with over 30% of pupils so identified, are in a situation of "identification inflation" and are identifying too many young people. Such authorities like Perth and Kinross and Aberdeenshire need to be removing the barriers that cause learning failures within schools rather than automatically blaming the learner and identifying too many children and young people having learning difficulties and requiring support needs. They should be monitoring levels of support to ensure children who no longer need support are not recorded and are inaccurately identified as having a continued need of significant support.

In terms of additional support, the SEAS is also concerned about possible abuse by private independent schools of the additional assessment arrangements for SQA examinations. Private schools, which cater for only 4% of the school population

account for 10% or more of the claims for special examination arrangements. It has been suggested that private schools use these arrangements to gain unwarranted support for candidates in independent schools. The SEAS calls on the Committee to investigate the practice in detail and commit to eradicate abuses of the system.

Assessment

The SEAS is concerned that the declining numbers of educational psychologists limits knowledgeable expertise coming to play in terms of assessment. The reduction in their numbers may be causing schools to over identify. The reduction in their numbers limits their ability to support schools in building capacity to be more inclusive of any child with additional support needs.

The SEAS believes that certain categories or conditions requiring additional support needs should only be diagnosed by medical diagnosis e.g. neurological conditions such as autism. There is particular evidence of inconsistent levels of identification of pupils with autism due to teachers labelling children, without medical advice.

Provision

The SEAS in general is convinced by the evidence that most children with additional support needs are improving in their outcomes. Scotland's schools which have over 95% of children with additional support needs in mainstream schools indicate a high level of inclusion. We need to further support such inclusive practices by investing in a range of support services. SEAS believes that continuing cuts to learning support staff (teachers and assistants) will imperil the successes of Scottish schools. We call on the Committee to monitor the levels of support staff in Scottish education authorities and schools and press for the highest level of support.

The SEAS is concerned that support staff are not as heavily involved in preventative work at the early stages rather the compensatory work at later stages of secondary education. Scottish education should draw on the resources in special schools more as resource centres as recommended by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.

<https://www.european-agency.org/publications/brochures-and-flyers/agency-position-on-inclusive-education-systems-flyer>

National Parent Forum

The National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFs) welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence for the Committee's work on Additional Support Needs.

NPFs have contributed to a range of national working groups including the Doran Project Board and AGASL, and CALLS Scotland's steering group.

We engage with parents through focus groups held throughout the year, online surveys, and also gather parents' views through local events, quarterly forum meetings, and at our annual conference. This evidence is based on 461 responses to a 2015 NPFs online survey, preliminary findings of the Review of the Scottish Schools (parental involvement) act, the views of NPFs representatives who responded to our request for information, and twenty submissions to those representatives from parents across Scotland.

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

Entitlements Fewer than

half of the parents who responded to our survey knew what additional support their child is entitled to.

led to, several knew what support their child receives but not if they are entitled to any more support.

We frequently hear from parents who described difficulties in finding this information. Enquire provide this information in a clear manner and we would like to see their service promoted more effectively by schools and local authorities.

Process

Parents do not find the process of accessing support straightforward. It can be lengthy, time consuming and often complex. Processes lack transparency and clarity for parents and are felt to be too slow.

Geography

There is a huge disparity in provision of support within schools, local authorities and across Scotland.

Many parents feel a degree of standardisation would be welcomed. Furthermore there is no uniformity to the data on ASN gathered from local authorities.

Political considerations appear to prevent cross authority cooperation and there is a lack of integration of services

Staffing and Resources

Parents who have engaged with NPFs feel that teachers have not received adequate training in ASN, in particular there is a lack of staff with specialist knowledge. Early diagnosis is vital, for this parents must be listened to as it is the parent who knows the child best. Parents very often support the inclusion agenda but only with the appropriate support in place. Lastly, parents find that ASL support for Gaelic Medium Education is insufficient.

What have your experiences been?

Overall the parents who have contacted NPFs over the last 24 months frequently do not feel that ASL resources and support meet their individual child's needs. Many Parents feel the impact of budget cuts has had serious negative effects on the provision of ASL in schools. Parents do not feel part of the decision making process as their views are frequently not taken fully into account in discussions surrounding their child's ASL needs. NPFs believe that to support improved communication with parents of pupils with additional support needs the Scottish Government should review the code of practice on Additional Support for Learning to consider whether this section on good practice in communicating with parents is sufficient and take appropriate action.

Council Submissions

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 :

Primary pupils with Additional Support Needs, by local authority, 2016								
	with Additional Support Needs	with CSP	with IEP	with Other Support Needs	Child Plans	Assessed or Declared Disabled	Percentage of pupils with ASN	
South Ayrshire	708	13	415	146	276	308	9.0	

Secondary pupils with Additional Support Needs, by local authority, 2016								
	with Additional Support Needs	with CSP	with IEP	with Other Support Needs	Child Plans	Assessed or Declared Disabled	Percentage of pupils with ASN	
South Ayrshire	903	6	358	224	254	636	14.9	

Pupils based in special schools with Additional Support Needs, by local authority, 2016 ⁽¹⁾								
	with Additional Support Needs	with CSP	with IEP	with Other Support Needs	Child Plans	Assessed or Declared Disabled	Percentage of pupils with ASN	
South Ayrshire	101	*	96	8	18	87	100.0	

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.

Dumfries and Galloway Council

The main principle on which Supporting Learners Provision is based in Dumfries and Galloway is that support is provided within mainstream schools. Support is primarily provided in mainstream classes but some children and young people require more specialist support delivered through resourced provision. The resourced provision includes specifically trained staff, specialised equipment, suitably modified environments and access to partnership agencies to support the inclusion of children and young people in their education and the social life of schools.

Our Council policy is that there is a core competency framework for staff supporting children and young people with additional support needs such that individualised needs can be met within Resourced Provision in their own community. We continue to build the capacity of all our staff to provide support at the Universal level as part of their “responsibilities for all”.

Over the past few years in Dumfries and Galloway we have reviewed our approach to meeting additional support needs and developed community teams around the child, to better blend with our GIRFEC approach and to better meet the increasing demands on services. Part of our service review process was to identify a more efficient approach to delivering supports, while at the same time ameliorating the impact of the removal of Classroom Assistants from our schools. This process has been challenged by an unprecedented 9% increase in 2016/17 of the number of children and young people identified as having an Additional Support Needs, 28% of our school population; and an 60% rise in children and young people identified as having specialist support needs.

As parents and young people are more effectively exercising their rights in seeking help, Getting it right for every child has helped us to focus on earlier intervention and prevention. Delivering improved outcomes through GIRFEC is not cost neutral. As needs become more complex and supports more resource intensive at the specialist support level, we are experiencing increasing demands to “get it right” with similarly high cost interventions for children who would have previously accessed support at the universal or targeted level.

The rising challenge to deliver bespoke resource intensive support packages from existing resources increases the pressure on all, and we acknowledge the need to improve parental understanding of our assessment processes and how we provide additional support for learning. In being more efficient and creative with finite resources we recognise that parents are key partners and we need to be more effective in involving them in developing solution focused approaches – shifting to a culture of active participation.

Example

A key pressure for us continues to be the provision of support for children and young people with a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder. Currently, we have around 370 young people with a diagnosis of ASD in our schools (5 – 18 years) which equates to nearly 2% of the school population. Significant progress has been made in raising autism awareness and in the quality of the support provided for these young people in schools in recent years and this work is on-going; although there is still room to improve, especially for the most complex individuals and families. As a Council, we are actively pursuing a number of developments to build on the work we have already begun.

The Dumfries & Galloway Autism Strategy encapsulates the challenges we face in the region in meeting the needs of the autistic community, their parents, carers and those who support them. The Strategy has five key strands and is based on extensive consultation with practitioners and parents. Within the Strategy there are three high priorities:

1. refining the diagnostic process and supporting parents through and after diagnosis;
2. developing opportunities for young people of all abilities, especially those more able autistic young people to enter further education, training or employment and
3. ensuring that autistic young people have plenty of social opportunities and access to the range of activities available to their neuro-typical peers.

A key element of service delivery going forward is partnership working between families, the statutory sector, the Third Sector and the business world. We have made significant strides in recent years in engaging with the Third Sector, improving the routes for information sharing and developing joint working, but there is still some

way to go. We have just begun to engage with employers and businesses in a targeted way for this cohort of young people and there are a number of exciting initiatives being developed to support our young people after school. All of this work has to be achieved against conflicting pressures on resources across all services, statutory and non-statutory. In a rural authority where limited public transport and few centres of population can easily lead to social isolation and lack of access to employment, more medium term (3 – 5 years) central government support to pilot and establish innovative solutions to these challenges would be welcomed.

Other key pressures include:

Managing challenging behaviour is one of the greatest pressures teachers have to deal with and has been highlighted nationally for many years as a key point of stress. The vast majority of children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway are a credit to themselves, their parents and their schools, but a very small minority create significant challenges for staff. We are developing alternative approaches to curriculum and provision for the children and young people who find mainstream education provision difficult to access, but again pressures on resources, especially staffing makes supporting individualised programmes very difficult to establish and to maintain over time.

Increasing levels of complexity of medical need - in recent years we have seen an increasing number of children and young people with significant and in some cases life threatening/ ending medical conditions attending our schools & nurseries who require support within our education establishments solely to meet their medical needs. This is increasingly impacting on our ability to meet these needs due to the level training staffs require in order to carry out these tasks which in some cases includes administering medication, the use of special feeding and intimate care procedures and in rare occasions adhering to DNR protocols.

In order to fully provide for these intimate care and medical needs safely within an educational setting now requires the provision of very considerable additional staffing levels which is impacting adversely on the overall level of additional support available to aid learning.

<http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15252/Support-for-people-with-autism>

East Ayrshire Council

Additional Support Needs in School Education

Mainstream integration of children with additional support needs (ASN) is one of the proudest achievements of Scottish education and there is a statutory presumption in its favour. Such provision can be both challenging and resource intensive; however, it is important that there is a central perspective around additional support needs, and in particular the allocation of resources.

In order to make sure that we are raising attainment for our most vulnerable children it is important to provide appropriate resources and support through a clear and robust assessment process with measurable and sustainable outcomes. Strategic overviews eliminate any tendency to duplicate planning, to support children with additional support needs.

The principles and values of GIRFEC have improved collaborative working and enabled professionals to focus on the child at the centre and build from universal to more targeted interventions at appropriate time(s) in a child's life. Building on current best practice with a strong focus on teaching and learning is only part of the picture, as education relies on other partners for support in delivering outcomes. Effective collaboration between partners contributes to best value, flexibility and adaptation and ensures that the team around the child (whether universal or targeted supports) is focused, with the child and their family at the centre. Integrated children's plans reflect a collaborative approach to practice but the environment also plays a key role.

The presumption of mainstream is crucial to drive the inclusion agenda and it enables children to be supported whenever possible within their local primary or secondary school. In East Ayrshire, ASN is regarded as integral to mainstream provision, including curricular planning, assessment and staff development and deployment – additional classroom assistants to support and scaffold learning are allocated on a needs led basis.

If children cannot be supported at universal services then targeted interventions through East Ayrshire Support Team (EAST) are deployed through an assessment of need. Support from EAST is provided for children with a visual impairment (0 -18 years), who have English as an additional language (3 –18 years), are aged from pre-school to Primary 3 and have a severe, specific language delay or disorder, who have Significant Communication Difficulty (SCD) including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (3 – 18 years) as well as children who have literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing needs (3 – 18 years). A Hospital Education Service supports children who are admitted to hospital for an extensive period or are frequently readmitted (3 – 18 years). Supports can take the form of direct and co-op teaching, support with early identification/assessment of need, consultation, liaison, planning, monitoring and reviewing and curriculum development.

Educational psychologists also visit establishments regularly to work with the staff to best support children who are experiencing barriers to their learning. Their role is often to provide advice and consultation with staff through collaborative assessment and intervention discussions.

It is acknowledged that without a well-engineered training programme for practitioners on a single-agency and/or multi-agency basis which includes modeling and coaching it is difficult to build capacity in establishments which are sustainable for the future. If this is not managed targeted interventions can never withdraw. Central supports are crucial to the ongoing development of staff and maintaining a highly skilled workforce which can be deployed at the most appropriate time. EAST and Psychological Services build capacity in the workforce through a comprehensive training programme.

Integrated service delivery combining early childhood centres and primary schools supports children with additional support needs during transition and opens opportunities for single agency collaboration between establishments.

The principles of GIRFEC are central to the planning and subsequent organisation of resources within East Ayrshire. The strategic overview of ASN provision across East Ayrshire enables the local authority to ensure that targeted resources are allocated through a robust assessment process. This ensures a fair distribution of support across the local authority and adheres to the stringent requirements of Best Value.

This assessment can be single agency and/or multi agency with partners allocating the most appropriate resource at the right time in a child's life. An excellent example of Best Value is the Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Service which takes collaborative working beyond the boundaries of East Ayrshire and clearly demonstrates the values of sharing resources across three local authorities, East, North and South Ayrshire.

If targeted interventions within a mainstream environment cannot appropriately or proportionately meet the child's needs then families within East Ayrshire have access to specialist provisions – one Early Language Centre, three special schools (providing both primary and secondary support), four Supported Learning Centres (two primary and two secondary provisions) within mainstream establishments and two Communications Centres (primary and secondary) also within a mainstream setting.

Although East Ayrshire Council will always endeavour to offer the best provision within our local area, some of our most vulnerable children require additional support out with our authority. There is a robust multi-agency assessment, through the Outwith Placement Screening Group, to make sure that all possible alternatives, within the local authority have been exhausted, before an external placement is agreed. The child's progress is monitored through LAC reviews and the Outwith Placement Screening Group, to make sure that the external placement continues to meet the child's assessed needs.

Schools Submissions

Trinity Primary School

At Trinity Primary School, Edinburgh, we are committed to inclusion and strive to the very best of our abilities to ensure the needs of all learners are met, working within Pathways 1, 2 and 3. We have established strong relationships with Pathway 3 support agencies and have ongoing, rigorous and high quality staff training. We work with all stakeholders to ensure that the needs of our learners are met to the best of our ability and are always looking for new and innovative practices to ensure that this happens. As a school we fully support inclusion, but recognise that with rising roles and the increasing number of pupils in school requiring support, that this is having a detrimental impact overall on the attainment of other pupils within school.

As a school, the majority of teaching staff views were sought and are recorded below for your consideration. Please take into account that views were sought from individuals and that not all staff may agree with all views recorded below:

- Teachers want inclusion, we want to close the gap but we feel that this is not supported at the moment for all pupils.
- We of course realise that it is important to support SIMD 1 and 2 pupils, to close the gap and welcome and appreciate the funding being given to schools to do this. However, it should be noted that pupils displaying ASL needs do not necessarily fall within SIMD 1 and 2 and these pupils can require significant support
- We would like to acknowledge how hard ASL services work with Trinity Primary School to respond to the needs of our pupils and to support all staff. ASL staff are highly professional, caring and motivated. Any comments below should be seen as relating to supporting pupils with additional support needs within school.
- Autistic children have had their 1:1 support cut and are no longer assessed as needing the same help by ASL Services when identifying Low Incidence Needs. We believe this is due to the increasing number of demands over time and the inability to fund this to the level needed at authority level. Due to this, PSA staff who are assigned as part of the overall support are increasingly used to support autistic children on a 1:1 basis or for a large part of the time. The impact of this on other pupils is that they are unable to support the raising of attainment for other pupils in classes to level available previously.
- Rising roles means that there is less space within school to work with pupils other than the classroom. Corridors and foot wells are now being used at times as 'safe spaces' and learning spaces for some autistic pupils who can at times find themselves experiencing high levels of anxiety within school
- Need more physical space in existing schools to allow:
 - areas to evacuate a class to when an autistic pupil is being very aggressive. These spaces should then allow teaching to continue so that the impact on other pupils is at a minimum. We currently have to evacuate two classes within school with no warning, when certain pupils exhibit high levels of anger and possible violence to others – keeping the rest of the class in the classroom would be a danger to themselves. This leads to two classes in one classroom whilst other staff support the pupil experiencing high levels of anxiety manifesting in potentially violent behaviour. When autistic pupils are being aggressive, it is at times impossible to remove them from the classroom as it would either cause them great distress and be a danger to themselves or staff to move them
 - Spaces for groups to run
 - Safe spaces, nurture spaces, chill-out areas for children with ASN
- Increased workload for teachers: teachers already differentiate to meet pupil needs but there is an increasing need to differentiate on a 1:1 basis for some.
- Some pupils are in mainstream education but due to their autistic needs, they would greatly benefit from a supported place within a special school setting. These children would have, in times past, been able to receive such support

however, their needs are no longer as unusual and therefore it is not possible to offer them such support

- Disproportionate amount of time given to a few learners due to their ASL needs
- Teacher non-contact often taken up with meeting needs of ASN pupils
- It can take a long time between referral, diagnosis and direct support due to the system (educational/healthcare) being stretched by the increasing, relevant, number of pupils requiring support
- Need more pathway 3 staff available to reduce waiting times and to provide support and training
- We need more involvement from the experts. Some of the issues we have to deal with as teachers are so extreme that we don't really know what to do. We try our best to use strategies from training and the Circle document, however we require more, direct support from trained experts to ensure that we in turn can do our best for all
- Need more time to collaborate with other professionals about children they are supporting
- Class teachers' time is increasingly taken up supporting pupils who have challenging behavioural difficulties. This has a direct impact on the learning of other pupils in the class and our concern is that it is having a detrimental impact on attainment of some other pupils.
- There is a lack of support within the classroom and class size impacts on supporting pupils
- 1:1 support is mostly required for some but is not always available
- Low Incidence audit hours are unrealistic and only given to extreme cases
- Staff and pupils are at increasing risk of violence from pupils exhibiting high levels of anxiety due to additional needs. All staff work hard to support these pupils and to reduce anxiety and identify triggers, however this is not always possible to ensure.
- Increased number of EAL pupils in classes but levels of support for this are not increasing. Very limited EAL support and time e.g. 8/23 children in one of our P1 classes are EAL. This does not include pupils with ASD and other learning needs.
- Concerns that in order to include individuals needs, there is a detrimental impact on the health and well being and educational attainment of other pupils in class.
- PSA support is available and used as effectively as possible but it currently can't stretch to all pupils who need it and teachers would like more support to ensure greater impact is made
- Other professionals providing a service in school e.g. swimming teachers and music specialists can 'refuse' to have pupils requiring increased emotional and behavioural support.
- Some pupils talk about being 'fed-up' about the way some pupils act and behave towards adults. They don't understand consequences etc. They are verbalising this at home and at school
- Lack of support when things 'kick off' - staff, space and resources

- Strategies we are being told to do (e.g. individual timetables, individual work spaces and safe spaces)are unmanageable when there are, at times, several children needing this.
- We are being told to make so many resources to support ASL needs and this time on top of the normal requirements of class teaching are significantly adding to workload
- Staff are dealing with an increasing amount of medical needs eg diabetes, toileting issues
- Impact on attainment due to inclusion without the depth of support needed should also be looked into in light of the PISA report identifying the drop in Scottish Schools World ranking:
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-38207729>

Teachers Submissions

ANON

Having worked as an additional needs assistant before becoming a teacher I feel that the children identified and supported varies vastly from authority to authority and from school to school. Support has decreased over 18 years I have worked within schools and now most support is split between children with very complex needs and those with behavioural needs. There is no support left for children with less complex needs like dyslexia, ADHD, global learning difficulties etc. Teaching a class of 31 last year with two children diagnosed with autism, five with dyslexia and over half the class working below the level they should have been there was no support available, it was all withdrawn at the start of the year to be given to children who were struggling with their behaviour!

If we want inclusion to allow all children to flourish the support has to be available to all children that 'need above normal levels' of support and not just those that have boxes ticked on an ever more complex criteria form. Local authority cost cutting recently has seen even this meagre amount of support cut. Teachers work really hard to make the learning experience the best for all children but when one child in a class needs constant adult support to stay on task it is going to have an impact on all the children.

When I worked in England there were two adults in every class with more than 25 children for all maths and literacy lessons. The impact on learning was clear to see. Support to help children who cannot self-regulate their time helps free a teacher up to teach!

ANON

I believe passionately in inclusive practices. I believe that children with ASN should be in mainstream schools wherever possible and *when this is what best meets their individual needs*. Inclusion improves society in every respect. But it needs to be done *well*.

Mainstreaming is not the answer for every child and it should not be the only option. A level of alternative provision is essential and it should be sufficient to

accommodate *all* who would benefit from it. Currently, provision is entirely inadequate and mainstream schools are accommodating a range of needs they are not equipped or adequately trained or supported to sustain effectively. Changes in our society are resulting in a significant increase in the numbers of children presenting in schools with social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and this is highly disruptive to the learning environment. The progress of all learners is affected adversely, at a time when raising attainment, closing the poverty gap and raising the bar for all has never generated more pressure in schools. Everyone agrees with this agenda. Everyone desperately wants to create the well-educated Scot of the future to sustain and grow our economy and remain globally competitive. Not everyone knows the impact that wholly inadequate funding for ASN across the board has on raising attainment for all.

Parental expectation has been cranked up so that all parents expect every school to be able to provide the level of support, or the alternative placement their child requires, or that they want/demand. This is not possible as things are currently. The issue of ASN in Scottish schools therefore generates a great deal of tension and stress on all sides. Multi agency approaches and GIRFEC are laudable in theory and schools work very hard on this, I believe. Accessing support from other agencies, including other arms of educational provision, e.g. psychological services etc, is a challenge as here also, budget restrictions and cuts have reduced provision significantly. The net result is that school struggle to cope, without adequate support, with the range and level of challenge being experienced in ASN.

Stress, anxiety, pressure, overwhelming workload and tension are generated as a result.

A shame, as inclusion is such a wonderful concept capable of changing society for the better in many respects.

ANON

I'd like my comments about ASN in Scottish schools to be considered please. I am a teacher in an ASN school. Prior to this post I also worked in a mainstream school supporting learners with ASN. I am also studying a Masters degree in Educational Support and Inclusion.

Firstly, I believe that there is significant legislation in Scotland which supports learners (Support for Learning Act, GIRFEC, Standard in Scotland's Schools Act etc.).

In practical terms, as I have stated, I teach in an ASN school. My personal experience is that the majority of staff (teaching and non-teaching) are completely dedicated to meeting learners needs. The school I work in, along with many other ASN schools in Scotland are struggling, due to a lack of staffing. Local Authority guidelines state that we have an appropriate number of staff for our pupil role, however I do not honestly believe we are doing the best for our children as we do not have enough staff. My own class consists of 6 children who have a very wide range of learning needs. I have two learning assistants with me, which sounds like a lot.

However when each child needs personal care 2-4 times a day, a learning assistant is taken out of the learning environment. If another learning assistant is a first aided etc they will also be frequently leaving the room. When there is any staff absence we are stretched to the limit and incidents have occurred. Many of the pupils can be violent at times, requiring a higher staff to pupil ratio.

To conclude, I believe that the majority of staff working with pupils with ASN are fantastic and strive to achieve the best possible outcomes for children. I would like committee members to spend a day or a week in an ASN school to experience the difficulties faced as a result of staffing issues.

ANNE LEE

I was a PT Learning Support until the late 1990s and then an ASN quality Improvement Officer until 5 years ago, working for Stirling Council. I have been disappointed to witness the decline in learning support provision in recent years, something that is brought home to me through my voluntary work with a charity which provides support to children in a disadvantaged part of Scotland. Below is a description of how this is impacting on a 12-year-old girl whom I support on a weekly basis.

Meagan (not her real name) has been formally assessed as being dyslexic and she also has significant difficulties with basic arithmetic skills suggestive of dyscalculia. However her overall level of functioning is higher than would be assumed on the basis of her literacy and numeracy skills and she needs additional support in order to access the curriculum and achieve her potential. Sadly, the additional support she receives has always fallen far short of what she needs.

It was only late in her P7 year that she started to receive specialist literacy input even though her dyslexia had been identified several years earlier. This was due to being on a waiting list for a specialist visiting service for a considerable length of time and a lack of learning support provision in the school.

She is now in S1 at a secondary school in an area of significant disadvantage yet is offered very little additional support. The school lost its PT Learning Support last session due to its falling roll and now has no learning support teachers and very few learning support/classroom assistants.

Until this session the 'Toe by Toe' reading programme, a widely utilised and effective programme for dyslexic children, was delivered to children at the school. This has ceased as a result of the departure of the PT Learning Support. Megan receives no specialist input to improve her reading and spelling skills and this will have an ongoing impact on her in adult life.

There is also very little in-class support for Megan and she is not even provided with a reader and scribe for assessments. Although able to understand verbally what she is being taught written tasks are often too difficult for her to tackle without help. Not surprisingly, from stating secondary school with great enthusiasm she is now very disenchanted. Her experience is the opposite of what it should be given the government's commitment to closing the gap and raising attainment.

As an ex Principal Teacher of Learning Support I have seen many children with a learning profile similar to Megan's thrive in secondary school - with appropriate support. In my experience such children require both a specialist literacy programme delivered in the Learning Support department several periods a week, and a combination of approaches to support access to the curriculum, ie in-class support, adaptation of resources and alternative methods of communication (recorded materials, reading and scribing etc.). In my experience (in Stirling) this level of support was routinely provided.

The level of support provided for Megan is so inadequate that it is likely that her school is in breach of its statutory responsibilities under the *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009* which require it to make appropriate provision for children and young people with additional support needs in order that they can benefit from school education. It seems to me that this is unlikely to be an isolated case and I would respectfully suggest that the enquiry take a detailed look at data on changes in the number of both learning support teachers and learning support assistants (the latter having various designations depending on the local authority)

ANON

I am all for including pupils in mainstream education if it's considered the best option for meeting their needs and is adequately supported.

The reality is that it is not adequately supported, particularly when the need is SEBD. The reality is many pupils are struggling to manage their behaviour in a mainstream setting, they are not feeling included when peers and parents are labelling them as troublemakers and don't want to play with them / have their child playing with them, the parents of these children feel judged by other parents and the child is not happy or coping. That is not inclusive for anybody involved!

Then the behaviour in class escalates, affecting everyone's attainment. Teachers are becoming very stressed out trying to manage the behaviour alongside trying to teach another 30 pupils. SMT are struggling to manage it as pressure to not suspend vulnerable pupils is put on HTs, however all pupils I've ever met with SEBD are vulnerable! So SMT can be left to deal with pupils refusing to follow instructions to keep themselves and others safe, we can't put a hand on them as we don't have restraint training and nor would we want to, however no other viable options are being offered. Parents of these children are often at a loss themselves what to do, so parental support is not usually an answer.

We then engage other services for support, but these services are all under-resourced and there can be a huge waiting list (e, g, CAMHS). When they finally get to see CAMHS, I've yet to meet a parent, child or teacher that felt their support useful!

In the midst of all that crisis, I've yet to find a pupil supported full time by an additional support needs assistant - they get a shared allocation which is never enough to cope with all the needs in a school. Also when ASNAs are off sick, there's rarely a replacement, so schools are stretched even more.

Basically pupils with SEBD need to fail for a considerable amount of time in mainstream before authorities will entertain a consideration of alternative placement. During all that time the pupil is struggling, stressed, ostracised and attainment is affected not only for the pupil but the entire class who are continually disrupted by the behaviour. Parental complaints about the pupil or the school's handling of it become constant. Staff are also stressed from trying to deal with it every day and feeling hopeless.

Even then when it is considered in the child's best interests to look at alternative provision, there is a shortage of spaces, so it's still not even possible.

We wonder why attainment has decreased in Scotland - could it be related to the inclusion policy that is not properly working or resourced.

ANON

I am a primary school teacher with 30 years teaching experience including 6 years as a specialist learning support teacher. There are not words to express how important Additional Support is to some children. When Renfrewshire Council disbanded the learning support team the children of Renfrewshire lost so much more than just the physical resources that ended up in a skip, but also the years of experience that the members of the team had. Since then I have seen children coming through the system that have been left struggling at every turn when I know that additional support would have made all the difference. As our current buzz words are "Raising Attainment" surely we should be looking at rebuilding a team of experts who are given the time and resources to help these struggling children to attain more from school.

The class teachers I have experience of working with are all very good and very dedicated but they do not have the time or expertise to provide these struggling children with the support that would make the difference. Throwing money at education for resources is not the answer. Experienced teachers who are allocated for learning support is the only way to make a long term difference.

ANON

I have been working in schools for 13 years, I have worked in special ed and mainstream and in my opinion, children with additional support needs need a smaller calmer environment, I worked in a class of 3 with 3 staff and it worked, I now work in mainstream with 30 kids and probably about 6 have additional support needs where all we are doing is letting down these children on a daily basis, especially the children who haven't got additional support needs...the kids with additional support needs can't cope with a large group of children and the demands that mainstream class brings, my job is impossible at times and very frustrating as I can't juggle all of this on a daily basis, I am all for inclusion when it works but with my experience and worked in a few mainstream schools this clearly does not work, we have no support from outside agencies, we are left on a daily basis just to get on with it and wing it, I am very sad that the government and education think that it's acceptable on a daily basis that education staff get abused and hit on a daily basis and when u send in

violence at work forms nothing gets done, no one comes from education to see if u r ok, your just a number,
I absolutely love my job but it's getting more and more harder and stressful every day and it's not somewhere I would like to continue if inclusion & education do not support you or help you, we are as classroom assistants totally drained and exhausted and very undervalued, I am lucky that I have great support from the management team and colleagues but I wasn't as lucky in a previous school, such a shame as the council are going to lose valuable workers, I would like head of education & inclusion to come into schools and actually see what we do and have to endure on a daily basis for a month at least then re-think where they are going wrong in not actually supporting the kids with additional support needs and staff, we are failing all of these kids on a daily basis

ANON

I am a primary school teacher based in a school in Aberdeenshire. I am writing to tell you of my views and experiences of Additional Support Needs (ASN) teachers in my school setting.

I have been teaching for 2-and-a-half years, and during that time I have found ASN teachers to be an invaluable resource; both to class teachers (new and experienced) and to children alike.

For teachers, they provide an experienced sounding board on particular learners in their class and are instrumental in helping teachers to support their pupils to access the curriculum. ASN teachers have a wealth of knowledge and access to resources which many teachers do not have; and so can help provide particular learners with suitable resources to help be included inside class and take part in other school activities.

For learners, ASN teachers make life-changing differences. Without ASN teachers, particularly for relatively new teachers like me, the experiences of learners with varying barriers to their learning would be severely impaired. I have had several learners in my classes over the years with very challenging behavioural issues (and addition to learning difficulties), and the ASN teacher in my school has been an invaluable support in providing resources and helping me develop routines and rules which in turn have helped these learners blend in with the rest of their class. I feel much better equipped to meet these learners' needs, particularly as such learners have recently been described by my local Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) as fast becoming "the norm" in my area's schools. This makes ASN teachers all the more important.

I am aware that there are shortages of ASN teachers in my area, which is concerning. I believe more needs to be done to recruit, train and retain ASN teachers so that they can continue to make an important difference to both teachers and children

ANON

As acting depute head of a primary school, the vast majority of my day is spent dealing with/ supporting/ supervising pupils with additional support needs, predominantly in the behavioural category. I am therefore unable to fully carry out the numerous important strategic duties I have without having to 'catch up' with them during evenings and weekends.

We do not have anywhere near enough pupil support assistants to support these children and those we do have are not given any training on how to support pupils who have additional support or behavioural needs (despite them asking for it). Entire classes are being disrupted due to inadequate support for these individual 'high tariff' pupils. Parents of other pupils within these classes are very unhappy that their child's education is suffering.

Teachers are experiencing dangerously high levels of stress due to these pupils and their behaviour and many are verbally and physically assaulted on a daily basis. The pace and challenge of learning is severely affected by the lack of support for these pupils. Entire classes are suffering due to lack of support for the minority.

The attainment gap will NOT be tackled unless we have enough, well trained pupil support assistants in class. This will allow particular pupils who need 1-1 support to have it, leaving the teacher to do their job and the class to be educated as they should be, without disruption.

For the price of a teacher we could employ 2 or 3 pupil support assistants. This would have an incredible impact on schools, staff, learning and attainment.

We need more staff. Teachers and/ or pupil support assistants with suitable training offered on how to support pupils with ASDs, trauma, PDA, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia.

You want to close the attainment gap? Listen to us who actually work in schools. We need more staff!

MAGGIE HODGE

I have worked as an ASN auxiliary in East Lothian primary schools for about 8 years. I tend to work one to one with pupils who need significant support in taking part in most mainstream class activities.

Positives -

Inclusion -

Allows child to be part of the community and access mainstream curriculum where possible. As important is the benefit to other pupils who gain an acceptance of and build relationships with children with additional/exceptional needs.

Special Activities-

ASN pupils get the chance to go to specialist activities - e.g. tailored swimming and sports sessions or horse riding.

Positive adaptations -

Sometimes minimal adaptations in class - for example visual timetables/specific seating arrangements - can make a big difference to those with additional support needs and can help other pupils too.

Support staff -

Essential for many pupils with more severe additional support needs. Staff can also be used to help support other needy pupils.

Attitudes -

Overall there is a very positive attitude towards children who need additional support. Everyone strives to have the child's best interests at heart.

Need to improve

Information on ASN pupils -

IEPs/handovers/general plans for pupils are often not completed/reviewed/updated/shared with support staff. This can lead to lack of continuity/progress for pupil. Each year it seems some staff are starting from scratch with a pupil - not aware of their abilities or behavioural issues.

Time is not available for support staff to liaise with/give feedback to class teachers.

Support staff are often very stretched and there are not enough staff to meet needs. There needs to be more realistic funding for ASN pupils.

Use of specialist knowledge/resources - need more input from ASN teachers, specialist bases and others with experience to improve on planning pupils learning plan. More specialist schools/bases?

More structured approach to "life skills" to prepare child for life in the community, help child progress with these skills and record ability.

How to deal with violent/ disruptive pupils. This seems to take up more and more of my time in my current post. On an almost daily basis I am dealing with runaways or having to restrain children so that they don't hurt other pupils or staff. Although in general I think inclusion is positive I feel some children are not able to cope with mainstream and would be better in a more supportive environment (maybe just temporarily). Disruptive and extremely needy pupils have a huge impact on the time lost in class. Inevitably this has an impact on the class's attainment and sometimes their emotional well-being.

ANON

I realise that I am a day late in submitting this email but I would appreciate it if my experiences and views may be considered.

I work in a large multicultural school in Glasgow. I teach a class one day a week and support for learning /EAL for 3 days. This is done on an individual or small group basis. I support children who have literacy and other difficulties which impact on their ability to access the curriculum. Many of these children can be quite disruptive in class but their behaviour would be classified as low level and manageable within the usual range of teacher strategies. This would be true of other children whom I don't support in the classroom.

In the past couple of years a number of children have come to our school with greater additional needs. I would like to focus on one of these children who is part of the class I teach and who I see twice a week in a small group.

K is on a part time timetable. He comes to school after lunch and is brought in by his mother. For two terms he screamed when he arrived and screamed at any setbacks within the classroom. He bit and pinched other children, kicked and hit the teacher and PSA. He was clearly extremely distressed. Throughout his time in class he drew circles in pen on paper. Any request to do anything else would cause intense rage and aggression.

His class teacher is very nurturing (as I hope I am – in fact we both have children with Asperger's) he has been assigned a PSA for his time in school (without which he would not manage) , various strategies have been deployed, revised, amended (following advice from psychologists and through building a relationship with him), timetables and activities have been altered to accommodate his needs and he is now in a place where he is less at risk of experiencing extreme distress. He participates more in oral work and is beginning to draw images other circles but I have been unable to teach him any more than his initial sounds. He remains unpredictable, is often very noisy (because he talks and shouts to himself) and will pinch or kick others in frustration. He is at his best in a small group setting (himself and 4 other children and a PSA) but this can only be provided twice a week.

From my experiences with K and seeing the behaviour of others in the school) I would make the following comments:

- Large classes can be distressing for children with certain additional needs - this is a factor that we as teachers cannot control
- It is IMPOSSIBLE to notice all the triggers for children's distress
- Some PSAs time is devoted exclusively to ASN children. There are almost 400 other children in the children
- PSAs do not have specialist training. PSA numbers have not been increased
- There will be many other children in a class who have significant difficulties (educational, emotional) but a child with Ks level of need can overshadow these
- Children who act out their distress as K does can cause a lot of anxiety for other children (Another child with additional needs started screaming in the same way as K - perhaps influenced by him)
- Strategies that may be particular to and effective for K can undermine whole class expectations ("How come he's allowed not to do any work?" or "If I act up may be I'll get a "reward" etc...
- How much are teachers expected to teach? Is it education or containment?

- There are no additional facilities (quiet room etc...) in a big, old Victorian school
- Small groups are clearly of most benefit
- We are not taught “restraining” techniques because we are not allowed to use them yet children run out of the classroom and may harm other children. Do we stand by?
- Evacuating the classroom, as we have been told to do, is extremely disruptive
- An inordinate amount of time is spent discussing children with additional needs. Our responsibility rests with ALL the children as far as is possible.
- Parents cannot be expected to understand the needs of a whole school. It is very important that the views of the teachers (who support the children in school) are heard.
- There are some classes (particularly infants) where the strain on teachers, who are expected to find their own resources, be creative and imaginative, tailor the curriculum to accommodate the choices and individual inclinations of their children whilst noticing the “triggers” and managing the intense challenges of some children with additional needs is almost unsustainable.

I apologise for the length of this email...although I could write a great deal more. When we attended a training session conducted by the Inclusion QIO who told us that the size of the classes didn't matter and that it was all about noticing triggers and developing strategies it was hard not to get very angry.

ANON

Having been a primary school teacher for almost 15 years, I cannot stress how valuable all ASN support is. While it is obviously essential for the pupils in need of the support, it is also extremely important to teachers, parents and the other pupils in the class.

Today there are definitely more and more children who need ASN support. However the availability of resources and staff with appropriate training is a worry and it is having a detrimental effect on everyone.

I strongly believe every primary school should have at least 1 full time SFL teacher AND full time ASN teacher with PSAs appropriately trained. I also think, to successfully deliver CfE to meet all children's needs, and the number of PSAs in schools must be increased.

Lastly, in order to benefit all pupils, teacher training at university must include ASN which will help inexperienced teachers entering the classroom. Every class now, without exception, has pupils with ASN needs.

I look forward to following the ASN discussions in parliament.

ANON

As a primary teacher (former ASN teacher) and parent of a child with ASN I feel very strongly about the current state of ASN in mainstream schools.

There is too little funding for support assistants and the time they get to spend with identified children is far too short. The ASN teachers are bogged down by meetings and paperwork and are not using their knowledge/skills/experience in the best way possible. ASN teachers have been stretched over too many clusters of schools whilst specialist ASN schools now only get pupils with extreme needs either

behavioural or medical whilst those with moderate needs are left floundering in mainstream schools without adequate support to thrive and flourish.

The policy and push for mainstream education for the majority of children with ASN is not manageable without adequate funding or training for existing class teachers and the provision of more support staff and as such is failing a large amount of children.

Policies and budgets for this area are obviously decided by people who are very far removed from the reality of trying to deliver an already overcrowded curriculum (and don't mention the numerous initiatives that keep getting added to the mix) to ALL children many of whom will have ASN in their education career. Those with ASN in mainstream cannot get their needs met fully until funding and training are improved.

ANON

I am a primary school teacher who works within an area of high deprivation in central Scotland. In the years that I have been working I have experienced severe cuts to staff hours which have the support for learning remit. With all the talk of ensuring equality for children from low income families and raising attainment I have been baffled and appalled that the only real approach that can raise attainment and meet the needs of children (carefully targeted small group support from a support for learning teacher) has been severally slashed. I work in the infant department with children who, each year, are presenting greater issues with phonological and numerical awareness. No amount of differentiated learning planned by the teacher can replace highly experienced support staff who can support these children when the teacher is working with other groups. Behavioural challenges in the classroom are becoming greater and greater as we have a generation brought up with tablets used as electronic babysitters. Without support in the classroom to manage extreme behaviours the teacher has to sacrifice large quantities of learning time trying to support these children. Local councils determined to keep these children in mainstream education are happy to sacrifice the learning of the rest of the class and the child involved. Meanwhile teachers feel dejected and defeated as no amount of careful planning can prevent extreme behaviours and meet these children's needs.

ANON

I have recently changed from being an ASN teacher (7 years over 2 establishments) to a learning support teacher within a mainstream primary school in a particularly deprived area. Firstly, my experiences as an ASN teacher are mostly positive. I worked with children whom had a variety of additional needs from moderate learning difficulties to nonverbal ASD. There were many challenges, particularly behavioural, but being in a small class situation with a high ratio of experienced PSA support we always ensured the pupils' needs were being met to our best ability. I left because our ASN department was changing to a behavioural support unit. Although there are clear overlaps having very street smart, volatile pupils, many of whom have experienced some form of physical or mental abuse in the same class as those with a mental age of 4 is not an effective set up for inclusive education. I consistently felt that I couldn't meet the needs of any never mind all of the pupils. For this reason I

changed to learning support teacher in a particularly deprived area and are saddened to say things are not much better. I could never have imagined the high number of additional needs mainstream teachers are trying to cater to on a daily basis (12 pupils with identified ASN in a P1 of 32). And with the pressure of data and performance improvement such children are not and never will be a priority. Pupils with additional needs don't show the same progression as Neuro typical children over the same timescale. Regardless of how much mainstream teachers try, they do not have the time and many admit the skills or support to meet such pupils needs. Our pupil support assistants are a fantastic asset although are regularly abused mentally and physically by pupils who are struggling to conform to a mainstream setting when they would flourish in a more appropriate setting.

I leave you very conflicted and down beat. I want to meet the needs of all these pupils but paperwork, assessments, results and mainstreaming as a form of inclusion stand in my way.

ANON

ASN are not being met in many cases. Class teachers are having to deal with a number of different needs within classes and this seems to keep rising with little additional training or support. Sfl teachers spend most of their time bogged down in paperwork and have less time to support an increasing number of learners in mainstream with ASN.

ANON

I am an Australian and Finnish citizen and I am thus abreast of what happens in these countries in comparison to what happens here.

Scotland is my home and there are many aspects in ASN education that I am proud of but there are so many fundamental problems.

Presumptive mainstreaming does not work. ASN pupils are not receiving an 'inclusive' education by merely being in the near proximity of their mainstream peers.

Pupils with SEBD and ASD are often not adequately catered for in a mainstream environment. There are not the staff nor resources to make it more inclusive.

These pupils often need a specialist provision that is simply not available. In rural Argyll and Bute; this is impossible.

The needs of all pupils need to be considered when a pupil with ASD or SEBD is placed in mainstream classes. Often their presence is extremely disruptive which is not what inclusion is all about. There needs to be alternative, specialist provision- and by this I mean properly equipped ASN bases in ALL schools.

ASN teachers are not adequately trained and those who are often used as to cover teacher absences rather than being able to do the intervention work that needs to be done.

The government needs to invest in ASN teachers, ASN specialists in ASD, SEBD and Dyslexia, Nurture Teachers and Home/school liaison teachers whom all can make a huge impact on the attainment gap. But these are always the first staff to get cut.

The work of the Education teams that work in the Local Authority in ASN is critical and needs to be protected. These people who work behind the scenes and support schools are absolutely intrinsic to GIRFEC. Swinney's notion that centralisation would streamline education in this respect is merely a poor attempt to save money by cutting critical roles.

Here's some of my experiences:

I've been hit, punched, bitten, shoved- and never have I had anyone in management ask if I'm ok. Is this part of the job?

I've done more physiotherapy and occupational therapy than any teacher should. All that for the bargain price of 1 ASN teacher.

I ate lunch with my pupils and helped to feed them and keep them safe EVERY SINGLE lunch time because the ASN assistants had to have a lunch break.

I've been left in a room with 4 ASN pupils with high needs- ALONE. Pupils that needed 1:1 but than don't get it. I've had to physically hold on to pupils with my arms and legs just so they don't run away.

I've fought for 18 months just to get a latch put on the door so pupils can't run away.

I have cried more tears and broken down with fear and anger; more than when I worked in mainstream.

The UNICEF Rights of the Child that underpins all of this, is contravened on a daily basis in the realm of ASN. These children are ignored.

Why is there no specialised, differentiated version of the CfE?

Why is there no detailed guidance from Education Scotland as to what constitutes reasonable ASN provision?

Why is ASN not a priority? MORE money needs to be spent creating an education system that our most vulnerable children deserve.

Why do I even have to write this in 2017?

I am willing to advise the government on ASN issues and I will even do it for FREE. Invite me and I will come.

ANON

I am a primary school teacher, currently dealing with ASN children in my composite class of 25, and there are many more in other classes on my school.

Key things to me seem to be:

1. If you want inclusion to work it needs to be properly resourced and staff properly trained. There are not enough PSA's - these staff are concerned with containing and restraining difficult ASN pupils. The previous role of a LSA was to support children who need support with their (often mild) learning needs. These children now get no support.

Classes need to be smaller to accommodate this new mix of needs.

More considered decisions also need to be made about whether it is actually appropriate for an individual child to be in mainstream education.

2. Reduce the number of curricular outcomes that teachers are currently dealing with and subjects to the basics, and provide a national bank of assessment resources that are easy to access. This would dramatically reduce the teacher workload, and ensure that learning was deeper, rather than surface.

Primary schools should be only focussing on the basics.

I also don't think the Scottish government focus on poverty is the issue .If it was financial poverty how can Africa and India produce well educated kids?

The issue is moral and value poverty at home for many kids .Money should be spent via social work into the more deprived homes, not schools to be effective.

Unfortunately money to provide support at homes has been cut . All support agencies to schools have been cut, it is very difficult to obtain support from ed psychs etc in school - and their support is desperately needed.

My concern is the over emphasis on trying (and failing) to get it right for a ASN few , but in doing so means we are definitely not getting it right for the majority . We have a duty to do that for all , positive discrimination towards the more demanding children is skewing that .

Even though I try to explain conditions to the class, I do think many children feel things aren't fair.

The brutal reality is the majority of kids who are most likely to make an economic contribution to society are being side lined for those who may not ever make any economic contributions

ANON

I have been teaching for over 20 years in one of Glasgow's most deprived areas. In that time I've seen many changes in education some have had positive effect on wellbeing and learning and others not so much.

The principles of GIRFEC are sound but impossible to achieve with the presumption to mainstream which is now being enforced upon schools and children. Children with ASN needs used to have a designated assistant who worked with that child within the school environment which enabled them to work towards achieving their potential academically and socially. In schools today teachers are now sitting with multiple children with diagnoses that require individualised support but in many cases don't have any PSA support at all.

I have been on numerous ASN courses and have found working with ASN children to be extremely rewarding but it has come at a price to my health , my work life balance and the academic and social developmental of other children in the class.

Staff at my primary school are verbally and physically assaulted almost on a daily basis and two support members have had to be treated for broken/ fractured bones after violent outbursts whilst trying to protect other children. Schools should be a safe place for all children and staff.

Even when parents have voiced that they wish their children to be placed in special provision as they know their needs would be met there as they have the manpower and resources they have been told that there aren't places and they need to stay in mainstream. After a couple of years we eventually have secured alternate provision for a small number of children who by all accounts seem to be happier, calmer and thriving in their new learning environment. Meanwhile the rest of their classmates left behind have missed out in vast chunks of their learning due to the daily violent outbursts when they had to abandon lessons and leave their classroom in order to keep them safe whilst the room was being trashed.

If you want to close the attainment gap then give every child the opportunity to go to an educational establishment that best fits their needs and is equipped and resourced adequately to do so.

Let's start adhering to the principles of GIRFEC and giving all children the support they deserve instead of councils using the principles of inclusion as an excuse to cut budgets and save money.

ANON

I am a teacher in a mainstream primary school which prides itself on its inclusion.

What I have noticed over the last few years is a rise in the number of ASN pupils with significant language, communication and behavioural difficulties, and a decline in the support available to all pupils in the classroom. Although autistic pupils are receiving some specialist support, pupils with other difficulties (such as dyslexia) are not.

In the past, Educational Psychologists would complete assessments for difficulties such as dyslexia. Now it falls on the ASN teacher who perhaps only visits a small rural school for half a day a month. ASN teachers receive limited training and, in my view, the majority are not qualified to complete these tasks.

As a teacher, I have received no formal training for dyslexia and associated classroom strategies. My ASN teacher is very busy and has limited time to share. In the past, these pupils would have been guaranteed help from a specialist teacher. They are being lost in the classroom.

All support is going on high-tariff pupils and the support others receive is dependent on their teacher - his or her knowledge, experience, interest, time, effort and energy. This has become a lottery for the pupil.

Myself and my colleagues are feeling tired and stressed as we are very conscious we are not getting it right for every child despite our best intentions

ANON

Presumption of mainstream has to stop. It is badly affecting our children with ASN and our pupils without ASN. My experience so far:

One P1 class of 23 has 7 children on the autistic spectrum. The only support is the class teacher and infrequent PSA time. The result, the children with Autism are not getting their needs met. The children without are being taught in a noisy, disruptive environment. They are unable to be properly taught and educated as teacher time is taken up with major behaviour issues. Teacher is over planning, over stressed and under supported. Opportunities offered are scaled down as children cannot be pushed and challenged. One child with no diagnosis still can't write her name! 3/4 of the way through p1!

Last year one pupil was identified as needing support in nursery, no support given. In P1 his violent behaviour caused staff members to wear wrist guards, shin guards and breast plates! Three members of staff had to go to hospital, one for a broken toe, two for tetanus injections after being bitten. EAL teacher was taken off timetable to supervise child so no EAL support given to any other children for a year! Two members of staff had to be with him at all times! Other pupils terrified to come to school in case they were hurt. Other pupils visibly upset at seeing staff attacked. 4 years old and scared to come to school...shocking! By p2 he was placed in ASN school, where he continues to be violent, no progress has been made. There is discussion about him being moved to another school to manage him. So many missed opportunities for this child, possibly p3 before he gets the proper support yet this was identified in nursery! What a disgusting thing we have done to this child's life and education.

P1 pupil with severe autism, no verbal communication told by ASN School to sit separately sectioned off from the rest of the mainstream class. What on earth did she or the other pupils learn that year while she sat there with a member of staff screaming, twirling around, playing with toys?

Last year parent realised her p7 child would not cope well in S1 and wanted to school to do something! However he had been offered an alternative placement in p4 and she refused. Authority did not work hard enough to explain why he needed supported elsewhere. He basically spent 7 years of school doing the same work on a different jotter or worksheet as he was unable to retain information.

Older pupils coming to school with weapons. Running out of class. Absconding from school. Threatening other pupils, staff and parents and yet they are brought back to school the next day to be taught!

P7 pupils crying and hiding under tables and in cupboards because their autism is so extreme.

ASN schools have smaller classes, more staff, better training and they can focus on meeting the needs of their pupils. Dreadful that this is stopped and we now have inclusion on the cheap. No one is benefiting from this least of all the pupils! There are more incidents but I think you get the idea.

Also the majority of these were logged as incident reports which were never followed up.

ANON

I have been working as an ASN auxiliary for over 6 years. I worked as a primary school teacher in England and Scotland before a break to care for my 3 children full time.

ASN provision in school is at breaking point with many staff feeling increasingly over-stretched and frustrated.

Here are my thoughts-

1. Why does the predicted needs budget not provide ASN children with support that allows them total access to the curriculum?- In my current school there is a Primary 1 pupil with Noonan's Syndrome and a P2 pupil with global delay. Under the predicted needs budget they receive funding for just 50% of the school week. Curriculum issues aside these children are unable to go to the toilet, move around the classroom and eat and drink without support. These are fundamental human rights- problems these children face before they can even begin to learn. These children deserve to be funded for 100% of the time they are at school.

2. Schools need fast, easy to access emergency funding to support unexpected needs regardless of whether that child has a diagnosis or is in the process of being diagnosed. Currently in my school, staffs have to be removed from their usual duties of support to support a child whose behaviour has unexpectedly deteriorated and has become a danger to himself and others. The school has applied for and been unsuccessful in gaining funding. Several members of staff have been physically injured by this child. He has a diagnosis of Asperger's.

3. Every Primary School (like secondary schools) should have a dedicated councillor/guidance "teacher". A constant go-to staff member (not a class teacher) available to children, staff and parents. In my experience many children with issues around anxiety and attachment fail to engage with the curriculum. Regular contact with a known adult helps significantly reduce anxieties and helps build resilience and develop a growth mind set. Also nips deteriorating behavior in the bud more quickly.

4. I support the principle of inclusion but feel many children would benefit from a broader range of educational provision- small local units staffed by experienced teachers and support staff. These can address a wide range of issues in a less traditional way. Units which mixed times of physical activity with short periods of concentration for example.

Early intervention is an absolute must.

A quicker diagnostic process would help enormously

Extra support for teachers during diagnostic process would be welcomed

ANON

POSITIVE ASPECTS

I think that it is important that children with Additional Support Needs are involved in mainstream schools as much as possible.

Not only is this good for the children with ASN to feel a proper part of the community, it is also important for the children in mainstream to be able to show compassion and understanding towards these individuals and I feel that the opportunity to develop friendships is very important.

The school that I work in, I believe, is one of a kind in Scotland. We have classes for mainstream provision as well as classes for children with ASN and we use opportunities to mix and match the children where we can. When I did work at the Primary 1 stage, I had boys from the ASN classes join some of my groups for reading and I had one boy who came to join a group for maths work. We also have a range of children with Additional Support Needs who have places in our mainstream classes and PSAs are timetabled to support them where possible - I'm not aware of any problems, except for the children that we get who have behavioural problems rather than health ones.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS

The problem with the way inclusion is being implemented is that teachers are too often left to cope with children who need extra support in the classroom, with no extra provision put into place to support this - with teacher shortages, often there is little back up support from the management team in the school who are otherwise busy elsewhere.

Presently I work in the nursery setting and we have had to deal with children on the autistic spectrum who need one on one support for a good proportion of the time, yet no extra staff to help ease the pressure that this situation presented. Last year, we had a lot of children who needed to be helped with toilet training and that again took a lot of time away from giving time to the majority of the class.

When I had a Primary 1 class a few years ago, one of my pupils was a boy with autism - I was left to cope with his needs on my own - on the occasion that my Head Teacher came to monitor one of my lessons and experienced the amount of support that this one child needed, her only comment to me was that she didn't know how I coped! I do feel that we need to be lead from the top and supported by our management teams rather than left to flail. Indeed, I had no training in working with children with such needs when I went through college and wonder if there is anything in place to aid students at present? When I became a teacher, it was a choice to work with children with Additional Needs - now it is considered the norm, which is the correct way to go, I believe, but the training needs to be understood and put into place.

The school that I work in often gets children put to our mainstream provision when other schools cannot cope with particular children any more. Last year, we had a female child who attacked staff and had to have two members of staff timetabled to be with her (who were taken from their normal classroom support duties). She

kicked one PSA in the face during one episode where she lost control of her emotions and our DHT was often scratched, kicked or hit by her. Eventually, she was taken away from her parents and fostered out with our area and has since moved school. It does feel like teachers and PSAs are expected to be abused in such a way by children with behaviour difficulties in particular. Although we have systems in place to log these incidents occurring, it does feel like it is simply a paper crunching exercise with little (if any) action taken to protect the staff involved. It can be a little soul destroying.

AN ADDED PROBLEM MY SCHOOL HAS

Our attainment results are displayed for the whole school - yet we have 7 classes of children with ASN from primary 1 through to primary 7 along with 15 mainstream classes - many of the children with ASN are still working at the Early Stage of Curriculum for Excellence which affects our attainment results. To compare our school's results with the others in the city is somewhat unfair as there is no other school like ours in the council area. It also makes it difficult for us as teachers to compare ourselves with other schools and evaluate if we are on course with what we are doing or not. I have asked my management team if it would be possible for us to split our attainment scores to that for mainstream and a separate score for the ASN side, but I've been told that we are one school, so we have one set of results.

ANON

Inclusion, dealing with ASN within a mainstream setting –
Challenges

- Children in class with complex needs without any support disrupting the class and preventing children from engaging in their learning, not enabling children to progress their learning. This is impacting directly on not closing the attainment gap.
- Constant disruptive behaviour without clear consequences, lack of a clear behaviour policy and appropriate sanctions. Reluctance to enforce any policy already in place.
- Lack of interagency working and poor interagency communication.
- Class teachers should be enabled to attend Child Planning Meetings (CPMs) as they are the ones with the day to day knowledge and relationship with the child.
- Lack of action arising from concerns raised in CPMs and Wellbeing Concern Forms and concerns raised at The Reporter. Poor experiences with The Reporter as there are different people on the panel each time a family and child attend. Making it difficult for the panel to see any progress or lack of progress.
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) support disjointed, no contact, feedback given to class teachers, liaison time not factored in. EAL provision not meeting the needs of learners, EAL provision needs urgent review.
- Absence of support for refugees, emotional wellbeing, mental health issues, little or no EAL support.

- Added pressures on teachers coping with children's immediate learning needs in the class, liaison time with different agencies, completing Wellbeing Concern forms, filling out notes for CPMs and preparing notes for The Reporter, preparing resources such as social stories, visual timetables, differentiated work.
- No liaison and planning time with Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs)
- Staff being physically assaulted on a daily basis by children within a main stream setting.
- Children being denied the right to an education because of disruptions in their classrooms. These disruptions are leading to children not being able to realise their full potential.

On a positive note –

I have had a brilliant experience and have been lucky to work with a P7 child this session. He is in a wheelchair and has many additional support needs. He has a timetable of visiting specialists from physiotherapists to occupational therapists. He has input from Support for Learning in school and has a Pupil Support Assistant full time with him every day at school. He has a whole array of equipment and daily exercises and the use of a dedicated laptop. His needs are varied but they are being met fully within the main stream setting.

He attended a week long P7 camp with his class mates and with the right planning, support and facilities it was an absolute success. He experienced success in every activity at camp from tree climbing to canoeing. He later confided in me that camp was the best week of his life.

ANON

I am a teacher in a school for young people with Complex Learning Needs. I am happy for my statement to be included in the report, but would prefer to remain anonymous.

I have nine years' experience working in special schools. For eight of those years I have worked with pupils with Complex Learning Needs. I love what I do. Although I enjoyed my years in mainstream education, I find my current sector rewarding, meaningful and stimulating, and have no desire to ever leave it. However, in the past three to five years, it has become increasingly difficult to do my job in any meaningful way. Staffing levels in particular have become increasingly challenging. My local authority does not, as policy, replace classroom assistants when they are off, whether for illness or for a planned absence such as maternity leave. Note – this is not a question of being unable to find cover; the policy is that they will not attempt to cover these absences. All pupils are presumed to need 3 to 1 support from classroom staff. This is irrespective of needs, challenging behaviours, health conditions etc. It has become impossible to get any additional support for children in the CLN sector in our Local Authority over and above this three to one: GIRFEC apparently does not apply to them, every child is presumed to require an equal level of support. This means that head teachers are forced to allocate more staff to the more challenging pupils, in an attempt to keep everyone safe; the actual education of pupils is a secondary concern. Inevitably, pupils who do not present a safety risk are disadvantaged, and their learning and progress suffers greatly. Classes are much

bigger than makes sense for the needs of individuals, and challenging behaviours are triggered by pupils being in inappropriate environments. Staff and pupils are regularly assaulted and injured, leading to increased staff absence, and an exacerbated problem. Staff shortages mean that crucial curricular areas and activities such as physiotherapy, PE and Work Experience are regularly cancelled. I know of one young man who did not have crucial physio for an entire year because of staffing shortages. When you consider that the funding for the attainment gap is not reaching the CLN sector, it becomes clear that what we are doing is not actually regarded as education. I'm not sure if it's even seen as babysitting.

The CLN sector is a forgotten and vulnerable section of Scottish Education. CfE really doesn't cater for it, as many of our pupils will never reach the Objectives in Level 1, yet it is what we must follow (and track!) nonetheless. The new National Qualifications actually reduced the number of courses available at level 1. Fewer and fewer FE colleges are catering for kids with this level of support need (and once they leave school, they are not catered for at all: they cannot attend without the level of support given by the schools, but Social Work will not fund this level of support once they leave.)

Pupils in the CLN sector are much more likely to come from a disadvantaged home environment: our kids are more likely to experience poverty and deprivation; there is a higher instance of families with English as an additional language; parents are more likely to have learning difficulties or disabilities themselves. Parents of these youngsters are also, often, exhausted by the challenges of caring for their kids, and by navigating the very complex and frustrating systems of education and social care. For all of these reasons, this is a parent group which is significantly less likely to make a fuss, to stand up and fight for the educational rights of their kids. This, and their smaller numbers, makes it easier for local authorities to ignore them, and to focus resources on the more articulate parents of more able children.

I would dearly love to see government ministers and senior executives spend a few days in a CLN school – not one that has recently had a load of money spent on it, but one which is struggling to survive with inadequate toileting facilities, small, cramped classrooms, no gym hall and an exhausted and demoralised staff. It would be wonderful to know that our kids are not completely invisible.

ANON

I am writing this as both a parent of a child with autism and learning needs and as a primary school teacher.

Views on Additional Support Needs provision in Scotland's Schools

I believe that the provision for children with Additional Support Needs in Scotland's schools is inadequate and does not fulfil our GIRFEC obligations. There are number of factors which contribute to this. Due to the limited number of Special Needs School places and Language Units and the increasing school population there are an increasing number of pupils with substantial additional needs who are being placed in mainstream schools with little or no additional support. The practice of

placing such children in a mainstream setting in a large class with limited PSA time and a teacher who has between 24 and 32 other pupils to educate is extremely unhelpful. It leads to a substandard education for the children with additional needs, who are often left to do anything that will keep them happy and quiet and a disrupted education for all of the other pupils in the class who have to try to ignore the behaviour of these pupils when they become bored/ distressed. Even when pupils with additional needs have assigned hours, the training of the PSAs who work very closely with them is basic. The best PSAs that I have come across are able to work well with their assigned pupils because of personal experience with children with additional needs. The system sets children up to fail rather than ensuring success by providing the highest level of support and then phasing this back as the pupil becomes more able and confident. The provision in Special Needs schools for children with Additional Needs is varied and also often not appropriate to their needs. This is not due to any lack of enthusiasm on the part of teaching staff, who do a very difficult job with kindness and dedication. However, they are tied to delivering a curriculum which does not cater for children who have a high level of learning needs and/or moderate to severe autism.

These children are often working at the cognitive level of a pre-school child. They still need to learn skills that are basic to everyday life, such as being able to ask to go to the toilet, being able to attend to an adult and follow simple directions, being able to communicate with others and being able to regulate their emotions and reactions to distress. They require a large amount of practice to learn these new skills. However, teachers are not able to concentrate on teaching these skills as they are required to 'give children exposure/experience' of subjects such as RME, Social Studies, Sciences and Modern languages. This is a complete waste of time for these children and their teachers. Being in a room while a subject is being covered does not ensure that any learning takes place. It is only when a child is engaged and has the required level of understanding that they can access material that is being taught. Trying to teach a child who does not follow simple instructions and cannot communicate their most basic needs how to say 'cat' in French is ludicrous. However, teachers in Special Educational Schools still find themselves trying to cover various curricular subjects in some manner in order to comply with Curriculum for Excellence requirements. Most teachers in Special Needs Schools would welcome a change in the curriculum they were required to teach to one that was more focussed on functional daily living skills, communication and social skills. There are many programmes that would be far more effective and useful for children with more severe additional support needs, such as the Essential Skills for Living Curriculum.

Own Experiences

As a parent of a child with autism and more severe learning needs I feel that my son

has been badly let down by the educational provision that he has received. The schools he has attended have been very caring and flexible with him and he has received a high level of care. However, he has not learnt a great deal since starting school, and most of what he has learnt has been outside of school. As I have said above, much of this is due to the curriculum that his teachers are required to follow. Part of the reason he has not made a great deal of progress is also a lack of training in effective techniques for teaching children with autism. The most recent SIGN guidelines have recommended the use of behavioural techniques for teaching communication and functional skills and Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) for reducing behaviours which are a barrier to learning. Yet there is no general training in ABA in Scotland, it is limited to small pockets such as training delivered by a small charity called Tailor Ed in individual schools. A large amount of research indicates that ABA is particularly effective for children with autism and learning difficulties and it is used as a matter of course in countries such as America, Canada, Finland, Sweden Australia and New Zealand and increasingly in specialist schools in England.

In summary, based on my experiences as a teacher and as a parent, I would argue that all Special Needs Schools in Scotland should be delivering a Communication and Functional Skills based curriculum, using Applied Behaviour Analysis techniques to teach. Only once a child has learnt the skills necessary for a dignified life with some level of independence should they begin to work on curricular skills. There should be an increase in the number of Special Needs Schools and Language Units and there should be much better training for PSAs working to include a child with additional needs in a mainstream setting. Children with ASN in a mainstream setting should also be given a fully supportive number of hours of PSA time.

ANON

My background is that of a very experienced practitioner in the field of Additional Learning Needs. I have worked in Early Years in both mainstream and specialist provisions, similarly in Primary provisions and in Secondary school provisions for autism and complex learning needs.

I am concerned that children and young people are no longer receiving the support that they truly need and deserve, as promulgated in Getting It Right for Every Child, despite the hard work and dedication of staff.

If we wish all children to achieve in the Four Capacities there is a need for recognition at a national level that there is a significant financial implication. Pupil Equity Funding aimed at closing the attainment gap leaves standalone provisions for pupils with Additional Learning Needs in an anomalous position. This funding can be used to enhance opportunities for success and achievement but quantifying this in terms of National Qualifications and leaver destination statistics would be an erroneous activity. The gap for these children and young people relates not solely to

academic attainment but also to achievement and equity in life experiences and life chances which are more readily available to their peers without disabilities.

I believe that the drive towards teachers being qualified to Masters level could ensure improved levels of specialism in additional learning needs becoming 'essential' for those wishing to work in this field rather than 'desirable'. Similarly, support for learning workers should receive better initial training and there should be a minimum qualification or Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning to ensure that they are as well trained as possible. Improved job status and greater remuneration for support for learning workers would make a vast improvement to the quality of Additional Learning Needs provisions.

Successful teaching and learning, in specialist standalone provision, can only take place when enabled by suitably trained support for learning workers as an integral part of staff team. They are dedicated to the care and wellbeing of the children and young people; however, many receive injuries at work. The cumulative effect has a detrimental impact on them personally; and on the running of a school as they require to be deployed in classes where there are lower levels of challenging behaviour. This impacts on remaining staff who spend more time in classes where the risk of challenging behaviour and possible injury is increased. Also, there can be long periods of absence as staff recover both physically and psychologically. Currently, such periods of absence are not covered by a replacement support for learning worker. Coupled with normal absences due to common winter illnesses schools can be understaffed by anywhere between 4 to 8 support for learning workers at any one time. This gives rise to a significant reduction in a school's ability to deliver appropriate support to children and young people so that access to learning and teaching experiences meet the highest standards.

As a result of national austerity, staffing levels have been reduced. Formerly, staffing additionally to meet extraordinary levels of need was more readily available. This practice is much less prevalent, adding to the current burden for existing staff.

Equity

Young people with additional learning needs require greater levels of support than their peers to access meaningful learning experiences especially in Senior Phase, e.g. to attend Further Education college as part of the S5 / S6 curriculum. The same holds true for working with other third sector partners who deliver learning or work experience opportunities for our young people. In order to deliver an equitable senior phase greater levels of staffing are required.

SQA NQs

The new qualifications at National 1 and National 2 in conjunction with Personal Achievement Awards provide a good range of subjects and learning experiences for young people with significant learning difficulties including the most dependent young people. They articulate well to the learning activities offered in the Broad General Education.

Parent Councils Submissions

Pencaitland Primary School Parent Council Sub Group.

Strengths of Educ Establishments in supporting additional support needs in schools.

- Children attend school and therefore a number of children can be worked with in one setting by a specialist visiting. This means children do not need to access unfamiliar settings to gain access to the service.
- School staff can build experience and share knowledge / support class teacher.
- Transitions can be tailored for children with additional support needs.

Challenges.

- Lack of specialist knowledge.
- Staff / pupil ratios in school are not set around children with additional support needs. Lack of working with parents / carers including early conversations around concerns / red flags within education system.
- Insufficient training for school staff in recognising and how to support children whether other ASN supports in place or not.
- Lack of confidence in recognizing early signs.
- Lack of confidence in approaching subject with parents / carers when no diagnosis is in place.
- Lack of appropriate environments whether a relaxation room / zone, areas in room to support and so forth.

Continue / Do Better. (Differences between schools and teacher approaches exist)

- Educational Establishments should create and develop very strong relationships with family. Include siblings within school and close friends of children with ASN.
- Recognise fully the wide range of Additional Support Needs and investigate fully when concerns are raised, including by parents. This MUST be supported by specialist input.
- Interventions should be put in place as early as possible. Both in child's life and in each school year.
- Transition and handovers from one member of teaching staff to another would have best effect by inviting parent / carer to attend or submit views (needs) in writing. This has to be embedded into practice.
- Each child in Education Setting has to feel safe, valued, cared for (loved) and respected, which means staff have to be supported both internally and externally.
- Maximise open door policy and invitation of parents/carers to support, particularly in Nursery and Early Years, to build strong relationships, (helps to improve communication) – continue to build and prioritise these “working with” principals. Ensure staff feel correct in raising concerns (talk with school management first) in confident and open manner – also that they are clear on not declaring or suggesting diagnosis but creating a 2-way communication around strengths and weaknesses. Work with parents/carers to build a clear picture of each child in their setting but develop observations further.
- Additional Support Needs are complex and often difficult to detect / understand, or fit into mainstream schooling. They are often variable also.

- Better training is required to understand differences between immaturity, under-stimulation for gifted children (who may also be immature in some areas of development) and a child trying to cope with an environment unsuited to their needs. i.e. If the child was in a different learning environment, with different opportunities, there would be no ASN as such.
- A fully play based infant department – with staff supported and confident / trained in delivering curriculum for excellence through scaffolding learning. (This will link directly to Local Authority and Scot Gov supports).
- Ensure referrals for support are prompt, early and comprehensive.
- Ensure parents / carers are fully included in creating clear pathways to better learning experiences.
- Create individual approaches to learning to meet childrens' needs. (Work with strengths and weaknesses of child and insights of family members / child pre specialist services or Individual plans).
- Work with whole school approach, with parent/carer support – to ensure other pupils and staff are aware of ASN needs of child (whether temporary or long-term) to enhance relationships and inclusion as one of the most difficult situations for parents / carers and the children is feeling isolated and alone. This would include office, janitorial and dining hall staff.

Local Authority.

Should Continue:

- To provide CPD opportunities and ensure all staff have regular training opportunities.
- Provide budget to each school for additional support needs and predictable needs.
- To support schools with Educational Psychologists.
- To develop effective pathways to support external and interconnected to school.
- To ensure specialist services are available to all settings.
- To ensure staff are encouraged to share good practice and ask questions / ask for help.
- Consult with Head Teachers and Deputies re needs of staff in supporting diverse needs.
- Develop specialist teams and knowledge; children's well-being, educ psychologist, communication / speech and language, links to health professionals also.
- SAIEY / SAI (Staged Assessment and Intervention [Early Years]) Approach.
- Support development of Co-ordinated Support Plan.
- Support bases and specialist school provision along with Child and Family Centre.
- Share of excellent practice in and out of authority, and roll out.
- Team Teach / Behavioural training for all staff to help deal effectively with situations when young people feel unable to cope and manage their emotions and behaviour.
- Ensure no child is left without adequate / good support regardless of fitting criteria for ASN worker or plan.

Do Better:

- Work with schools and associated specialists to improve provision.
- Consult with children re needs.
- Work with schools and associated professionals to create optimal CPD training.
- To ensure support staff are trained and are fully aware of how to support children both in class and in break times.
- Compulsory CPD for teaching staff covering Additional Support Needs – building confidence and assurance in ensuring open approaches and encouraging staff to build strong relationship with child and with family.
- Develop excellent practice for holistic approach.
- Create a play-focused approach to all children until age of 7 to support key skills for learning, inclusion and well-being.
- Create whole school approaches for use by all children and particularly those with ASN – dyslexia friendly. Valuable Play opportunities and choices for all free time. Proactive approaches to dining room experiences. Teacher rotation for extended break times – to observe children in this different and less managed time.
- To invest in provision for additional support needs throughout schooling as an economical and moral responsibility.
- To research and develop excellent practice throughout East Lothian.
- To ensure all teams developing policy and strategy for East Lothian are highly informed and have specialist understanding of both ASN and of Education.
- Create pathways to protect children with ASN in times of change which increases vulnerability and creates barriers in education and to well-being.
- Prioritise the needs of the child, not just educationally, but with understanding of the power held over child's well-being and life, through working intensively with parents / carers and appropriate specialists.
- Presenting case for increased budgets to support all above from wider budgets – particularly relating to GIRFEC, SHANARRI and Raising Attainment / Reducing the Attainment Gap. Income does not relate to all ASN, therefore multiple-deprivation statistics are not key driver to targeting help and supports.
- Ensure children with complex support needs can be cared for and educated within local authority effectively and avoid penalising costs of support sourced in other regions.
- Work with other local authorities to increase affordable provision through specialist services and establishments.
- Increase capacity through investing in supporting professional teams.
- Develop clear and monitored processes where all professionals, all assessments and their findings, including those from out with local authority are noted and embedded into planning for school provision. Where assessments are carried out, the assessment and outcome must be shared formally with parents/carers and with professionals also involved in child's care, education and well-being.
- To create an open table for discussion in settings and an Attachment Led practice throughout East Lothian.

- To share with parents an effective route to support and help, along with understanding of local authority roll in facilitating and ensuring effective support.

Scot Gov.

Continue

- Provide support through legislation, policy and strategies to support children and young people with Additional Support Needs.
- To ensure growing budgets for the provision in educational settings.
- To ensure that teacher training covers both Early Years child development and Additional Support Needs insights and understanding for all commonplace conditions and needs.
- To learn from other models internationally which work with inclusive approaches to education.
- To create a bank of specialists to deliver CPD for educational settings and ensure that handbooks are available to all staff with basics in recognising different ASNs, key behaviours and actions to be aware of, lines of communication are improved and improving practice and confidence in working with ASN.
- To ensure that any class with more than one child with identified ASNs, but which does not have additional support staff for any child, be supported with additional class support. This is clearly in the best interests of all the children in that class and is the minimum level of support required.
- Children with needs of physical nature, even as simple as urinating without full control, have to be treated with respect and care. Approaches based on Child Protection solely do not deliver this and is a negative experience for a child regardless of Additional support needs; but for a child who is likely to experience this more than once due to medical issue, immature bladder control, anxiety or any other need must be cared for tenderly and professionally straight away. Insisting children remove all wet clothing, dressing in clothing in which they feel uncomfortable, dealing with embarrassment at times and so forth can create a very negative environment for schooling. For an adult to deal with this fully, in a class setting, is impossible with no support in the classroom. This is the simplest commonplace experience that comes to mind at time of writing comments.

Additional Comments:

Teachers are seen to be key professionals for Educ Settings, but generally unprepared and untrained to deal with job given of balancing class needs when ASN is present in class.

Parents and Carers find it very difficult to obtain help in many cases. Often taking years to make little progress.

Stability in school for child with ASN is vitally important.

Not all reports from Specialists are made available to parents.

Staff often wait for parents / carers to come to them re a worry or concern about ASN being present.

One class teacher alone in class, is not sufficient to deal with any ASN children.

Stockbridge Primary parent Council

We are writing on behalf of Stockbridge Primary School Parent Council. We welcome the opportunity to submit our views to the Scottish Parliamentary Education and Skills Committee on behalf of our school community.

Stockbridge Primary School aims to be a truly inclusive school ensuring that all children are able to learn, feel safe, make friends and take part in all aspects of school life. Both the school and the Parent Council feel strongly that children who require additional support should have access to the right support to ensure they are able to reach their fullest potential.

However due to significant cuts to school budgets over recent years, we feel the school is being put under significant pressure to meet children's additional support needs without adequate resources. Within our school population we have a number of children with complex needs and we feel these children's needs are met well within the school. However we are concerned that children with less complex but still significant needs (such as learning or emotional, social and behavioural difficulties) are not able to be supported as fully as is desirable. For example, previously the school has offered PSA-led circle of friends groups but can no longer offer this due to insufficient PSA staffing. Likewise, the school can no longer take advantage of support from the dyslexia support team delivering individual programmes as these require ½ hr per day 1:1 input from a PSA, for which the school does not have resource.

Through our Parent Council meetings, we are aware that the school prioritizes support for learning but this results in a continuing overspend on additional support for learning staffing which is a sure indication that adequate provision is not being made to meet the needs of the learning population. This also results in significant shortfalls in funding for other important parts of the school budget namely IT and learning materials. We have also been made aware that referral times for outside agencies such as Speech & Language and Occupational Therapy can be long, which adversely affects those pupils awaiting support.

As you will be aware the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2004 states that "It is the duty of education authorities to make adequate and efficient provision for additional support needs as is required by the child and young person" and that this education should be directed to the "development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential". The Act is also very clear that a child can have an additional support need for any reason and that these duties apply not only to those children with a formal diagnosis or condition.

We are deeply concerned that the current mechanism for allocating support for learning resources is inadequate and adversely affects the children in our school most in need of support. Depriving children of adequate support flies in the face of both the legal duties mentioned above but also the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child.

We also want to raise our concern about how these budget restraints can be put in place at a time when the Scottish Government's main educational focus is on raising attainment levels. It is only fair that children with additional support needs are able to access the support they need to benefit from the efforts of their dedicated teaching staff to raise attainment.

Whilst we appreciate the significant expenditure the Scottish Government has been made through the Attainment Challenge Fund and the Pupil Equity Fund the formula for distributing this money has not led to a significant increase to funding to our school. It also does not take account of the level of need within the school. We believe that meeting the needs of pupils who require additional support for learning must be seen as a priority for both the Scottish Government and local authorities. Additional resources geared towards meeting the needs of each school's actual pupil population is required

Stoneyhill Primary School Parent Council

I refer to your email of 3 February 2017 inviting views from parents on the above issue. I hope that the following statements are useful to the Committee.

The needs of every pupil at our school is very personally important to us - indeed, it is at the heart of why we devote our free time to the parent council of our children's school.

We believe that every child should be nurtured to achieve, and approaches such as collaborative learning, where every participant has a vital role and children support each other to achieve a shared goal regardless of ability, are hugely beneficial and supportive of equality for all learners.

GIRFEC is at the forefront of our school ethos with the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators being explained and addressed via monthly communication to parents and carers. The "All about Me" booklet demonstrates the inclusive approach taken by the school, in that every child has one and personal achievable goals are identified and addressed.

We feel that from a national perspective more could be done on inclusivity, to enhance the understanding of more able pupils and to empower them to help their peers where possible.

In the interests of progressing towards greater support for pupils with additional support needs, we would like to see a more uniform approach to addressing pupils needs, perhaps drawing upon the knowledge and skills of the most experienced teachers to create a resource for all staff to support pupils in a cohesive way.

We are grateful for the opportunity to feed in our views and would be pleased to provide more specific anecdotal evidence if that would be helpful.

Parents/Guardians/Siblings Submissions

ANON

My nightmare and my families' nightmare started in 2010. Through exhaustion, tears and frustration we battle each and every moment of each day. Whatever happens at school impacts home and school have no understanding of this. If it has been good

at the end they think it's a result unfortunately this is far from the truth and it's like a fizzy pop bottle that is shook all day then opened.

I spent 4 years of her life with a passive little girl that was a joy to be with and take out. She went to a private nursery from the age of 10 months. I was such a proud mum as she thrived and met all her milestones. The nursery staff loved having her. She was a bubbly, confident, sociable girl that joined in with everyone and everything. No social, emotional or behavioural issues. She was a good eater and slept well. This went on until she started school. She said she didn't want to leave nursery and go to school. Every day became a battle with food, toilet and behaviour issues. She seemed very upset. She started feeling unwell and sought advice and checked for food intolerance issues but nothing was picked up. All blood tests came back fine. I mentioned IBS but was told she was too young to be that stressed. If only that had been the case but professionals ignored what I said. Her personality seemed to have changed overnight. She was defiant, oppositional, hyper, inattentive and impulsive as well as very disruptive. Life became chaos and totally unpredictable from one minute of a day until the next.

I had reports of 'naughty' behaviour every day I was exhausted and in tears daily. School said she was settling in. They tried reward charts, boundaries and consequences. None of this seemed to work but continued until P2 with very little learning and improvement.

I was asked to remove rewards for 'naughty' behaviour at school. I thought school knew what they were doing.

At age 6 the firm boundaries had a very negative impact on my daughter's health. She lost herself in a fantasy world with fairies which became her reality. She became aggressive with staff and pupils and lashed out in anger. I later found out she had been urinating in the corner of the toilet at school. She was made to clean it up. I was appalled as obviously there were serious issues not being recognised. I asked for referral to an educational psychologist that had not been done and she was referred to school Dr after I argued about possible exclusion as I felt her needs were still not being met.

She got a diagnosis of ASD at 7.

I complained to the education authority in January 2015 as her needs were not being met again. She was threatened with exclusion. I had done enough research by then and figured out my daughter was showing PDA traits. Her clinical psychologist agreed that a lot of traits were present and that a flexible approach was required. Not the rigid one school were trying.

P6 went well with PDA strategies.

P7 has however not been good since her SFL teacher left who was her security within school.

I had to give up work in July 2015 due to appointments and meetings as work would not accommodate all the time I needed off.

My daughter became very aggressive in November 2015 and lashing out towards pupils and staff again. My daughter was locked out of the classroom and had to be

restrained by staff; some, of which are not CAHMS trained. Nobody seemed to be able to prevent this level of distress. I would expect staff to have intervention training to deescalate stress levels before the fight or flight response. The intervention seems to be delayed by staff and not dealt with at the earlier stage that is required. When I asked they did not lock her out I was told they would do it again if needed. There was no discussion around how staff would change the situation so this wouldn't happen by recognising triggers and using strategies.

It seemed clear staff are struggling but wouldn't be open to having external autism trained professionals in to help. A nearby specialist school has lots of experience and could work with the school.

She has an IEP but it seems to be full of demands and not supporting her impaired emotional and social skills.

She now refuses to go to school due to the way staff try to get her to comply and mention the law. She has it in her head that if she lashed out they will contact the police. She says she can't control herself and therefore doesn't want to go.

She had been calmer at home and have had work sent home. We are now looking at a flexible learning plan, family support worker and possibly a tutor. This was suggested by the QIO but feel my daughter should have had this at 7. She also needs to get a transition to academy but school are struggling to get my daughter to do it the ways they have tried.

The GIRFEC is a joke. The obligations of SHANARI are not met. The named person scheme is taking over parents' rights and placing every single barrier there to prevent early intervention. Professionals don't know what autism really is. Their knowledge is so basic it's not any help the limited ideas they seem to have. They are creating a hostile environment for kids and they are discriminating against many. These kids have a right to feel safe and thrive like any other. Instead schools use bullying tactics to get kids to comply and kids are distressed and made to feel they don't fit in society. Professionals need to listen and stop causing damage that will result in a negative life lasting issue

I hope my views will be considered as parents need a voice to advocate for their children and not have it dismissed or taken away as the named person is more important than the parent.

I have found information has been shared without my consent despite supreme court not allowing this part of the GIREFC and named person scheme.

Kids with autism are being discriminated against as well as the family

ANON

The following are my thoughts and comments regarding additional support needs in my primary school setting:

* Additional Support Needs staff are not valued as they should be: in my setting over the last 4 years due to staff illness (which cannot be helped) and poor management

(which can be helped) children have received sporadic additional support, if any at all. No thought appeared over the years to be given to how this affected the child and their self-esteem, the class teachers in their GIRFEC efforts and the overall attainment levels within the school.

* ASN staff should be highly valued and experienced members of staff who are not treated as supply staff to cover absence.

* GIRFEC - is the ideal but not the reality. We are setting children up to fail unless we have appropriate staffing and facilities to cover and support ASN; teachers, pupil support assistants and specialised staff. Placing children with ASN into large mainstream classes is not getting it right for any one.

* Management teams need to be clear about the role of ASN within their schools and be able to answer questions put to them by ASN staff - or be able to find the answer. Too often inexperienced management seem to have no understanding of the issues being dealt with or the procedures to be followed by ASN staff in e.g. recognition of dyslexia which is extremely frustrating.

Law Primary School ASN Support Group

I am writing regarding your request for views on ASN provision within Scottish schools, on behalf of the Law Primary School ASN Support Group.

We are a support group set up by parents, for parents of children with additional support needs at Law Primary & Nursery School in North Berwick, East Lothian. We face many challenges as parents of children with a wide range of additional support needs, but one of our greatest challenges is trying to get the best possible education for our children.

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 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 adaptations 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 feel 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".

I hope that as a result of this consultation we begin to see change.

Marie Gray

I have had experience of additional support provision in schools over the last 15 years. I have 3 children with autism.

Currently, my 6 year old son attends an LCSC unit. I am disappointed in the lack of GIRFEC implementation. My Son does not receive teaching support or specific strategies to cope with behavioural issues, life skills or appropriate social interaction on a level required to meet his needs. Every letter, every report and every meeting revolve around attainment targets and maintaining attainment levels. My Son, requires more than numeracy and literacy, yet this seems to be the only focus of additional support education within his school unit. This was not the case with my

older Son, during his primary and secondary education. As you know, it is vital to teach children with additional needs, additional skills. This needs to be examined as a matter of urgency at primary level. Life, behavioural and appropriate social skills are just as necessary to fully meet the education of additional needs children.

My oldest Son was given the opportunities at primary school to learn these skills, as well as strategies to help him cope with life. The education system needs to be updated to include the needs of every child.

If you require more information, please don't hesitate to contact me by any of the means below:

ANON

I live with my three children who have all been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. My daughter is 8 years old and my sons are 7 and 4. I moved here 2 and half years ago and have struggled greatly with the school and nursery. Back then my daughter was starting primary 2 and my son was doing a second year at nursery. I was refused an Asn meeting for him because "he clearly isn't autistic and didn't need any extra support ". This was said to me by the head of the nursery who is now the head of the primary. At the time he was going through an autism assessment which the nursery staff were aware of. He was diagnosed shortly after and an Asn meeting was held.

It seems to me that they say they will support your child but then do not do most of what they agree to put in place. The communication between me and the school is poor. Information is not freely shared. As autism is a communication disorder it is the worst thing to have poor communication with the school. Whenever an incident happened in nursery with another child I was never told who else had been involved but was told "your child will be able to answer your questions ", which he wasn't. This was not supportive to helping him with his communication or social skills. Had I known I may have been able to help.

There was also an incident with a member of staff who was removed from the nursery and after this day my son never wanted to go back to nursery and was completely distressed for months. I was never given the details of what happened and my son wasn't able to tell me. To this day they have never told me what she did to my child. They claimed complete ignorance whenever I asked about it.

My son started school when the time came and had a wonderful teacher in primary 1. The other staff in the school were not so well trained in how to deal with autism and so every time somebody else got involved it caused stress to my son. There was another incident which someone in the school had reported. I was taken to the head teacher who wanted to inform me there had been an incident with my child but he wasn't willing to tell what had happened or who had been reported. He told me my child would tell me what had happened. I told him my child would not be able to communicate what had happened to me and I relied on staff to tell me about his day. He assured me that my child would not have any contact with that member of staff. I went back the next day to ask him to please tell me what had happened and with

who. He gave the details which were that a member of staff had asked my son to move as he was sitting on the floor and when he did not do as he was told this person took him by the arms and dragged him along the floor. I was still not given a name. I asked my son if he knew the person's name who had dragged him by the arms to which he replied "I don't know his name".

The following day I went back to ask again for the full story and I wanted to know if this person would be allowed back. I was told "you probably know by now it was this person " and finally was given a name. It was in fact another teacher who had done this and was a woman not a man like my son thought. He can become very nervous and can't even take in his surroundings or whether the voice that is telling him to move is a man or a woman (she was probably yelling which would have scared him) I was only told because the head teacher assumed I must have heard of the absence of that staff member. It was ridiculous of them not to tell me. If I had left my child with a babysitter and they behaved the same way I would call the police and they would have to share the information. I don't understand how schools get to operate in this way!

My youngest child had started nursery at this time and was enjoying it. The head of the nursery was my daughter's teacher from the previous year. My daughter didn't like her because she used to rip up her pictures and throw them in the bin. This was upsetting to hear that she was being treated like this by a grownup but I decided it was never going to be believed if I took it further.

I had given the staff plenty of information to help and told them areas where he needed help. I feel I was not listened to and was pushed out which was upsetting. They didn't help him with going to the toilet and they segregated him so he couldn't form friendships. I was not told about anything until it inflicted on someone else's day. Despite all this he still looked forward to nursery. This changed overnight and he was behaving the same way his older brother had after that member of staff had been removed the year before. I asked and asked what had happened because something had upset him. Again they claimed ignorance and I did not believe them so removed my son from that nursery. I tried to get him into the other nursery in town. On the phone they said yes he can have a place but after meeting him they changed their minds and said he couldn't have a place because there were many children applying for a place. He has remained on their waiting list for both a government funded and privately paid place for well over a year. They have never phoned to say a space has opened up yet I see them taking other kids all the time. So my little boy has not had a nursery education and I feel guilty for not doing more. Maybe I should have complained but I don't think this would have helped.

Now my second child is in primary two. He was given a teacher in her first year so she isn't there on Fridays. He has someone else who will have less time to get to know him. This year has not gone smoothly. My son has been self-harming at school and as a result he has been restrained by somebody who claims to have a lot of training specifically in autism. I'm very unsatisfied with her knowledge of autism. I have since discovered that strategies which were supposed to be in effect were not! He had been restrained 4 times over the course of 6 school days. They have since denied this and claim it has only happened 3 times! The appropriate forms were not filled in until 4 days after I asked to see them.

All my suggestions were not listened to by senior management and information about forms and anything else was not freely shared. I removed my son until a plan of action had been agreed. I couldn't have my child going to school and becoming so upset he hurt himself and then to make matters even worse was restrained! This is not like him and he does not do this at home. I had a meeting at the school and before the meeting the head teacher wanted to have a word alone with me to tell me to not post on social media that my sons needs were not being met in school because this gives a very bad impression of the school. I had posted this on a closed fb page which was a support group for parents of additional needs children. He urged me to come to the school and formerly complain rather than posting on social media. I never thought they would know about my comment on a closed group but somehow they did. I hadn't stated names or the school my son attended. As you can imagine the meeting didn't go well. I waited a week for another one which I took my parent to parent family support worker to. We were left at the front desk when we arrived nobody came to get us. We were given directions to the room we were to go to with a key fob to get through. When we got there everyone had a much more professional attitude than the one witnessed a week earlier (because parent to parent was there). Many things were put in place to support my son but the following day I was phoned by head of the primary to be told that certain things which they had agreed to could only be temporary. My sons teachers are being let down by their senior management team who I am sad to say I don't trust. They withhold information and put barriers up. I do not feel welcome there and think they are trying to bully us out. If I had the option I would take my kids to another school but I do not drive. My kids get very travel sick so the only option would be to move somewhere else. I have a lot of family here and the kids have friends. It is very unfair that we should have to leave and start all over again. I have watched other families struggle and eventually leave town because of the lack of support they get from this school. It is an ongoing battle and I am tired.

Beth Morrison

My name is Beth Morrison. I have written to you separately about my personal experience regarding my son in school.

This letter is about my experience as a volunteer, campaigner, and my parliamentary petition PE01548: National Guidance on Restraint and Seclusion in Schools.

For the last 9 years, I have run a support group for parents who have children with additional support needs. I am also in the process of setting up a new Charity called "Positive and Active Behaviour Support Scotland" (PABSS) I have just completed training as a BILD (British Institute of Learning Disabilities) PBS (Positive Behaviour Support) Coach. I recently became a board member of Enable Scotland.

The children from the families in my support group are diverse. Some have Dyslexia, others have Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD). We also have many children with Autism and other related neurological disabilities like ADHD, Epilepsy and Global Developmental Delay

As of today, there are 280 families in my support group. We are a voluntary service, run by parents with no government or local council funding. Most of our families are based in Fife, Dundee, Perth/Perthshire, Angus and Aberdeen, but we have an increasing number of families from other cities and counties across Scotland seeking support. I therefore represent a wide spectrum of families, in terms of types of disability and geographical spread across Scotland.

You might think that for families of children with additional support needs, stress comes mainly from worry related to our child's condition and our ability to look after them. Whilst that is true for some, for a much greater proportion of families of disabled children of school age, their greatest source of daily stress is school itself. If a child has a straightforward non-challenging disability, then generally, schools can cope. Most are fairly wheelchair accessible so physical disabilities are usually able to be accommodated somehow. But what if your child has a debilitating neurological condition or brain injury?

Many of these children are nonverbal, they may suffer from Sensory processing difficulties, Autism, or Learning Disabilities that mean these young people cannot conform to the school's demands of sitting in circle time (our kids can't sit still) paying close attention to the teacher (our kids often have little or no attention span) following instructions (our kids often don't understand verbal language) and maintaining a standard of behaviour deemed acceptable in a school setting (our kids communicate unmet needs through their behaviour). In particular, problems occur when the most basic needs of non-verbal children are not met by staff. Simple things like hunger, thirst, pain, discomfort, and wishing to go to the toilet. Because these children cannot communicate verbally, when their needs are unmet the behaviour they may display in trying to communicate what they want is often regarded as bad behaviour. This is often dealt with by punishment, very often by restraint and seclusion.

Children unable to understand why they are being punished for communicating a basic need may then kick off as they are taken to seclusion rooms and the situation can then escalate into dangerous territory. It is a reality that small children in Scotland today are sometimes restrained in schools in the same way as that which led to the death of Shekhu Bayou. I hope you will agree that is unacceptable. Interestingly in my experience, educators understand that such treatment of typically developed children would not be tolerated, but fail to see that the same standards should be applied to disabled children. Many seem to genuinely believe that "these children" are genuinely bad. "What else are we supposed to do?" is a typical response from staff when challenged. I am writing to tell you that there is plenty that educators can do to avoid such situations.

The problems that the staff complain about in regard to our children are very often not behaviours we recognise in our children in any other environment. The problem is most often the failure by staff to observe the attempts of the child to communicate needs and to interpret those needs. To do so is not rocket science and well within the cognitive abilities of teachers. Parents have to learn it, usually by simple experience and advice from other parents and support groups. Teachers can learn it in a more formal way. Positive Behaviour Support is a practice that has a substantial evidence base behind it to show that its use reduces instances of "Challenging behaviour" and that improves outcomes in schools for children and staff. It is

practised in some schools in Scotland, but not in the overwhelming majority where the same strategies of reward and punishment (including corporal punishment which is of course supposedly outlawed) are imposed in children incapable of understanding consequences in the same way as a typically developed child. Many of the children are unlawfully excluded, and of course such exclusions are not recorded. Parents are often told to pick up their children, in some case multiple times in the same week. This is unlawful and ineffective. It also means that many parents of disabled children are caught in a poverty trap which of course places unnecessary burdens on the welfare state. How many employers will put up with their staff leaving suddenly so often to pick up their children or to attend YET another meeting at which they will be told how much of a monster their child is? Some who have started university courses have had to leave for the same reason. Others who previously ran their own business had to give up because of the demands of the school.

Many parents feel bullied by school management. Some are too fearful to complain, especially if their children are in a special school. What if they throw my child out? What if there is nowhere else for them to go? Inevitably some parents go down the route of home schooling. This is far from ideal for our children who often already lack social skills, and find opportunities for their development further stymied by a lack of a peer group.

Whilst all of that should be most concerning, there is a solution. It is true that we have much to be proud of in Scotland's Schools, but we need the good practise seen in some schools to be replicated in ALL schools. Staff need to be universally taught to understand the function of "challenging behaviour". They must stop imposing sanctions on children who they perceive as misbehaving when in fact the child just wants an apple. To do so they need to recognise that is what the child wants. It can be done, and is being done in Scotland, but it is not universal practice. It needs to become so.

In 2017, we have very few teachers with any expertise in disability. Most teachers (even in special schools) have not had basic training, not even Autism training. If some training has been done, it is very often a half day or a few hours and is not refreshed. There is nothing to build on.

It is not surprising then that teachers are struggling to cope with children who have significant additional support needs by misinterpreting any attempt to communicate unmet needs as "bad behaviour". I also find ASNA's are left to "deal" with disabled children alone, without support, training or knowledge.

Our children are too often viewed in a very negative way. They are seen as a nuisance, disruptive and a threat to the teacher's authority. The reality is somewhat different. Thus, schools are not meeting the needs of children like ours. They have no idea that behaviour from children with Learning disabilities/Autism etc. is because the child is using the only way they know to get attention they need to have their needs met. Therefore, a child who cannot say "I am tired/in pain/hungry/thirsty or I cannot cope has no other means of communicating their distress other than through behaviour considered challenging by educators- and you are not allowed to "challenge" a teacher!

Schools often adopt a control and management approach to dealing with “discipline” issues relating to our children and feel that the child “must learn” so they ignore the fact (or possibly don’t realise due to poor understanding) that the child lacks the cognitive skills or ability to conform, Nonetheless, the teacher imposes a consequence/sanction because it’s the only way they currently know how to modify behaviour. **THIS DOES NOT WORK** for our children. They do not understand, so the behaviour escalates as they are then extremely anxious, their needs remain unmet and we end up with stressed, frustrated staff and extremely upset (challenging) children.

The subject of restraint and seclusion is an emotive one. Most parents (myself included) had or have no idea that teachers and support staff in schools are often allowed (by their own council policymakers) to use “Physical intervention”. The lack of clear and universal guidelines on what is acceptable or unacceptable has led to differing practices between councils and even within councils.

I warn you solemnly, there is evidence that we are lucky a child’s death has not been recorded due to restraint in schools yet.

I recognise that the staff have a duty of care and should be able to use physical intervention in a few circumstances where harm might be prevented by its use. However, the reality is in many schools, staff are hiding behind these policies to control and manage disabled children and using restraint and seclusion (isolation rooms) as a punitive measure.

I know literally hundreds of disabled children who have been manhandled/ dragged and forcibly restrained by staff- many children suffering horrific levels of bruising and injuries. The harder the child struggles, the harder the staff hold them down, the greater the danger of the serious injuries that all too many children **HAVE** suffered. It’s a barbaric practise and a terribly traumatic experience, with lasting mental and emotional consequences for ANY child that experiences it, but even more so to a child who just doesn’t understand.

Not many people know about the use of “isolation rooms” in schools. They are often called “quiet rooms” and this conjures up an image of a lovely, nurturing room where a child can take some time to reflect and calm down. The reality is that these “rooms” are nothing more than “cupboards” (yes- seriously!) in which children are often left locked in and alone. Some of the parents in my group were brave enough to photograph these rooms. Some can be seen on a video link I uploaded to youtube along with graphic images of disabled children’s injuries inflicted by staff during restraint. The UNCRC wants such rooms to be **ABOLISHED**. Not refurbished, or renamed; **ABOLISHED**. Our government has signed up to implementing UNCRC recommendations. Time now to act on those promises.

It’s time for change for the better. The way to do that is to ensure the best practice already evident in Scotland is universal practice. The benefits to teachers, ASNA’s, pupils, families and our country should be self-evident. The adoption of best practice must **NOT** be optional at the whim of local councils.

ANON

I have a deaf son who is 15 years old. He was diagnosed at nursery school age. He has attended mainstream school and has a teacher of the Deaf throughout that time. However she covers the whole of Argyll and Bute, which is a large geographical area and covers children from 0-18 yrs. With more children being diagnosed at birth thanks to the neonatal screening, her workload is so high and demanding that there is just too much work for her to possibly spend enough time with every child.

Information from schools is not always available about what your child gets or needs in the terms of support or the process to involve other agencies and professionals if needed. I find the ways support plans are written vary from school to school and this is very difficult for parents to understand. Often leaving them confused and frustrated.

It can be a bit of a postcode lottery how much support you receive. The schools don't always get a good budget to supply support staff to deliver everything that is needed.

Or have budgets to deliver training for staff to allow them to deliver enough support to my child.

There are too many differences in the support being offered from one establishment to another, from one area to another.

My experiences have varying results but have felt that i have been fighting to get the support my child needs all his life! It's a constant battle.

Better trained staff to explain the processes and help parents understand support plans. More money is needed to provide this and the support needed in schools. More consistency in what is given and how its recorded and delivered to everyone involved.

ANON

My child has received 1:1 support since she started nursery at the age of two and a half.

There is a difference I feel between early years & primary/secondary education.

Support staff who are good are quickly moved/relocated to jobs that provide education staff with better support i.e. - office duties.

Appropriate training does not appear to be available for support staff. Training is a very important part of any employment - teachers study and are assessed prior to teaching children - why is this different for support staff?

I feel that Education staff do not treat support staff as equals. They are seen as photocopying assistants/poster hanging people/playground supervision people in particular in primary education.

Changes are made in relation to support staff without consultation with pupils and parents in secondary school.

Communication in general is not very good with parents in secondary school. Once your child is 12 years old they are classed being able to make their own decision which when you have an ASN is not always the case.

Some support staff quite clearly are unable to provide basic support in relation to literacy and numeracy - again in primary.

The curriculum has changed however support staff who have been in post for a number of years are no longer up to date with the new procedures.

There is an issue regarding contracts relating to intimate care for children in main stream schools - children are made to awkward because of their needs.

The setup of line management for support staff doesn't work - they work directly with education staff however are line managed by office staff - education staff are not given the appropriate training or guidance on expectations relating to support staff.

My daughter requires 27.5 hours of support at school as she is wheelchair bound. At primary her support assistants did not have the correct skills to keep her up to date in numeracy and literacy as she progressed to P6/7.

An excellent support worker was recruited to work with my daughter at secondary school - I am now having to fight with education staff to keep her with my daughter.

Other support staff have refused to do intimate care due to contract issues - should these contracts not be amended or staff redeployed?

ANON

My experience has been quite negative in the beginning, having 3 children two of whom are dyslexic.

As a parent it was frustrating in trying to get the school to acknowledge something wasn't right.

Staff are not fully trained on assessments, the stages of screening and then the supports required afterwards.

I don't believe they knew how to access the dyslexia toolkit without speaking to Dyslexia Scotland, I don't feel they understood visual stress and the difference overlays and coloured jotters make to a child's life.

This experience resulted in me withdrawing my middle son from Primary school to place him in another school outside my catchment that would offer him support twice a week and access to coloured jotters & ICT support.

I did escalate my complaint to Education and I believe this is an issue across Scotland and across education boards.

Dyslexic needs early intervention and it starts with training and communication between staff and parents.

ANON

As the mother of a 7 year old dyslexic child, I find the ASN support provided by our local school to be severely lacking.

My child struggles with literacy began to cause him difficulties right from the onset of school, when he went from project-based learning in pre-school, to learning in the 'traditional' manner. Throughout his pre-school years, my child excelled, and would impress all who met him with his excellent oral skills, high level of comprehension and general knowledge, ability to form excellent relationships with other children and adults alike, his thirst for knowledge and lust for new experiences and adventure. School took him and us completely by surprise, causing huge levels of stress and struggle, along with behaviours in class that are completely out of line with his character.

The school did not notice any problem with his learning, despite concerns being repeatedly being raised by us. They simply said that he was a "silly little boy who is not ready for formal learning", and that "even if he was dyslexic, we wouldn't be doing anything differently anyway". We decided to seek private assessment (we drove 3 hours and paid £500 for this), and he was identified as 'significantly dyslexic'.

Even with this diagnosis, we have had to battle with the school to have our child's huge obstacles to learning acknowledged or understood. We then took the decision to home-school part-time, in an attempt to reduce the stress he was under. Our child was losing sleep, had developed a tic of head-scratching which was causing sores which then became infected, and most worryingly, his self-esteem plummeted. He referred to himself as an 'idiot', and stopped wanting to meet people or go places. He was constantly afraid of failure.

The education authorities listened to our situation and concerns, and our proposal for flexi-schooling was accepted immediately.

Since starting flexi-schooling 6 months ago, our child is showing huge signs of improvement. He is sleeping at night, has almost stopped the head-scratching, and he is his interested and sociable self again. He dreads the time he does go to school, and we now have a Child Support Worker in place to help him cope with his time in the classroom.

We have made a huge sacrifice to make up for the school's failings - I no longer work as a Veterinary Surgeon in our practice, and our child's two younger siblings have

experienced a lot of stress as a result of this. I strongly feel that we are doing the right thing to support our child, but I am shocked and disappointed at the lack of understanding the school has of this common learning difference. That an intelligent, vivacious, dyslexic child should be made to feel a failure in the classroom still now, is just one example of how the ASN provision in schools is hugely insufficient.

Please ensure teachers are qualified to support the children whose lives they are shaping.

ANON

My son who has additional support needs at a mainstream school and I am feeling very let down by the lack of support he has received and lack of knowledge and understanding and ignorance by other teachers he has been thrown in to mainstream like a lamb to the slaughter from a speech and language unit where he received the support he so needed although I have tried many times to help them understand him and what helps him best they don't want to know which makes me very angry that he was put in mainstream with all the funding cuts how are mainstream supposed to support kids with all different additional needs such a disappointment and let down vulnerable children through no fault of their own are treated like they don't belong

Lesley Chalmers

I would like to comment on my situation with my 14 year old son.

My son was diagnosed with severe dyslexia in P7 after a few years of asking and being told he was just an "unruly child" he was then diagnosed in 2014 with Dyspraxia which has its own issues and also effects my sons self-confidence and self-esteem and inability to manage his behaviour.

Since leaving primary school (with a learning support plan) he has had very little help and support at high school, to the point now that it's been a 3 year battle for me with the Education authorities and the school. He was given support in S1 doing the toe to toe programme and at the end of S1 he was tested where the outcome was that he had a reading age of a child of 7 years and 8 months, shortly after this we received a letter stating as my son had made great improvement, that he was now no longer being offered this moving forward into S2. So he was to move forward into S2 with the reading age of a child half his years, surely this isn't right? He then had a brief time in Paired reading which involved a 5th year pupil sitting alongside him listening to him read, my son stated that the boy didn't help him and was constantly on his mobile phone, so he withdrew himself from the programme.

I have asked for nearly 3 years now for someone to help and support my son at school, I am in contact with the Head of year, and his pastoral care teacher almost every other day, and feel although they talk to me and agree that he needs help, they don't do anything except talk.

My son was in the top classes for Maths and English in S1, but is now sadly in the lowest groups. I have written to many agencies asking for help, but to no avail. <My

son has a possible 18 months left at school, has very low self-esteem, is bullied on a weekly basis for " being stupid", lack of designer clothes and an absent father, has anger issues as he gets very frustrated when he asks for help and gets none. He sat an English exam a few weeks ago that was in the form of a case study, my son's Dyslexia is of the kind he has problems with comprehension and word flow, he couldn't read or understand the case study so couldn't answer the questions, so he sat for the 40 minutes feeling dumb. (His words) and failed the exam.

As his mother and the only present parent, I have had to watch my son, deteriorate from being a fun loving happy boy, to a now, isolated with no friends, angry young man who has no confidence and very low self-esteem and it breaks my heart that he hasn't been given the help and support he so desperately needs. I would like someone to please recognise my sons additional needs, before he leaves school with no education, no qualifications and becomes someone he doesn't want to be, he is a very creative boy and sadly his enthusiasm for school had waned drastically over the last year, so much so that his comment this morning when I asked him to get up for school was " what's the point, no one helps me" and again I have to talk to him with a positive upbeat attitude when I know he's right, I can't and won't give up on him, nor my battle with the school, I want my son to achieve all he can be in school, yet with little or no support what else can I do but watch my son fail, surely this cannot be right.

I will close now in the hope that this letter gives someone a little insight to what is actually going on in our daily struggle with his learning disabilities and school..

I am a great supporter of children having a supported Education, but alas I am only one voice of many other parents who feel very let down by my son's teachers and school.

ANON

I have just been given details of the Education and Skills Committee and the request for views on additional support needs in our schools. I realise the official date of the 21st February but would be very grateful if my views and experiences were noted.

1. What are your views on Additional Support Needs provided in Scotland's schools?

I believe that the ASN support in our schools is very much crying out for more funding, resources and staff. The system seems to be failing a lot of children the way it is at the moment. In particular if a child does not fit a certain label or criteria they are placed where ever there is "space" rather than something being tailored to suit their needs.

2. What have your experiences been?

I have a 10 year old son, Charlie, who is in primary 5. He is in a Social, Emotional and Behavioural Provision attached to a mainstream school. He has a dual ASD/ADHD diagnosis as well as other ongoing issues. The Provision is designed to work with children with these issues and re-integrate them into mainstream school. Unfortunately for my son this is unlikely to ever happen he has been there

for over 3 years and never set foot in his mainstream class. For almost 3 months he has only been in school on a part time basis - something that is not supposed to be used as a long term solution. The school staff are great at what they do and have a plethora of experience, but they are struggling and don't know how best to help my son. The well know saying "trying to fit a round peg into a square hole" is the definition of my son and school, and one i have heard echoed from other parents with ASN children.

ANON

In spring 2015 we received a letter confirming that our Son would be placed in a mainstream nursery. We had not been given a chance prior to this to state our opinion on what would suit his ability.

At the time of our receipt of his letter he was attending Special Needs Playgroup (A charity funded Playgroup located at a Special Needs School, that focuses on aiding and encouraging Children with Additional Needs where a key worker is assigned to your child who records their development in comparison with neurological milestones and then works though particular areas of concern). It was minuted at a review done by a Multidisciplinary Child Development Clinic. That his name would be put in the waiting list for First Steps Playgroup. However he did not get a place in August of that year but in January of the following year.

My son started his placement at mainstream in August 2015 and was there until June 2016. He did not have an Additional Support Needs Teacher for support with learning and personal care was provided by a nursery nurse. Even with this help, he suffered from tension due to noise. He was also very uncomfortable due to small proximity of space within the nursery, poor layout and 35 children playing around him using units such as sandpit, water area, toy kitchen, shop area, dressing up area etc. He was showing signs of this tension - covering his ears and signs of being very uncomfortable by becoming upset.

When planning for next year his Deputy Head Teacher and Nursery Manager met with Health and Well Boeing to advise that my son and five other children would be better benefited in an additional needs school or mainstream school with autistic unit. As a result our Son received a place at the Special School Nursery for 2016/17.

When planning commenced for 2017/2018 School year. We were given opportunity to make our request on where he goes in August - Primary 1. We have made a request for a special school, due to learning methods and smaller numbers.

ANON

I'm writing from the viewpoint of a parent of two adopted children of primary school age.

I am friends with other children with additional needs.

Background:

Typically for accommodated (then adopted) children, both have additional emotional needs which affect their learning.

There is uncertainty around their prenatal exposure to drugs, alcohol and domestic violence.

They have both suffered significant losses of birth and foster families before adoption. Research shows these losses affect brain development and can disrupt the healthy development of attachments to primary caregivers and future relationships

My son is possibly affected by Foetal Alcohol Spectrum and is at risk of developing Cerebral Palsy.

My daughter has moderate dyslexia and possibly ADHD.

Both myself and my partner have needed counselling for anxiety and depression, we would argue as a result of dealing with the additional worries and challenges of parenting adopted children. Post-adoption depression is very common.

Views:

Staff in educational establishments can make a huge difference to the learning opportunities for adopted children, if they are supported in appropriate ways.

Schools and other education providers should ensure that all staff who may come into contact with children and young people with attachment difficulties receive appropriate training on attachment difficulties.

Adopted children should AUTOMATICALLY be offered Stage 1 assessment and enhanced transition to help identify and address their additional needs.

Parents and schools need to work in partnership. There is a common misconception that once children are adopted they are fine.

The Government and Education Authorities need to supply additional funds to address learning support needs of adopted children and other children.

I would suggest there is an untapped resource in well-educated parents who choose not to return to full time work because of the constraints of wrap around childcare. With a little training in additional support needs they could be paid to provide extra support in schools for a few hours a week, as well or instead of full time ASN staff. Quite often parents of children who struggle at school already have specialist knowledge.

Antonio Cardy

I would like to tell you a little about our experience with getting help for our children, I have had to fight for my children to get the help they need and the common excuse that was given to me by Pupil Placement that there was a lack of funding for my child to have a Placement in the resources Unit & Also Nursery at a school as they did not have the funding , This is not acceptable at all we should be giving all children

with a disability as much support to help them achieve a happy and safe environment to achieve the targets they need to in school, My children are making some improvements but we need to do all we can to make sure we can fund and support All the children who need this help, You must be able to provide the right funding and spaces for the children they are our future and we should not be letting them down which at the moment they are. I cannot thank the Teacher's at Beatlie and Dedridge enough for all their help and support they are giving my children. Please do not let them down by not helping them get the education and support need for them to reach their potential in the future, helping now can make a difference to the future. To summarise its more cost effective to spend what is needed now than a larger amount over the next forty or so years .

ANON

I would like to say it's shocking the lack of support needs in schools, I have two boys in mainstream school and who both have autism and they handle get any help, one support teacher for half the class that's in primary 1, my boy needs a one to one, my other boy his support teacher is doing two classrooms and he has meltdowns a lot in school, where lack of staff I have to go in and volunteer to look after my boys, which nowadays is shocking,

ANON

I have just sent an email to a local shop regarding a minor incident which happened earlier today with my son. I feel this sums up some of what I would like to express to you.

"Today was an odd experience. I am trying to teach him about "safe strangers" so when we are in a shop I always encourage him to find one. In fact we play games to see who can spot the most safe strangers. When he went to the first safe stranger, he stood for a good minute after saying excuse me. He was ignored. The young gentleman looked at him then continued with the job he was supposed to be doing of preparing someone's online order. A bit rude, but perhaps he had his reasons for ignoring a child who, as far as he could see, as he didn't see me, was alone. I called my son back and explained that the man was a bit too busy working. Next he tried the next safe stranger, a lovely young girl who was very helpful and spoke directly to my little boy.

When we went to the till to checkout, the cashier behind the till made a comment about him being too big to be lifted. I over reacted and explained, perhaps too abruptly why I was holding him. You see, he has autism and was barely managing to hold himself together. He had spent about forty minutes trying hard not to freak about the unknown juices that had been offered to him. He didn't recognize the packaging and was worrying about what it would taste like. During this time, people had walked past staring at him and making the usual comments when they thought they were far enough away that neither of us would hear. They were wrong. My son and I had a deal, we just had to pay for the items and get to the car. We had to stop several times as the wave of emotions returned again and again. I knelt down beside

him whispering that he was okay and everything would be fine while silently praying that this would be true.

We just had to pay and get to the car. We looked for the quickest till. Maybe I should've asked for an empty till, but that would've taken time. Instead we went to the till with only one person. He was trying so hard to hold himself together and stop the eruption that was happening inside, that he wasn't able to focus on walking and waiting patiently. He's only five you see, and a battle was ensuing for him. I asked him if he wanted lifted, would that help? He managed a whispered yes and tried to hide away from the world by burying his face against my neck. Your cashier made the comment and I went into overdrive of having to quickly explain autism. Your cashier was apologetic and that is fine.

However, I want to bring this to your attention, as I feel that it is important feedback. Not everyone who comes into your store can be judged on how they look. When a child is having an asthma attack, or an epileptic fit, people rush to help. I have never once heard anyone comment on it being an asthmatics fault for having an asthma attack, nor someone blaming a lack of discipline as being a cause for a fit. I am a teacher of children with severe and complex needs. I know what it is like to be out as a teacher, maybe 1 in every 30 people are rude or disrespectful, when the children are visibly disabled. But when the child looks like any other child who goes to a mainstream school, all of a sudden it is down to a lack of discipline, it is a made up thing that wasn't around when we were young, it's just an excuse, it's a child who deserves a good smack, it's a spoiled child who hasn't heard the word no, it's all about attention, the parents are too soft, the parents aren't doing anything about their child's behaviour, it's an excuse all of a sudden, everyone is an expert and everyone knows someone who has autism and they don't behave that way.

Perhaps next time, it would be nice to know that if my son is lying on the floor in a shop, or trying to run away, or sitting making a pattern with his fingers against the basket, or running round in circles, or crying, it would be nice to know, that your customers may judge my son and I, but your staff will not. That your staff will be aware that autism is not just Rainman or Sheldon Cooper from the Big Bang Theory; autism is the five year old child who needs to be carried, autism is the adult who takes it literally when you say you are going to jump into town, autism is weird and wonderfully, beautifully simple and complex. My son is the most loving and caring human being. He has a beautiful character and an incredible imagination. But sometimes, life is too confusing, sometimes colours are too bright, noises are too loud, tastes are too strong and smells are too overpowering and sometimes emotions all come at once causing an internal explosion. He is my world, and my world is autism.

Autism awareness is more than seeing a PowerPoint or watching a DVD. Autism awareness is about walking the path of someone with autism and seeing the world their way for just a day. "

I think before anyone makes any decisions regarding the implementation or the pulling of resources, they first must spend a real day not just a visit in a class of 29, where 8 of the children have additional support plans, or a day as an asna in a school supporting children who have severe needs and need to be moved

throughout the day, a teacher who is being hit due to classroom being removed due to funding.

Please spend a full school day and experience these things before making any decisions.

ANON

My view to the above question is that I feel this is a vital role for all schools and all children to have access to but most children do not receive enough additional support. Schools in Highland, which is the area me and my family live in, are overcrowded and understaffed and have been limited to the amount of resources they can receive. All children need additional support. Some more than others but still if support is put in place for a child they will thrive. I do believe there is not enough support provided in Scotland especially Highlands.

What have your experiences been?

I have two children in mainstream schools p3 and p1. Both my children are under assessment for ASD and they receive a lot of support from the support for learning teacher within the primary school in the Highlands is a phenomenal woman and a complete asset to the school. Not only has she continued to support my children within school but she has supported and advised us throughout our children's assessment. Her role as a support for learning teacher is limited though. She only works 4 days a week and has the responsibility to support all children who need additional support. Although her work is of an extremely high standard I still feel that one support for learning teacher is not enough. Teachers cannot cope with the demands of children who present with difficulties in learning and I have had to continually ask and ask for more support for my children. My daughter is 7 and still cannot spell; we believe she is showing signs of dyslexia

Although she receives some support from the teacher I fear that the limitations of resources and lack of individual input will have an effect on her education, self-esteem and her ability to meet her full potential. It is a continuous stress to parents every year to see what cuts will affect or children. It is a continuous stress to keep fighting for more support and it is extremely disappointing that children receive below average resources. There is more and more evidence to help diagnose a child with additional needs but only a small amount of teachers have to have been educated about how to meet these needs. All teachers should have an understanding about ASD, ADHD, dyslexia and other additional needs. My son received no support in nursery as his teachers didn't feel he was presenting with autism. Although angry and anxious at the time I now feel like those teachers don't have the same level of understanding as a support for learning teacher. For this reason my son was let down. For this reason and many more it is vital that additional need support is continued in schools but it must be acknowledged that more needs to be done.

ANON

I would like to share my views as both a parent and an Additional Support Needs teacher. I have twin daughters (aged 7) who both have cerebral palsy, one of which also has visual impairments who both attend mainstream school. I myself have worked as both a classroom teacher (secondary Science) and as an ASN Teacher in a mainstream secondary school. I also volunteer regularly at a local charity for children with disabilities to offer support to the families of young children with a variety of disabilities and so I hear a lot about the issues they face at home, at school and in their local communities.

My views:

Early intervention is key to reducing the level of support needed. If support is provided early it can significantly reduce the amount of time and money spent on support later which will also help reduce behavioural issues and help build confidence and self-esteem. Not just academically but also for speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. My own daughters benefited greatly from a lot of support from these services in the early years which had massively increased their physical abilities and their independence, thus now they have well surpassed the expectations of medical staff and are much more independent than was ever considered possible. Fortunately we were able to seek out such services as we were financially secure enough for me to be at home with them in the early years and to provide intensive home therapy. Many families aren't so fortunate and cuts in such services means many of these kids are not getting the vital support at a young age which will then in turn cause them to need more support as they get older and lack independence skills.

Quality SLA support is vital.

Small class sizes allow much better progress for pupils and much more individual attention from staff.

Teaching by stage not age (e.g. for numeracy) helps build confidence and helps pupils progress quicker (although care must be taken not to affect pupils self-esteem).

ASN pupils benefit from a good teacher/parent relationship so school and families can work together to support the child.

A higher level of SLA should be introduced so SLA's can have some progression and be given more responsibility. I have met many SLA'S who would be capable of becoming teachers but who are unable to because of family commitments or who choose to be SLAs because the job fits in well with the children's schooling but who are capable of doing much more. Many take on extra responsibilities but get no incentive or reward for it. Many are committed and loyal serving the same school for decades. This could free up teacher time (thus money) as teachers are currently overworked and stressed often doing basic tasks which could easily be done by support staff.

Many ASN pupils I know of are starting primary school while still wearing nappies or while needing physical assistance to visit the toilet. Others have accidents and go through phases of needing more support. As inclusion in mainstream is the assumption for ASN pupils I believe all mainstream schools should have staff trained to deal with the personal care of incontinent pupils. My daughter although not incontinent needs support to go to the toilet. She has come home from school soiled on several occasions despite being apparently supported to visit the toilet. I know several other families who have also had issues with toileting at school, and some who choose to send their child to school in nappies because there is nobody trained to help them with toileting at school. Personal care needs are part of their care and support needs, so if they are to attend mainstream school under inclusion and GIRFEC surely these needs must be catered for! These needs can be catered for in hospitals and nursing homes so there should be no reason they can't be catered for in schools.

There is a teacher shortage at the moment. This could be addressed by introducing a shorter working day for some part-time staff (difficult to do for class teachers but definitely a possibility for ASN teaching staff). I felt it difficult to get back into teaching after having my children due to my family circumstances (especially my caring responsibilities) and lack of suitable local childcare. I would be willing and able to work most of the school week (while my kids are in school e.g. 0.6 over 4 days or up to 0.8 over 5 days) so a shorter working day would allow me to commit to a teaching position while still be able to meet the needs of my young family. There must be many other teachers in similar situations who could be working as teachers if a more flexible approach was taken to the working day.

Sue Langlands

The absolutely key thing to successful provision of all education including ASN is leadership.

Starting at the top, with the approach of the head and filtering down as an expectation to all members of staff should be an attitude of empathy and genuine listening when pupils and parents and careers come with specific issues.

Obviously wherever possible it is vital to provide personalised support. However there are limits to resources, and at that point real honesty and integrity is key. Even if something is not possible, a school should be fully sympathetic and seek creative approaches as well as doing things which keep the communication flowing between school and family. Too often I believe parents are daunted by needing to speak to school staff and leaders likely to be resistant to anything that might entail more resource or input. A good genuine relationship must be fostered or the child education will suffer.

Susan McKellar

I am a mother of two boys one with a diagnosis of high functioning autism. I feel that there is an inadequate provision for supporting our children in Scotland's schools. I am part of a few groups who help parents with children with additional support needs and complaints we often get are regarding the lack of support and resources in local schools. I am also part of the ASL forum at Glasgow City council and it seems that the majority of parents who are unhappy are parents with children with diagnosis such as autism, ADHD and Asperger's.

It was noted that these parents feel that a diagnosis did not mean that the support was there for their children. It was felt that because their child's condition was not physical and could not be seen that they felt their children's needs were not being met as some teachers, HT didn't think that there were any issues. Parents feel that they are not being listened too and that they had to fight to get any level of support in schools. Some parents were made to feel guilty that provisions were given to their kids when the teachers did not agree they should get it. Children are often not allowed in for the full school duration with some children only getting between 5-10 hrs of schooling a week because resources are not there to support the child. Kids are often sent home for bad behaviour but exclusions not noted. This makes it harder for the parent when they are trying to get them moved schools to prove they have been unable to cope

Due to lack of funding there is a lack of resources and of support for these children and their families. The attainment gap in this field seems to be worsening and HT are now going to use the extra funding they get through the pupil equity scheme to hire more PSA's to take the pressure off of teachers. I feel there is a total failing in the system and PSA's or support for classrooms should be based on the needs of the child. If you have 299 pupils but 75 of these pupils have an additional support need then there should be so many PSA's to support these children. At the moment the lack of support is making it hard for teachers to teach and for children to get the best out of their education.

The system is not getting it right for every child as the needs of children with an ASN is not being met due to money and resources. We have many parents who would be willing to give their story with regards to education but are never informed. I got word of this on the 22nd of February a day too late for the submission but I still wanted to send my views as I feel they are important. I think more has to be done to engage with these parents as they would be defined as hard to reach as most of the relationships seem to break down and parents do not engage with the system as they feel their views are not considered or listened too. Most parents I have spoken to have strained relationships with their schools due to inaction and lack of resources. I feel more has to be done to ensure that every child and their needs are represented.

In my personal experience with my child. I have felt isolated and my child excluded from activities because of his condition. We were advised he could not go on trips or outings if he did not have a parent/grandparent with him as the school were unable to cope. I know of parents being used as classroom assistants in the class to help their children to adjust to their environment which I find totally unacceptable. Our

school was also built too small for the roll which means we have no nurture room or quiet space for these children to go to when they become overwhelmed. Scotland is not the best place to grow up if you have an additional support need as the resources and lack of funding means our children are often left behind.

ANON

Our son (11) is currently only receiving 1h 30m education per day in school, in the Stirling Council area. This is 1:1 with a depute head teacher, along with time with an ASD support teacher, music teacher and PE teacher.

We are grateful for the individualised timetable, but as this is only 1h 30m per day, we are providing the remainder of his education through tutors and by ourselves (rearranging our work to accommodate). This is his third school move in 2 years.

Our son has seen Clinical Psychologists and a Consultant Psychiatrist at CAMHS. One psychologist identified our son as having Autism Spectrum Disorder, but subsequently they have identified his problems as more ADHD-like. In short, there is no one “label” which can be applied to his neuro-developmental difficulties.

The provision which is available for ASN is either for those with ASD, or Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs (SEBN).

The ASD provision is aimed at those with more severe autism, which isn't appropriate for our son.

And regarding SEBN provision, in another submission, identified the main clients as having “Poor early life experiences, trauma, abuse, neglect, welfare, child protection factors, etc.”

Is this, then, an appropriate environment for a child with neurodevelopmental difficulties?

So, where does that leave children with difficulties which don't neatly fit into the available boxes?

One approach currently used in some schools to deal with challenging behaviour is a “calm room”. (We understand their use is also currently being discussed by the Scottish Parliament.)

Described as a “safe space to achieve self-regulation”, these rooms sound like a good idea.

However, the reality is that they are often used more like isolation cells. In one school, the room (essentially a bare walk-in cupboard) had a door with two handles, one high-up so effectively it was locked to a child inmate. In another school, our son repeatedly spent up to 5 hours in one day in the room (again a bare cupboard) in the apparent belief that this will teach him to self-regulate. In fact, use of the “calm room” was one of the escalating factors in his behaviour, as he had to be physically coerced into it.

We agree with the submission of Beth Morrison on replacing the use of seclusion rooms with “Positive Behaviour Support” strategies which aim to de-escalate challenging behaviour.

Current Education Practices:

Unfortunately, some current education practices which aim to make learning more fun and effective for the majority of children actually exacerbate the problems of those with ASD-traits, and can be the triggers for avoidant behaviour:

Emphasis on group work

Cross-curricular learning, rather than clear separation of subject

Emphasis on need for imagination rather than recounting fact

Emphasis on including creative work, art, etc with all subjects.

“Busy” classroom filled with posters, chatter, hum of lights and IT equipment, etc.

We believe that approaches to learning need to be more flexible, and account for the fact that the above well-intentioned techniques are actually going to increase anxiety in some children, rather than develop “Confident Individuals”.

There also needs to be a greater range of types of provision, and better training for education staff in identifying triggers and de-escalating challenging behaviour.

Current Policy on “Wellbeing” and Early Intervention:

Unfortunately, the language of GIRFEC and SHANARRI encourages education staff to make unhelpful and judgemental assumptions about the root cause of challenging behaviours, adding to the considerable stress of families whose children are unable to manage successfully in school. Our son’s first head-teacher (identified prematurely as his Named Person on a GIRFEC form) ascribed his problems to “lack of parental consequences”.

Complex needs won’t be solved by a sticker chart, a home-school diary and TAC meetings: we have been on early intervention for 7 years...

And it rings rather hollow that schools can be the guardians of “wellbeing” whilst using extended incarceration in seclusion rooms!

ANON

My child has a diagnosis of Autism and is in mainstream school. I would like to respond to your Additional Needs Survey as follows:

Question 1. What are your views on Additional Support Needs provided in Scotland's schools?

Response:

* There is not enough 'in depth' training on Additional Support Needs. Staff have rudimentary understanding which, in some cases, makes them believe they 'know all about this'

*There needs to be follow ups to test or check that schools are actually sticking to agreed plans and not falling back on old habits.

* I have been reading about Autism since my son's diagnosis six years ago and am still learning more whereas the school seems to have around two day's training - sometimes conducted 'in house' by the Head Teacher who is not an expert and is relating information second hand.

* School staff are stretched very thin - and with sick days and numerous additional support needs in mainstream schools - there is just not enough staff to go around and some children are being 'left behind' or falling under the radar.

* A more holistic approach to ASN is required - just because an Educational Psychologist can offer no further help - why should our trail end here? Can a referral letter of concern (with parents' permission) not be passed on to relevant agencies?

* NHS should have more hands on involvement in Schools i.e CAHMS, k Children's Services or other relevant agencies.

* There should be some time in school that is devoted to 'Social Learning' - especially for children whose academic work is not a concern.

Question 2: What have your experiences been?

* I have had difficulty since Nursery (same school). The staff were unsympathetic, un-supportive and seemed either unaware or unwilling to accept alternatives other than that my son was just a 'bad kid'.

* My son was labelled as 'challenging' and the onus was on me to 'deal with it'. At home, I could see, even predict potential trigger points, and respond to difficulties while I was there but I should have been able to rely on these trained professionals to provide the same care and attention when I could not be there.

* I was told repeatedly there was 'no chance' of getting an additional person in to work with him or help him.

* Shortly after he began Primary one he was reduced to half days to reduce the stress on the staff (not the child!). After this it was changed to bringing him in to school fifteen minutes after the school bell and collect him fifteen minutes early - and the same after lunch time.

* In Primary 3 and Primary 4 my son made good progress due to the good, patient and understanding teachers he had in these two years and it made all the difference to his behaviour and achievements.

* In Primary 5 his teacher left him to his own devices because she found him 'too difficult' to teach so he was basically ignored for many months. I subsequently discovered that all he had been doing in class was drawing and computer. There was a lack of communication on her part as she failed to inform either myself or the school that she was having difficulties (we only found out what was happening when my son came home and asked for drawing paper as he was 'using up all the class resources') - but there was also a lack of support for the teacher from the school. My

child's needs being mishandled led to 'meltdowns' and his mishandled meltdowns led to more serious and extreme moments. For all of this, I was informed, he was 'to blame'. He now has increased anxiety and trust issues. At a meeting with the Head Teacher my mother and I were told that the school had 'failed' my son and that she would ensure the teacher was given access to training on Autism as soon as possible. Unfortunately, a great deal of damage has already been done and this view has been endorsed by the Educational Psychologist.

* He is now is Primary 6. The Head Teacher and Depute Head have been trying to support him this past year but there is still a lack of understanding from other staff. His Autism is not typical of other children in the school who have been diagnosed with ASD so staff presume that my child's behaviour is just 'bad behaviour' when it is actually caused by anxiety which has been caused by their historical treatment of him.

* At the present time I have to remain in the school building all day so that I am on hand to give support to teachers or support staff. It has now been proposed that my son be reduced to a 2 hour day in school with the possibility of having to change schools or even home school him for Primary 7.

* I have contacted CAHMS - they say they 'can't help'. The Educational Psychologist does not seem to be able to help much either. I am left wondering - Who Can?

ANON

I have two sons with ASN one aged 18 and the other 9. They both have a genetic condition that causes learning difficulties, developmental delay, they both have autistic traits, sensory difficulties my oldest is dyslexic my youngest has school anxiety and behavioural difficulties.
We are under highland council

I am going to give you my views with bullet points because if i was to explain it with every detail of how education has so far failed my sons you would be reading for a very long time.

- : parents/carers need to be listened to
- : more communication between health and education i.e if an assessment has been done by a clinical psychologist and its highly recommended a one to one in school then that should be seriously considered. (i was told there was no such thing in education anymore that was back in 2012 and getting my son the right support since is an ongoing battle)
- : If a lot of support has been given and needs to withdraw then it should be done gradually (my son had 90% of his day supported before the summer holidays 2016 and was put back to school after the holidays with 10% of his day supported, that was a lot of support to loose)
- : They need to stop passing the buck from one person to the other (this happens all the time)
- : when it comes to leaving school the kids need to feel ready and not pressured into doing so

: difficulties getting contact with heads off ASN department
: if support was given from the start then they may be able to withdraw it a little year on year/month on month then so much support may not be needed later in education (i am not saying this would be the case for every child)
: if the local Authority has signed up to GIRFEC it needs to be followed through, the highland council have signed up for it but i can assure you it DOESNT work
: if a child has struggled through the day in school there is a high chance they won't show it until they get home, they will manage to hold it together in school but as soon as they are in the door at home it all comes out then
: you need to accept some children will just not manage in mainstream school
: The main focus should be the child, school is meant to be the best years of their life i can assure you in my experience it is far from best more like worst and nothing but a battle especially primary years

As a parent of these children they have taken me on an amazing journey a difficult one but they have taught me so much about life it's just a shame they have to suffer in education like they do.

Us parents/carers spend too much time having to fight to get our kids the support they need. Giving them the right support has a positive knock on affect with everything .

Had the education system had given my children what they needed from day one would my oldest son have gone to secondary school doing p3/p4 work?

Had education given my youngest son the right support from day one would he be suffering severe school anxiety now?

I would be more than happy for you to contact me with any questions you may have or for a more in depth conversation about how education has and is failing my children

ANON

As the father of two school-aged children with additional needs, I am well-placed to assess the current ASN provision in our schools.

GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD is a bold promise which looks good on paper. In reality, however, it is unachievable under the current provisions and structures. Education in Scotland is fine if you are neuro-typical; otherwise, the story of your school life will be one of frustration, sadness, anxiety, under-achievement and friendlessness. We know of many parents whose children have had to leave high school because they could not cope with it. So they are now getting just a fraction of the education that they need.

My daughter has often come home from school saying she is "stupid". She has no friends (an all-too common theme among children with difficulties such as autism who attend mainstream school). She is too anxious to take lunch in the canteen, so eats with a member of staff. She went for a long time without the additional support she needed as the local authority would not agree with our request; eventually they realised that we had been right all along, but much valuable time had been lost and

much damage done. At primary school she was so isolated that she sat alone at break times on a bench while the neurotypical pupils played around her. She felt so inferior and missed out on valuable exercise.

Essentially, the Education system does children with additional needs no favours. Most are expected to cope in mainstream schools, even though common sense shows that they cannot cope in these situations. One of our children has been found to be emotionally and intellectually years behind her peers; yet she is forced to attend mainstream school. Why? Because there is no alternative. And that is the problem. There should be a, a place of learning geared towards those children who are out of their depth in a mainstream setting. This should be the government's priority. Yes, it will be expensive but, in the long run, it will be worth it a hundred times over.

So, here are my considered and sincere suggestions.

1. Create new schools - at least one for each local authority - which cater specifically for children with additional support needs.
2. Make it compulsory for all teachers to undergo training in ASN.
3. Annual, open consultations at every school in Scotland to see how they are performing in ASN, with parents given the opportunity to raise concerns and, of course, offer praise.
4. Create a department or team to oversee Child Plan meetings as these are often ineffective, even pointless.
5. All formal complaints to local authorities should be handled by an unbiased, outside agency.
6. More respect should be given to parents and their opinions. After all, no-one knows our children better than we do.
7. Finally, there should be a government agency or department which can deal immediately and directly with any urgent concerns raised by parents. Currently, if you cannot reach agreement with the local education department, there is no way forward. It is an ongoing source of frustration that there is no-one with the power to step in and take action. Yes, there will be times when parents are wrong, me included. But there will be many other occasions when we have valid observations which need to be acted upon as a matter of urgency. Local authorities know fully well that, when push comes to shove, parents are powerless to take them on. This is unhealthy and contributes to the difficulties faced by ASN children on a daily basis.

You are creating a generation of children who will grow up feeling stupid, excluded and unimportant. Their issues and anxieties are compounded by attending schools which are not equipped to handle their very specific needs. And most of these children will leave school without knowing friendship; indeed, they will have grown accustomed to being ignored, or made fun of. School staff always come back with the same response: "you cannot force children to be friends". If this is correct, it is surely the most powerful of all arguments for educating ASN children in a non-mainstream setting.

We should aim for a sea change in the way ASN is provided. The current set-up falls pitifully short of what should be in place. So let's grasp this important opportunity to finally put this right.

ANON

Apologies for the late submission with regards to the ASN consultation, but as a mother of a 12 year old with ASD, who has been educated partly under the Scottish system and partly under the Dutch system, I feel I have some input which maybe of value.

My son has high functioning ASD, is extremely bright to the point of gifted, and has received very little support in Scotland.

When he first went to school in the Highlands, my son's experiences were nightmarish for both him and us. His social difficulties were quickly identified, but the manner of the staff was confrontational and aggressive rather than supportive. My son was already reading, writing and doing mental arithmetic when he started school at 4.5 years old, but despite requests no adaptations were made for his level because he had social difficulties. The result was a highly stressed and bored child who developed previously unseen behavioural problems, constant confrontations between the school and I, culminating in a threat of exclusion because he looked at the fire alarm. After a formal complaint to the LEA, I decided to move him to another school.

The second school was very small, but despite tiny class sizes they simply were at a loss for how to deal with my son. His behavioural problems continued to escalate, and without support for either them or us things seemed very bleak. He wasn't learning and his behaviour was having a detrimental effect on the other children in the classroom too. My marriage broke down under the strain of the situation, and so we moved to Glasgow. I was optimistic that in the city we would find more support.

G did indeed receive a diagnosis in Glasgow, along with direction that he needed 1 to 1 support in the classroom, but in his new school they were unable to fill the standard support roles let alone provide specific and permanent support for my son. By this time his social and sensory difficulties had become so pronounced that he was unable to tolerate the classroom and quickly became distressed, screaming, crying and swearing. He began banging his head into walls and hitting himself and talked frequently about wanting to kill himself. His school days were mostly spent in the head's office, and he learned almost nothing in the first 4 years of his school career. The head and I, along with the educational psychologist had frequent discussions about his needs, but with no funding, no support staff and no training, there was little they could do. We discussed applying for a special school place for him, but I was told that the waiting list just to be assessed was 2 years, and that because he was high functioning he would be rejected as placed are prioritised for children with physical or intellectual impairment.

At the beginning of P5 we moved to the Netherlands. There he was immediately assessed by their special needs board, with the help of the reports written by the head teacher at his previous school, he was awarded a place in an autism and ADHD specific school. There the staff are trained and equipped to support children like him, with high needs but also high ability. After a few battles to establish who

was in charge, he settled and finally began to learn. In 6 months he was fluent in Dutch, and after 2 years he had made up the full 4 year deficit in his education. He was scoring in the top 5% of the country for language skills, scoring highly in all other areas, and was actually enjoying school.

Then we voted to leave the EU, and the impact of that prompted a return to Scotland. On our return I refused to put him back into mainstream, having seen the difference that proper special education provision can make. We got a place at Rutherglen High School, a wonderful school which does some excellent work. Unfortunately, their teaching is geared towards children with an intellectual impairment, and so my high functioning gifted child doesn't fit in. We are working with Cathkin high school, the mainstream school next door, to give him a blended education across both sites, so he gets the support from Rutherglen and the academics from Cathkin, but at the time of writing this there is not enough support in Cathkin to enable him to attend language, art or science classes. So, once more he is bored and falling behind.

In my opinion, we need provision in Scotland for children like my son, who are capable but have special needs which mean they cannot tolerate or function well in mainstream schools. We also need to provide much more funding for those who choose mainstream to get support, and proper and consistent training for teachers on what support they need. We need to renovate our facilities with autism and sensory disabilities in mind, as small changes can have a big impact in terms of making education accessible for our kids. I would highly recommend that the facilities and systems in the Netherlands, (my son attended a school called De Keyzer) are looked at as a model of what can be achieved. While these options cost money, I would point out that children like mine who without appropriate help will not achieve their potential in education, are being set up to fail. The consequences for failing include a life of dependency, with all its associated costs and issues. With help, my son is more than capable and will lead a full life. He might be the next scientist to make a major breakthrough, the next doctor who finds the cure for cancer, or other such scenarios. He needs help to get there, and we are failing him and thousands of kids like him, and losing all that potential.

ANON

I am a mother of 2 daughters who both have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Both are primary school age. My eldest is 9 and is in Primary 4. My youngest is 6 and in Primary 2.

My eldest child has severe mental health issues due to high levels of anxiety. The more demands that are placed on my child at school, the more anxious she becomes. (I suspect she has PDA. But we cannot get a diagnosis as the NHS in our area do not recognise this as a condition. Normal autism strategies do not work for my child yet these are the strategies school uses. Without a diagnosis of PDA my child does not get the support at school she requires.)

Last year she threatened to commit suicide. Although I am doubtful she would carry this out, I was extremely angry at her school when I mentioned my child's suicidal thoughts at a meeting with her teachers they stated she had been threatening this at school for some time. Yet I had never been informed of this. Communication with the school is on their terms and things that I should know about my child on a daily basis are kept for school meetings when it is possibly too late to help my child.

Her mainstream teacher has not been trained to deal with a child with additional support needs and comments at every meeting that she has not progressed. Never offers any solutions to this problem and acts like my child is just naughty rather than overwhelmed.

My child is aware of her condition and was in the school's base for additional support until one of her peers told her she was "disabled" a year ago. Since then she has refused to go back to the base but also cannot cope with mainstream. She has been assigned a teaching assistant for one to one support but the assistant spends most of her day calming my child down. Due to this my child is not learning. I have been advised by school that one to one support may not continue for my child as next year's primary one intake will be large and the assistant maybe needed elsewhere.

School and the NHS do not work together. My child was referred to CAHMS due to suicidal thoughts but psychologist and school fail to work together, blaming each other for poor communication. Plus I had to fight to get school to refer my child to the education psychologist even though she was threatening to kill herself.

My child needs an autism specific school. But the nearest one is in Alloa (Scottish autism's school) or one near Glasgow (National Autistic society). To go to one of these schools' s my child would have to be residential and I would only see her at weekends and at school holidays. In effect someone else would be bringing up my child and it is my opinion she would not cope away from our family. In effect we have had to choose between her education or bringing her up ourselves. So her education has been sacrificed.

My child needs an autism specific school in our area. Mainstream education is not for her. It's like hammering a square peg into a round hole. One size does not fit all. Teachers need autism training, funding etc to provide the education my child needs. Learning needs to be child led, as making her follow the curriculum like normal children causes her more anxiety. NHS and school need to communicate better.

My child is very intelligent but is not reaching her full potential as the right support at school is not provided. I fear that in the future she will not be able to work due to poor education and in this age of austerity she will not be able to apply for benefits either. So what will happen to her? How will she feed herself, pay rent, pay bills etc?

Eileen Grant

This submission was received once the Additional Support needs report was published and has been highlighted to education officials in the Government .

I have considered it's content and I am not surprised by the findings. However, there is one issue that I would like to raise. Early intervention is known to be key when it comes to children with ASN, and in particular Autism. It is recognised that early intervention can have a significant and beneficial impact on a child's development. However, this needs to be from when the signs first start to become obvious and when the Child's brain is more malleable. Unfortunately, in Scotland there is a delay in doing anything substantive before the child is 3 years of age, which is too late. There needs to be early provision available, so that parents of children showing Autistic traits or other developmental delays can access the support that is needed to enable them to work with the necessary professionals to achieve the best outcome for their child. Beatlie School Campus in LIVINGSTON, West Lothian provides an excellent early years Education for children who have or are likely to be diagnosed with Autism or developmental delays. However, spaces are limited, and this vital service has been cut. This does not make sense. The service should be extended, to accommodate children under the age of three; and similar like services should be available across Scotland, delivering this essential support. The outcome for children with ASD etc. is likely to be greatly improved with the earliest intervention. We knew that our little boy had Autism around the age of 11 months. However, he was not eligible for a place in a specialist nursery until he was three years old. It was around this time that we went on the "More Than Words" course, which was invaluable in what it taught us. However, this would have helped us significantly had we received this training when we first identified that our child was demonstrating autistic traits, and more importantly we believe this would have made a significant difference to his development at a much earlier stage. That said, we appreciate that we have been very fortunate that we received the assistance of trained professionals in a specialist nursery and he has also been granted a place in an ASD Unit attached to a mainstream school which he is due to attend in August. We know that many other families have not been so fortunate to have had the benefit of either a specialist nursery or an ASD provision, or courses such as the one we attended. It seems that as a nation we are behind when it comes to addressing the needs of our children at an early stage. Age 3 and older is too late. Support and early intervention needs to be available much earlier.

In addition to attracting teaching and support staff to train in ASN there needs to be a drive for trained nursery and early years professionals in this field too. Beatlie School Campus should be the model for Scotland, and more facilities such as this nursery and school should exist. I am uncertain if the Education Minister has visited Beatlie School Campus, but If he hasn't then I think he should make time to do this, so that he can see for himself what this excellent nursery and school has to offer children with multiple disabilities, including autism. I also think that the cut to this provision should be urgently reviewed.

It seems to me that ASN should be a nation wide programme, separately funded by Government, as opposed to the councils having to make room within their budgets. This is where it becomes detrimental to the needs of the children within the various jurisdictions across Scotland, almost akin to a postcode lottery. The system needs to be equitable and fair irrespective of the locale. More importantly it needs to deliver. No child should be failed because their needs are greater than the norm.

I am requesting for this email to be submitted to the Education Minister. We need to think more broadly about this issue, so that the best outcomes can be achieved for our children. Again, I would impress on him to visit Beatlie School Campus.

I am happy to participate in any consultations concerning ASN.

Kindest regards

Eileen Grant - Mother to a son with Autism Spectrum Disorder