



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Public Audit Committee

Neil Rennick
Director-General, Education and Justice
Scottish Government

30 May 2025

Dear Director General,

Additional Support for Learning

Thank you for providing evidence to the Public Audit Committee on the above briefing, at its meeting on [7 May 2025](#) alongside your officials and colleagues from COSLA. Following the evidence session, the Committee agreed to write to you with some questions relating to issues raised in the report

You also offered to follow up on additional areas and these are referenced at the foot of this letter. Please note this letter has also been copied to COSLA, who may be in a better position to respond to some of the points. We would be grateful for a single response, if possible.

Disaggregation of data

The Auditor General for Scotland's briefing found:

"Inconsistency in local recording and data gaps mean that national statistics are unlikely to provide an accurate reflection of demand for [Additional support for learning] (ASL), or the type of support pupils require". It also noted that:

"SEEMiS requires councils to record pupils' reasons for receiving ASL under 23 detailed categories... [yet] around one in four pupils are receiving ASL for a 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulty'... and ten per cent... for 'other' needs that are not defined".

These broad categories referenced in Appendix 2 of the briefing, including 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulty', 'autistic spectrum disorder' and 'Other' encompass a wide range of support needs and we agree with the AGS's view that such wide, general classifications make it difficult to target resources effectively.

The briefing notes that this also makes it difficult to assess whether pupils' needs are being met and whether the ASL recorded is what pupils receive, not what may be required, and that "the scale of unmet needs is unknown".

Contact: Public Audit Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.
Email publicaudit.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

During the evidence session, you acknowledged the limitations of the current system and indicated that changes to data recording were being considered. However, we remain concerned that without significantly more transparent data, the Scottish Government and COSLA will continue to struggle to allocate support appropriately.

Please can you provide more clarity on the specific steps that the Scottish Government will take in the next 12 months to improve the disaggregation of ASL data, particularly in relation to the broad categories listed in Appendix 2 of the briefing?

For example, if the numbers of children recorded under broad categories such as autism is increasing, it would be helpful to have more detailed and specific information on which aspects within that category are contributing to the increase.

Timescales

Members of the Committee expressed disappointment about the lack of detail provided on timescales for the delivery of the National Measurement Framework.

While we recognise that the ASL action plan is a joint initiative with COSLA, the AGS states in the briefing that, although a national measurement framework has been under development since October 2020, this remains at “a very early stage of development”.

The recommendations in the briefing are clear that the Scottish Government and councils should:

- within 6–12 months, agree how they collect and record data required to inform the national measurement framework; and
- within 12–24 months, roll out a national measurement framework and annually publish data that enables them to better identify the scale, complexity and nature of additional support needs

During the evidence session, we noted the commitment to publish the first iteration of the National Measurement Framework this year. We also took an interest in the suggestion that a data summit would be held this year with all local authorities to begin to explore the issues of consistency and data gaps.

While these initial steps are welcome, the Committee did not receive a clear commitment to meeting the deadlines set out as recommendations in the AGS/AC briefing. Given the scale of challenge and delays in responding to earlier reviews such as the Morgan review, we would welcome some further clarity.

Please can you provide us with the Scottish Government’s expected timeline for the full implementation of the National Measurement Framework for ALS including the main stages of work planned between now and its completion?

During the evidence session on 7 May, you also undertook to provide the Committee with the following information:

- Tribunals – whether there is an intention to consider making mediation a mandatory step in the tribunal process (in response to Colin Beattie’s question, columns 7/8).
- ASL project board; reporting timescales – the speed with which the board is making progress (in response to Graham Simpson’s question, columns 25/26).
- Report on accreditation for pupil support assistants – work being carried out jointly between the Scottish Government and COSLA on whether training/a collective induction could be provided. The Committee would welcome sight of the report referred to, once published (in response to Stuart McMillan’s question columns 39/40).

The *Official Report* of the committee’s meeting can be found here: [Public Audit Committee Official Report, 7 May 2025](#).

We would be grateful for your response by **Friday 27 June 2025**.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Leonard MSP

Convener

CC Laura Caven
Chief Officer for Children
COSLA