



Convenor  
Education and Skills Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH  
EH99 1SP

10 January 2019

Dear Clare

I am writing in response to your letter of 11 December 2018 following officials' appearance in front of the Education and Skills Committee on 28 November 2018 on data on school support staff.

As I stated in my letter to Johann Lamont of 31 October 2018, and as officials stated in their committee appearance, I have no role in influencing the decision made by statisticians on the publication and presentation of statistics. It is a matter for professional statisticians how the data is collected, quality assured, and presented, in conjunction with listening to the changing needs of people who want to use the statistics. Given many of the issues you raise relate to exactly these issues, it is for the Chief Statistician, Roger Halliday, to provide a response to you on those matters and I have made him aware of your letter.

The Committee has also asked for further information in relation to matters of policy on additional support for learning. I have provided information below in response to those points.

### **Quality of data – ASN specialist school support staff**

The Committee has asked that further work is undertaken to further understand the staffing provision available for additional support for learning. My policy official indicated that there has been some consideration of changing from an input based data collection model to one that focuses on outcomes. The purpose of that approach is to understand better, not only the picture of additional support for learning in Scotland but also the outcomes that children and young people with additional support needs achieve, and where further work needs to be done to further support implementation of this policy and legislation (see Annex A). I would therefore suggest that the proposal made by the committee in relation to staffing should be considered within the context of this development.

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## **Working with local authorities to produce guidance**

I hold all of those who provide support to pupils in the highest regard and recognise and value the important contribution they make to teaching and learning. I remain convinced that the needs of individual children and young people can best be identified and met by the people who work closely with them every day and are enabled to make decisions about their learning.

My officials are already actively engaged and working collaboratively with CoSLA to identify the roles carried out by School Support Staff in Scotland, and the support offered to those individuals at a local level with the aim of enhancing the support and professional development offered to this workforce at a national level.

Whilst I am committed to maintaining and improving the quality of classroom support in Scotland, I recognise that local authorities are the direct employers therefore offer posts that may vary from authority to authority, based on the nature of their duties, including those to identify, provide for, and to review the support for children and young people with additional support needs.

## **Research on the experiences of children and young people with ASN**

I note that the Committee has asked that the research on the experiences of children and young people with additional support needs is published, whilst I reflect on the publication of the revised guidance on the presumption to mainstream education, in light of the Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved report. As part of the Committee's earlier report on Additional Support for Learning the Committee asked that the research was taken account of in the publication of guidance. As a result, these two pieces of work are linked, and my preference is to publish the research at the same time as the revised guidance document.

Scottish Government and CoSLA officials will meet shortly to discuss the issues raised in this letter further.

Yours sincerely

**JOHN SWINNEY**

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**The Advisory Group for Additional Support for Learning has discussed the change from our current statistical collection to one which focusses on the outcomes achieved for children and young people.**

**Advisory Group for Additional Support for Learning (AGASL) Meeting  
8 February 2017**

**Outcomes reporting**

Laura noted that a paper on outcomes reporting had been circulated to the group following agreement at the last meeting on the broad approach that would be taken. She noted that Annex B outlines the data available but that the group now need to agree how that data will be used to develop a report.

The group agreed they were happy with the addition of the data on early years. They also agreed that data on achievement of CfE levels was helpful in providing a baseline. Laura noted that further work will be required to draw out the data from HGIOS4 and transitions.

The group noted that there were difficulties getting data from independent schools as they do not use SEEMiS. However, Laura noted she has some data on the proportion of children in independent special schools and will include this in the data collection.

██████████ advised that the language around transitions is changing and Laura confirmed that she was aware of this. She also noted that this will be reflected in the guidance on statistical collection which will come to AGASL for input.

The group discussed the data that had been provided by Enquire and Let's Talk ASN which they agreed was helpful. The group agreed that it would be helpful for a further update to be provided at future meetings and ██████████ agreed to provide stats on the most common reason for enquires.

**ACTION: Provide stats on the most common reason for enquiries.**

The group discussed the timing of the report and agreed it would be published on a bi-annual basis. It is expected the next report will be due in early 2018.

The group agreed that children and young people should be included in the audience of the report. It was also agreed that AGASL itself was also part of the audience as the report will be critical in guiding its future workplan.

The group agreed the report should be published and sent to the Education and Skills Committee and Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe)

**Advisory Group for Additional Support for Learning (AGASL) Meeting  
30 November 2017**

### **3. Outcomes Framework**

Laura noted that there is a requirement for Ministers to collect and publish stats on a number of input measures. These are: the number of children and young people with additional support needs; the principal factors giving rise to their additional support needs; the types of support provided and; the cost of providing that support. She noted that although this requirement has been removed from the face of the 2004 Act by the Education Act 2016, this is only to allow future changes to the type of data that would be collected and published.

Laura noted that the group have previously discussed and agreed to produce an outcomes framework which would make the stats collected more meaningful by including a number of outcomes measures. Laura referred to the paper which was agreed at the February 2017 meeting of the group. This paper includes a number of measures of outcomes which could be collected. It was agreed that this paper would be re-circulated to the group.

#### **ACTION: Re-circulate paper on outcomes framework**

The group suggested some other measures which could be included, such as information on local authority complaints and parental engagement levels. It was agreed that work will be done to agree the best way for this data to be captured.

Laura noted that the forthcoming Report to Parliament can be used as a test of the outcome measures and whether more work is required to develop these further. Laura proposed to develop the report over the Christmas period and bring it to the group for their input. The group agreed they were content with this approach.

#### **ACTION: Report to be circulated for comments**

The group discussed the stats that had been provided by Enquire, Let's Talk ASN and the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS). [REDACTED] noted that the trends in inquiries that Enquire received were broadly similar to previous years. Let's Talk ASN reported a similar picture. [REDACTED] advised that as the CYPCS advice line is currently not highly publicised, they have received few inquiries.

Notably, there had been an increase in inquiries about children who were not in school. The group discussed the need to make clear that informal exclusions are illegal. [REDACTED] confirmed that Education Scotland takes this issue very seriously as part of their inspections. She also confirmed that Education Scotland will work with Enquire to ensure that the information on exclusions is absolutely clear on this point.

The group also discussed home education and their concerns that there is the potential for children who do not register for primary school or who do not transition to secondary school to be lost. Laura advised that this is a known issue. She noted that other agencies, such as health will be involved with the child which should minimise safeguarding concerns. Laura agreed to link up with the appropriate teams in the SG to feed back the group's concerns.

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