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How is Additional Support for Learning working in practice?



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Education and Skills Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.



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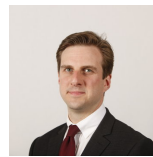
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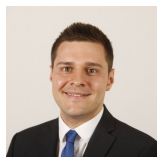
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Conclusions and recommendations

1. The Committee wants to thank all those who shared their perspective on additional support needs, particularly those parents who shared personal and sensitive information on caring for their children and the challenge of ensuring their children receive the support they need in school. This information has been very valuable to the Committee, helping it to produce recommendations that reflect these practical experiences. This report highlights some of the themes raised in evidence, but anyone with an interest in this issue should also look at the [original submissions](#) to get a sense of the concerns raised.
2. The context for the Committee's analysis of education for children with additional support needs in this report is the "exponential"ⁱ increase in the recorded incidence of children with additional support needs in Scotland in recent years, to a level beyond many people's expectations (153% increase since 2010).
3. The Scottish Parliament passed the legislation that brought in the mainstreaming policy and the Parliament continues to support the inclusive ethos behind it. However, the success of mainstreaming, and more broadly the policy of inclusion, is dependant on how it is implemented. The Committee received lots of evidence suggesting that, due to a lack of resources, some children feel more excluded in a mainstream school setting than they may have done in a special school. In other words the policy to include is having the opposite effect in some circumstances due to a lack of resources. An analysis of the evidence, taking available resources to support Additional Support for Learning (ASL) in mainstream schools into account, suggests that more children than are actually best served by mainstream education are currently in mainstream primary and secondary schools.
4. Looking more broadly at additional support for learning, the evidence points at a number of ways in which resources are not currently sufficient to support those with additional support needs in mainstream schools. The most notable factors are the reduction in the number of specialist staff in classrooms, the reduction in specialist support services and the reduction in special school places.
5. Nevertheless, the Committee is encouraged by the figures provided by the Cabinet Secretary on positive outcomes for those with additional support needs (ASN). It is also encouraged to have heard from a number of parents what a massive difference effective support from a particular person, school or education authority, in mainstream education, has made to the lives of their children. These

ⁱ Quote in the focus group note from the visit to Dalkeith Community Campus

achievements are particularly welcome when set against a backdrop of limited resources and a massive increase in the recorded incidence of additional support needs.

6. The Committee acknowledges that it only heard from those who wanted to respond to its call for views, and so naturally comments centred around what needs to improve. However, the Committee places real value on the amount of evidence it received, the depth of the detail, and the consistency of the issues raised with the implementation of the mainstreaming legislation, and more generally the insufficient resources for additional support for learning in mainstream education. More has to be done to establish the extent to which the experiences conveyed in evidence are happening across Scotland.
7. The Scottish Government must assess the extent to which the policy to mainstream and the associated communications to education authorities are leading to mainstreaming in practice. The Scottish Government must also assess the extent to which a lack of resources is impacting on mainstreaming in practice and more generally on the provision of additional support for learning in mainstream education.
8. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government should undertake a quality assurance review of the implementation of the presumption to mainstream policy, and more broadly of the availability of additional support for learning in mainstream schools. This review should place emphasis on the direct experiences of parents (and by extension the children themselves), teachers and support staff in schools. The evidence received by this Committee should be context for the Government's work. Having children in mainstream education who would benefit from it is the starting point, but insight into the real experiences of children with additional support needs in mainstream education is vital to the success of inclusion, including mainstreaming.
9. The Committee recommends that this quality assurance review should feed into the terms of the revised guidance planned by the Government. The revised guidance must ensure the impact of a lack of resources is reflected in the form the additional support for learning policy takes in the future.
10. Given the evidence received, and the fact that the mainstreaming policy is a "cornerstone" of inclusivity in mainstream schools, the Committee considers that parliamentary oversight of the progress of the implementation of mainstreaming, and more broadly additional support for learning, is required. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government, having established a process of quality assurance as part of the review recommended above, reports to Parliament on an annual basis providing qualitative as well as quantitative evidence on additional support for learning in mainstream education.

11. The Committee welcomes the Scottish Government's review of the guidance on mainstreaming and recommends that the review includes a systematic assessment of the processes outlined in paragraphs 69 to 88, including an assessment of the extent to which resources are impacting on each process. Resource limitations that are impacting on these processes include:
 - the number of trained ASN teachers and ASN assistants,
 - the availability of specialists including mental health specialists and educational psychologists,
 - the level of resources supporting the ASN Tribunal process and other appeal processes, and
 - the availability of spaces in special schools.
12. Since approaching 1 in 4 children have a recognised additional support need, the successful provision of additional support for learning is integral to the success of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). The Committee is concerned that parents from areas of deprivation may have lower chances at present to receive advice and support to ensure additional support needs of their children are recognised and the necessary support for learning provided. Given the emphasis in evidence on the importance of the parent pushing for support for their child, the Committee is concerned that this issue will disproportionately impact upon disadvantaged families and potentially have an adverse effect, namely widening the attainment gap between children with ASN in deprived and more affluent families.
13. The Committee welcomes the undertaking from the Cabinet Secretary to set out the criteria that the attainment gap will be assessed against by "the middle of this year [2017]". As supporting children with ASN is integral to closing the attainment gap, the Committee recommends that the Scottish Government analyses the extent to which a process that relies largely on parental involvement to have their child's ASN recognised and supported, could potentially widen the gap.
14. The Committee also recommends that the Scottish Government increases the provision of advocacy services and looks at how these could be best targeted at raising awareness and supporting parents from areas of deprivation.
15. The Committee welcomes the undertaking from the Cabinet Secretary and recommends that the Scottish Government establishes whether there are deep-seated factors that are influencing the variation in these figures. Specifically, the Committee is concerned that additional support needs are going unrecognised in some education authorities more than others and that, in addition to parental

involvement and resource limitations, the culture of the education authority, and some particular schools within authorities, is also a factor.

16. The Committee recommends that, once the raw data has been improved as a result of the Scottish Government working group's efforts, anomalies in these figures should be used as a basis to explore with individual authorities the basis for any inexplicably low percentages of ASN in their area. Information from the quality assurance review recommended above could also be analysed on an education authority by education authority basis to establish whether the patterns in parent, child and school staff experiences in these areas, specifically on cultural barriers to recognition, support the figures. The Committee would ask that, when the Scottish Government has established which education authorities are cause for concern, that the Government shares this information with the Committee so that the Committee can also seek to hold these authorities to account.
17. The Committee also recommends that the Scottish Government should undertake a financial review to ascertain the extent to which education authorities are spending in line with the level of need in their area, and identify any education authorities that have spends lower than their recognition rates might require. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government undertakes this review in collaboration with education authorities as the Committee appreciates that authorities will have some valid explanations in relation to the disparities in recognition rates and in levels of spend per pupil with ASN. The financial review should be the starting point for Scottish Government discussions with education authorities on their funding allocations.
18. Inclusive education for those with additional support needs is "based on the premise that there is benefit to all children when the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is properly prepared, well supported and takes place in mainstream schools within a positive ethos". The Committee would therefore welcome further analysis from the Scottish Government on how the education and ultimately the attainment of pupils in general is being impacted upon by insufficient resources being provided to support children with additional support needs. This should include any correlation between the reduction in specialist ASN staff in certain education authorities and overall attainment.
19. The Committee recommends that education authorities seek to collaborate more, including in respect of designing and delivering training in order to remove duplication of effort. The Committee will seek a response from Cosla and SLGP on this and other relevant recommendations, and will also highlight this report to all education authorities.

20. In relation to initial teacher training, the Committee welcomes the undertaking from the Cabinet Secretary to highlight to the GTCS the Committee's concerns that combining post-graduate training with the probationary year, which is one proposal for change, will limit further the time available for trainee teachers to train in additional support needs. The Committee recommends that the GTCS takes this into account when assessing proposals from the colleges of education, produced in line with the Government's intention to "encourage more teachers to come into the classroom and get them there quicker".

Introduction

21. Additional support for learning is an issue that has been raised in evidence regularly with the Committee since its establishment, including in scrutiny sessions with education authorities on their implementation of Scottish Government policy and in sessions focussing on the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence and attainment. It is also 16 years since the Parliament passed the legislation that introduced the presumption to mainstream education for children with additional support needs. In addition, debates of the whole Parliament and in-depth studies from external sources such as Unison, NASUWT and the the Scottish Children's Services Coalition have highlighted concerns with the extent to which additional support for learning is functioning in practice.
 22. On this basis the Committee agreed to hold a [roundtable evidence session](#) with representatives of distinct perspectives on this issue followed by a session with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills for the Scottish Government perspective. The Committee also issued a call for views which sought to get perspective from academics and organisations but also those with direct experience of additional support needs, including parents and school staff.
 23. The Committee asked for views online and people had just over two weeks to submit their comments. There was a big response, particularly from teachers and parents, with 143 parents and 64 teachers and support staff responding.
 24. In total the Committee received 261 written submissions that can be found [here](#). The Committee ran four focus groups with teaching staff and university lecturers. The Convener, James Dornan MSP, and two other members of the Committee Ross Greer MSP, and Ross Thomson MSP, also visited Dalkeith Community Campus and spoke to teachers from the two mainstream secondary schools about their experiences.
 25. Following the completion of the evidence taking, and before the report consideration stage, the membership of the Committee changed, with Clare Haughey MSP and Ruth Maguire MSP joining the Committee to replace Richard Lochhead MSP and Fulton MacGregor MSP.
26. The Committee wants to thank all those who shared their perspective on additional support needs, particularly those parents who shared personal and sensitive information on caring for their children and the challenge of ensuring their children receive the support they need in school. This information has been very valuable to the Committee, helping it to produce recommendations that reflect these practical experiences. This report highlights some of the themes raised in evidence, but anyone with an interest in this issue should also look at the [original submissions](#) to get a sense of the concerns raised.

Context

27. A person has 'additional support needs' if *for whatever reason*, they are unlikely to be able to benefit from school education without additional support. This is a very broad definition and includes, for example, very able children and those who may need temporary additional support due to family circumstances such as bereavement. The legislation underpinning this does not list any particular conditions or type of need, except that there is a presumption that 'looked after' children have additional support needs.
28. Illustrating the diversity of additional support needs are the particular conditions and circumstances referred to in submissions to the Committee. These include: dyslexia, autism, downs syndrome, ADHD, brittle bone disease, looked after children, adopted children, dyscalcula, very able children, hearing impairment, anxious children, nystagmus, aspergers, agenesis of the corpus callosum growth hormone deficiency and pituitary issues, complex needs requiring 24 hr support, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
29. Section 15 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000 provides a legal presumption that children will be educated in mainstream schools unless mainstream provision:
 - would not be suited to the ability or aptitude of the child;
 - would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for the children with whom the child would be educated; or
 - would result in unreasonable public expenditure being incurred which would not ordinarily be incurred,
 and that "it shall be presumed that those circumstances arise *only exceptionally*".
30. The then Scottish Executive issued [guidance](#) on this in 2002. The guidance explained the broader intention of the policy:

"It is based on the premise that there is benefit to all children when the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs with their peers is properly prepared, well-supported and takes place in mainstream schools within a positive ethos. Such inclusion helps schools to develop an ethos to the benefit of all children, and of society generally. It also helps meet the wishes of many parents that their children should be educated alongside their friends in a school as close to home as possible."
31. According to the guidance, local authorities must "make adequate and efficient provision" for the additional support required by every child for whose school education it is responsible. However, authorities do not have to do anything that would require unreasonable expenditure. The local authority must identify those who have additional support needs and also those who need a Co-ordinated Support Plan. In addition, if the needs of a disabled child aged under three are brought to the attention of the local authority, then the local authority must provide "such additional support as is appropriate". There are also requirements to seek

and take account of information in order to aid smooth transition when starting school, moving to secondary school and leaving school.

32. In the context of a growing focus on inclusion, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 changed the way in which support for pupils with learning difficulties was managed, increased the number of categories used in relation to reasons for support and enhanced the rights of parents to challenge local authority decisions.
33. Where the local authority is responsible for the child's education, parents have a number of rights. These include:
 - A local authority must comply with a parent's reasonable request to establish whether their child has additional support needs.
 - A local authority must comply with reasonable requests for an assessment, and take the findings into account. However, such assessment is to be carried out by a person the local authority consider appropriate.
 - Certain children with complex needs are entitled to a statutory Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP), which brings with it rights of appeal to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal. 1.4% of pupils with ASN have such plans.
34. Local authorities must make available certain dispute resolution procedures (mostly free of charge), these are:
 - Right to have a 'supporter' present in discussions or an 'advocacy worker' make representations to the local authority, but the local authority does not have to pay for this.
 - Right to an advocacy services, free of charge, for those taking cases to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal.
 - Independent mediation, free of charge.
 - Independent adjudication, free of charge.
 - Additional Support Needs Tribunal for certain issues involving CSPs, placing requests and disability discrimination cases under the Equality Act 2010.
35. Outwith these statutory dispute resolution procedures, there is advice and information provided by voluntary organisations. For example, there were 1,444 calls to the 'Enquire' helpline in 2016 which is run by Children in Scotland and funded by the Scottish Government.
36. The number of pupils recorded with additional support needs has more than doubled over the last few years (153% increase since 2010 (SPICe)). This is likely to be due in large part to better recognition and changes in recording practice. In 2010 102.2 pupils per 1,000 were recorded as having additional support needs. In 2016 this had increased to 248.7 per 1,000.
37. Since 2002 the number of pupils in special schools has fallen by 19%, compared to a 4% drop in the number of pupils in mainstream primary schools and a 13% drop in the number of pupils in mainstream secondary schools over the same period.

([Scottish Government pupil census 2016](#) table 1.1). The pupil census also records that 93% of pupils with additional support needs spend all their time in mainstream classes. Those with the most complex needs have Co-ordinated Support Plans, and half of these pupils spend all their time in mainstream classes ([Scottish Government pupil census 2016](#), table 1.6). The Committee considers evidence later in the report on the increased likelihood of a child receiving a Co-ordinated Support Plan if they are from a more advantaged background.

38. The *rate* of increase of pupils recorded with additional support needs has been greatest with regard to mental health problems (increase from 1 per 1,000 to 4.1 per 1,000), English as an additional language (increase from 9 per 1,000 to 39.3 per 1,000 and more able pupils (increase from 1.2 per 1,000 to 4.8 per 1,000). There are also a number of new categories recorded such as 'family issues' (rate of 17.5 per 1,000 in 2016 and being a young carer (3 per 1,000). The single most common category remains Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (21.9 per 1,000 in 2010 increasing to 52.6 per 1,000 in 2016).
39. The number of teachers and other staff with an additional support needs specialism has reduced in recent years, as have the number of educational psychologists and other specialists providing support to teachers outside the classroom (Professor Sheila Riddell), the overall number of classroom support assistants that can provide 1:1 support and other services for those with ASN (Professor Sheila Riddell). To illustrate this, the [SSTA submission](#) states that "at the same time the total number of pupils recognised as having additional support needs (across all sectors) increased by 72%, the number of teachers working within Learning Support and ASN in both the primary and secondary sectors decreased by around 26%."
40. The Cabinet Secretary set out in evidence to the Committee his perspective on the budget constraints faced by education authorities, and the challenge of delivering additional support needs should be considered in this context.

” ...a recent Accounts Commission analysis showed that the reductions in Scottish Government funding from the UK Government and the funding implications for local authorities in Scotland are of largely the same magnitude. The level of reductions in the Scottish Government's budget has largely been reflected in the local authority situation in general. That means that, in challenging budget environments, local authorities have been treated fairly in the process.

Secondly, the figures indicate that, in the previous financial year, there was a 2.7 per cent increase in local authority education expenditure and a 1.9 per cent real-terms increase.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 50¹

41. The context for the Committee's analysis of education for children with additional support needs in this report is the "exponential"ⁱⁱ increase in the recorded incidence of children with additional support needs in Scotland in recent years, to a level beyond many people's expectations (153% increase since 2010 (SPICe)).

ii Quote in the focus group note from the visit to Dalkeith Community Campus

Key issues

42. Insufficient resources was a strong theme throughout the evidence received. Essentially the impact of a lack of resources on the implementation of the mainstreaming policy, and more generally on the support for any child with additional support needs in mainstream education, is reflected in three ways in this report:
- The first, and the one that receives the most focus in this report, is that the additional support needs of a large number of children are not being fully met, and this impacts on their education
 - The second is the impact on other pupils studying in mainstream education
 - The third is the impact on teaching and support staff, in the context of other work pressures
43. The report also includes recommendations for change including in relation to:
- the process for establishing the need for support and the process of then receiving support, including how hard some parents have to fight for their child to receive support
 - the need for collaborative working, consistency of approach, and in some cases, cultural change, from education authorities
 - the need for more teacher and support staff training
44. It should be acknowledged from the outset that a number of those submitting evidence do not believe that a presumption towards mainstreaming is the correct overarching ethos for Scottish education. However this was very much a minority view in the evidence received and, on that basis, this report does not question the validity of the decision to have a presumption to mainstream. It does however look at whether the correct balance is currently struck between allocating children to mainstream and special schools, and again the influence of the availability of resources, such as the availability of special school places, on these decisions.

Overview of the impact of a lack of resources on Additional Support for Learning

45. As set out above, the central premise of a presumption towards mainstreaming is that "there is benefit to all children when the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs with their peers is properly prepared, well-supported and takes place in mainstream schools within a positive ethos¹". The Cabinet Secretary set out the ethos behind providing additional support for learning in mainstream schools, including mainstreaming, in his opening statement to the Committee on 8 March 2017:

” Scotland has one of the most inclusive systems for provision of support in schools. We have a system that focuses on barriers to learning, and that approach makes Scotland stand out from others. The approach is well regarded throughout Europe and has been adopted by a number of other countries.

A cornerstone of our inclusive approach is the presumption of mainstreaming for pupils with additional support needs. We know that significant numbers of children, young people and their families have benefited from that inclusive approach.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney), contrib. 3²

46. The Committee has received submissions from a number of education authorities that highlight how their work in relation to additional support for learning complements and dovetails with their wider approach to Getting it Right for Every Child.

” 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....

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. (Dumfries and Galloway Council)

47. A strong theme of evidence from parents and teachers however was the gap between the experience envisaged of inclusive education and the experience of the children they supported in practice. Again, the lack of resources, specifically staff, was regularly cited as the issue in evidence. Of the 143 parents who shared their experiences the vast majority mentioned resources of some form and 87 specifically mentioned a lack of staff and its impact on their children. The majority of the teachers and support staff also mentioned this in evidence. Some parents and teachers consider that the lack of resources is sufficiently serious to suggest that inclusion does not work in practice. A snapshot reflective of views submitted by many parents and teachers is set out below:

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

Senior Education Managers at Authority level who have not seen in action the impact of sufficient and well-trained support staff understandably do not value this area of expertise. Support staff in recent years have therefore become the easy target for staff cuts. This includes both teachers and support assistants. (Lorna Walker)

We are in a desperate state and letting so many pupils down. Inclusion will only work if we invest in training and professional staff. Our young people deserve better. (Anonymous)

Local authorities do not have enough suitably qualified teacher/assessors and enough support for learning staff to support all the young people once identified as having additional support needs. (Anne Warden)

Many of the pupils I teach with additional support needs have behavioural / social issues which impedes their learning. The ASN support simply does not have enough people to truly support their very delicate needs. We have the paper work to evidence their needs and therefore the legal responsibility to remove barriers to their learning but we do not have enough staff to deliver these high expectations (Louisa Maestranzi)

In my experience of mainstream schools in which there was no department for additional support needs, inclusion actually meant exclusion (Sharon Veelenturf)

48. These personal experiences and perspectives support the findings of a wider piece of survey work that fed into the report published in 2016 by ENABLE on mainstream education for those with learning disabilities. [IncludEd In the Main?](#) reported on a survey finding that “truly inclusive education is still far from a reality for young people who have learning disabilities”. The value of the findings of that report have been acknowledged by both the Cabinet Secretary in evidence to the Committee and by the Minister for Further and Higher Education in her contribution to [Graeme Dey MSP's recent members debate](#) on this issue. The Committee has also received examples in a number of submissions from other organisations that align with the themes in evidence from parents, teachers, and the Enable report. For example the Scottish ADHD coalition referred to children being:

” “put on “short days” or taught away from other children sometimes on their own in unsuitable locations such as a photocopier cupboard.”

49. Some of the most extreme accounts received related to parents who were home schooling their children; what Sally Cavers from Enquire described as “informal exclusion”. Twelve parents of the 143 sharing their experiences said that because

of issues with understanding of their child's needs and/or funding they are home schooling their children. Five of those explicitly said that they do not feel that their child's needs are best met by this approach because of the lack of socialising. Four other parents said they were currently considering home schooling.

50. These perspectives should be balanced by accounts received from parents praising the support their children have received in mainstream education and outlining the difference this support has made to these children. Indeed a number of parents of children who have been placed, or were intended to be placed, outwith mainstream schools in stand alone specialist schools pushed for a mainstream education for their children because of their belief that inclusion was a more beneficial approach for their child. Christine Williamson spoke of her son's experience:

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

I am under no illusion that the work load for staff to differentiate for him is high, however he benefits massively from being in a mainstream environment – learning how to behave socially and independently. He would not enjoy the same learning experience in a special needs school with children with a range of needs.

51. It should be noted that insufficient resources was also highlighted as an issue in a number of submissions relating to children in special schools. In other words, insufficient resources is also an issue outwith the debate on whether mainstreaming is working in practice and whether additional support for learning has sufficient resources. A further perspective was that the effective provision of additional support for learning had barriers in its way that are cultural in mainstream schools and/or education authorities.

” As a parent, I trusted the “system” yet I feel that my son has been totally failed over the years. Not all schools are as good as his High School. If only he'd had the kind of nurturing and care he enjoys here in all his schools, maybe he would have managed to achieve more.

The culture and attitude in schools varied greatly. The lack of expertise and understanding goes hand in hand with extremely poor to non-existent training.

However, no amount of training can teach empathy and mindfulness.(Anonymous mother of three)

It would be too simplistic to suggest resources, although a dominant factor, is the only factor at play. Cultural issues are explored later in the report.

52. For completeness, the level of expectation from parents in seeking support for their child is not the only perspective on the requirements of a child that needs to be taken into account when assessing and delivering support for a child. Parental expectations were perceived as high in a number of submissions, including a suggestion that wanting 1:1 support was commonly requested including where this was not necessarily required. (Kindred)

Condition specific evidence: Autism

53. To examine one of the most prevalent conditions requiring support, ASD, of the 143 parents submitting views, 55 challenged whether mainstreaming for their autistic children was working. One anonymous parent said:

” “a lot of children who are on the spectrum are being ‘lost’ in the mainstream environment and a large number spend a significant part of their school day in solitary conditions and not in the classroom, either spending significant time in ‘sensory rooms’ ‘safe rooms’ ‘soft play rooms’ etc. but yet this seems to be acceptable and parents are told ‘but your child is accessing the curriculum.’”

54. A number of parents highlighted very positive experiences for their autistic children within mainstream education. Kindred provided a submission based on the experiences of its support of 1,000 families each year:

” “Some children with high level ASD or other disabilities 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.”

55. Enquire confirmed in evidence that the most enquiries the support service received related to support for children with autism and that it provides support to these parents. Dumfries and Galloway Council's submission highlighted its response to the scale of the challenge of supporting a large number of pupils with ASD:

” 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 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.

56. Dumfries and Galloway Council also highlighted its specific autism strategy and other submissions mentioned support sitting below such strategies, including online resources available to mainstream schools such as autism toolkits. Numerous support documents at a strategic and operational level are available, although much of the evidence on training highlighted later in this report serves to beg the question as to how much time is available to train in particular conditions and whether there are sufficient numbers of staff to do so.

57. A number of submissions highlighted how a lack of support to ensure some children with autism were not overexposed to the impact of a bustling environment meant that these children often became anxious and as a result became distressed and disruptive in classes. Two parents outlined what they considered to be violent and disruptive behaviour from children with autism towards their own children. In addition Kindred, in its summary of parental experiences it was aware of, reflected instances of autistic children being picked on as problem children or parents of autistic children being ostracised in the playground.

58. The purpose of focusing on autism is not to suggest that the experiences of those with autism are reflective of the experiences of all those with additional support needs, and as with all conditions there are positive experiences as a direct result of mainstreaming. The autism evidence however does highlight the pressure on the education system in relation to this condition and also the danger that children with additional support needs like ASD can be perceived socially by children and parents as 'the problem'. It is undoubtedly the case from the evidence received that some disruptive behaviour is a direct result of being in an educational setting where children receive insufficient support due to insufficient resources.

Main conclusions on resources

59. The Cabinet Secretary, having considered all of the evidence received by the Committee, highlighted the improvements in the overall percentage of children with ASN experiencing positive outcomes such as exam qualifications.

” The performance of young people with additional support needs has improved; 86.2 per cent of those pupils have a positive destination, and that figure is up on previous years. A rising proportion of pupils with additional support needs are leaving school with one or more qualification at Scottish credit and qualifications framework level 5 or better. The improvement in performance of young people with additional support needs is encouraging.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 40³

He also referred to the Government's planned work to review the guidance on the presumption of mainstreaming in part to ensure the correct balance was being struck between specialist education and mainstream schools. In relation to staffing levels and other resource issues, he suggested the number of ASN staff had actually increased since 2008 and also made clear the extent to which delivery of additional support for learning is the responsibility of education authorities:

” Fundamentally, however, the statutory responsibility rests with local authorities to ensure that provision is delivered in accordance with the needs of every child, which requires that an assessment be made of the needs and circumstances of every young person who is involved. Clearly, a great deal of work is undertaken to determine and design the most appropriate approaches to take; it is for individual local authorities to form their own conclusions.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 5⁴

60. Quality assuring inclusion was a suggestion highlighted in numerous submissions and by numerous witnesses and the Committee adds its support to these suggestions. Sharon Veelenturf stated during the Committee's evidence session:

” As you know, I am just a parent. It would be really useful for school staff members, kids and parents to have some way of quality assuring inclusion. Who checks—and decides—that it is working, and how do we check that? Do we check with kids, parents and school all together, or is inclusion deemed to be working because there are no exclusions? On paper, it might look as if things are great, but there could be nervous breakdowns happening at home; alternatively, things could be really rough in school and really good at home. Who assesses how well the approach is working and who decides whether it is or is not working? That needs to be looked at—we cannot just assume that it is working because the bodies are in the class.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Sharon Veelenturf, contrib. 131⁵

Kenny Graham added his support to this idea and referred to the Doran Review and also the educational consultant Bill Colley's emphasis on quality assurance:

” ...the Doran review suggested that there must be a quality assurance mechanism to our reporting and recording. In his submission to the committee, the educational consultant Bill Colley mentioned that we should be seeking the views of pupils and parents on the quality of the experience. That is critical. If we do not ask the right questions, we will not get the answers that we need in order to make appropriate changes.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Kenny Graham, contrib. 137⁶

61. The Scottish Parliament passed the legislation that brought in the mainstreaming policy and the Parliament continues to support the inclusive ethos behind it. However, the success of mainstreaming, and more broadly the policy of inclusion, is dependant on how it is implemented. The Committee received lots of evidence suggesting that, due to a lack of resources, some children feel more excluded in a mainstream school setting than they may have done in a special school. In other words the policy to include is having the opposite effect in some circumstances due to a lack of resources. An analysis of the evidence, taking available resources to support ASL in mainstream schools into account, suggests that more children than are actually best served by mainstream education are currently in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

62. Looking more broadly at additional support for learning, the evidence points at a number of ways in which resources are not currently sufficient to support those with additional support needs in mainstream schools. The most notable factors are the reduction in the number of specialist staff in classrooms, the reduction in specialist support services and the reduction in special school places.

63. Nevertheless, the Committee is encouraged by the figures provided by the Cabinet Secretary on positive outcomes for those with additional support needs. It is also encouraged to have heard from a number of parents what a massive difference effective support from a particular person, school or education authority, in mainstream education, has made to the lives of their children. These achievements are particularly welcome when set against a backdrop of limited resources and a massive increase in the recorded incidence of additional support needs.

64. The Committee acknowledges that it only heard from those who wanted to respond to its call for views, and so naturally comments centred around what needs to improve. However, the Committee places real value on the amount of evidence it received, the depth of the detail, and the consistency of the issues raised with the implementation of the mainstreaming legislation, and more generally the insufficient resources for additional support for learning in mainstream education. More has to be done to establish the extent to which the experiences conveyed in evidence are happening across Scotland.

65. The Scottish Government must assess the extent to which the policy to mainstream and the associated communications to education authorities are leading to mainstreaming in practice. The Scottish Government must also assess the extent to which a lack of resources is impacting on mainstreaming in practice and more generally on the provision of additional support for learning in mainstream education.
 66. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government should undertake a quality assurance review of the implementation of the presumption to mainstream policy, and more broadly of the availability of additional support for learning in mainstream schools. This review should place emphasis on the direct experiences of parents (and by extension the children themselves), teachers and support staff in schools. The evidence received by this Committee should be context for the Government's work. Having children in mainstream education who would benefit from it is the starting point, but insight into the real experiences of children with additional support needs in mainstream education is vital to the success of inclusion, including mainstreaming.
 67. The Committee recommends that this quality assurance review should feed into the terms of the revised guidance planned by the Government. The revised guidance must ensure the impact of a lack of resources is reflected in the form the additional support for learning policy takes in the future.
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68. Given the evidence received, and the fact that the mainstreaming policy is a "cornerstone" of inclusivity in mainstream schools, the Committee considers that parliamentary oversight of the progress of the implementation of mainstreaming, and more broadly additional support for learning, is required. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government, having established a process of quality assurance as part of the review recommended above, reports to Parliament on an annual basis providing qualitative as well as quantitative evidence on additional support for learning in mainstream education.

Accessing appropriate support

Recognition of an additional support need for a child

69. Two themes in relation to recognising conditions were highlighted in evidence. The first is the ability to recognise accurately conditions due to a lack of specialists in schools to either directly recognise these conditions or to provide advice and support to teachers and support staff in recognising conditions. The issue of a lack of time for teacher and other staff training was seen to exacerbate this problem.
70. A number of contributions to the roundtable session reflected this theme. Professor Riddell stated:

” Scotland has a declining number of educational psychologists. We also have an ageing learning support profession and a reduction in the number of classroom assistants. One of the problems is that it can be difficult for parents to get a proper assessment. Some people might be effective at arguing for an expert assessment to be done by a psychologist, but many parents get an assessment from the class teacher.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Professor Riddell, contrib. 37⁷

Sharon Veelenturf, a parent, commented on this expectation on teachers:

” People who do not have expertise in the area of additional needs are also being asked to assess something that they do not know anything about, which is also a barrier to getting a proper assessment.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Sharon Veelenturf, contrib. 38⁸

Samreen Shah confirmed this from the teacher's perspective:

” ...there is an issue around services such as educational psychologists and school nurses. Back in the day—10 years ago—there was a nurse and a policeman in the school. That is not going to come back, because of budget cuts. Now, the pastoral care team and people who are involved in speech and language therapy see an educational psychologist once a month for two hours, if they are lucky. That is not good enough if we are going to identify young people with needs. You are right to say that those needs do not just involve autism or dyslexia. What about children who have gone through bereavement or who have mental health issues? As you can see from the report, the incidence of children with mental health issues has doubled.

We just do not have enough resources and training to deal with all the issues, but we are trying, because that is what teachers want to do.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Samreen Shah, contrib. 56⁹

71. Sylvia Haughney's evidence aligned with Samreen Shah's view when she commented from an ASL worker's perspective on the effectiveness of cascade training:

” There are not just teachers who work in schools—there are a lot of staff in there. I have worked in the ASL sector for more than 34 years and that is exactly what my training was on. There is a curriculum for pre-birth up to five years. I was trained in that but, because it was a long time ago, it was called taking a holistic view. We looked at auditory detection and it included all class staff, teachers and speech and language therapists. I had to develop all those skills, but we were given the training so we had an understanding and knew what to look for. That training is no longer there. We had direct training from psychologists and speech therapists to give us some understanding and knowledge of what we were looking for and how to take the next step with that pupil. That approach has gone. Now we have cascaded training—someone goes on a course and then comes back and tells us what to do.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Sylvia Haughney, contrib. 65¹⁰

Lastly at the roundtable, Colin Crawford, Head of Inclusion from Glasgow City Council, reflected on the positive work ongoing to develop training but also the time pressures associated with undertaking appropriate training:

” Creative thinking is also needed. In Glasgow, we work quite closely with the autism resource centre, for example, which delivers CPD training for us across the city. There are also opportunities for staff to do online training, although that is not ideal, given the workload and time pressures that staff are under—I completely agree with Samreen Shah on that.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Colin Crawford, contrib. 101¹¹

72. As mentioned above, the Committee appreciates that a barrier to successful inclusion is a lack of acknowledgement in some schools of the need to recognise and provide support for additional support needs, and this can be a cultural issue in some places just as much as a financial one. However it is very challenging to seek to identify a cultural issue in isolation of the resources issue. The [focus group of trainee teachers](#) included comment that:

” "...the extent to which conditions are flagged up from the classroom and pursued to receive support for a pupil can be school resources and culture dependant and therefore unidentified ASN remain in some cases."

73. This comment leads on to the second theme on recognising conditions: an unwillingness to recognise them, or delays in assessment of them, due to the funding implications for providing support once an additional support need is recognised.

74. One anonymous parent commented of her experiences:

” “My other child has not been diagnosed, but I suspect that is because the school do not want to have to provide him with any support as it would eat into their ever-dwindling budget”

75. Carol Gilmour, a parent and foster parent, told the Committee:

” The guidance says that a local authority must identify those who have additional support needs and those who need a co-ordinated support plan. However, as you say, that is not what happens in practice. I would say that I am quite a confident parent, and I have asked for a CSP for the children I look after, but it was never offered despite the fact that both my foster sons have additional support needs. They are placed out of the local authority and lots of different agencies are involved, so the plan should have been put in place automatically.

... I think that local authorities are reluctant to put co-ordinated support plans in place because they then know that they have to take those actions for the children.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Carol Gilmour, contrib. 29¹²

Jonathan Sher, independent consultant, points out in his submission:

” “It is commonly acknowledged that ASN services and support for ASL eligible children are routinely being decided by money, not need or entitlement.”

76. The submission from Highland Council refers to the difficulty in predicting required resource stating that:

“we have worked hard to provide a robust system of identifying need with a resource allocation model”

Availability of support

77. Where a child is recognised as requiring additional support in a mainstream school the Committee heard evidence to suggest that delays in accessing the relevant support services can be lengthy. A number of comments from parents and teachers highlighted delays in accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). These included comments of a focus group on 8 February 2017ⁱⁱⁱ

” “One teacher suggested subject teachers are supposed to identify a wide range of needs and then, when these are referred on to CAMHS there is sometimes a year long wait due to a lack of social workers and psychologists. The main issue they suggested was the need for more resources.”

78. The SPICe summary of the submissions to the inquiry notes that:

” “[parents] referred to promised support not materialising or lack of resources meaning that even where the school is supportive, the required support is not put in place.”

ⁱⁱⁱ It is important to note, when considering evidence provided from focus groups held on 26th January and on the evening of 8th February that the teachers in attendance were attending Parliament as part of political literacy work arranged through the Parliament's Outreach Centre. Therefore the teachers involved did not respond to the call for views, they were picked on a relatively random basis to share their perspectives.

79. The submission from Margaret Gilmour, ASN assistant at a primary school, set these delays in context, noting the number of success stories in relation to support in mainstream primary school, whilst acknowledging access to social work and health partners is an issue. This is partly, the submission suggests, due to overly bureaucratic processes as opposed to resources.

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

Receiving the correct placement

80. The ultimate recognition of the needs of a child was deemed by a number of parents and teachers as being the decision that a child's needs were sufficient to require placement in a specialist unit. The impact of inappropriate placement, in relation to primary school, was highlighted in Kindred's submission:

” 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.

81. Kindred, which supports over 1000 families with disabilities each year, suggested part of the issue was that education authorities follow the legislation's suggestion of the presumption to mainstream too stringently:

” The presumption to 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.

82. It was suggested during the Committee's roundtable evidence session that children need to fail in the mainstream system before they can be moved to specialist units or schools but this was contested by Colin Crawford of Glasgow City Council.

” ... In Glasgow, which is all that I can talk about, we have 65,000 children across the city, and almost 10,500 of those in primary schools and 9,500 of those in secondary schools have an identified additional support need of one form or another. The needs of the vast majority of those children are being met well in a mainstream setting. Do we get it right for every child? No, and the exceptions will be the ones that come to members’ attention. What is important is that, when something goes wrong, we move quickly to move those children on. We need to do that quickly, by working in partnership with schools and parents, to minimise the trauma of the transition. However, on the whole, the system works well for the majority of young people. We need to hold on to that fact.

83. Professor Riddell's evidence suggested that local authorities discourage CSPs. This would perhaps contribute to the low take up of CSPs referred to in the SPICe briefing on ASN (1.4% of children with ASN).

” I think that local authorities have tried to discourage the use of CSPs, even though they should not do that. Partly because of their resource constraints, they are concerned about allocating funds to individual children.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Professor Riddell, contrib. 28¹³

84. One linked issue to CSPs is that these plans enable a child's case to be considered at a tribunal of the ASN Tribunal (ASNT), which can in turn lead to a recommendation that a child is moved from mainstream education to a special school.

85. A number of pieces of evidence highlighted the reduction in special places across a number of local authorities and also the cost associated with this form of education as opposed to remaining in the mainstream. The note of a [focus group](#) organised by the Committee on school education states:

” A central message going forward is that local authorities cannot continue to close down the special schools or units within schools, as for some pupils, this provision is necessary to best meet their needs. (Focus group A)

86. A group of 22 teachers from the Edinburgh area at a separate [focus group](#) on the evening of 8 February 2017 included one comment that "Edinburgh is closing all the special schools but not offering extra staff or resources to mainstream schools". A number of anonymous teacher submissions supported this theme (outwith Edinburgh), for example:

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

87. The evidence received by the Committee highlights issues at various stages of the process for ensuring a child with additional support needs receives the required levels of support, be it:

- recognition/diagnosis,

- allocation of support inside or outside of school,
- receipt of an appropriate needs/support assessment including a CSP,
- processes to challenge decisions of education authorities who may be mainstreaming too many pupils and/or failing to recognise or provide the necessary support for a child with additional support needs.

88. The Cabinet Secretary, in acknowledging issues with the operation of the system, told the Committee:

” ...it is necessary that we ensure that the approach to mainstreaming is undertaken in an effective fashion, which is why I have commissioned a review of the guidance on mainstreaming. That is to ensure that the existing guidance reflects the legislative and policy context and succeeds in delivering on individuals’ expectations.

89. The Committee welcomes the Scottish Government's review of the guidance on mainstreaming and recommends that the review includes a systematic assessment of the processes outlined above, including an assessment of the extent to which resources are impacting on each process. Resource limitations that are impacting on these processes include:

- the number of trained ASN teachers and ASN assistants,
- the availability of specialists including mental health specialists and educational psychologists,
- the level of resources supporting the ASN Tribunal process and other appeal processes, and
- the availability of spaces in special schools.

Preferential outcomes based on the efforts of parents

90. The chances of children with informed parents, who press for recognition and support, receiving more support than other children was another clear theme of the evidence.
91. The starting point for parents, understandably, is a lack of awareness of their rights under additional support for learning legislation. Both Glasgow University and ASNT's submissions refer to parents being unaware what they can ask for and their legal rights. During the Committee's roundtable session Sally Cavers from Enquire referred to the need for parents who are seeking to pursue support to have more advocacy services available as the process for accessing the correct support was "quite overwhelming". Kenny Graham of the SCSC then made clear the importance of the parent pushing for the correct support for their child as it is the "parents pushing diagnosis not the local authorities". In this context he also raised the issue of looked after children, suggesting there is an issue with, and therefore perhaps a low likelihood of, local authorities "challenging themselves" to secure more support for children in their care.
92. A large number of parents in [written submissions](#) shared their frustrations with the system for seeking additional support for their child, suggesting they have to fight hard to get support in place. One referred to "feeling you have to fight the system every step of the way," another that "we fight for her right to have an education."
93. Professor Sheila Riddell made a number of references in her evidence to the patterns that emerge when some groups of parents manage to access more recognition for their child's ASN, and therefore more support for their children, than others. In relation to getting a diagnosis for a condition she states:

” Some people might be effective at arguing for an expert assessment to be done by a psychologist, but many parents get an assessment from the class teacher. There are therefore social inequalities in the type of assessment that you get.

In relation to getting a CSP she states:

- ” We find it concerning that a child is much more likely to get a CSP if they come from an advantaged background than if they come from a disadvantaged background.

She also highlighted the patterns that reflected progress made by parents in areas of deprivation compared to those in more affluent areas.

” Because it is very hard to take on the system, it is always the more determined parents who insist on proper assessment and manage to get that provision for their child. We know that many children with additional support needs come from areas of deprivation, and the issue is to do with poverty and their having parents who are struggling to cope with masses of social stress. Those are the parents who cannot take on the system. The system should support those parents, but it is not doing so adequately, and that is reflected in many of the statistics.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Professor Riddell, contrib. 28¹³

” Let me return to the patterns of social deprivation that are evident in the categories that are used. Generally, a child is more likely to be identified as having ASN if they live in an area of deprivation. Figure 3 in our briefing shows that the only two categories that occur more frequently in advantaged areas are being identified as a more able pupil and having dyslexia. Those categories are associated with having advantage rather than disadvantage. In fact, we find that a person is far more likely to be identified as having dyslexia if they are in an advantaged area.

...We should be suspicious when we find a pattern of social advantage or disadvantage associated with categories. Of course, being identified as dyslexic carries advantages. The person can get more time in exams and might need lower grades to get into university and then get additional time in their university exams. It is not surprising, therefore, that middle-class parents might seek out the label and pay for a private assessment. We should not be having these social class patterns.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Professor Riddell, contrib. 32¹⁴

94. The LGiU policy briefing provided by Professor Liddell to inform the evidence session provides further background on "social class patterns" taking dyslexia as a particular example:

” The type of ASN identified among pupils from different social backgrounds is not reflected evenly across the categories. Pupils from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods are considerably more likely to be identified as having social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties than are those from the most advantaged areas, whereas the opposite the case in relation to dyslexia. Dyslexia is a contentious category, there are disagreements with regards to its definition. This is likely to be one of the reasons why its identification varies across local authorities... It is worth noting though that a secondary pupil in East Renfrewshire is 14 times more likely to be diagnosed with dyslexia compared with a secondary pupil in North Lanarkshire.

95. The Committee was interested in the "social class patterns" set out by Professor Riddell and it considers that work on the extent that these trends exist would be very useful in informing the Scottish Government's ongoing work reviewing the guidance on ASN and also on closing the attainment gap.

96. Since approaching 1 in 4 children have a recognised additional support need, the successful provision of additional support for learning is integral to the success of GIRFEC. The Committee is concerned that parents from areas of deprivation may have lower chances at present to receive advice and support to ensure additional support needs of their children are recognised and the necessary support for learning provided. Given the emphasis in evidence on the importance of the parent pushing for support for their child, the Committee is concerned that this issue will disproportionately impact upon disadvantaged families and potentially have an adverse effect, namely widening the attainment gap between children with ASN in deprived and more affluent families.

97. The Committee welcomes the undertaking from the Cabinet Secretary to set out the criteria that the attainment gap will be assessed against by "the middle of this year [2017] ²". As supporting children with ASN is integral to closing the attainment gap, the Committee recommends that the Scottish Government analyses the extent to which a process that relies largely on parental involvement to have their child's ASN recognised and supported, could potentially widen the gap.

98. The Committee also recommends that the Scottish Government increases the provision of advocacy services and looks at how these could be best targeted at raising awareness and supporting parents from areas of deprivation.

Variation in education authority approach

99. As can be seen in the written answer from the Scottish Government [S5W-05965](#), there is a wide variation in the overall percentages of recorded additional support needs for different education authorities. A number of factors make some variations easy to interpret whereas other factors confuse the picture. For example the largest category of ASN is social, emotional and behavioural and these are most prevalent in deprived areas. On that basis there might be an expectation that higher levels of ASN would be recorded in these areas. However, as set out above, more affluent parents may be better placed to push for their rights to have their child recognised as having an additional support need, and this may also impact on the recorded percentages of ASN for each local authority.
100. In addition the variations in the numbers of specialist staff between education authorities will presumably influence, to a degree, the number of conditions picked up on in schools in different education authorities (the challenge of other teachers identifying the full range of conditions is detailed above). The SSTA submission includes details of a variation in numbers of specialist staff across different education authorities in its Appendix 3.
101. A further factor is presumably the extent that an education authority, and under its direction, its schools, engages with the processes to recognise conditions. Available resources are also clearly a factor. Written answer [S5W-08627](#) reflects the pattern of decreasing spend per pupil between 2012/13 and 2015/16 and also the variation in the level of spend per pupil between different education authorities (ranging from per pupil £572 in Angus to £10,074 per pupil in North Lanarkshire in 2015/6).
102. In addition to these factors, the Committee has heard evidence of a resistance in some education authorities, and some schools within them, to implement elements of the additional support for learning policy. One submission illustrates the value of school staff having direct experience of a child with particular support needs in order to help attitudes change towards inclusion. Brian and Lynn Murray's submission explains how they pushed for their daughter to go to a mainstream school despite some reservations from the school, and the result was more inclusive attitudes in the school:

” Sadly, we found that many people seemed to fear the idea of our daughter going to MS {mainstream} school. Teachers from both primary and secondary worried about her being bullied... Another wise young friend also pointed out that some young people might also want to meet and help people like our daughter and this made us think of a more positive side to mainstreaming, which meant that others (staff included) might benefit and blossom from meeting her.

Despite some bad attitudes [within certain support services in the school], we sent our daughter to the local MS HS [mainstream high school] in August 2012. We swallowed hard and realised that it was going to be down to her to ‘sell herself’ to the school. Thanks to the Local authority support staff and Down’s Syndrome Scotland, the right level of support was finally put in place. The first few months held no particular problems, but there was tension from some of the school staff, they had obviously not been reassured that they could manage a school day with a little girl with no behavioural issues but who was challenged in her learning.

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

103. The Committee also heard positive examples of schools with an inclusive ethos. Castlevue Primary School's submission provides details of proactive approaches to supporting children with additional support needs and begins with this mission statement:

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

104. The Committee commends parents and schools that lead the way in changing attitudes and supporting the ethos of inclusion.
105. The Committee is interested in whether cultural resistance to adopting the mainstreaming policy or a lack of emphasis on children with ASN, either by some in schools or at education authority level, is impacting on the levels of recognition of ASN in different areas, and therefore on the ASN percentages. For example, if the incidence of different conditions is considered at education authority level, it may become apparent that certain authorities acknowledge some additional support needs more than others (for example recording physical disabilities more readily than emotional and behavioural difficulties).
106. Professor Riddell highlighted anomalies in the figures in evidence:

” There is obviously a huge amount of local authority variation. Overall, we know that a child is more likely to be identified as having additional support needs if they live in an area of deprivation, but the local authority variation does not seem to be very obviously related to that. For example, Aberdeenshire, a rural authority, identifies 35 per cent—more than a third—of its children in school as having additional support needs; that compares with North Lanarkshire, one of the poorest local authorities, which identifies only 6 per cent. We have to ask very carefully what is going on there.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Professor Riddell, contrib. 26¹⁵

107. The SSTA submission highlights the difficulty in interpreting and comparing the information from education authorities at present as there are variations in the applications of different definitions and terminologies.
108. In 2016 the Committee raised the variation in the recording of additional support needs by local authorities with Cosla, SLGP and the Cabinet Secretary during general evidence sessions on Scottish education. The Cabinet Secretary had given consideration to this issue when he appeared before the Committee in 2016 and committed to inviting a [Scottish Government working group](#) to analyse inconsistencies in recording practices.

109. The Committee welcomes the undertaking from the Cabinet Secretary and recommends that the Scottish Government establishes whether there are deep-seated factors that are influencing the variation in these figures. Specifically, the Committee is concerned that additional support needs are going unrecognised in some education authorities more than others and that, in addition to parental involvement and resource limitations, the culture of the education authority, and some particular schools within authorities, is also a factor.

110. The Committee recommends that, once the raw data has been improved as a result of the Scottish Government working group's efforts, anomalies in these figures should be used as a basis to explore with individual authorities the basis for any inexplicably low percentages of ASN in their area. Information from the quality assurance review recommended above could also be analysed on an education authority by education authority basis to establish whether the patterns in parent, child and school staff experiences in these areas, specifically on cultural barriers to recognition, support the figures. The Committee would ask that, when the Scottish Government has established which education authorities are cause for concern, that the Government shares this information with the Committee so that the Committee can also seek to hold these authorities to account.

111. The Committee also recommends that the Scottish Government should undertake a financial review to ascertain the extent to which education authorities are spending in line with the level of need in their area, and identify any education authorities that have spends lower than their recognition rates might require. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government undertakes this review in collaboration with education authorities as the Committee appreciates that

authorities will have some valid explanations in relation to the disparities in recognition rates and in levels of spend per pupil with ASN. The financial review should be the starting point for Scottish Government discussions with education authorities on their funding allocations.

Impact of the resourcing of additional support for learning on mainstream education

112. As discussed above there are concerns that where children are placed in mainstream school when they may be better placed in specialist settings, or more generally where children do not get the necessary support in mainstream school, they can become distressed and disruptive in classes. A number of parents and teachers raised concerns that these instances can impact on the learning of others and, on occasion, children with certain additional support needs can be violent. As also discussed above the Committee is concerned that these children can be considered to be 'the problem' by other students and by parents.

113. A further common thread through submissions was the impact on teachers and support staff and the education of other pupils in the class of using, often scarce, resources to support children with complex needs or to managing disruptions in class. For example a concern raised in numerous submissions was teachers being diverted from teaching the class being to the detriment of the majority of the pupils in the class. One teacher was candid on the relief they felt when one particular pupil was not in class as it enabled them to teach the rest of the class far more effectively (Anonymous). Other comments included:

” I worked as a PSA in a mainstream school. I left due to the number of ASN children in the school. Don't get me wrong, I did my best and was continually verbally & physically abused (by children & parents) but there comes a time when you have to say enough is enough. The majority of children in mainstream education are having their learning disrupted by ASN children and It is time for this to stop. Bring back more special education facilities & let the majority of children get the education they deserve. (Anonymous PSA)

” Sometimes it can be incredibly challenging having children with additional support needs in a class, I say children as in my experience a class generally has at least one and usually more children of varying additional support needs. When teaching a class of 30 and in some cases more how can a teacher divide his/her time amongst all the children (as every child needs the help and guidance of the teacher) when the teacher may be having to spend all of her time working one to one with a child or small group. It can be difficult to ensure that the rest of the class are getting the support they need. (Anonymous teacher)

114. Unison reflected the expertise now expected of its members in teaching classes with a number of different children with recognised distinct needs and conditions in them:

” “members are now expected to deal with a range of medical and personal care needs for children that they do not feel adequately trained, supported or indeed paid to undertake”

Glasgow University also reflected on the pressures on teachers stating:

” “the gap between policy and practice seems to be bridged best by knowledgeable and highly qualified teachers”

115. The extent that other children's learning is being impacted on caused some to call GIRFEC into question for these children. Other contributions looked at the issue specifically from an attainment perspective. A submission from Trinity Primary School stated:

” 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 in the school.

116. The SSTA submission to the Committee suggested it would be interesting to look at the attainment of schools on an education authority basis set against the ASN specialist staff levels in those areas. SSTA have used annual FOI requests to education authorities combined with analysis of the pupil census over a number of years to inform its work in this area and, as a result, considers additional support for learning to be a "key component of the raising attainment agenda".
117. The Committee does not have a sense of the scale of the impact on the education, including the attainment, of children in classes where teacher and support staff time is disproportionately diverted to the pupils in the class with certain additional support needs. A number of submissions from teachers, parents and schools did set out much more positive experiences including in relation to the learning of the students with ASN and other pupils in the class which suggested real inclusion in education and socially exists for many children. (See Brian and Lynn Murray's submission detailed above).
118. The potential to target attainment funding at schools where there are concentrations of pupils with ASN, specifically schools in less advantaged areas where there is the greatest concentration of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, was raised by Professor Riddell:

” I think that there is an opportunity to make some connections between different areas of education. More than 20 per cent of our young people—the figure is getting on for 25 per cent—have been identified as having additional support needs. The Scottish Government wants to narrow the attainment gap for the bottom 20 per cent. Those are the children we are talking about, so it is very important that the school improvement money is channelled into helping that group of children. We must recognise that schools in disadvantaged areas have a concentration of children with a range of difficulties. The attainment moneys need to be targeted at those schools, rather than being spread widely.

119. The Cabinet Secretary highlighted that the Government has already taken to steps to target attainment funding through the pupil equity fund, stating:

” In addition, the Government has put in place pupil equity funding that invests directly in 95 per cent of the schools around the country to ensure that there are new resources to provide additional interventions that will help us to close the poverty-related attainment gap in Scottish education. That will also help in the context of mainstreaming.

120. Inclusive education for those with additional support needs is "based on the premise that there is benefit to all children when the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is properly prepared, well supported and takes place in mainstream schools within a positive ethos". The Committee would therefore welcome further analysis from the Scottish Government on how the education and ultimately the attainment of pupils in general is being impacted upon by insufficient resources being provided to support children with additional support needs. This should include any correlation between the reduction in specialist ASN staff in certain education authorities and overall attainment.

Training for school staff

121. There were calls in a number of submissions for teachers to have training in relation to specific common conditions such as autism, dyslexia and ADHD. The availability of an increasing number of online and other specialist resources, such as autism toolkits, were highlighted by organisations representing those with specific conditions.
122. Given the diverse range of additional support needs, the specialist knowledge required to support distinct needs, and the number of children in classes that teachers and classroom assistants needs to support (approaching 1 in 4 children) the Committee would expect that additional support for learning should be a key feature of teacher training. This section looks briefly at initial teacher training, work placements for trainee teachers and continuous professional development for qualified teachers and classroom assistants. The Committee has not looked in great detail at teacher training in this piece of work but highlights the themes of evidence to the Scottish Government. The Committee is very interested in training as an issue, for teachers and other school support staff, and intends to return to this later in the session.
123. Because of the evidence gathered at the roundtable, this section includes particular evidence focused on Glasgow. In terms of initial teacher training, Colin Crawford, Head of Inclusion at Glasgow City Council was critical of this on three occasions in his evidence.
-  There are also issues about initial teacher training and the training that is offered at colleges to upskill staff before they go into the profession. The issue is not always down to local authority training once staff are in place; there is a stage before that—the preparation for going into a role working with children and young people—that also needs to be addressed.
- Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Colin Crawford, contrib. 66¹⁶
124. Professor Riddell responded to these comments suggesting that, given the number of other areas trainee teachers are supposed to learn about and qualify in, it was an unreasonable expectation to cover the breadth of additional support needs in a year.
125. Moving on to the work placement in schools for trainee teachers, the nine trainee teachers from Glasgow University attending a focus group on 26 January 2017 were asked whether they felt supported in relation to additional support needs they all either said no or shook their heads. One said they had had a class of 25 pupils where nine had ASN and these needs were all very distinct. The trainee was given access to files for these children and then they googled these different conditions. They had received no training on common conditions such as autism.
126. In relation to the probation stage, Colin Crawford cited support from Glasgow City Council specifically a probationer programme seeking to ensure teachers learnt in detail about different conditions.

” ...that can be partially addressed through a probationer programme. In Glasgow, we have a quite extensive programme that offers all probationer staff fairly intensive drill down into individual conditions, such as autism spectrum disorder, and time—although not enough time—in some of our specialist placements. Building that pre-knowledge before staff come into the profession would help.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Colin Crawford, contrib. 92¹⁷

127. Finally, on qualified mainstream teacher training, Colin Crawford outlined a range of ongoing work and reflected on the time and resource pressures on some of it. For example he mentioned there had been a reduction in the number of central Quality Assurance staff to deliver training and so baseline training could only be done on a roll-out basis. He mentioned online training that had been produced, but acknowledged the pressures on staff time that impacted on the ability of staff to undertake it. Lastly he mentioned work in progress aimed at ensuring specialist staff in specialist units can upskill staff in mainstream schools:

” in Glasgow, because of the size of the authority, we have a large number—37—of stand-alone and co-located facilities with specialist provision, and two pre-school assessment units. We are moving towards having much more flexible throughput from specialist provision into the mainstream. We have a relatively large number of highly skilled expert staff working in our stand-alone provision, and we should be using them much more flexibly to upskill and work in conjunction with staff in mainstream provision.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Colin Crawford, contrib. 76¹⁸

128. Other evidence received on training repeated themes explored earlier in this report, namely the pressures on school staff's time, including time to undertake training, and the level of knowledge required of teachers and other staff in supporting a wide range of additional support needs.
129. Sylvia Haughney spoke from her perspective of an ASL working in Glasgow and also as a representative of Unison, she reflected a picture of school staff receiving cascaded training from others who had been on a course in relation to a particular condition and a lack of time to train or consult specialists. Her comment that received notable traction in the media was that when a member of staff asked for advice on Aspergers, they were told to "watch the Big Bang Theory".
130. Samreen Shah reflected this experience from teaching in Glasgow, mentioning that specialist support and training used to be available in schools for teachers to tap into and also the lack of time available for training courses.
131. The Cabinet Secretary referred specifically to the Big Bang Theory reference in his evidence and said he had sought information from Glasgow City Council and was reassured that there was a comprehensive training programme for staff in place.
132. In relation to qualifications required to specialise in ASN, Professor Riddell suggested that the quality of post-graduate training had declined, that training was patchy and that statutory requirements were limited compared to elsewhere in Europe. The SSTA submission also highlighted concerns that there was no

requirement for previous experience of additional support needs in order to secure an ASN promoted post.

133. Summing up on teacher training in schools, issues undoubtedly exist with a reduction in specialist staff available in school to provide specialist training and the ability of school staff to take time out from other work pressures to train. There is clearly positive work developing training resources underway in different education authorities such as CPD programmes for ASN assistants (Highland Council) and Autism strategies (Dumfries and Galloway). Work like this will doubtless translate in other areas.

134. The Committee recommends that education authorities seek to collaborate more, including in respect of designing and delivering training in order to remove duplication of effort. The Committee will seek a response from Cosla and SLGP on this and other relevant recommendations, and will also highlight this report to all education authorities.

135. In relation to initial teacher training, the Committee welcomes the undertaking from the Cabinet Secretary to highlight to the GTCS the Committee's concerns that combining post-graduate training with the probationary year, which is one proposal for change, will limit further the time available for trainee teachers to train in additional support needs. The Committee recommends that the GTCS takes this into account when assessing proposals from the colleges of education, produced in line with the Government's intention to "encourage more teachers to come into the classroom and get them there quicker".

Annex

The Committee invited comments on Additional Support Needs and received a high number of [written submissions](#).

The Committee also held a number of focus groups in February 2017 and produced a [written summary of comments](#) in relation to ASN.

The Committee held a round-table on Additional Support Needs on [1 March 2017](#) and took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills on a number of topic including Additional Support Needs on [8 March 2017](#).

- [1] Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 50,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10833&c=1981894>
- [2] Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney), contrib. 3,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10833&c=1981847>
- [3] Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 40,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10833&c=1981884>
- [4] Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 5,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10833&c=1981849>
- [5] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Sharon Veelenturf, contrib. 131,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978711>
- [6] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Kenny Graham, contrib. 137,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978717>
- [7] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Professor Riddell, contrib. 37,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978617>
- [8] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Sharon Veelenturf, contrib. 38,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978618>
- [9] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Samreen Shah, contrib. 56,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978636>
- [10] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Sylvia Haughney, contrib. 65,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978645>
- [11] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Colin Crawford, contrib. 101,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978681>
- [12] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Carol Gilmour, contrib. 29,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978609>
- [13] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Professor Riddell, contrib. 28,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978608>
- [14] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Professor Riddell, contrib. 32,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978612>
- [15] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Professor Riddell, contrib. 26,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1990520>
- [16] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Colin Crawford, contrib. 66,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978646>
- [17] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Colin Crawford, contrib. 92,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978672>
- [18] Education and Skills Committee 01 March 2017, Colin Crawford, contrib. 76,
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10817&c=1978656>

- 1 [Scottish Executive 2002 Guidance](#) on the presumption to mainstream
- 2 <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-03863&ResultsPerPage=10>

