

Education and Skills Committee
**Additional Support for Learning / Mainstreaming Policy in
Practice**
18 February 2019

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Education and Skills Committee's ongoing inquiry into Additional Support for Learning (ASL), examining how ASL is working in practice in mainstream schools.
2. The NASUWT is the fastest growing teachers' union in Scotland, representing teachers and school leaders in all sectors of education.

GENERAL COMMENTS

3. The ambition for all children to be educated in mainstream schools is one the NASUWT supports in principle, but the setting must be appropriate and the placement properly resourced to meet the needs of each child. Without this, the needs of the child will not be met and their educational progress will suffer.
4. In April 2018, the NASUWT published the results of an Additional Support Needs (ASN) survey (see Appendix 1) which examined member experiences in relation to the presumption of mainstream. Ongoing feedback from members indicated that there was an increasing focus on

inclusion and that the demands being placed on teachers and schools were also increasing, with more and more learners with complex needs being taught in mainstream classrooms and cuts to specialist services exacerbating the difficulties teachers face. The survey sought evidence about the nature and extent of these issues.

5. The following stark statistics were revealed in the 2018 NASUWT ASN survey:

- 58% of respondents from Scotland said that the local authority required their school to implement burdensome policies and procedures;
- 56% of respondents from Scotland stated that they had received training or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) within the last two years, compared to 68% of respondents from England and 61% of respondents from Northern Ireland;
- 43% of teachers in Scotland identified training/CPD on local authority ASN policies to be ineffective and just under one third of respondents (31%) reported that training/CPD on engaging parents was ineffective; and
- less than half of Scottish respondents said that their Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) includes discussion about their ASN support needs.

6. As a teachers' trade union, the NASUWT clearly has concerns not only for the impact on a pupil's learning but also for the wellbeing of the teachers who deliver that learning. The issue of reduction in ASN support has been consistently raised at our local and national conferences (see Appendix 2). The impact on teacher workload is clear. Without support, teachers are left to manage classes on their own, often struggling to cope. Two examples given by members are:

- (a) class of 20 secondary pupils, nine of whom have ASN (all, of course, of a different nature) results in having to produce ten differentiated plans for everything;

(b) secondary teacher on receiving a new pupil who only speaks Arabic has to spend several hours on a weekday evening translating PowerPoint handouts using Google translate to ensure the pupil feels included. No English as an Additional Language (EAL) support is available for this pupil.

A national dialogue about the support available for our young people is required as a matter of urgency.

7. NASUWT members also report a funding crisis in schools which the Government should not underestimate. As set out in a letter of 07/12/17 to the Education and Skills Committee of the Scottish Parliament in advance of the publication of the 2018/19 budget, teachers are reporting that the underfunding of schools has led to numerous extremely detrimental consequences, including:

- *‘class sizes continue to increase, with low-ability sets growing to the stage where pupils cannot receive the individual attention they need;*
- *off-campus places for children and young people with the most challenging behaviour are impossible to get, other than for looked-after children;*
- *special school provision in many local authorities has been stripped out;*
- *children and young people with very challenging behaviour in mainstream settings are failing to receive the support they need and discipline standards are plummeting in classes affected, which impacts on all pupils in these classes.’*

8. As the NASUWT further set out in its response to the Scottish Government *Excellence and Equity for All: Guidance on the Presumption of Mainstreaming* consultation:

‘The Union...agrees that “being present in a mainstream school should not be the primary marker of successful inclusion”... [and] recommends, before progressing further guidance or legislation relating to the presumption of mainstreaming, that the Government commits to undertake

a full audit of the success of inclusion to date and considers in depth what the barriers to inclusion currently are.'

9. The NASUWT is therefore pleased that the Education and Skills Committee has continued to keep ASN in practice as part of its work plan, but it is also critical that we do more than talk. Teachers report that the failures of the school system in providing adequately for vulnerable children and young people, and worsening provision for pupils with ASN, are stoking up problems for society in the future, when these children and young people will become adults. Provision for violent, autistic or mentally ill pupils is at crisis point.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

10. In order to provide a real-time snapshot of teacher experiences, the current questions being considered by the Education and Skills Committee were circulated to the NASUWT Scotland Executive Committee for immediate feedback. Extracts from our members are enclosed within the responses below.

a. How has the mainstreaming policy for young people with ASN worked (specifically your experience since you submitted to the Committee)?

<i>EXTRACTS FROM MEMBER FEEDBACK</i>
<i>It needs to be reviewed. There are too many children misplaced in mainstream education and we are failing them, not through teachers' effort but through lack of skills, resources and facilities. There have been some success stories, true, but too many are being let down and would have achieved more with the right specialist facilities and personnel.</i>
<i>The mainstreaming policy has proved to be a challenge – meeting the needs of pupils with ASN in full classes has become almost impossible at times.</i>
<i>On the whole the policy does not work. Schools are not equipped with sufficient resources to deal with the complex needs of many ASN young people.</i>

I feel that young people have been let down by this policy. They do not receive the individual support that they require in order to access the curriculum.

Patchy at best. Many young people are left unsupported and this has had a big impact on learning and teaching.

Generally it has not. Support can be intermittent, inconsistent or non-existent.

Insufficient support. Has obviously been the result of a cost-cutting exercise.

Not very well, the children without any major needs get by only.

The presumption of mainstream can create exclusion within classrooms. Young people may not be fully included in the learning, due to the complexity of their needs.

Teachers are expected to differentiate for too many different learners in a class. For instance, I have experienced having a class of 30 pupils; 1 EAL pupil has no grasp of basic English (Google translate can only do so much), 4 ASD pupils, 2 of which often require a lot of one to one support. This can sometimes be detrimental to the learning of others as I am busy trying to support those with ASN.

I do believe that the children who would previously have been in a special school are being short-changed because they would do better in very small group teaching environments and also in years gone by would have been taught by experienced teachers with additional qualifications in ASN.

In my experience, when a mainstream placement is not suitable for a child, it takes years to have them moved. In fact, we have a child in our school who should be in special school and we have been told that the LA will not move her till she is ready for high school. She is currently in P3.

The assumption of mainstream is key to saving money and, by the back door, reducing support staff numbers. This will result in an increased workload for mainstream teaching staff and for ASN specialists, with the new ASN strategy being one where ASN PTs will not be in classes or departments, but consultants to assumption of mainstream. I do not think this is GIRFEC (Getting It Right for Every Child) or serving the best interests of reducing teacher workload.

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

12. Financial austerity has substantially affected both the ability of the system to successfully support mainstreaming as well as the perception on the ground of the Government's intentions behind the inclusion policy.

13. The downward turn in investment in ASN, and education more generally, shows no signs of improving and therefore the current inability of the system to best support the mainstreaming policy shows no sign of positively changing.

14. Feedback from one Local Association Secretary noted that their local authority was facing a growing shortfall in funding due to the current method of calculating government-allocated funds and highlighting how funding changes are very slow to react, with it taking years to see the gradual lowering of one authority and the increasing of another. Its current budget discussions for the coming year include the closure or removal of: all family engagement teams, youth workers, police teams working with young people and schools, swimming lessons in primary schools, all music instructors, and a 25% reduction in senior education officers and educational psychology. Further, the proposals are factoring in a reduction in funding for supply staff, with cover (particularly in secondary schools) having to be taken by promoted staff; increases in class sizes; a closure of a school; a 5% reduction in classroom assistants; fewer subjects being offered to students; and where a school post has been sitting 'unfilled' for a period of time, the post being 'removed'. Local authorities are weighing up the cost/risk analysis of reducing the number of posts being offered to new teachers with the potential financial penalty from the Government. Significant concern should be given to fiscal discussions where the folding of a local authority within the next four years could feasibly take place.

b. How has the Additional Support for Learning policy worked (specifically your experience since you submitted to the Committee)?

EXTRACTS FROM MEMBER FEEDBACK

<i>There are not enough staff to support the young people's global needs.</i>
<i>ASN legislation is good but underfunded and under resourced.</i>
<i>Some pupils are provided with support but a significant number are not, and when you have large class sizes they tend to suffer because of this. Very frustrating as a teacher as there is only so much you can do for them.</i>
<i>Class teachers are responsible for meeting the needs of the learner on their own. Some pupils with complex needs that require one to one support receive nothing due to staff not being available. In some instances I have more than half of pupils in a class with some sort of support requirement and I am supposed to manage this all on my own.</i>
<i>Our school has around 310 pupils but is expected to share a Support for Learning teacher with four other schools across four days. This results in only the neediest learners being allocated support for short periods of time within an overloaded support timetable.</i>
<i>Class teachers are expected to meet with the Support for Learning teacher despite required budget savings dictating an absence of class cover to facilitate meetings. Class teachers receive 'advice' on learners requiring additional support and are expected to provide this within normal class teaching time.</i>
<i>Often, groups of children needing support are put in the same class and one extra person is given to support them all. The impact of this is high numbers of ASN in a class, meaning those pupils, and pupils without ASN, are not getting enough one-on-one time to progress their learning. This also leads to extremely stressful working conditions for staff, again leading to a detrimental impact on pupil learning.</i>
<i>All children deserve an appropriate placement where their needs are met. All children, in every class, should have the support/resources that are necessary. This is not the case. Class sizes are too big, ICT is abysmal and resources, including support staff, needs to be drastically improved.</i>

15. Teachers and schools will always strive to do their best for every child they teach, but it is unacceptable for them to be expected to meet the needs of pupils without the necessary resources. Supporting children and young people with ASN requires renewed investment in tailored services and education settings to ensure there is equality of opportunity for all.

16. The teaching workforce want to work within an education system which will enable all children and young people to get the support they need to reach their full learning potential. But sole responsibility for ensuring barriers to learning are overcome and the policy intention behind GIRFEC is achieved should not be shouldered by classroom teachers, as was highlighted in the following 2018 NASUWT Scotland Conference motion (see Appendix 2):

Reducing the support for Mainstream ASN Pupils

Conference is concerned that local authorities are cutting funding both directly and indirectly for pupils with ASN in mainstream classes in Scotland.

Conference asserts that the effective responsibility for GIRFEC ‘Getting It Right for Every Child’ is being subtly passed to mainstream class teachers through increased workload both during and outwith direct class contact time. Conference calls upon the Scotland Executive Council to campaign to ensure support for pupils with ASN is not being reduced through reduction in staffing budgets and the redistribution of funds through such initiatives as PEF (Pupil Equity Funding).

17. Without the addition of funding, resources and support for the education workforce, the ASL policy rhetoric appears little more than an attempt to pass the buck to schools and teachers.

c. Do you think mainstream schools, in your experience, have enough resource to be able to provide effective support? What forms of additional resources are needed?

EXTRACTS FROM MEMBER FEEDBACK

No. We have a school of over 1,600 pupils and the facilities here are extremely inadequate to support the many children we receive as ASN, EAL and so on. Staffing ratio of teacher to pupil requiring the necessary assistance is extremely inadequate. There are not enough specialist staff in this school to carry out the job

efficiently and because of this staff just cannot help the way intended, so the young people miss vital assistance, fall behind, become disengaged, and the cycle continues.

No! More support staff required to provide provision for all class not the selected few.

Not enough resources are provided for young people – PSAs assigned at Primary school do not follow to secondary school and so support is withdrawn – more and more often, schools are having to use PEF funding to increase staffing resources.

No. Children with EAL and ASN are poorly served in mainstream. Not enough resources allocated. Classroom teachers left to get on with it, with little to no support. What support there is is often poor. Lack of EAL and ASN teachers and support staff.

No. There are not enough specialist ASN teachers. Half an hour training session and we are supposed to be an expert in how to manage, prepare and deliver a curriculum for these children.

No, pupils with ASN into classes with 30 pupils does not allow a teacher amicable time to meet the needs of the learners in the classroom. Resources are not necessarily the answer, additional time with ASN pupils is fundamental.

Classroom assistants can be useful; however, I don't feel that there are enough of them.

Teachers and support assistants are often given a brief lecture and some literature to read on an in-service day and expected to be expert on various conditions. It is then expected that this allows them to support the young person with ASN. Staff do not feel confident enough with the limited training given and this leads to stressful environments for both pupils and staff. Staff also feel extremely guilty that the young people in front of them are not receiving the experience they are entitled to. The emotional impact of this on staff can lead to mental health issues.

Due to teacher shortages, they are on maximum contact time. This historically was not the case. When not on maximum contact, it meant staff could dedicate a significant amount of planning time to ensuring lessons and resources fully met the needs of ASN pupils in their classes, as it takes longer to plan these types of lessons. Staff now do not have that “extra” planning time and so lessons for ASN pupils feel rushed and not to the high standards pupils should expect.

New school buildings, my own being a case in point, are not suitable for many ASN pupils, ie no doors, shared noisy spaces, not enough rooms in the school as the building is too small and ICT hardware that is fit for the bin. Too noisy, too distracting and for some children a sensory overload.

There are not so many teachers qualified in specialist ASN and teachers are trained in an ad hoc, bitty way through short twilight sessions.

The universities need to change what they teach in their initial teacher training courses.

18. The provision of education to children and young people with ASN is currently creaking under the strain of inadequate resourcing. The NASUWT is committed to the full inclusion of children and young people with ASN in the education system, but in far too many cases the Presumption of Mainstream policy has become a euphemism for cuts in high-quality ASN provision, including specific ASN staff such as educational psychologists.
19. In addition, the reduction in the number of support staff in schools does not only jeopardise educational standards, but also results in teachers being diverted away from their professional pedagogical role into support-staff duties and activities, such as supervisory functions and clerical and administrative tasks. The reduction in the number of support staff in schools militates against excellence and also contributes to high teacher workload, one of the key drivers of teachers wanting to leave the profession. NASUWT members report that in at least one local authority classroom assistants have been removed wholesale from secondary schools, with a consequential impact on standards and also teacher workload. Many other local authorities continue to reduce numbers of support staff significantly.
20. Teachers and other support workers must also have access to appropriate training and CLPL to ensure they have the specialist knowledge and skills to be able to support all pupils with ASN's. At this point it is worth revisiting the NASUWT ASN Survey results (see Appendix 1) in which it was shown that only 56% of respondents from Scotland stated that they had received training or CPD within the last two years, 43% identified training/CPD on local authority ASN policies to be ineffective, and less than half of Scottish respondents said that their CLPL includes discussion about their ASN support needs.
21. In addition to improved teacher training, both at initial teacher education (ITE) and beyond, teaching staff require sufficient time to undertake

parental and external liaison as well as additional planning and preparation time. Given the current teacher shortage across Scotland, many teachers are unable to access time out of class for any reason. Indeed, increasing numbers of teachers are working beyond their contractual maximum class-contact time of 22.5 hours.

d. Do parents and young people know their rights (on mainstreaming or receiving support in school for ASN)? If so, are they able to exercise them?

EXTRACTS FROM MEMBER FEEDBACK
<i>Quite possibly, but many do not, and if they did they would be demanding a better provision either in the school they are in or elsewhere. And that is the biggest problem – less alternatives these days and more and more are placed in mainstream when it shouldn't happen.</i>
<i>Yes, they know their rights. However, their expectations about what we are able to deliver as an individual are unrealistic.</i>
<i>As usual, the parents who are persistent in their demands for support for their child usually get the support needed, but many more children are falling through the net.</i>
<i>Can't speak for parents but would suggest that in areas of high deprivation, the majority do not.</i>
<i>I don't think they are fully aware of their rights.</i>
<i>In my opinion very few know their rights.</i>
<i>Many teachers feel that they do not have the necessary training or expertise, and very often the meetings around the children are nothing more than talking shops where school staff try to assure parents that all is well and they are meeting the needs of their child, where, in actual fact teachers are struggling to access and provide the support they need.</i>

22. Teaching staff cannot with any certainty know whether parents and young people are fully aware of their rights and undoubtedly there will be variations across schools and local authorities. Nevertheless, what is clear is that teachers are being placed in the unenviable position of having to explain and justify local authority provision of ASN support to parents and young people, when they themselves are feeling significantly unsupported.

e. Does where you live make a difference?

EXTRACTS FROM MEMBER FEEDBACK
<i>Yes. In an area of high deprivation you tend to get more pupils with ASN. In more affluent areas, parents are more aware and will push for the support of their pupil.</i>
<i>Yes. And the mix of pupils between ASN and EAL.</i>
<i>Very much so. In this school there are a very large number of Roma children who have little or no English and are illiterate in their own language. They require a lot more provision in a specialist unit rather than being placed in mainstream classes.</i>
<i>The reallocation of funding through the Scottish government PEF programme is a system of robbing Peter to pay Paul, with PEF funding restricting where and how money is spent, while existing funding for everyone else is cut back continuously.</i>
<i>Is funding to raise attainment reaching the children who really need it?</i>

23. There are undoubtedly a number of variables to the provision of ASN support within a school or local authority, such as:

- number of children with an ASN: for example, some areas have significantly higher numbers of EAL pupils;
- access to high quality support/training for teachers;
- school building facilities;
- allocation of local authority resources/ASN priority within budget;
- continuity of staffing;
- PEF funding/staffing;
- availability of special school provision;

- numbers of specialists support services.

24. It is important to flag the intended and unintended consequences of the allocation of PEF funding. Attendees at a recent NASUWT Primary Teachers Seminar disclosed that many were not only unaware of how their PEF was being spent, but also had not been consulted or involved in those discussions. Where PEF funding had been disclosed to staff, some were concerned that it had not been put to the best use, being spent on life-size models of pupils or football pitches. While there have been examples of PEF making a positive contribution, there is considerable variability and understanding across Scotland. For example, where there is constant turnover in the SMT, this has had a detrimental impact on the management of PEF money.

25. One significant yet unintended consequence resulting from the distribution of PEF has been the 'PEF drift', where posts created using PEF, which, for example, pay teachers to attend homework clubs, attract applications from teachers whose current schools do not have access to PEF or are not using funds in this way. Schools not receiving substantial PEF are losing experienced staff and having significant difficulties filling vacant places.

26. Through the national policy narrative which currently focuses on the closing of the Poverty Related Attainment Gap, the Scottish Government has also undoubtedly affected the funding priorities of local authorities and schools, which in turn will affect pupils with ASN or with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act.

27. In the NASUWT's experience, local authorities are not universally following national guidelines for ASN support and there is currently no-one effectively monitoring this variability. Furthermore, within local authorities, the significant reduction in the numbers of experienced ASN central staff (Education Officers/QIOs) who previously would have supported mainstream schools and headteachers has resulted in a catastrophic loss

of practical knowledge and support for schools, who can feel left adrift and unable to provide the appropriate support for their pupils.

28. With the proposed introduction of the Headteacher Charter, this variability of provision for ASN across Scotland could increase. It is critical that the Government commits to monitor and track ASN support and ASL implementation across different areas because, while it is absolutely necessary that individual local authorities must have the scope to make independent decisions as to what local provision will best meet their specific needs, it is equally important that children and young people across Scotland have a common entitlement to education.

f. Do you have any experience of seclusion or restraint of children, or unrecorded exclusions from school? If so, what is your experience?

<i>EXTRACTS FROM MEMBER FEEDBACK</i>
<i>Unrecorded exclusions from school remains an issue.</i>
<i>Yes. Pupils physically assaulting teachers and the initial exclusion not being recorded.</i>
<i>I think that unrecorded exclusions take place on a regular basis. Young people are sent home and told to return with a parent at a future date. This has gone on for some time. On other occasions, young people are removed from class and placed with DHTs for a period of time.</i>
<i>I don't know of any.</i>
<i>No experience of this.</i>
<i>Yes, very regularly pupils are sent home with no formal exclusion.</i>

29. While there may be significant variability of experience, there remains a number of unrecorded exclusions taking place within the system. While *Included, Engaged and Involved, Part 2* sets out that ‘all exclusions from school must be formally recorded and that children and young people must not be sent home on an “informal exclusion” or sent home to “cool off”’, it may be prudent to revisit the messaging to schools and local authorities on this specific issue.

g. Do you have any specific comments on any of the Committee’s [report recommendations](#)?

EXTRACTS FROM MEMBER FEEDBACK
<i>Improve the provision of care for those kids with ASN in mainstream. Review your policies and stop closing facilities and using it as an excuse for increasing numbers into mainstream – everyone suffers from it – there cannot be any winners from such a policy other than a Council’s budget. Make reporting easier and support teachers who are abused at work, verbally or physically. It seems to be the only profession that Councils are keen to ignore the Zero Tolerance approach to abuse of its employees.</i>
<i>There needs to be a thorough look at the support, and new strategies to be devised to deal with the increasing ASN needs and funding needs to be available to deal with this.</i>
<i>EAL is reaching epidemic proportions in some schools. Mainstreaming without any English is a disaster.</i>
<i>Largely in agreement with the recommendations.</i>
<i>I do feel that no matter what evidence we submit the Government will disregard much of what is said if it is not fitting with the current ideology. Unfortunately, classroom teachers’ opinions are always bottom of the pile and local authority senior staff and policy makers are so busy trying to fit in with Government policies.</i>

30. The NASUWT considers that recommendation 4 is key to better supporting both pupils with ASN and teachers and is in full agreement that ‘resources are not currently sufficient to support those with additional support needs in mainstream schools’.

31. As set out in recommendation 11, the NASUWT considers a comprehensive review of the extent to which resources are impacting on mainstreaming to be essential. The data analysis outlined in recommendation 18 is also important and the NASUWT would welcome an in-depth analysis from the Scottish Government on *'how the education and ultimately the attainment of pupils in general is being impacted upon by insufficient resources'*.

32. The NASUWT will continue to work with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders to support the policy intention behind the Presumption of Mainstreaming and to campaign for sufficient finances to ensure its successful implementation.

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