

## **Further Education ASN matters – paper for the EIS-FELA Executive.**

This EIS-FELA Executive paper aims to identify key issues of concern regarding the Further Education provision for both young people and adults with Additional Support Needs and makes proposals to address these

The term 'Additional Support Needs' is defined in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as applying to:

*1) A child or young person has additional support needs for the purposes of this Act where, for whatever reason, the child or young person is, or is likely to be, unable without the provision of additional support to benefit from school education provided or to be provided for the child or young person.*

**[F1(1A)]***Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), a child or young person has additional support needs if the child or young person is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 17(6) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (c. 36))*

This Act sets out the duties of education authorities and the rights of parents, children, and young people to additional support for learning. Additional support needs can arise, in the short or long term, from a variety of circumstances including:

- the learning environment
- family circumstances
- health or disability needs
- social and emotional factors

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/additional-support-for-learning/>

This term replaced the previous term 'Special Needs' and encompasses, but is not restricted to, pupils and students with Learning Disabilities and is intended to promote inclusion by focussing on the support needs of individuals to enable them to fully benefit from education.

Many students with Learning Disabilities require Supported Programmes to enable them to grow and develop their skills to enable them to live independently. The Scottish Funding Council supports these courses under Price Group 5 regardless of the age and stage of the students. These students are referred to as ASN students although the legislation only identifies young people. This Price Group provides additional funding to allow for smaller group sizes on average, however colleges may be disinclined to run classes with small numbers for students with higher additional support needs when they can prioritise bigger groups,

EIS-FELA Lecturers have raised concerns over many years that provision is inadequate and the Lifelong Learning opportunities have significantly diminished since the mergers of colleges.

Prior to the programme of mergers of colleges in Scotland between 2012- 2014, Further Education Colleges were more responsive to the needs of both young people and adults with Learning Disabilities in their communities. Supported programmes addressed a range of learning needs that included social and personal development, communication and numeracy and work skills relevant to the age and stage of the individuals throughout their lives.

A post-mergers EIS-FELA survey identified a significant drop in this provision. The needs of students with Additional Support Needs across the spectrum are identified primarily through the lens of their ability to be economically active.

During the pandemic, the gaps in the provision became even more acute, as students struggled with online learning and Lecturing staff found the challenges of online learning difficult for that cohort of learning.

The provision of appropriate courses for adults with Additional Support Needs is inadequate and their reduced opportunities are exacerbated by the lack of community facilities and support.

EIS-FELA Lecturers who work with ASN students are concerned and angry about the elevated level of unmet educational needs, reduced participation in society, and increasing digital and financial poverty. The courses offered under Price Group 5 funding are mostly employability based but do not take account of the needs for personal and social skills development to ensure that employment can be sustained and that vulnerable adults obtain fair work opportunities or that they are safe within their communities. There is also duplication of learning opportunities with the same or similar courses being offered by different providers and very few Supported Employment opportunities that they can access when they leave Further Education.

There is no coherent strategy for the provision of Further Education provision and appropriate support for ASN students. EIS-FELA Lecturers want all students to be both included and safe.

There is massive potential for digital inclusion to support ASN students to achieve greater independence and involvement in their community, but this appears to be a low priority for colleges.

The capacity to achieve digital inclusion is limited due to the lack of professional development for Lecturers in the appropriate use of technology. There is also a lack of appropriate digital resources. Staff simply do not know what resources are available that could be used or adapted to be appropriate and effective in ASN delivery.

ASN delivery is a specialism, but it is important that students access a wide range of topics offered in the college to develop their skills, interests, and experience.

However, staff with no ASN background need support and good quality professional development to meet students' needs. Lecturers are concerned that there is a lack of opportunity for this.

**The EIS-FELA calls for:**

To make representation to the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee.

An urgent review which includes Lecturers, students and potential students, care providers and other stakeholders. The review should aim to identify the gaps in provision, specific Professional Development and resources which should be made available to ASN students and Lecturers.

A national strategy to be put in place to ensure that young people and adults with Additional Support Needs are both included and safe in society and have appropriate social and employment opportunities.