



Findings of and EIS response to academic research on local authority ASN provision

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Independent academic research

- ▶ EIS Council passed a motion calling for research on the provision of learning support for pupils:

“That this Council commission independent research into changes in, and variations of, provision for learning support for pupils, with a view to determining:

- *The different criteria currently used by Local Authorities to establish students’ entitlement to learning support;*
- *Changes to these criteria over time - particularly how far these changes may have been impacted by budgetary, rather than educational factors - and consequent impacts in educational establishments for both pupils and staff;*
- *Variations in these criteria per authority, and consequent variations in the ability of educational establishments to meet pupils’ learning needs, as well as variations in the demands placed on staff”*

Process

- ▶ Following a tendering process, the University of Aberdeen was commissioned to conduct the research; a research team was led by Dr Jennifer Spratt
- ▶ The research was conducted in 2017 and completed in 2018
- ▶ Methodology: 14 LA respondents completed a questionnaire; six were interviewed; 2 members of the EIS ASN Network were interviewed
- ▶ In parallel the EIS also held its own member focus group to explore the issue
- ▶ The EIS Education Committee considered the academic research report and agreed that it would be published alongside a parallel publication, setting out the EIS view on the gap between promise and practice in ASL provision
- ▶ The University of Aberdeen report is called '*Provision for learning support in Scotland: a survey of local authorities*', Sept 2018, Dr Jennifer Spratt et al
- ▶ The EIS parallel publication is called '*Additional Support for Learning in Scottish school education: Exploring the gap between promise and practice*'

Research findings: drivers for change

- ▶ The research found that “changes that have taken place in identification and support of children with ASN have been driven by the changes to the national legislative and policy framework”
 - ▶ Development of a rights-based approach
 - ▶ Presumption of mainstreaming
 - ▶ Move from deficit-driven models of need

Research findings: variable approaches

- ▶ The research found that there are variations between LAs in terms of how readily they use diagnostic criteria to identify ASN
- ▶ LAs focussed on *process* rather than criteria in responding to the request for information about how criteria have changed over time
- ▶ Within LAs, decisions were made collaboratively by teams, involving e.g. teachers, Educational Psychologists and other specialists
- ▶ These processes are in line with GIRFEC and allows for “professional judgment to be the main currency in determining who needs support”

Research findings: changes over time

- ▶ The research found that the main changes over time relate to the changing roles of ASN staff and classroom teachers
- ▶ LA respondents argued strongly for classroom teachers making environmental and pedagogical changes
- ▶ It was common for specialists to provide limited targeted support coupled with capacity building for teachers, though there was found to be considerable variation at school level
- ▶ Support for teachers to take on new roles was variable within and between LAs

Research findings: budgets

- ▶ The research found that in many LAs schools have devolved budgets for ASN
- ▶ These are based on formulae that take account of factors such as levels of deprivation, size of school, no. of Looked After Children
- ▶ Resources were most commonly not allocated to children but to schools (or, in one case, to a school cluster)
- ▶ **“LA respondents rarely mentioned budget as a reason for changes”**
- ▶ Respondents largely commented that budgets for ASN had remained fairly static
- ▶ The research found that because need was increasing, “LAs were looking for ways of supporting low-level difficulties in ways that did not incur additional costs.”

Research findings: level of need

- ▶ The level of need was recognised as increasing by all respondents who commented on budgets
- ▶ “Reasons for increased need were unclear”

Research findings: Staff shortages

- ▶ There was a recognition that staff shortages affected ASN provision
- ▶ In rural areas in particular, ASN staff were sometimes deployed as classroom teachers where there was no-one available to take a class

Overall EIS response to the research

- ▶ It is useful to have a perspective from Local Authorities and to have more information about the variability of practice
- ▶ However, the EIS firmly believes that austerity budgets have been the root cause of changing provision; we do not see policy changes as the main driver
- ▶ We believe that classroom teachers alone cannot meet the needs of children with ASN, and that appropriate specialist support must be provided; the research points to an over-reliance on universal rather than targeted support being able to meet a wide array of needs
- ▶ We would agree that support for teachers on meeting ASN is variable across authorities

EIS member focus group on ASN: findings

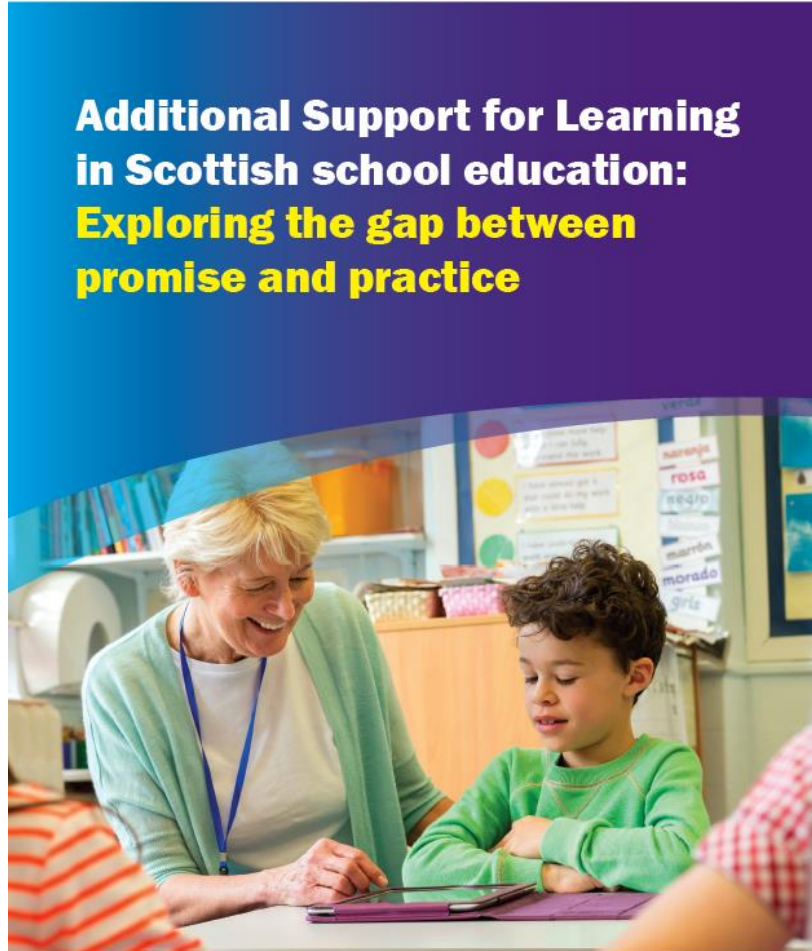
- ▶ There have been **substantial changes in criteria** for establishing learning support needs - expectation that only the most complex needs require any specialist intervention & that class teachers can meet all other needs
- ▶ There has been **significant change in the past decade**; learning support is much harder to access; more complex needs in mainstream settings
- ▶ Members are not satisfied that **teachers' perspectives** on what's needed for learners with ASN are taken into account by LAs/school management; they **feel unheard**
- ▶ **Changes** to criteria and support have been **driven by budgetary** rather than educational **factors**
- ▶ **Impacts** on learners, staff and the climate in educational establishments have been **substantial**, causing members increased **stress and workload**
- ▶ Teachers have **not had enough access to meaningful professional learning** on meeting ASN; there has also been an undervaluing of specialism

EIS member survey: ASN aspects

- ▶ Over 12,000 respondents - largest survey of its kind in Scotland this decade
- ▶ Over 78% of respondents disagreed that there was adequate provision for children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) in their school
- ▶ 82% of respondents said they were dissatisfied with their workload levels, with many citing ASN-related workload concerns
- ▶ 76% of respondents reported that they feel stressed 'frequently' or 'all of the time' within their jobs:
 - ▶ 52% of respondents stated that dealing with pupils' ASN was the aspect of working as a teacher which had created the greatest stress in the last year
 - ▶ This was the third most cited stressor

New EIS report

- ▶ *'Additional Support for Learning in Scottish School Education: Exploring the gap between promise and practice'*
- ▶ A restatement of EIS policy on ASN, highlighting our concerns about:
 - ▶ **Undervaluing ASN staff**
 - ▶ **Under-investing** in ASN provision
 - ▶ **Rising need** among the learner population
 - ▶ **Wider educational issues**
- ▶ We remain firmly committed to the principle of inclusion.



More information

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Or see:

- ▶ www.eis.org.uk
- ▶ <https://www.eis.org.uk/Networks/ASNnetwork>