



Additional Support Needs (ASN) FoI(S)A: EIS-FELA Report into the Responses.

Background

The EIS-FELA has been concerned for some time that ASN provision in colleges was being reduced as a result of government spending cuts on college education relative to spending in 2009-10. Whilst there was evidence of some cuts in ASN provision in some colleges, in Autumn 2013 a FoI(S)A request was sent out to all Scottish colleges to ascertain changes in ASN provision since 2009-10 on 01 November 2014.

All colleges responded to the FoI(S)A request with the exception of the City of Glasgow College, which was reported to the Information Commissioner's Office.

Fifteen questions were posed in the FoI(S)A and the first question was clarified by a further letter (dated 04 December 2013). To ensure fair and meaningful comparisons between colleges and for year-on-year purposes, each college was asked to identify the number of ASN students that have DPG18 funding. Some colleges also gave the number of students that are on Extended Learning Support (ELS) programmes as ASN students.

Many colleges stated that their 2013-13-14 data was provisional and likely to change. For this reason, year-on-year analysis did not include 2013-14 figures. Two colleges gave incomplete data which meant that they could not be incorporated into any comparison between 2009-10 and 2012-13.

Findings

- 1. How many students with ASN were enrolled at your college for each of the sessions above?**

EIS Clarification to FoI letter (4.12.2014) May I ask you to clarify your response on ASN student numbers to identify whether the numbers that you have stated are DPG 18 students. If the numbers given are not DPG18 students, I would be grateful if you could provide DPG18 students numbers to the questions asked.

Most colleges have given a DPG18 number as requested in the follow up FoI clarification letter, some colleges have also given ELS students whilst a few colleges have simply given a total number of ASN students – which is probably DPG18 and ELS combined.

When DPG and ELS are combined, the FoI responses for student ASN enrolments show that in 2009-10 there were 25,114 and that this had dropped to 18,881 in 2012-13. This drop, which is consistent with 2010-11 and 2011-12 figures, shows that the Scottish FE Sector as a whole has 27% fewer ASN students between 2009-10 and 2012-13.

If we consider the figures for individual colleges, then the trend is clearly downwards between 2009-10 and 2012-13, however there are fluctuations during 2010-11 and 2011-12 which show one year rises.

It is worth noting that the Sector's downward trend is not universal and that some colleges have a higher number of ASN student enrolments in 2012-13

than they did in 2009-10, for example New College Lanarkshire and Lews Castle College.

Another statistic that is worth noting is the wide range in the numbers of ASN and DPG18 students that colleges enrol, and that this range cannot simply be explained by college size.

For example: Aberdeen College had 240 ASN students in 2012-13, approximately the same as Anniesland and West Lothian – despite having three times the size of each college. Forth Valley College also seems to have a low number of ASN students relative to its size.

The component colleges of the now merged Glasgow Kelvin College had in 2012-13 approximately four times the number of ASN students than the component colleges of Glasgow Clyde College.

It is very clear that there is no planned national delivery of ASN throughout Scotland. ASN provision is greater (albeit with a wide range) within the populated central belt but drops disproportionately low outwith this central band.

Analysis of DPG18 Data from Question 1

As stated above, the EIS asked colleges for DPG18 Student numbers in a follow up FoI request and most colleges responded with this information.

The EIS has carried out an analysis of the DPG18 figures supplied over 2009-10 to 2012-13, appreciating the limitations of the provisional data supplied for 2013-14.

The data clearly shows a year-on-year reduction every year from 2009-10 to 2012-13. The number of DPG18 students in the colleges sharing data has dropped from 19,622 to 14,887 between 2009-10 and 2012-13. This is a reduction of 24%. There is a clear year-on-year trend in reducing DPG18 provision.

DPG18 students bring additional funding, but their provision seems to be at the discretion of the college. It is clear that some colleges have developed this provision intensely whilst others only provide a light provision. The method of determining provision develops an erratic irregular provision across Scotland.

(The figures for 2013-14 are cited as provisional by many colleges and are not used in year- by- year comparisons.)

- 2. How many discrete classes solely or mainly (i.e. where ASN students formed 50% or more of the class) for students with ASN were run in your college for each of the sessions above?**

Whilst the total number of ASN classes has fluctuated between 2009-10 to 2012-13, the overall trend is downwards. In 2009-10 there were 2371 discrete classes, which dropped to 2245 three years later.

Over this period, most colleges show annual changes in the numbers of classes provided, with an overall trend downwards.

3. How many courses solely or mainly for students with ASN were run in your college for each of the sessions above?

Whilst the total number of ASN courses has fluctuated between 2009-10 to 2012-13, the overall trend is downwards. In 2009-10 1388 courses were run, in 2012-13 1025 were.

(Adam Smith College) has given the number of courses run since 2010-11, but not for 2009-11 which means that it cannot be included in the year by year analysis.)

4. How many full time students with ASN were enrolled in your college for each of the sessions above?

The number of full time ASN students has fluctuated in the period 2009-13, but the overall trend is marginally upwards.

In 2009-10 the number of full time students was 5535, and this had risen to 5682 in 2012-13. This trend may reflect the wider shift towards full time students in the Scottish college sector, as sought by Government policy.

5. How many part time students with ASN were enrolled in your college for each of the sessions above?

The number of part-time ASN students has steadily dropped in the period 2009-13.

In 2009-10, the number of part-time students was 19,746, and this dropped to 17,490 in the following year, then 14,963 in the following year and was 13,243 in 2012-13.

It is possible that this downwards trend is driven by two factors, the Government's desire to move towards full-time students and the separate reduction in ASN provision.

The drop of 6,500 part-time students is not offset by the increase of 150 or so full-time students.

6. What level of support was given to ASN students on courses that were open for ASN and non-ASN students in 2009/10 and 2012/13?

Colleges responded by setting out the support they offer to ASN students, stating that it is assessed and needs led. The majority of colleges stated that the level of support had been maintained between 2009-10 and 2012-13.

Two colleges stated that the level of support had been reduced slightly, for example that support tutors continued to offer one-to-one support but no longer attend whole classes.

7. Has the level of support offered to ASN students been reduced since 2009/10? If so, how?

It is clear that colleges believe that they have maintained the level of support to ASN students. One college stated that it had increased the level of support to ASN students.

8. How many staff in your college held a Diploma in Special Educational Needs for 2009/10 and 2012/13?

According to the figures given, in 2009-10 66 staff across the whole Scottish college sector held a Diploma in SEN (or equivalent) and this had dropped to 52 in 2012-13.

9. How many staff in your college currently holds a Diploma in Special Educational Needs?

At the time of the FoI responses in late 2013/ early 2014 only 46 staff held a Diploma in SEN (or equivalent), this is a drop of 30%. Six colleges stated that they had no Diploma in SEN qualified staff.

A small number of colleges stated that they had provided training and access to the 'Brite' qualification for teaching and support staff.

10. Does the college require a lecturer teaching ASN classes or classes with 50% or more ASN students to hold a Diploma in Special Needs (or equivalent)?

Only one college in Scotland requires staff teaching ASN classes to hold a Diploma in Special Educational Needs or equivalent (NESCol).

11. Does the college require a Learning Assistants supporting ASN classes or classes with 50% or more ASN students to hold a Diploma in Special Needs or similar qualification?

No college in Scotland requires support staff to hold a Diploma in Special Education Needs or equivalent.

12. Has the college increased the class sizes of ASN or mainly ASN students since 2009/10?

Fifteen colleges stated that they had not increased ASN class sizes since 2009-10, six colleges stated that they had.

13. Has the College reduced or amended the staff qualifications needed for teaching or supporting ASN or mainly ASN classes since 2009/10?

One college stated that it had reduced or amended the qualifications needed to teach or support ASN classes since 2009-10. All other colleges that responded stated that they had not reduced or amended the qualifications needed.

14. How many staff were employed by the College for ASN or mainly ASN related duties for each of the sessions above.

The number of staff employed for ASN purposes has dropped steadily in the period 2009-13.

In 2009-10 the number of staff was 528.6, and this had dropped to 457.2 in 2012-13.

15. How many rooms were set aside for ASN or mainly ASN related teaching and support at the college for each of the sessions above.

The number of rooms set aside for ASN purposes has dropped steadily in the period 2009-13.

From the responses given, in 2009-10 the number of rooms was 84, and this had dropped to 81 in 2012-13.

Conclusions

Analysis of the FoI(S)A responses show a clear reduction in ASN activity by the college sector between 2009-10 and 2012-13. This reduction in activity is illustrated in eight ways across the whole sector; the reduction in ASN students enrolled, the reduction in ASN courses, the reduction in ASN classes, the reduction in DPG18 provision, the reduction in part-time ASN students, the reduction in the number of ASN staff, the reduction in the number of Diploma of SEN qualified staff and the reduction in the number of rooms allocated for ASN teaching. There is further evidence that a few colleges have increased ASN class sizes, reduced ASN support and reduced the qualifications necessary for staff to teach ASN students.

The indicators above clearly show a systematic reduction in ASN activity and a reduction in total college capacity to deliver ASN. This is a source of concern for the EIS.

The wide range in the amount of ASN provision provided by different colleges is striking. Some large colleges – regional colleges in some cases – seem to have small amount of ASN capacity. North East Scotland and Forth Valley Colleges seem to have similar ASN provision to much smaller colleges.

The EIS understands that colleges have previously decided how much ASN provision is delivered. This probably accounts for the wide range of ASN provision. This is a further source of concern for the EIS. The EIS does not believe that any part of Scotland has an inherent lower ASN need than another.

Furthermore, it is difficult to envisage some ASN students in more remote FE regions travelling to other FE colleges outwith their regions. In this context, whilst ASN students in Lanarkshire or the West of Scotland may avail themselves of college ASN services in Glasgow, it is difficult to see where ASN students in North East College Scotland or parts of the Forth Valley can avail themselves of alternative ASN provision. This makes the relatively low ASN provision in these two FE regions a source of concern.

It is not clear from the data whether the reduction in ASN staff has driven the reduction in ASN students, or vice versa. With a reduced ASN provision, the drop in specialist staff with Diploma in Special Education Needs (or equivalent) was to be expected. However, the 30% drop in staff with this (or equivalent) qualification is worrying.

EIS-FELA Policy Implications

- 1. The EIS-FELA will campaign to restore ASN provision to 2009-2010 levels.*
- 2. The EIS-FELA will campaign to ensure that there is greater access to ASN provision for students. One part of this will be to seek a greater consistency of ASN provision across Scotland. This may require campaigning at Scottish Government and SFC level to ensure that all Regional Outcome Agreements have similar terms.*
- 3. The EIS-FELA will campaign for greater professional development for teaching and support staff, specifically the preferred qualification of a Diploma in Special Education Needs (or equivalent).*
- 4. The EIS-FELA seeks a restoration of the part-time ASN places as it deplores the huge cut to part-time ASN provision as it causes a disproportionate harm to ASN students, who are amongst the most vulnerable in our colleges.*

Appendix 1.

«Title» «First_Name» «Name»
Principal
«College_Name»
«Address_Line_1»
«Address_Line_2»
«City»
«Post_Code»

Ref: DB/EK/FoIsupportneeds
01 November 2013

Dear «Title» «Name»

These questions refer to the impact of funding cuts on students with Additional Support Needs. The EIS is seeking to investigate how funding cuts have impacted upon students with Additional Support Needs. The group of students who we wish to focus on are those students with

- Severe learning difficulties
- Mild to moderate learning difficulties

Could you answer the following questions regarding sessions; 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2012/2013 and 2013/14.

Could you ensure that your answers include information for the existing college and any other college which may have merged with your existing college since 2008.

- 16.** How many students with ASN were enrolled at your college for each of the sessions above?
- 17.** How many discrete classes solely or mainly (i.e. where ASN students formed 50% or more of the class) for students with ASN were run in your college for each of the sessions above?
- 18.** How many courses solely or mainly for students with ASN were run in your college for each of the sessions above?
- 19.** How many full time students with ASN were enrolled in your college for each of the sessions above?
- 20.** How many part time students with ASN were enrolled in your college for each of the sessions above?

- 21.** What level of support was given to ASN students on courses that were open for ASN and non-ASN students in 2009/10 and 2012/13?
- 22.** Has the level of support offered to ASN students been reduced since 2009/10? If so, how?
- 23.** How many staff in your college held a Diploma in Special Educational Needs for 2009/10 and 2012/13?
- 24.** How many staff in your college currently holds a Diploma in Special Educational Needs?
- 25.** Does the college require a lecturer teaching ASN classes or classes with 50% or more ASN students to hold a Diploma in Special Needs (or equivalent)?
- 26.** Does the college require a Learning Assistants supporting ASN classes or classes with 50% or more ASN students to hold a Diploma in Special Needs or similar qualification?
- 27.** Has the college increased the class sizes of ASN or mainly ASN students since 2009/10?
- 28.** Has the College reduced or amended the staff qualifications needed for teaching or supporting ASN or mainly ASN classes since 2009/10?
- 29.** How many staff were employed by the College for ASN or mainly ASN related duties for each of the sessions above.
- 30.** How many rooms were set aside for ASN or mainly ASN related teaching and support at the college for each of the sessions above.

Please consider these questions under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Emily Kemp
Administrative Officer

Appendix 2

Ref: DB/EK/FoIsupport11113
4th December 2014

Dear «Title» «Surname»

Additional Support Needs FoI Clarification

Thank you for your recent response to our FoI on the above. It has become apparent after the FoI request was made that using existing student categories may be helpful in allowing a fair comparison of FoI responses on ASN across the sector.

To this end, may I ask you to clarify your response on ASN student numbers to identify whether the numbers that you have stated are DPG 18 students. If the numbers given are not DPG18 students, I would be grateful if you could provide DPG18 students numbers to the questions asked.

Thank you in anticipation for this information – and my apologies that the EIS was not specific enough in the first request.

Yours Sincerely

David Belsey
National Officer (F&HE)