

Additional Support for Learning

STUC Women's Committee
Campaign Briefing:

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INTRODUCTION

This year's Programme for Government included the allocation of an additional £15 million funding for the employment of 1000 pupil support assistants (PSAs) in Scotland's schools in answer to growing concerns about the resourcing of Additional Support Needs provision.

The extra funding could amount to a 7.66% increase in PSA staffing, depending on how the details of funding allocation and spending are worked out between Scottish Government and local authorities.

Whilst the additional funding is welcome, with a declining PSA:pupil ratio from 1:9 to 1:13 in recent years, it falls far short of what is required to restore PSA staffing to pre-austerity levels and to help meet the needs of the now almost 200,000 young people with additional support needs in mainstream classrooms in Scottish schools. (Further information will follow on the extent to which the requirement for PSAs now to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Commission is impacting on numbers.)

No additional funding has been made available towards restoring the numbers of specialist ASN teachers with expertise in areas such as Behaviour Support, English as an Additional Language and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Meanwhile, as the grip of poverty tightens and the mental health crisis among young people intensifies, the overall numbers of children with additional support needs has increased by 102% since 2011.

Children and young people, especially those with additional support needs, and trade union members who are in the front line of Education service provision - most of them women- are bearing the brunt of austerity cuts in the classroom.

Last year's Women's Conference agreed that enough is enough. Falling numbers of specialist staff- teachers and support assistants- and reduced support for children with increasingly complex additional needs, resulting in increased levels of violence and aggression in our schools, has to be challenged- at national level and at local authority level - where overall budgets are reducing and the main decisions about ASN spending lie.

Purpose of this Briefing

This briefing aims to support union branches and local associations of unions which organise within the Education sector, in negotiations and campaigning in response to the under-resourcing of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009, the legislation which underpins additional support needs (ASN) provision, including the deployment of Pupil Support Assistants and specialist ASN teachers within mainstream schools, nurseries and other education settings.

We would suggest that discussions and campaigning should highlight four key issues:

1. The adverse impact of under-resourcing on the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, the majority of whom are female;
2. The adverse impact of under-resourcing on learners' educational experiences at a time when a top Scottish Government priority is to raise attainment for all;
3. The relationship between incidence of additional support needs and poverty and educational inequality at a time when a top Scottish Government priority is to close the poverty-related attainment gap;
4. The unsustainability of the current approach and the need for urgent action.

Why raise this now?

The 2018 STUC Women's Conference passed a resolution which called on the STUC Women's Committee to:

...campaign against further cuts to school budgets and to ensure that the untold story of violence in school classrooms, which is affecting women workers most, and results in pupils not receiving the support that they need, is challenged by the STUC in its dealings with the Scottish Government.

The resolution was passed in the national context of:

- Reducing local authority and school budgets.
- A 50% rise in the numbers of children with additional





- support needs since 2012, with numbers sitting at 183,491.
- Reduced numbers of pupil support assistants amounting to a ratio of 1 to 13, compared with 1 to 9 in 2012.
- Reduced numbers of ASN specialist teachers.
- Large class sizes.
- Decreased access to Educational Psychology services.
- Decreased pupil access to CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services.)
- Reduced social work, youthwork and outreach teaching services.
- A significant increase in incidence of violence by pupils towards pupil support assistants and teachers.
- Negative impact on the mental and physical health, safety, and the general wellbeing, of pupil support staff and teachers, the majority of whom are female.
- Increased workload and pressures associated with seeking to meet learners' needs in large classes, where children with complex needs all need different kinds of support.

What about more recent developments?

The total number of pupils with additional support needs as per the December 2018 Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland data is 199,065. This represents an increase of 8.49% on the figure quoted within the original resolution.

The September 2019 Programme for Government included the announcement of £15 million funding for 1000 additional support assistants. This could amount to a 7.66% increase in PSA staffing. At the time of writing, discussion of the details of how the funding is to be allocated and spent continues between Scottish Government and Local Authorities.

Whilst the additional funding is welcome, it falls short of what would be required even to maintain ratios of 1:13, far less begin to restore former levels of ASN provision in the form of pupil support assistants.

No additional funding has been made available as yet towards restoring the numbers of specialist ASN teachers with expertise in areas such as Behaviour Support, English as an Additional Language and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Action?

Against such a backdrop, in addition to national campaigning, it is suggested that unions representing teachers and education support staff in local authority areas, make the case strongly against any proposed cuts to the education budget in general and ASN provision specifically - either in the form of specialist teachers or support staff who, as low-paid workers, often are in the sights of local authorities seeking to make savings.

Any further erosion of staffing in ways that undermine the health and wellbeing of staff, put the safety of staff and young people at risk, and exacerbate the disadvantage already experienced by many children and young people with additional learning needs, would be even more unjust, unsustainable and therefore unacceptable.

Preparing the Arguments: ASN in Scotland- facts and figures:

- Over 1 in 4 school pupils (199,065 pupils/28.7%) has identified ASN; in 2011, the overall number was 98,523; the increase over that period is 102%.
- 97% of children with additional support needs are educated in mainstream settings as per the terms of the Presumption to Mainstreaming legislation.
- Special school provision where significantly smaller class sizes determined by strict national agreements are a necessity, must be available for children whose complex needs cannot be properly addressed in mainstream settings.
- The number of ASN assistants in mainstream education declined by 730 (FTE) between 2013 and 2016.
- The number of teaching staff in mainstream primary schools with a Behaviour Support role declined from 32 in 2008 to 9 in 2017 - a reduction of 72%. The latest 2018 figure is 19 - this is likely to be down to the employment of Behaviour Support Teachers using Pupil Equity Funding, a temporary funding source rather than core budget.





- The number of teaching staff in primary schools with a general ASN role declined from 146 in 2008 to 63 in 2018 – a reduction of 57%.
- The number of teaching staff in mainstream secondary schools with a Behaviour Support role declined from 127 in 2008 to 71 in 2017 – a reduction of 79%.
- The number of learning support teachers in secondary schools declined from 945 in 2008 to 821 in 2017 – a reduction of 13%.
- The number of Behaviour Support Teachers in secondary fell from 127 in 2008 to 71 in 2018 - a reduction of 44%.
- ASN teacher numbers fell in 16 out of 32 local authorities over the period 2007 to 2016.
- The number of educational psychologists in Scotland fell by more than a tenth from 2012 to 2016; there were 363 trained EPs in Scottish local authorities in 2016 – almost 12% fewer than the 411 practising in 2012.
- One in four children in Scotland lives in poverty (strongly linked to having ASN). In some school communities, the figure is more than 1 in 3.
- There is evidence to suggest that parents of children with additional learning needs, who have higher income, greater social and educational capital, and therefore greater capacity to advocate on behalf of their children, have greater success in ensuring that resources are secured on their behalf. As a result, existing educational inequalities between more and less affluent children with additional needs, are widened.
- 10% of children and young people (aged five to 16) have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem (Scottish Children's Services Coalition); and 20% of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year.
- 4.1% of children from the most affluent backgrounds displayed social, emotional or behavioural difficulties when they started school, falling to 3 mental health difficulties at the start of school, rising to 14.7% by primary three.

Preparing the Arguments: wide-ranging learner needs

Members will be aware that Scottish ASL legislation is expansive and covers a wide range of circumstances from which additional support needs (ASN) can stem. A young person is said to have 'additional support needs' if they need more, or different, support to what is normally provided in an educational setting to children/young people of the same age. The range of learners' needs is becoming ever wider, with the presumption of mainstreaming (which the trade union movement supports in principle) meaning that schools and colleges now have learners with a very wide range of support needs, arising from (but not limited to):

- sensory impairment, including impaired sight or hearing
- long-term learning difficulties or disabilities e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia
- autism spectrum disorders
- physical disabilities and health conditions, such as diabetes, asthma or epilepsy
- mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression
- experience of the care system/being looked-after by the authority or kinship carers
- social, emotional and behavioural issues
- being a young parent or carer
- having experienced abuse or neglect.
- family issues such as parents involved with substance misuse or in prison
- having English as an additional language
- being a refugee or asylum seeker
- changing gender identity or expression
- coming from a Traveller community
- being exceptionally gifted or having particular talents.

Some children will have needs arising from multiple factors in combination. With such a diverse range of needs in schools and colleges, it is self-evident that resourcing – particularly staffing resource – needs to be in place to ensure that educational establishments can 'Get it Right for Every Child' and young person.





Preparing the Arguments: relevant policy and legislation

Meeting the variety of needs present in schools is primarily required by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009. However, it is also supported by other laws and policies, including:

- Curriculum for Excellence
- the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000
- Getting it Right for Every Child (an aspect of the Children and Young People Act 2014) and the SHANARRI indicators
- the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



The Equality Act 2010 is relevant, as it affords both learners and staff protection from discrimination, including discrimination arising from disability, which can include mental health conditions associated with work-related stress. Some young people may have ASN which overlap

with the protected characteristics in this Act, e.g. travellers whose needs arise from their ethnicity, or young people undergoing gender reassignment whose circumstances temporarily give rise to support needs. There is also interaction between the Equality Act 2010 and certain policies e.g. around exclusion.

The Government has committed through the National Improvement Framework (NIF) to raise attainment for all and close the poverty-related attainment gap between Scotland's most and least disadvantaged young people. This applies also to children with additional support needs, a disproportionate number of whom also live in poverty. Local authorities are required to report annually on their progress towards realising the aspirations contained in the NIF.

The impacts on staff of under-resourcing of learning support prompt significant issues. For that reason, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 is also relevant, and Health and Safety risk assessments can be an important tool to use in instances where cuts in a particular area of ASN provision are proposed.

Preparing the Arguments: the impact of under-resourcing ASL provision

Well documented by unions representing support staff and teachers are the issues caused by the continuing under-resourcing of ASL provision. These can be summarised as follows:

Impacts on safety, health and wellbeing

- Increased stress and risk of personal injury or other health impacts for staff, because of exposure to violent incidents, personal abuse or aggression, from learners who require more support but are not getting it, and from their parents.
- Reduced morale among staff, owing to a feeling of failing young people and their families; a feeling of being 'useless'; feeling blamed for repetitive unacceptable pupil behaviour; feeling unsupported by School Management Teams; concern for vulnerable children.
- Reduced wellbeing both at and outside of work – lack of sleep, headaches, generalised anxiety – all of which undermine effectiveness at work and potentially contribute to more long-term absence.
- Increased workload for remaining teachers and support staff against a backdrop of rising need and reduced human resource to address it.

Impacts on learners' wellbeing

There are multiple health and wellbeing impacts caused by reduced ASN for learners, both those who have additional support needs and those who don't. Learners who have additional support needs can experience reduced morale and lower self esteem, due to:

- receiving less support to have their needs met than is required;
- being less supported to take part in enrichment/after-school activities than is required;
- higher levels of generalised anxiety;
- being more likely to display challenging behaviour;
- being involved in more violent incidents, fights and low-level





- disruption to learning; and
- experiencing a loss of dignity e.g. when they exhibit high levels of distress ("a meltdown").
- Among the general pupil population, learners can experience higher levels of anxiety due to more stressful atmospheres developing when children with ASN do not receive the requisite support; stress caused by disrupted learning - e.g. when a classroom has to be evacuated due to a violent incident; potential distress caused by witnessing peers' violent behaviour towards staff and or pupils; and overall, reduced enjoyment of school.

Impacts on learners' educational experiences

- Some pupils being unable to access learning due to social/emotional issues.
- Less access to learning support for some pupils, as this is diverted to supporting the most complex and severe needs, e.g. less support for children with dyslexia.
- Some pupils having longer waits for work to be marked or new work set.
- Risk of reduced attainment, due to increasing non-attendance, opting out of school, disruption of learning or less time with teachers.
- Differential impacts depending on socio-economic status: children from higher income families often

getting more support than those from poorer backgrounds, as a result of more strident parental advocacy.

- Less support available at transition times.
- Some pupils having fewer positive interactions with SMT and other teachers who are dealing with large numbers of acute cases/crises.

Making and winning the arguments together locally

With all of the above in mind, at local level, union branches and local associations are advised to:

- Set up clear, effective and sustainable channels of communication across relevant unions - both formal and informal to enable flow of dialogue throughout the campaign.
- Organise - adopt an organising approach to campaigning, involving members within individual unions at all stages, building the grievance, sharing the narrative, securing individual member buy-in and willingness to take action within the campaign and monitoring this at key intervals.
- Gather local ASN data - many elements of the national School Census Data are broken down by local authority. Examine the staffing trends over the past decade.

Build external campaigning alliances:

- across all relevant unions and act together - communicating, sharing knowledge and ideas, agreeing campaign strategy and tactics, supporting one another, and resisting efforts by employers and/or politicians to weaken the campaign by 'divide and conquer'.
- with parents and parents' organisations such as Connect (the national Parent Council body which organises locally) and the National Parent Forum of Scotland (which also has local branches).
- Take the campaign to the wider public - street stalls, leaflets, address meetings of community groups, organise visible and eye-catching public demonstrations that will capture the interest of members and the wider public.
- Engage local and national press interest and use social media - as platforms from which to make the arguments against any proposed cuts to services and for the restoration of staffing levels; and to publicise campaigning activity and events. Issue joint press releases and statements; devise a joint social media strategy.
- Meet jointly and seek to negotiate - with Directors of Education, Heads of Inclusion Services or other key local authority staff, on the issue.
- Meet jointly with individual/small groups of elected members of the Council on a party political basis to make the arguments and seek to secure support. (Next Council elections are 2022 - seek manifesto commitments in the lead-up.)
- Write jointly to officers and elected members of the Council.
- Request to jointly address meetings of the Education Committee of the local authority and/ or full meetings of the Council.
- Lobby local MSPs on a party - political basis. While ASN spending is largely determined by local authorities, the





Scottish Government has the ability to provide additional ringfenced funding as in the case of Pupil Equity Fund and the additional £15 million for PSAs announced September 2019.

(Next SP elections are May 2021 - push for manifesto commitments.)

- **Network with branches and local associations in other local authorities - share the challenges, the learning and the wins.**

Pupil census (data source for pupil numbers): <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/dspupcensus>

EIS Report ASL in Scottish school education: 'Exploring the gap between promise & practice', published March 2019 <https://www.eis.org.uk/Additional-Support-Needs/ASNGuidance>

Joseph Rowntree research on the link between special educational needs and poverty: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/special-educational-needs-and-their-links-poverty>

Further reading and contacts

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/4/contents>

'Supporting Children's Learning' Code of Practice - Statutory Guidance on the ASL Act: <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-education-additional-support-learning-scotland/>

Scottish Government ASL webpage: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/welfare/ASL>

Children in Scotland's 'Enquire' service: <http://enquire.org.uk/>

Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee report on ASN provision: http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Reports/ASN_6th_Report_2017.pdf

Teacher census (data source for teacher numbers): <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/teachcenssuppdata>