



Supporter Update – September 2019

Thank you for supporting *Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved*

In September 2018 we launched [Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved](#), a report on the experiences of autistic children who have missed school. In that report we made nine recommendations which we hoped would have a positive impact on the educational experiences of all autistic children.

We produced an update in February this year, here's what we've been doing since then to make sure progress is made against our recommendations.

<p>March 2019</p>	<p>Guidance to education authorities on their duty to provide education in a mainstream setting unless certain exceptions apply was published, in his introduction John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills said:</p> <p><i>“We are committed to mainstreaming as a central pillar of our inclusive approach to education. The Scottish approach to inclusion is already world-leading; our legislative and policy commitments are amongst the most extensive in the world. However, we must improve the experience of inclusion for all pupils if we are to deliver on the promise of such an ambitious framework. Being present in a mainstream school should not be the primary marker of successful inclusion.”</i></p> <p>We welcome this commitment to improve the experience of inclusion for all pupils.</p> <p>The Scottish Government announced funding for a National Autism Implementation Team based at Queen Margaret University to work across children and adult services to improve the diagnosis process and care pathway for autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions, such as ADHD.</p> <p>https://www.gov.scot/news/increasing-support-for-those-with-autism/</p>
<p>April</p>	<p>On 30 April the first meeting of an Autism in Schools working group took place, established by John Swinney. It was agreed that a subgroup would form to discuss the specific issue of quality assurance and a common baseline for Initial Teacher Education.</p>

	<p>That meeting was attended by a range of representatives including AMASE, the Scottish Government, the General Teaching Council Scotland, Education Scotland, the Association of Directors of Education Scotland, COSLA, the National Autism Implementation Team and The Educational Institute of Scotland.</p> <p>The meeting discussed other work underway to support improvement including what Education Scotland is doing to audit the specific approaches schools use to support autistic pupils and what the Scottish Government is doing around guidance on staged intervention.</p>
May	On 21 May the second meeting of the Autism in Schools working group took place. This meeting explored what changes were being made to the Autism Toolbox and new learning resources for teachers.
June	A meeting of the subgroup involving the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) about autism specific input in Initial Teacher Education.
July	On 10 July the third meeting of the Autism in Schools working group took place and agreed the working group proposals to make to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. We will update you when a response is received.
August	The research partners met with the National Autism Implementation team to discuss joint areas of focus.
September	<p>Running up to the one year anniversary of the publication of the report we are sending a letter to John Swinney to say where we feel we need to keep up momentum, planning our targeted activity over the next few months (see below) and continuing to work with partners on developing materials and resources.</p> <p>We are following up with the Scottish Government team about the proposal that was submitted to Mr Swinney after the working group meetings.</p>

We have continued to engage with Mr Swinney and his officials and have no doubt that he is committed to improvement for autistic pupils in schools so that the pupils highlighted in our research receive support to allow them to achieve their potential. We need to keep working with the range of people who will make this happen to highlight children and families experiences and be part of this change.

Yours sincerely

Children in Scotland

The National Autistic Society Scotland

Scottish Autism

We have updated the summary we provided in our February update to reflect what we think about further actions needed against our calls.

What we asked for	What Mr Swinney said	Further action needed
Stop unlawful exclusions.	<p>“Unlawful exclusion is completely unacceptable and should not be used under any circumstances.”</p> <p>He also says that the Scottish Government's school exclusion guidance has recently been updated.</p>	<p>We continue to welcome this very clear statement on the practice of unlawful exclusion.</p> <p>We are interested in what impact the revised guidance has had on unlawful exclusions.</p> <p>We continue to be concerned that the extent of the problem is not known and are calling for a way to record and report this. We are working with stakeholders on making sure appropriate support to children and their family is put in place.</p>
Reduce the number of formal exclusions of children with additional support needs.	Mr Swinney acknowledged that the rate of exclusion per 1,000 pupils who have additional support needs is more than four times higher than those who have no additional support needs and says that he wants to reduce this disparity.	<p>We are hopeful that the activity by Education Scotland, the National Autism Implementation team and on the refreshed Autism Toolbox will take the necessary steps to stop autistic children being formally excluded from school.</p> <p>We hope that the outcomes of the working group will also progress this call.</p>
Improve the availability of specialist teachers.	Mr Swinney says that overall teacher numbers have increased and mentions the number of pupil support assistants employed in Scotland's schools.	<p>We specifically called for an increase in the number of Support for Learning teachers.</p> <p>We welcomed the announcement in the 2019-20 Programme for Government that an additional £15m will be available this year to improve the experience of children who have additional support needs, and their families. We look forward to finding out more about how this money will be spent.</p> <p>We continue to call for an increase in Support for Learning teachers who have a responsibility</p>

		<p>for planning and adapting learning support. There is a wider issue with the number of specialists who can support inclusive education and our charities are campaigning on this. We are aware this is also a consideration of the National Autism Implementation Team.</p>
<p>Review the availability of appropriate placements for autistic children.</p>	<p>Mr Swinney said that parents, carers and young people themselves can make placing requests.</p> <p>He states that placements should be about "how best the child's needs will be meet."</p> <p>Mr Swinney also highlights that draft guidance on the presumption to mainstream education was paused, due to him wanting to reflect on our reports findings.</p>	<p>Through our advice services we continue to hear that the timings of placing request decisions are often difficult for children and young people in terms of good educational and transition planning.</p> <p>We support paragraph 43 in the revised guidance on mainstreaming and would like reassurance that placement decisions are always based on the best interests of the child.</p> <p>"Section 15 is a continuing duty and can apply at any time there are decision making points about where a child should learn. Children and young people usually attend the school within their catchment area or the early learning and childcare setting of their parent or carers' choice. However, in some circumstances the education authority may propose that another school, including a special school, may be more appropriate to meet the needs of the child or young person."</p> <p>Education Scotland published 'What are effective Educational Interventions for Children and Young People on the Autistic Spectrum?' and 'Summary of audit of current approaches to training and implementation in Scottish local authorities to support Children and Young People on the Autistic Spectrum' in Spring 2019</p>
<p>Enhanced teacher training both for new and current teachers to improve their understanding of autism.</p>	<p>Mr Swinney said that student teachers gain sufficient knowledge of the most common additional support needs (including autism), and that existing teachers</p>	<p>We said that we were most disappointed with this response, but we are very pleased to say there has been significant activity since February.</p> <p>Changes are being made to all Initial Teacher Education programmes to have specific content on autistic children.</p> <p>The revised Professional Standards for Teachers will include reference to the main neurodevelopmental disorders (including</p>

	<p>have a requirement to undertake continuing professional development (which could include autism).</p> <p>He also makes reference to the Autism Toolbox, which is being refreshed, and refers to the development of an online module to support school staff in their 'understanding of inclusive practice'.</p>	<p>autism) in 2020.</p> <p>Related activity also includes a new inclusive classroom resource - 'Inclusion Practice -The Circle Framework: Secondary' launched by Education Scotland.</p>
<p>Introduce a minimum number of hours of education for children who are out of school.</p>	<p>Mr Swinney stated that there has never been a minimum number of hours provision in place when children are not in school education.</p> <p>He says that the Additional Support for Learning Act requires local authorities to meet needs of individual children, rather than have prescribed set of hours.</p>	<p>As we stated previously, guidance for children who are unable to attend school due to ill health indicated that they should expect 3-7 hours of education per week. As a result of the research carried out and extensive conversations with families, it is our understanding that this guidance provided a very helpful reference point for planning.</p> <p>We are investigating whether section 21 of the Education Act 2016 Act which gives Scottish Ministers powers in regulations to prescribe a minimum number of learning hours that is owed to each individual pupil would be helpful to children affected.</p> <p>We continue to think that the experience for a child of being out of schools need to be better understood.</p>
<p>Improve access to online learning.</p>	<p>Mr Swinney said that it is the responsibility of local authorities to provide education to</p>	<p>We support greater consistency across local authorities in this and encourage Education Scotland to share and promote good practice.</p>

	<p>pupils outside of school when they are excluded.</p> <p>He referenced GLOW; the Scottish Government funded online learning platform.</p>	
<p>Take a whole school approach to raise awareness and understanding of pupils with additional support needs, including autism.</p>	<p>Mr Swinney states that implementing the curriculum is the responsibility of local authorities.</p> <p>He also mentions the Autism Toolbox and online module (as discussed above.)</p>	<p>We feel that the Scottish Government has shown good leadership on this issue since February and that different pieces of work are underway to achieve this including work Respectme has been carrying out with Education Scotland and development of the empowering schools guidance.</p>
<p>Raise awareness of children's rights to additional support for learning with children, young people and families.</p>	<p>Mr Swinney highlighted that the Scottish Government funds Enquire, a helpline for advice about additional support for learning.</p> <p>He goes on to say that local authorities have a duty to publish their additional support for learning policies.</p>	<p>Extensive marketing by Enquire on the ASL framework, parents and carers rights and the rights of children and young people.</p> <p>We continue to believe that local authorities need to do more to ensure their additional support for learning policies are published clearly, prominently and in an accessible way.</p> <p>We are aware that Enquire is working closely with local authority representatives to consider how this can be done.</p> <p>There has been development of resource by the Disabled Children's Team at Scottish Government - https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-disabled-children-young-people-and-their-families/</p>