



December 2019

Review of the Implementation of Additional Support for Learning in Scotland

Children in Scotland response

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do. By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland. We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

Children in Scotland (CiS) manages Enquire, the national advice service for Additional Support for Learning, the Resolve: ASL Mediation service and the Inclusion Ambassador Network, and is a partner in delivering the My Rights, My Say project. As such, we are keenly aware of the additional support for learning landscape in Scotland. We are firmly committed to ensuring that all children in Scotland are able to attend an inclusive school environment that promotes their best interests. We are pleased to be able to contribute to the review of additional support for learning in Scotland.

The views of children and young people

We anticipate that the Review will have had a high number of responses from adults, both parents and practitioners. CiS would like to take this opportunity to share what we know about what children and young people have said is important in terms of supporting them to learn.

We have promoted the involvement of children and young people in this review more widely by developing a template to assist with this.¹ We hope that the Review has received responses directly from children and young people who would like to share their experiences and views.

Children in Scotland's Evidence Bank

We are aware that children and young people are often consulted on the same issues numerous times. For this reason, CiS has developed an evidence bank that helps to share and promote the views of children and young people on a range of subjects without the need for additional consultation.² To inform our response to this review, we have drawn from this bank of evidence to reflect on what children and young people from across Scotland have said about their experiences of education and support for learning.

Additional Support for Learning

We are aware that discussions about additional support for learning can become focused on the needs of children with diagnoses such as ASD, ADHD or dyslexia.

In our discussions with children and young people about the factors giving rise to additional support needs, it is often their perception of what the term 'additional support need' encompasses that can be a barrier to them identifying themselves as having additional support needs. It is a benefit that in Scotland we recognise there is a wide range of issues that can mean pupils may require additional support to learn. It is important that national discussions, such as this one, keep this broad focus so that all children get the support to which they are entitled. For this reason, we would like to draw on a

¹ See appendix 1

² <https://evidencebank.org.uk>

broad range of evidence from children and young people about their experiences of what makes an inclusive education system.

Themes

The broad themes that have emerged from the evidence we have drawn on are:

- Support
- Staff
- Rights and views
- Resources
- Learning environment
- Inclusion
- Challenges.

Support

The quality of the additional support that children receive to learn naturally has a significant impact on how they engage with it. From the evidence we have seen, the quality of the support is closely linked to the relationships with staff.

In terms of those relationships, it is crucial that there is enough flexibility within the education system to ensure that support can be provided in a way that meets need. We have raised concerns in previous consultations about the pressure on staff to focus efforts on a narrow definition of achievement which can be at odds with a truly inclusive education system.³

“If teachers are prepared to stick by you, believe in you, it makes a huge difference. You can turn your whole life around.”⁴

“Supportive teachers who will listen to you and take positive steps with you.”⁵

³ Presumption of mainstreaming consultation response, p.7

⁴ © What Kind of Schools Do Children Want? - Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/what-kind-of-schools-do-children-want/>

⁵ © Creating a Supportive Environment to Talk About Mental Health in Schools - Children and Young People's Evidence Bank

“They make time to sit and listen and they do not interrupt until you have ended and they make it as friendly as possible so it is not formal and is in a private area.”⁶

“My ASN teacher would take me out mountain biking and we shared that interest. He was so understanding. He made a scale about how I was feeling 1-10 and we changed it to bikes – ‘what bike are you today?’ to show how I was feeling and that helped a lot. This was great especially in a busy school with kids all around so they wouldn’t know what we were talking about.”⁷

“The PSA [Pupil Support Assistants] have been great. They ask what do I want and they will take care of me and be sympathetic if I have a sore belly.”⁸

“It is important to praise pupils. It will make them feel good. They will do better work.”⁹

All of this feedback goes beyond transactional interactions about support. Children feel best supported when they have a meaningful relationship with someone they feel is with them, listens to them and actively supports them. We are aware that this requires time, staffing and resource that can be scarce within schools.

Children have also spoken about the importance of peer and family relationships in helping them to access support and to learn. A whole-school

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/places/creating-a-supportive-environment-to-talk-about-mental-health-in-schools/>

⁶ © Creating a Supportive Environment to Talk About Mental Health in Schools – Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/places/creating-a-supportive-environment-to-talk-about-mental-health-in-schools/>

⁷ © Life after School – Help and Support – Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/additional-support/help-and-support/>

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ © Supportive Teachers – Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/supportive-teachers/>

approach to inclusion creates the space required for peer support and positive relationships between schools and families help to create a holistic culture of support.

“Sometimes you worry that you’re not good enough. Your friends can help and encourage you. When you work together, it’s better because you have someone to look after you and help you learn more.”¹⁰

“It’s like the way you grow up that makes you want to learn or what kind of person you are as well. So [if] you’re growing up, like, in an environment where everybody helps you and that, like supports you and that, then you’re going to have a good future. But if you don’t then it’s not really going to be a good future. So I would say that’s important.”¹¹

Staff training and understanding

We have heard time and time again about the importance for pupils of feeling as though their teachers have had enough training and understand why they need additional support at school.

“It would be good if there was better training for teachers about our culture. Or even if we had Gypsy/Traveller teachers.”¹²

“Trainee teachers don’t class BSL as necessary as part of their learning. BSL is absolutely needed. It gives children and young

¹⁰ © What Kind of Schools Do Children Want? – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/what-kind-of-schools-do-children-want/>

¹¹ © Impact of Poverty on Education – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/impact-of-poverty-on-education/>

¹² © Discrimination of Gypsy/Roma/Traveller Young People in Education and Work – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/discrimination-of-gypsy-roma-traveller-young-people-in-education-and-work/>

people an opportunity to express themselves visually and what's more amazing than that?"¹³

"More awareness-raising and training in schools around the needs of young people in care."¹⁴

"I think there should be an education programme for the teachers about being a young carer and mental health because a lot of them don't get it at all. It should be an enforced course and not optional."¹⁵

Children need adults to be proactive in having conversations with them about what is going on and the support they require. Children may struggle to talk to the school about the support they need and can get into trouble or be overlooked as a result of this.

"If you have a lot of stress on at home because of your caring and you can't do your homework or study and you then get shouted and screamed at and you get detention. And it's not our fault as we have had to care for our brother or sister or mum."¹⁶

"The school complained and said, 'you did really bad in [your] prelim' and I said, 'well my brother was going through chemotherapy.' I couldn't come into school and just relax and go into my prelim and do my best because inside I was just scared and needed someone to help me through it."¹⁷

¹³ © Human Rights in the Classroom – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/human-rights-in-the-classroom/>

¹⁴ © Care Experienced Children Discuss Their Rights – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/inclusion/care-experienced-children-discuss-their-rights/>

¹⁵ © Life after School - Young Carers and Mental Health Problems – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/additional-support/life-after-school-young-carers-and-mental-health-problems/>

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ © Human Rights in the Classroom – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/human-rights-in-the-classroom/>

“I’m just overlooked most of the time... I’ve had no help at all. I think I’m just a quiet person and like to blend in and get missed.”¹⁸

“...sometimes you need help without having to ask for it. Some people won’t ask so we just need you [teachers] to realise this and help.”¹⁹

A sense that adults don’t understand can prevent children and young people coming forward to talk about an issue and can be a significant barrier to the effectiveness of the support put in place and can lead to issues escalating. The impact when a pupil feels understood and included is huge.

“It was great to have a teacher who totally understood and didn’t think I was stupid as that was how I felt about myself.”²⁰

This links to Call 12 from CiS’s 25 Calls campaign.

“We want to see every child in Scotland reach their potential. The presumption of mainstreaming means early career teachers will expect to be teaching learners who have a wide range of additional support needs (ASN) including autism. As a result, we need an education system staffed by teachers and support staff who feel confident in their skills to meet pupils’ individual needs.”²¹

We understand that Initial Teacher Education is not able to cover every area that may lead to a child having an additional support need. However, an ongoing emphasis on inclusive teaching practices is key to meeting the

¹⁸ © Life after School - Preparation and Life Skills – Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/additional-support/life-after-school-preparation-life-skills/>

¹⁹ © Life after School - Preparation and Life Skills - Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/additional-support/life-after-school-preparation-life-skills/>

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/call-12-support-our-pupils-and-teachers-embed-understanding-of-asn-in-initial-teacher-training-and-ongoing-development/>

needs of all children in our education system. This means supporting teachers to access ongoing training as needed as well as approaching meeting the needs of individuals with an open mind and a collaborative attitude to planning and support. There are very good examples of inclusive education programmes in Scottish universities and provided by Education Scotland but there is an issue with access and consistent application. We appreciate that within the current system, this is a significant ask as teaching staff generally do not have the time or flexibility required to attend regular training or the time it might require to build a relationship and understanding with a pupil.

“They should ask the actual professionals i.e. us because we have experienced it and we could use our experiences to give them advice.”²²

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education is also currently carrying out a project on this topic²³ and we suggest that it is essential that children and young people are included in developing and contributing to the frameworks and resources cited above.

Rights and views

All children have the right to an education (article 28 of the UNCRC). In addition to this, all children have the right to be involved in decisions that impact on their lives (article 12 of the UNCRC), which includes any decisions made about their support for learning.

A rights-based approach to education creates a more inclusive education system. As we move towards incorporation of the UNCRC into Scottish law, we must reflect on areas that require change, additional funding and support in our education system in order to meet with the gold standard that the First Minister aspires to.

“All staff must be trained in the UNCRC and ensure the principles are implemented into policy and practice throughout all services for young people in care.”²⁴

²² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lw_u2yPqP6I

²³ <https://www.european-agency.org/projects/TPL4I>

²⁴ © Care Experienced Children Discuss Their Rights – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank

“Increased rights education in mainstream and alternative education settings.”²⁵

We must be aware of the power imbalance that exists between professionals and children and how our actions can minimise or exacerbate that.

An issue that has come up in evidence is the sense of lack of control about what happens with information and how involved pupils feel in their own planning processes. This has been addressed in part in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended where the rights of children aged 12-15 were extended, to include the right to decide what information is shared when they are leaving school. We believe that similar consideration should be given for all children's information, and raised a similar point in our response to the consultation on the Guidance on the Presumption of Mainstreaming:

“Have children and young people given consent for their information to be shared or been involved in a conversation about which staff at school their information needs to be shared with? While children and young people have highlighted the importance of staff being aware of their circumstances to be able to support them, this may be sensitive information that only a limited number of people need to know. There is obviously also a legal requirement to ensure that data protection regulations are adhered to.”²⁶

“Sometimes I feel sad and have lots of worries. I want teachers to understand that when I feel sad it's hard to learn. I want teachers to be aware that I might be putting on a brave face and to take the time to understand what I might be going through at home and within myself. Not all worries, thoughts and problems are public and not everyone needs to know.”²⁷

CiS is a strong advocate for children being actively involved in their planning processes and provides support for this as part of the My Rights, My Say service. However, this must be done in a way that is meaningful and does not create additional barriers for children and young people.

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/inclusion/care-experienced-children-discuss-their-rights/>

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ Presumption of mainstreaming

²⁷ Leaders of Learning

“I didn’t want the Depute there as it’s really hard but they wouldn’t listen and said she had to be there to Chair. I was shaking my head to show I wasn’t happy but no one asked me. They used a lot of jargon that my mum and I didn’t know and they didn’t even tell me who was in the meeting.”²⁸

“Value what we say – value our opinions and just like respect what we say and have respect for us as we do for you. Treat each other the same.”²⁹

Another key rights issue is around exclusions and time not in school. This issue was highlighted in relation to autistic children in the *Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved* report³⁰ and the authors of this report have submitted their own response to the Review.

“Not getting your education that day is like not being paid that day. Taking it further than that, like detention, is not fair.”³¹

This links with Call 6 of the CiS 25 Calls campaign:

“We need long-term and sustained connections and consensus on the purpose of education and how Scotland achieves an excellent education and learning system. This must be agreed across political parties and successive governments at national and local levels.”

²⁸ © Life after School – Transition Planning Meetings – Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/additional-support/life-after-school-transition-planning-meetings/>

²⁹ © Life after School – Preparation and Life Skills – Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/additional-support/life-after-school-preparation-life-skills/>

³⁰ <https://www.notengaged.com/download/SA-Out-Of-School-Report.pdf>

³¹ © Human Rights in the Classroom – Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/human-rights-in-the-classroom/>

Resources

Access to the right resources at the right time is key to making education accessible. We know that over years of reduced local budgets, this is an increasing pressure on schools, with a significant impact on upholding children's right to access an education.

We know that poverty can create an additional support need of its own and will often result in barriers where other support needs exist. We acknowledge that addressing issues related to poverty needs to go beyond education, but it is unacceptable that this is a barrier to children fully accessing their right to education.

"I had to get a pencil and then I couldn't afford lunch. It's not, like, I have exact money." ³²

"[Teachers] give us homework on the internet. Which doesn't help some people [if] they don't have internet." ³³

Children regularly speak about the importance of being able to access the right support at the right time.

"Ensure all support is equally accessible to all young people with learning difficulties and younger children." ³⁴

This was the subject of the call from CiS's children and young people's advisory group, Changing our World, as part of our 25 Calls campaign:

"All children and young people should be able to, and know how to, get support with their mental health and wellbeing when they need it, without discrimination.

³² © Impact of Poverty on Education – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/impact-of-poverty-on-education/>

³³ © Poverty and Family Support Impact on Learning – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/poverty/poverty-and-family-support-impact-on-learning/>

³⁴ © Care Experienced Children Discuss Their Rights – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank
Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/inclusion/care-experienced-children-discuss-their-rights/>

This is their right and shouldn't be taken away or judged by people. There should be access to different types of support whenever you need it, whatever your situation, with people you can trust and who respect your right to privacy."

However, children are also aware that this is not the reality of how they will receive support.

"You have to be put on a list and wait months to see the school psychologist – not good." ³⁵

"Teachers are really stretched too thin, there aren't enough resources." ³⁶

Learning environment

Something that does not necessarily require significant resources to create is an inclusive learning environment and ethos. A calm learning environment has been brought up in a number of pieces of work as something that makes education more inclusive for everyone.

"Shouting doesn't help me learn." ³⁷

"If a teacher is kind it travels across the class and puts everyone in a good mood." ³⁸

*"Shouting makes me more angry."
"Getting angry at you doesn't help."* ³⁹

³⁵ © Creating a Supportive Environment to Talk About Mental Health in Schools – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/places/creating-a-supportive-environment-to-talk-about-mental-health-in-schools/>

³⁶ ibid

³⁷ © What Kind of Schools Do Children Want? – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/what-kind-of-schools-do-children-want/>

³⁸ © Supportive Teachers – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/education/supportive-teachers/>

³⁹ ibid

“School is difficult for me. It is noisy and busy and there are bright lights. I don’t understand the rules. I try to run away and hit out. I am often excluded.”⁴⁰

These quotes reveal how a whole-school approach to inclusion would benefit all pupils, with a few additional adjustments required for those who need more support.

Inclusion

An inclusive education goes beyond the practical support required to access the curriculum to feeling fully included in the school community. A whole-school approach to inclusion will be of benefit to all.

“I just get on with school but it is hard. I feel like I’m not part of the crowd and sometimes don’t feel #Included in conversations with others. Classmates talk about university and their career and often I don’t feel #Included in those conversations.”⁴¹

“I am never treated the same I don’t get allowed out for playtime or at lunch.”⁴²

“My mum has to fight for me to go on trips and things.”⁴³

With regard to participation on school trips and wider school activities, the responsibility should be on the school to ensure that these activities are made as accessible as possible for all pupils, rather than the responsibility being on children to participate in activities that they do not feel comfortable or able to do, or the expectation being that parents attend.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ © School Experience for Children with Learning Disabilities – Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/inclusion/school-experience-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

⁴¹ © School Experience for Children with Learning Disabilities – Children and Young People’s Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/inclusion/school-experience-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ Presumption of mainstreaming

Children and young people don't want only their teachers to understand their additional support needs, they want their peers to have an understanding too, to promote a sense of inclusion and reduce the likelihood of bullying. Children and young people frequently bring up bullying as being a significant issue either as an additional support need in its own right or in addition to other support needs that they have. This reinforces the need for a whole-school approach to inclusion.

"I spoke to my headteacher and said I wanted to talk to the whole school about it. I wanted them to understand what it is like to have a learning disability and how hurtful it is when people call you names. I wanted to make it better for me and younger people who might be bullied too."⁴⁵

"There should be lessons put in place to educate settled young people about our culture and contributions."⁴⁶

This is the subject of the Inclusion Ambassadors' most recent film. *Accept Me for Who I Am*,⁴⁷ which aims to give their peers an insight into their school experiences.

Challenges

CiS is keenly aware that staff across the education sector are doing the best they can to ensure that children are receiving the support they need to access their education. However, we are not yet getting it right for every child.

"They are so busy they don't seem to have time. It can take days to see your Guidance. It's just stressful as you have extra things to manage and if you can't get to speak about it you

⁴⁵ © School Experience for Children with Learning Disabilities – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/inclusion/school-experience-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

⁴⁶ © Young Gypsy/Travellers Discuss the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/inclusion/young-gypsy-travellers-discuss-the-united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child/>

⁴⁷ <https://youtu.be/phAmGCJNFIM>

just keep thinking about it.”⁴⁸

“My school is the best but I need someone to help me most of the time and I don't have anyone. My teacher and head teacher try to help me but they can't do that all the time and so I get mad about stuff and then I am naughty and it gives me a sore head and sore feet and I want to run home. I just want to have someone to help me. Mummy goes to meetings to try to get me more help but they don't do anything. It is making me sad and I feel like I am bad at school. I am good at home though so it makes me sad. I am in P2 now and I don't want to go to school anymore.”⁴⁹

Conclusion

We hope that these quotes from children and young people about the issues that impact on their learning, which have been drawn from a range of sources, are useful to the Review. Children and young people are the primary service users of our education system. Their experiences and views, both positive and negative should form the building blocks to improvement for all.

If we are to achieve our national outcomes in respect of children and young people and ensure our children grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding there are key areas from the themes cited above where change is required. We are confident that collectively and with the right level of commitment we can act swiftly to achieve this change.

Contact

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⁴⁸ © Life after School - Preparation and Life Skills – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/additional-support/life-after-school-preparation-life-skills/>

⁴⁹ © School Experience for Children with Learning Disabilities – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank

Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/evidence/inclusion/school-experience-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

Appendix 1 – Template for children and young people’s involvement in the review



Your views wanted!
Tell us about the support you receive at school

The Scottish Government is reviewing how additional support for learning is working in Scotland. A woman called Angela Morgan wants to hear from teachers, parents and children and young people about what they think.

If you would like to **share your views** with Angela, please finish these sentences and send it back to ChairASLindependentreview@outlook.com



Something that works well to support me learn is ...



Something that hasn’t gone well for me is ...

It helped me when ...





If I could change one thing about the support I receive, I would ...



It is important that the adults that support me are ...



I think it's really important for the review to know that ...