



## **GTCs Consultation on Registration Rules**

**20<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

### **About Children in Scotland**

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.

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Children in Scotland has very much enjoyed partnering with the General Teaching Council for Scotland on a number of projects over recent years. We are pleased to be able to respond to the GTC Scotland consultation on registration for teachers. We do not feel best placed to comment on all of the questions in the consultation. However, Children in Scotland conducts a range of work in relation to additional support for learning. This means we can share our learning from children, young people and families on their needs and wants with regards to additional support needs, which relates in particular to questions 6 and 7 in the consultation.

### **Proposed changes to Additional Support Needs**

We recognise it is proposed that registration in Additional Support Needs is treated differently than is current practice, and that the proposed Rules will require teachers to achieve full registration in primary, secondary or further education before potentially enhancing their registration through seeking an accredited specialism. Thus, Additional Support Needs would cease to exist as a category of registration.

We welcome the GTC Scotland's aim as part of the proposed Rules that full registration is required to begin to build teaching expertise. We also welcome the proposal for the establishment of 'accredited specialism' to allow individuals to demonstrate their specific skill set to learners and employers, reinforced by the successful completion of formal qualifications. We acknowledge the assertion that

this allows for specific qualifications to be recognised – for instance an accredited specialism in autism or dyslexia.

## **Sharing our learning**

Children in Scotland manages Enquire, the national advice service for Additional Support for Learning, the Resolve: ASL Mediation service and the Inclusion Ambassadors network, and is a partner in delivering the My Rights, My Say service. 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 concerned that the needs of children with additional support needs are not always being met in Scottish education. If we wish to create a truly inclusive education system, specialist support must be provided in a non-stigmatising fashion.

In our Children in Scotland Manifesto for 2021-26 we recognise that the recent independent Review of the **Implementation of Additional Support for Learning**<sup>1</sup> found that Additional Support for Learning (ASL) is not visible or equally valued within Scotland's education system.

The effect lack of support and specialist staff is having, particularly on children with additional support needs, was demonstrated through our **Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved**<sup>2</sup> research in partnership with Scottish Autism and the National Autistic Society. The report highlighted the experiences of autistic children who were experiencing unlawful exclusions and demonstrated the effect of this on their health, wellbeing and learning. This report resulted in a round table chaired by the Deputy First Minister with key autism stakeholders in 2019 to discuss and agree next steps. This led to the establishment of an Autism in Schools Short-Life Working Group to explore four key asks from the Deputy First Minister - including ensuring a common baseline of content on autism during the delivery of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes.

We have called for funding to support the holistic learning needs of children and young people. We believe numbers of specialist and support staff in schools should return to 2010 levels. This includes Support for Learning teachers, Speech and Language therapists and Educational Psychologists. We also believe it is essential to raise the esteem and value of Pupil Support Assistants within the education system through providing clarity over their remit, and provision of appropriate training, support and supervision. Children in Scotland has contributed to the Pupil Support Staff Working Group which is looking at training and the role of support assistants.

## **Role of all teachers**

We recognise the proposed Rules emphasise that full registration is required as a precondition to beginning to build teaching expertise. Children in Scotland believes this is essential.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-support-learning-action-plan/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.notengaged.com/>

We do not want the establishment of an 'accredited specialism' in Additional Support Needs to dilute the need for all teachers to be well trained and supported in their ability to support all learners' needs.

Our work with the GTC Scotland in 2018 on the refreshed Professional Standards for teachers highlighted that children and young people believe that an essential part of being a good teacher is providing support based on the individual needs of every child. This involves knowing the best methods to support children with specific issues but also identifying appropriate learning strategies for different pupils based on their needs.

We have heard about the importance for pupils of feeling as though their teachers have had enough training and understand why they need additional support at school. One young person shared:

*"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."*<sup>3</sup>

We understand that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is not able to cover every area that may lead to a child having an additional support need. Children in Scotland would encourage the GTC Scotland to explore the effectiveness of current delivery around additional support for learning in ITE with the policy officials who are leading a review of its content and impact.

A continuing career-long emphasis on inclusive teaching practices is key to meeting the 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.

Children in Scotland hosts Enquire – the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning. Enquire takes more than 1,500 enquiries a year from parents, carers and professionals looking for advice on the education of children with additional support needs. Based on what they hear, Enquire agrees that all teachers should understand their responsibilities towards children and young people with additional support needs and that specialists should be fully registered teachers. This must apply from Early Years onwards. Training and support on inclusive pedagogical practice must also be a key feature for teachers working in the early years settings.

The GTC Scotland has a central role in ensuring teachers receive robust assistance to identify individual methods of support for children and are given practical help to utilise a range of learning techniques within the same lesson.

## **Specialist teachers**

We acknowledge that the GTC Scotland proposes to recognise a teacher's qualifications in additional support needs through a process of registration enhancement. After full registration teachers can begin to build teaching expertise in specific areas under 'accredited specialism'.

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<sup>3</sup> © Life after School - Young Carers and Mental Health Problems – Children and Young People's Evidence Bank Source: <https://evidencebank.org.uk>

To reiterate, we do not want the establishment of an 'accredited specialism' in Additional Support Needs to dilute the need for all teachers to be well trained and supported in their ability to support all learner' needs.

However, we understand this aims to allow for specific qualifications to be recognised, such as an accredited specialism in autism or dyslexia, and for teachers to demonstrate their specific interest and skill set.

Children in Scotland welcomes the principle that a teacher's commitment to Additional Support Needs will be recognised and will have parity of esteem with other aspects of education. This may go some way to supporting our Manifesto call for numbers of specialised staff to increase in schools. It may also bolster staff morale and recognise the work many teachers do without current recognition.

We would like to ask if the GTC Scotland has any thoughts on targets for schools or local authorities regarding teachers with ASN specialism in each school. If so, how might this be monitored and supported, such as encouraging more to take up this opportunity?

*If you have any questions about this response please contact, Amy Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Projects and Participation, [awoodhouse@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:awoodhouse@childreninscotland.org.uk),*