



Introduction

UNISON is Scotland's largest trade union with members across the public, private and voluntary sectors, including the staff who support children with a range of additional support needs in schools and early years settings as well as social workers and educational psychologists. UNISON therefore welcomes the opportunity to give evidence to the committee.

Evidence

There is no doubt that the needs of children and young people with additional support needs (ASN) are not being fully met in our schools and early years settings. UNISON believes that there is an urgent need to take action to ensure that we are Getting It Right For Every Child. There needs to be substantial investment in a range of different staff to support children in mainstream education and specialist schools for those children that need it. This means staff who can identify pupils' additional support needs, for example educational psychologists, counselors, school nurses and social workers. There also need to be staff in place to provide appropriate support, this includes specialist teachers, specialist support staff, mental health workers, counsellors, speech and language therapists, social workers, youth workers and medical staff to meet the healthcare needs of pupils. Funding is required for training and ongoing professional development for **all** staff.

Increasing numbers of children with additional support needs attend mainstream schools but many are far from being mainstreamed into school life. The widely supported policy has not been underpinned by adequate funding for the learning support, healthcare needs and behavioural support that children need in either mainstream or specialist schools. There is also widespread misunderstanding about who is actually providing support for children on a day-to-day basis. Classroom assistants provide the majority of their support and these staff do not get adequate training, support or pay for the work they undertake. School nurses are not part of a school's staff complement: pupils' healthcare needs are taken care of by support staff. Pupils with challenging behaviour are also most often supported by school staff not teachers. Wider recognition of just who is providing support would be an excellent first step to improving the attainment of pupils with ASN in our schools and early years settings.

- a. How has the mainstreaming policy for young people with ASN worked (specifically your experience since you submitted to the Committee)?**

The feedback from members is that there has been very little change since our last submission. If anything the pressure on resources has increased. The education budget has reduced by 2.5% since 2010/11 but the number of primary school pupils and pre-school registrations has increased by 30,000. So it doesn't take a degree in accountancy to see that is a big cut in the resources available for each pupil. Total spending on primary and secondary education may have grown in cash terms but the **real spend** per pupil has fallen since 2010/11. (8% for primary and 4% for secondary). It will come as no

surprise that satisfaction with schools has fallen for the sixth year in a row. Add to this the continued rise in pupils with identified ASN and it is clear that resources continue to be a serious issue¹.

Some authorities have initiatives in the planning stage which may lead to improvements in some areas but if these come from a shifting of resources within the education budget rather than new funding then there will be a negative impact in the areas which have been cut. Concerns continue to be raised about the suitability of the school environment for some children: the settings are too large for some, classes are too large, some pupils have sensory issues which make mainstream schooling extremely challenging. Some children are being forced to fit in rather than being schooled in more suitable physical environments.

Glasgow City Council has plans in place to use specialist early years staff to work with health visitors to assess children with complex learning needs and then support their transition to schools specialising in those needs. There therefore does seem to be a growing recognition that mainstream schools will not be suitable for all children.

UNISON has consistently raised concerns about the lack of training and ongoing professional development for the staff who provide support for children with ASN. Sadly the Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland don't include support staff numbers so it is difficult to get accurate figures for the numbers of staff who are working with ASN children far less the training they have received. Even where training does take place it is often not appropriate or detailed enough to allow staff to meet the needs of the children they are working with.

So while UNISON welcomes initiatives such as Glasgow CC's proposed introduction of an accredited two-year induction training course for all new support staff (and possible rollout to existing staff) the success will depend on the content of the programme and the time given to staff to undertake and reflect on the training. .

Feedback from members is that training is still too brief and too often in the form of a lecture or video with little opportunity for discussion or practical activities. For example de-escalation training delivered in a single morning en-masse to only support staff and with no opportunity for in-depth dialogue/interaction. The training on offer has little scope for meaningful discussion round the needs of individual children with experts in the field. The cascade method and online tools remain popular with employers presumably due to their cost, but are as unpopular with staff as they are ineffective.

Another key issue is twilight or weekend training. In this largely female workforce training should be in work time. Many have caring responsibilities and cannot attend after work sessions. Low pay rates also mean that many of the staff have other jobs in evenings and weekends so again do not have the flexibility to attend training outwith their working hours.

b. How has the Additional Support for Learning policy worked (specifically your experience since you submitted to the Committee)?

¹ Local Government Benchmarking Report 2017/18 <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/councils-continue-to-perform-well-for-communities.html>

As stated in our earlier submission UNISON does not believe that the policy is working as we had all hoped. Pupils may have gained access to mainstream school buildings but in many cases that is all that has been achieved. There are neither the resources in place to properly identify the specific needs of children nor to meet them once identified.

The lack of resources has an impact on all the children in the school. If a parent manages to successfully get extra support for their child then this is not accompanied by extra funding. Resources are just redirected impacting on others in the school. When support needs are not met pupils' behaviour can become disruptive. This impacts on others in the class and often leads to their exclusion from the classroom. This typically leads to a child working alone in another classroom with a support worker not a teacher or specialist. Time-out rooms are also used to de-escalate tense situations often caused when lack of support in the classroom leads children to disruptive responses. Again it is usually the lowest paid staff in the school expected to manage the pupil once removed from the classroom.

These staff are the ones who receive the least training (and pay) the whole point of identifying additional support is to identify specialist help. That requires employing and training specialists.

School support staff are very concerned about the violence they experience in schools and the lack of support they receive from employers after an incident has taken place. Many report that they are told that it is just "part of their job". UNISON believes that reporting systems are inadequate and many incidents go unreported. Even when reported there is little if any assessment of what happened or action taken to avoid a repeat. No one should be expected to be the victim of violence as part of their job.

The following are the incidents recorded by local authorities in the 2017/18. (not all authorities give separate figures for education)

Aberdeen City – Education Services - 244 physical assaults, 188 Staff Verbal

Aberdeenshire Education & Children's Service 544(employee) 70 (non employee) Violent Incident

South Ayrshire – Education –56 verbal, 77 physical, 65 verbal & physical, 9 threatening behaviour

Renfrewshire –68 Classroom assistant, 21 nursery officer, 166 Teacher - physical/verbal

West Dunbartonshire – 95 education physical assaults

West Lothian - Education, Pupil support worker 709 incidents, Education, Teacher 402 incidents

Dumfries &Galloway – 463 violent incidents

Clackmannanshire - Teaching Staff 53/32physical 21 verbal, school Staff 78 physical /21 verbal

Stirling – Schools & Learning - 194 physical assaults on employees

City of Edinburgh :Early Years Officer 3 violence with injury 1 violence with no injury Early Years Practitioner 28 violence with injury 16 violence with no injury

Learning Assistant 26 violence with injury 8 violence with no injury

Nursery Nurse 125 violence with injury 47 violence with no injury

Teacher-Nursery 2 violence with injury 2 violence with no injury

Teacher-Primary78 violence with injury 43 violence with no injury

Teacher-Secondary 4 violence with injury 7 violence with no injury

Teacher-Special 122 violence with injury24 violence no with injury

These figures are clear evidence that pupils are not getting the support they need. Other children also need to be protected from unacceptable behaviour. Accepting violence in schools fails the children who exhibit violent behaviour as much as it fails everyone else involved. They need support to express themselves in a more appropriate manner. It is those pupils who have most to gain from school leaders reacting properly to violent incidents with full risk assessments, assessments of the child's needs and then taking action to deal with the issues identified.

c. Do you think mainstream schools, in your experience, have enough resource to be able to provide effective support? What forms of additional resources are needed?

It is very clear that schools do not have enough resources to provide effective support for pupils without ASN far less those with. The education budget has reduced by 2.5% since 2010/11 but the number of primary school pupils and pre-school registrations has increased by 30,000. So it doesn't take a degree in accountancy to see that is a big cut in the resources available for each pupil. Total spending on primary and secondary education may have grown in cash terms but the **real spend** per pupil has fallen since 2010/11. (8% for primary and 4% for secondary). It will come as no surprise that satisfaction with schools has fallen for the sixth year in a row. Add to this the continued rise in pupils with identified ASN and it is clear that resources continue to be a serious issue².

This is about more than just teacher/pupil ratios. The fact that national statistical publications don't record the numbers of other staff in schools also indicates that those other staff don't count when anyone working in schools knows the value of the full team to delivering high quality education. Despite the language of debates and policy papers the day to day work with pupils with ASN is carried out not by teachers but by support staff who go under a range of different titles across the local authorities. Some support staff were employed directly to work with ASN pupils and others as classroom assistants but who are increasingly expected to undertake work with children with complex needs including healthcare.

Anyone working in schools will agree that cuts to support staff numbers have had a serious impact on the quality of the service provided in schools despite all those working in schools working long hours and skipping brakes in an effort to maintain standards.

There is also a shortage of staff such as educational psychologists, school nurses and social workers to identify a child's needs and develop a programme to meet those needs. There also needs to be initial and ongoing training and development of staff in order for them to meet those needs. This needs to include the support staff who do the day to day work and not just teachers. This requires time in the working day. Twilight and weekend training is difficult for staff to attend and it is much harder to learn after a full day's work. Many low paid women have to combine 2 or even 3 different jobs in order to make ends meet. They do not have free evenings and weekends, they are working. As UNISON has raised before, cascade training, where one person attends and then feeds back to others or training videos are not good enough to enable staff to deal with the complex nature of much of the individualised support that pupils need.

² Local Government Benchmarking Report 2017/18 <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/councils-continue-to-perform-well-for-communities.html>

The use of ICT in schools is increasing and offers many opportunities for those with ASN. Proper planning for their needs rather than trying to adapt a one size fits all roll out of new ICT such as tablets could make a huge difference. Staff will also need training in the use of new devices. Many will not have access to their own to practice on outwith work time so again not just a short training video but time to develop the skills to use them.

There needs to be a wider understanding of the huge range of ASN among pupils from short-term problems where children will need emotional support and time to adjust like divorce, an ill parent, loss of a grandparent to long-term physical and mental health problems, learning and physical disabilities. They need to be treated as the individuals they are.

d. Do parents and young people know their rights (on mainstreaming or receiving support in school for ASN)? If so, are they able to exercise them?

Nothing has changed since our original evidence that leads us to believe that things have improved. Not all parents and young people have the either same knowledge of their rights or the power to ensure that they can access them. The current system for ASN is adding to the current wealth based attainment gap. Many members indicate that they see not those most in need getting extra help and support but those with more resources and contacts. Some parents are also able access support from advocacy groups round specific disabilities or organisations like the Education Law Unit but again not all parents know that such support is available. We hear that it is those who “shout the loudest” that get help for their children. Not only is this an unfair way to allocate resources it puts enormous pressure on parents who have to “shout” to get the support their children are entitled too. Families shouldn’t have to fight to have their children’s needs recognised or met.

There needs to be a move to a much more open system where parents and staff can work together to support the needs of the child. When there aren’t enough resources available it is no surprise that the rationing of scarce resources has a negative effect on the relationships between those perceived to be holding the key to support and those who feel they are being denied support.

e. Does where you live make a difference?

UNISON is more concerned about the differences created by the relative power/wealth of families rather than geographical differences across local authorities. UNISON believes that as directly elected bodies local authorities have the right to make decisions about how services are delivered locally, assuming that meets their statutory duties. By doing things differently it is also possible to see what works and then learn from the differences and share best practice. Local difference isn’t a bad thing in itself. That does not mean that children’s rights should be undermined.

f. Do you have any experience of seclusion or restraint of children, or unrecorded exclusions from school? If so, what is your experience?

Below is the evidence UNISON recently submitted to the Petitions Committee in response to their inquiry into introducing CCTV following concerns raised regarding restraint.

UNISON does not believe that CCTV cameras in our schools would be a particularly helpful strategy. It suggests that staff or pupils need to be watched to ensure appropriate behaviour. It is a culture of blame/punishment rather than building an ethos of clarity on acceptable behaviour and good relationships. On a practical level CCTV cannot “watch” everywhere: camera angles mean that there are often blind spots particular under furniture etc. How many cameras would it take to provide blanket coverage? What atmosphere would hundreds of cameras create? If behaviour has broken down to such a serious extent the perpetrators will also be able to use the limitations of camera’s scope to avoid detection. UNISON believes that better staffing ratios, including chaperones during intimate care and toileting, alongside individualised training are a much more effective way to protect children and staff.

School support staff are very concerned about the violence they experience in schools and the lack of support they receive from employers after an incident has taken place. Many report that they are told that it is just “part of their job”. UNISON believes that reporting systems are inadequate and many incidents go unreported. Even when reported there is little if any assessment of what happened or action taken to avoid a repeat. No one should be expected to be the victim of violence as part of their job.

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Violence is not a minor issue. Action needs to be taken to ensure that incidents are reviewed, that staff are given adequate ongoing support including counselling and adequate time out to recover. Incidents must be properly investigated. There needs to be action in terms of appropriate staffing going forward and specific support for the child. Other children also need to be protected from unacceptable behaviour. Accepting violence in schools fails the children who exhibit violent behaviour as much as it fails everyone else involved. They need support to express themselves in a more appropriate manner. It is those pupils who have most to gain from school leaders reacting properly to

violent incidents with full risk assessments and then taking action to deal with the issues identified.

There may be a role for body cameras: they can record incidents which can be used for analysis which can support training either through demonstrating good practice and/or reflection/discussion round how different approaches earlier on could have led to different outcomes. These cameras are more effective at recording incidents and also avoid turning schools into Orwellian nightmares of constant surveillance. The culture in which recording takes place is the key to successfully changing behaviours. It will not succeed as part of a blame culture. A focus on improving services, protecting staff and Getting it Right for Every Child will be much more effective. This will require careful management and negotiation with appropriate trade unions.

g. Do you have any specific comments on any of the Committee's [report recommendations](#)?

UNISON welcomed the committee's report but is concerned at the slow pace of change since then. Scotland has a range of excellent policy statements but we need action to take Getting It Right For Every Child from an aspiration to a reality.

Conclusion

UNISON is Scotland's largest trade union with members across the public, private and voluntary sectors, including social workers and the staff who support children with a range of additional support needs in schools and early years settings. UNISON therefore welcomes the opportunity to give evidence to the committee. There is no doubt that the needs of children and young people with additional support needs (ASN) are not being fully met in our schools and early years settings. UNISON believes that there is an urgent need to take action to ensure that we are Getting It Right For Every Child. There needs to be substantial investment in a range of different staff to support children in mainstream education and specialist schools for those children that need it. This means staff who can identify pupils' additional support needs, for example educational psychologists, counselors, school nurses and social workers. There also need to be staff in place to provide appropriate support, this includes specialist teachers, specialist support staff, mental health workers, therapists, speech and language therapists, social workers, youth workers and medical staff to meet the healthcare needs of pupils. Funding is required for training and ongoing professional development for **all** staff.

**UNISON Scotland
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How do you want us to treat your views?

I am happy for my name to be on the submission, for it to be published on the Scottish Parliament website, mentioned in any Committee report and form part of the public record: UNISON Scotland

I have read and understood the [privacy notice](#) about submitting evidence to a Committee.

I would be able to come and share my views in person with the Committee on an anonymous basis on the evening of Wednesday 20 February 2019 at the Scottish Parliament as part of anonymous focus groups (reasonable expenses can be reimbursed).