

Sue Webber MSP
Convener
Education Children and Young People Committee
T3.60
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

16 August 2023

Dear Convener,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to matters which we agreed to follow up, following the scoping enquiry into additional support needs carried out by the Education, Children and Young People Committee on 28 June 2023.

As requested this is a joint response with content provided by both the Scottish Government and COSLA.

Set out below is the information we agreed to provide.

Data on current levels of staff resources

	Pupil Support Assistant	Behaviour Support	Home-school link worker	Educational Psychologist
2022	16,606	184	497	398
2021	16,299	187	475	383
2020	15,263	148	409	378
2019	13,909	148	373	372
2018	13,803	122	376	368
2017	12,806	79	201	356

Resources

Spending on additional support for learning by authorities has reached a record high of £830m in 2021/22.

On pupil support assistants, 1,354 extra pupil support assistants were recruited in 2020, exceeding Scottish Government's Programme for Government commitment to deliver 1,000 new support assistants. A total of 15,263 pupil support assistant were employed in 2020, an increase on 13,909 in 2019. Scottish Government continue to provide additional support to local authorities by investing an additional £15 million every year to further enhance capacity to respond effectively to the individual needs of children and young people.

On the current level of vacancies for speech and language therapists, COSLA does not hold this information. It is COSLA's understanding that Speech and Language Therapists are primarily employed by NHS territorial health board, although we are aware that there are different approaches across Scotland in how speech and language services are structured and funded.

As agreed at Committee, information through the Enquire website detailing available pathways at a local authority level can be found at the following link:

[Resources - Enquire](#)

A response to the request for indicative levels of funding required to address demand in relation to additional support for learning is provided from COSLA at Annex A of this correspondence.

Further Clarification

The Committee requested clarity on the meaning of positive initial destinations for school leavers. We can confirm that the statistical publications providing information on the educational attainment and initial destinations of school leavers from publicly funded schools in Scotland relates to the period approximately three months after the end of the school year. The term initial positive destination includes higher education, further education, employment, training, personal skills development and voluntary work.

The latest statistical collections on initial leaver destinations and follow-up destinations for pupils with additional support needs can be found at the following links:

[Summary Statistics - Initial Leaver Destinations No.5 2023](#)

[Summary Statistics - Follow-Up Leaver Destinations No.5 2023](#)

The Committee requested further information in relation to the Scottish Universities Inclusion Group, chaired by Dianne Cantali. The group is made up of course directors and inclusion specialists from the Scottish Universities offering initial teacher education and work in collaboration to ensure that professional learning in inclusive education is embedded in University teacher education programmes. Their experience ranges from early career researchers through to Professors. The group developed the 'Framework for Inclusion' and continue to encourage creativity in its use in schools and other educational establishments.

The group works collaboratively to:

- Ensure that teacher education programmes across Scotland embed inclusion in their initial teacher education courses and support new teachers to understand their professional responsibilities to support the learning of all children.

- Support teachers at all stages in their careers to recognise, value, and respond positively to the diversity of children in schools.
- Support teachers in all stages in their careers to draw from contemporary research-informed understandings of inclusion as they reflect on, and develop their practice.
- Challenge, where appropriate, practices or attitudes that act as barriers to inclusion.
- Undertake research to inform and develop ongoing work relating to inclusion in schools.

The group works with other organisations to support the development of their aims. These include the Scottish Government and Dyslexia Scotland. Several SUIG members sit on national committees and working groups including the Scottish Professional Learning Network steering group and Scottish Parliament Dyslexia and Autism working parties.

As discussed at Committee, an update to the Committee can be provided following discussions on the Action Plan at the COSLA Children and Young People Board later in the year.

I hope this response fully answers the questions from Committee. Please let us know if there is any further information required.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Meikle
Unit Head - Support and Wellbeing Unit

Nicola Dickie
Director Of People Policy, COSLA

Indicative Levels of Funding Required to Address ASL Demand - COSLA Views

COSLA's Pre-Budget Scrutiny submissions to various committees ahead of the 2023/24 Scottish Budget outlined the financial challenges faced by Local Government as a result of pressure on core funding, increasingly directed funding, rising costs and inflationary pressures. The 2023/24 Budget represented a '[budget reality](#)' of just under £70m extra compared to total funding in 2022/23 - far short of the £1bn funding pressures estimated by COSLA. COSLA are currently drafting Pre-Budget Scrutiny submissions for various committees ahead of the 2024/25 Scottish Budget, the Committee may find information in there once published to help their considerations.

COSLA is not in the position to provide a figure on "what level of additional funding from central government would be needed to address the demand", as discussed during the session with the Committee, the issue of additional support needs will look very different between each young person, each school and each local authority.

As well as ensuring Local Government is adequately funded, ensuring that councils have sufficient flexibility to employ the staff that are required is also fundamentally important.

The Committee may be aware that the Scottish Government and COSLA recently signed the Verity House Agreement. The agreement contains a number of commitments on how we will work collectively to tackle key priorities. This includes a presumption against ring-fenced funding from this point forward. COSLA's position for many years has been that Local Government should receive a fair share of Central Government funding and have sufficient flexibility to be able to allocate that funding based on local needs and priorities across all services they provide and support.

From recent correspondence, the Committee is also aware of COSLA's position on the Scottish Government's interventions in relation to teacher numbers. We recognise the very important role of teachers, but protecting teacher numbers will and does mean greater pressure on wider council budgets. This inevitably means savings will have to be found in services which support schools and communities. While education and social care have been protected, other services have had to be cut - services which are also key to supporting children and young people, including those with additional support needs. Councils must be empowered to employ the staff that are required locally.