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Education, Children and Young People Committee

Wednesday 28 June 2023

Session 6



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**EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE
21st Meeting 2023, Session 6**

CONVENER

*Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)

*Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)

*Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab)

*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)

*Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con)

*Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)

*Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP)

*Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Laura Caven (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)

Fran Foreman (Education Scotland)

Laura Meikle (Scottish Government)

Scott Mulholland (South Ayrshire Council)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Pauline McIntyre

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Education, Children and Young People Committee

Wednesday 28 June 2023

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:00]

Additional Support for Learning

The Convener (Sue Webber): Good morning, and welcome to the 21st meeting in 2023 of the Education, Children and Young People Committee.

The committee has agreed to undertake an inquiry into additional support needs, and it is keen to identify where our work can add most value. To that end, we are seeking to understand the progress that has been made since Angela Morgan published her review of additional support for learning implementation in June 2020. The first item on our agenda is therefore a scoping session to help to inform our inquiry into additional support needs—or ASN, which is the acronym that we will use regularly throughout this session.

We will hear from members and the co-chairs of the additional support for learning project board, whose role is to support additional support for learning and inclusion policy, including through delivery of the additional support for learning—or ASL—action plan and associated workstreams. I will try not to use too many acronyms today, but we know that things can be like that.

I welcome our panel of witnesses: Laura Caven, chief officer, children and young people team and co-chair of the additional support for learning project board, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, or COSLA; Laura Meikle, head of support and wellbeing unit and co-chair of the additional support for learning project board, Scottish Government; Fran Foreman, project board member and senior education officer, inclusion and ASN, and inclusion, wellbeing and equalities, Education Scotland; and Scott Mulholland, chair of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland children and young people's ASN network, project board member and assistant director of education, South Ayrshire Council. I thank you all for joining us.

I invite Laura Meikle to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Laura Meikle (Scottish Government): Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to the committee. This introductory statement is made on behalf of

COSLA and the Scottish Government as the joint chairs and partners in the ASL project board.

We recognise that there is significant interest in the implementation of additional support for learning and that the committee will use today's session to inform its consideration of its future work in the area.

As members will be aware, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 is a highly inclusive legislative framework that seeks to address barriers to learning experienced by children and young people as part of their learning. The framework focuses on barriers to learning arising from the learning environment, family circumstances, social and emotional behavioural needs, and disability and health needs. Needs might be of short or long duration. Currently, 241,639 or 34.2 per cent of pupils are identified as having additional support needs in Scotland.

The Morgan review, which was undertaken in three phases during 2019-2020, considered the implementation of additional support for learning. In summary, the review focused on how additional support for learning works in practice across early learning and childcare centres, and primary, secondary and special schools, including enhanced provision; where children and young people learn within the balance of the provisions in local authorities; the quality of learning and support, including overall achievement and positive destinations achieved post-school; the different approaches to planning and assessment to meet the needs of children and young people; the roles and responsibilities of support and teaching staff and leaders, education authorities and national agencies; and the areas of practice that could be improved through better use of current resources to support practice, staffing or other aspects of provision.

The review was published in June 2020, and it made 43 recommendations across nine themes. It confirmed that there is no fundamental deficit in the principle and policy intent of the ASL legislation and guidance. It is therefore necessary that, in our work, our joint focus is on the collective actions to be taken to improve the experiences of children and young people and their families.

In the joint response to the review on 21 October 2020, the Scottish Government and COSLA confirmed acceptance of the review's recommendations, including partial acceptance of one recommendation. No recommendation was rejected. At the same time, the Scottish Government and COSLA published the ASL action plan, which sets out 76 actions to be taken to deliver the recommendations of the Morgan review. As part of that response, we committed to

publish regular progress reports, and two have been published since then.

The latest progress report was published in November 2022 and confirmed that, at that time, 24 of the 76 actions had been completed. In order to secure progress on delivery of the actions at pace, the Scottish Government and COSLA have established the ASL project board. The role of the project board is to oversee the delivery of the ASL action plan and associated workstreams.

Throughout the life of the plan, there has been continued progress towards the achievements of those actions. That has continued since the publication of the report in November. We expect to see more progress before the next report, which is due in May 2024.

It is acknowledged in the ASL review report that the

“recommendations are not a quick fix”

and that they will “challenge and cause discomfort”. We recognise that. However, we are confident that by working together, maintaining a focus on outcomes and taking seriously the implementation of the recommendations, we have achieved, and will continue to achieve, the necessary change. That knowledge comes through the regular scrutiny of the work plan to deliver the recommendations, including prioritisation of any areas of concern and progress on short, medium and long-term actions.

Member of the ASL project board are here today to provide evidence to the committee on the progress of the delivery of the ASL actions. We recognise that the committee will wish to explore wider aspects of the implementation of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.

To aid our discussions today, it may be helpful if I set out some key information. I have already set out the number of children and young people who have additional support needs. I will now turn to their achievements. In 2021-22, 22,550 pupils with additional support needs received a Scottish credit and qualifications framework qualification. That is the highest number of pupils on record. Within that, 75 per cent of leavers with an additional support need achieved one pass or more at SCQF level 5—national 5—or better, which is a 10.1 percentage point increase since 2014-15. In addition, 93 per cent of leavers from public secondary and special schools were in a positive destination three months after leaving, which is the highest proportion since consistent records began.

We have also established the success looks different award. The award was developed by Scotland’s national inclusion ambassadors, who are a group of young people with additional

support needs from across Scotland. They gather to influence policy and reflect on the implementation of additional support for learning. The award is to highlight and celebrate education settings that support and champion children’s rights and can evidence inclusion practices as embedded within their school ethos, values and practice.

On support for pupils, the Scottish Government has invested £15 million a year to enhance the provision of pupil support assistants. That has contributed to an increase of 2,803 support staff in schools since 2018. That is within the context of local authorities continuing to prioritise funding for additional support for learning within their budgets, despite a challenging financial context. In 2022, local authority spend on additional support for learning was £830 million, the highest level of local authority spend on additional support for learning to date.

We cannot view support for learning in isolation from the wider on-going work to support children and young people; for example, through keeping the Promise, tackling child poverty and supporting mental health and wellbeing, including the forthcoming mental health strategy and plan.

In working to implement the recommendations of the ASL review, it is important that we recognise our strengths and challenges. The ASL review provides a clear framework within which we can work together with our partners in the ASL project board and beyond to continue to improve the experience of children and young people with additional support needs.

We are currently midway through that work together, and we will continue to deliver against the actions of the action plan and the recommendations of the review. We are absolutely committed to making that change together, and look forward to answering the committee’s questions today.

The Convener: Thank you for that statement. We will move to members’ questions. I have the privilege of asking the first question.

You spoke about the legislative framework, barriers to learning and how things are not a quick fix. You are here very much to talk about the progress on the actions that you laid out. Has the additional support for learning project board considered whether any legislative change is required to support improvement with additional support needs?

Laura Meikle: The Morgan review indicated that the right legislative and guidance framework is in place, so the project board has focused not on legislative change but on implementing the action plan, which is about improving the experiences of children and young people. We have worked on

the basis of recognising where we are in relation to the framework and have focused on improving the experiences of children and young people. So, in short, the answer is no.

The Convener: Stephanie, do you have a supplementary question? I have that noted down.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): No, not on this subject.

The Convener: It was an early start for all of us.

I say to Laura Caven, who is joining us online, that I can see her directly in front of me, so she can put up her hand if she wants to come in on anything. She can also mention that on BlueJeans, and the clerk will let me know.

We move to questions from Ruth Maguire.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): The number of pupils who are identified as having initial support needs has grown substantially in the past 10 years. Has any work been undertaken to understand why there has been a sustained increase in the number of pupils being identified?

Laura Meikle: The statistics come from each year's pupil census and are published in December each year. We review those every year while we are preparing for publication, particularly in the sphere of implementing additional support for learning.

As well as the figures about children and young people who are identified as having additional support needs, there are publicly available supplementary statistics, which give a breakdown of different types of need. We analyse all that information. For example, we know that the largest group of children and young people with additional support needs is the group of those who have social and emotional behavioural difficulties and that the fastest-growing group of children and young people with additional support needs is the group of those who have English as an additional language. That sort of analysis does go on.

Ruth Maguire: It is helpful to hear about those trends. How do local authorities and the Scottish Government use that data to ensure that the right support is in place?

Laura Meikle: We consider our own work and whether additional action is needed. The Scottish Government provides support for children and young people who have English as an additional language. Additional learners have arrived in Scotland this year as a result of the situation in Ukraine. Those are the kinds of things that we expect to come through in our statistics, which allows us to think about what sort of support should be in place. We fund some services directly and we have discussions with our colleagues from COSLA and ADES about the wider picture.

Scott Mulholland (South Ayrshire Council): At local authority level, we use that data to support our evaluation of need. In my area, we are seeing increasing levels of language and communication need in early years and in the early stages of primary school and we are also looking at autism spectrum disorder.

Once we know what we are seeing, we target our resources in the best way possible to ensure that we can meet the young people's changing needs. I have had a number of different roles. I was a deputy headteacher in a school and now manage resources at local authority level and allocate them to schools. We have seen a shift in the past 10 years, so we have had to change from the way that we allocated resources 10 years ago. In the post-pandemic world, we are seeing a need for earlier intervention and the need to use resources to support young people who, in the past few years, have not experienced the transitions that we would have wanted. I will be more than happy to discuss those changes later.

09:15

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): Good morning, panel. Following up on my colleague Ruth Maguire's question, over and above the points that you have made on why we have seen increases—quite reasonably, because of the issues that you have raised—is the change in social attitudes also an effect? People, including parents, are now rightly more forthcoming about asking whether they should get more assistance. Anecdotally, I know people who did not get support when they were at school and probably should have, for dyslexia or other things. How much is that point part of your consideration, from a positive perspective?

Laura Meikle: We certainly recognise that. The framework is extremely broad. In comparison to similar systems across the United Kingdom or, indeed, internationally, our system is recognised as incredibly inclusive, which is a positive.

You are absolutely right that parents and carers as well as young people and children themselves are much more aware of the benefits of support. We have been very clear about the fact that, by intervening early, we can enhance children and young people's learning outcomes—that narrative has been quite public—and an element of that work exists in a number of strands, which contribute to that increase. I regard that as a positive instead of a negative.

The Convener: Fran, do you want to come in?

Fran Foreman (Education Scotland): I absolutely concur with Laura Meikle. A tremendous effort has taken place in Education Scotland and local authorities to help people to

understand what we mean by additional support needs, how broad our definition is, and that people do not need a formal identification or diagnosis to receive additional support. The fact that we are much better at identifying need will have had an impact on the increase in numbers, and early intervention is absolutely critical to that process.

Our work in Education Scotland is really focused on universal support—understanding what is really good and effective learning and teaching that will help all learners irrespective of their identification of need. We have real variation in that different pieces of work and programmes over the years have focused on different areas. We are doing a lot of work at the moment on autism, such as trying to support autism and inclusive practice. The profile has been, and continues to be, raised. Meeting the needs of all our learners is what we should be about.

Ben Macpherson: Those are really important points to consider, so thank you for expressing them.

With regard to recent years, I note that the Morgan review was published in 2020 and that a lot has happened since then. Will you reflect on how the pandemic affected what additional support pupils require and what types of support have seen increased demand through that period? Do policy makers use that data to determine the levels and types of resources that are made available for schools and local authorities in the post-pandemic time that we are now in?

Laura Meikle: Yes—absolutely. As we are considering the impact on children and young people's learning as a result of Covid, I will talk briefly about a different part of my role. When the pandemic was going on, it was immediately apparent that new children and young people would have additional support needs as a result of their experience in it. We have talked about the learning environment and about social and emotional needs, and we expected both to be challenging for young people during the pandemic. Children and young people have had an unsettled learning period and, as Scott Mulholland mentioned, young people are now coming into the education system whose entry into that system at the early learning or primary stage was different from what it would usually have been. That will inevitably have an impact.

When we were working our way through our advice around additional support for learning during the pandemic, we were very clear that, to use the system properly, we would have to identify, plan for and then review any needs that were arising, and link that process to the context of getting it right for every child, which allows the much fuller assessment of needs through the wellbeing matrix. At that time, our national

guidance explicitly said that that was the approach that we wanted people to take.

As I said, I am also responsible for other areas, such as mental health and wellbeing in schools. We identified immediately that there would be issues in relation to children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing as a result of the pandemic, so we brought forward work to introduce counselling services in schools during that period. That has been successful in terms of the number of children and young people who have received counselling and have benefited from those services. We certainly have a better understanding of referral to other services and of the reasons why children and young people have those experiences.

We have also enhanced counselling and support for staff so that they can understand children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing, and we have introduced guidance on whole-school approaches to mental health and wellbeing.

The Convener: Laura Caven, who is joining us online, wants to comment.

Laura Caven (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities): I want to respond to the point that was raised earlier about the definition of additional support for learning. Because the definition is about both short-term and long-term needs, there is a likelihood that, during their learning journeys, everyone will have additional support for learning needs that schools might want to—and should—support.

To add to what Laura Meikle said about the response during and after Covid, I note that diverse and creative approaches were taken to counselling, with online and phone-based support alongside the in-person support and enhanced community mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people that was developed during the pandemic.

Ben Macpherson: From constituency cases that I had during the pandemic, I am aware of how challenging parents and carers found those times. I presume that similar avenues of support are being used to support them.

Laura Meikle: One of the recommendations of the Morgan review was that we should increase our support to Enquire, which is the national advice and information service on additional support for learning. It has a role in providing advice and information to parents, carers and young people aged 16 and above. It also has a role in providing advice and information for children aged 12 to 15 who have additional support needs. We have enhanced that service as part of an approach that was also about enhancing the understanding of parents and carers of those

concerns and, as we said earlier, their awareness of rights. A number of strands of work in that space have therefore come together.

Fran Foreman: I have worked in this area for a long time. When the pandemic happened and children and young people were unable to attend school, I and the team that I work with became aware of the increased need for and the entitlement to additional support. We also had children and young people who actually found working online quite helpful because they were able to engage with their learning in a way that they might not have been able to do before because of their additional support needs. Education Scotland, along with our digital support team, did a lot of work to upskill staff so that they could support online learning. We are keen for that methodology to still be available for learners, because accessibility of the curriculum is a legal entitlement and hugely important, and the effective use of digital provision can support that.

It was good to hear people in the education community being really aware of children's rights, to hear about relationships and access to good universal support, and to hear that additional support needs and inclusion were not thought to be someone else's role.

Scott Mulholland: We have most definitely seen a change in need since the pandemic. As I alluded to earlier, we see early language and communication needs increasing in younger children in our early years education settings and in the early stages of primary school. In relation to mental health and wellbeing, we are currently seeing social, emotional and behavioural needs as young people progress into secondary school, particularly in secondary 2 and 3. It is no surprise that those groups were most impacted in relation to their transition experiences from home into early years settings, early years into primary 1, and the upper stages of primary school into secondary school two years ago.

We believe that earlier intervention to work with those young people and their families and carers is key. Our schools, headteachers and class teachers have a key role to play in that, but we also have to work with our other partners, for example in developing work with our speech and language therapy colleagues and other allied health professionals such as health visitors and school nurses. We all have a role to play in how we support the increased need and demand for support as we move forward with the finite resources that are available to us.

There is absolutely a correlation between what we are seeing post-pandemic and that increase in need, and we can then break that down into the particular barriers to learning in which we see increases.

The Convener: I have a queue of members who are waiting to ask supplementary questions. If your supplementary is asked by another member, please indicate that. We will go first to Stephen Kerr.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): I think that I heard Laura Meikle say how broad the definitions that we are using in Scotland are, and then I heard Fran Foreman say that the benefits of additional support are becoming more widely known. I think that I heard Laura Caven say that, at different points in the learner journey, nearly everyone will require additional support. She is nodding her head in agreement.

My question is very simple. Perhaps for the benefit of those who will read or watch these proceedings, will you say how someone becomes designated as being eligible for support? Do they pretty much self-identify? Is it done through parents, carers or teachers?

Laura Meikle: Under the legislation, there are two main ways that someone will become identified as having additional support needs. The first is that, during the routine assessment of someone's progression and learning, it might become apparent that there is a barrier to learning. For example, if someone is having challenges in reading and writing, that is likely to lead to an assessment to understand what the barrier is. There might also be behaviours that are apparent in a classroom. The classroom teacher or support staff member will notice that something is causing a barrier and will then progress through identification.

The second way is that a parent might be a bit concerned about their child and draw that to the attention of the school, and the process of identification will go through in that way.

Stephen Kerr: It is therefore an in-school assessment.

Laura Meikle: Well, it depends. The way that the legislation works is that the school can then draw in support—for example, from educational psychology, clinical psychology, speech and language therapy or occupational therapy. The system is such that the school might be the receiver of the information, but it will then reach out to partners to draw that support in. That potentially links back to the broader framework around getting it right for every child, because it is about looking at the wider needs of the child and then planning on that basis.

Stephen Kerr: Going back to Ben Macpherson's question about resources, I note that there has been a steady increase in the numbers pre and post pandemic to the point where between 34 and 35 per cent of pupils are designated as having additional support needs.

Has the level of resource in terms of speech therapists and pupil support assistants increased in line with that upward movement in the proportion of Scottish pupils who are designated as having additional support needs?

09:30

Laura Meikle: The local authority spend on additional support for learning has increased steadily over time.

Stephen Kerr: Has it increased in line with the increase in numbers?

Laura Meikle: It would be difficult for me to say that it is in line. To give a fuller picture, I would need to outline the whole picture of the support that we are putting in place. We have already touched on the work that we have done on supporting children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing. That was supported by £15 million of recurrent funding for counselling services. We have also done work to enhance the workforce for educational psychology and we have invested in it, so we now have an increased educational psychology workforce available. The number of pupil support assistants has also increased significantly, partly through the investment of £15 million per year.

Although there is the figure of £830 million of spend, other tranches of funding that also contribute to the overall picture of support are available.

Stephen Kerr: Scott, do you know the numbers for PSAs and speech therapists?

Scott Mulholland: I know the numbers for my local authority.

Stephen Kerr: You know the numbers for your local authority, but not overall.

Scott Mulholland: Those figures exist. They are collated as part of the census.

Stephen Kerr: Do we not have them?

The Convener: Laura Caven wants to comment on the topic. I will then need to move on to other members.

Stephen Kerr: If the witnesses do not have the numbers, can they provide the committee with the data after the meeting?

Laura Meikle: I have the numbers, but I am happy to provide them in writing as a follow-up.

The Convener: It might be better for you to do that rather than our spending time on them now.

Laura Meikle: Of course. That is no problem at all.

The Convener: Laura Caven wants to comment.

Laura Caven: I was going to go into detail on the figures, but it is probably best to follow that up in writing.

The Convener: Okay—thank you.

Pam Duncan-Glancy has a supplementary question.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): I have a supplementary on data and I have a question about finance. Do you want me to ask that one now as well, convener?

The Convener: Will you keep it for later? I have a queue of members who have questions on the current subject.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: No bother at all. That is fine.

Our papers for the meeting say that 28 per cent of pupils in primary school and 40 per cent of pupils in high school have ASN. Can the witnesses explain why there seems to be a greater prevalence in high school? Is it due to late diagnosis?

The Convener: Who wants to answer that first? I am conscious that all members are going to Laura Meikle first, so I will bring in Fran Foreman initially. That will give Laura a break.

Fran Foreman: It will be due to a combination of factors. Part of it will be about the transition from the holistic primary school setting, where pupils see fewer staff—not only teachers, but all staff—to secondary school.

Transition planning is an entitlement for children who require additional support. There should be effective transition planning. Obviously, the pandemic created some barriers to that. We had whole cohorts of year groups that did not have proper transition planning to secondary school, and they are now our young people in S3. The transition to a completely new environment can, for some, involve quite a sensory overload. That is about everything from the buildings and the number of people they come into contact with to the environment.

We know that a change of environment, which is one of the factors that give rise to additional support needs, has an impact. Depending on the environment, the needs of children and young people in a primary setting—and, indeed, an ELC setting, because moving from that is a transition as well—might be met almost by stealth. Sometimes, it is not until they reach a particular type of transition point that other needs arise. Historically, we have seen that in the transition from S4 to S5, when there is a step up to a

different type of curriculum. Additional barriers can be seen at that point as well.

It is a complex area, but the changes to the environment, the number of staff and the number of interactions that pupils have all have an impact.

The Convener: Laura Caven, do you want to comment?

Laura Caven: No. The letter R that I put in the chat box related to the earlier question about figures.

The Convener: Scott, do you want to respond to Pam Duncan-Glancy's question?

Scott Mulholland: Yes. We see a consistent trend over time in that the number of young people who are identified as having additional support needs tends to be higher in secondary schools than in primary. As Fran Foreman said, the additional demands that are placed on young people as they progress through education may lead to their being identified as needing additional support to reduce any barriers to their success in education.

Young people's mental health and wellbeing are affected by social media and by the other pressures that they face in their teenage years. There are a multitude of reasons why needs increase. From a local authority perspective, and based on my experience, there can be a change in needs as a young person progresses through school.

The statistics also show a change in the identified barriers to learning. For a significant percentage of those children who are identified as having additional support needs in primary school, the main barrier is in language and communication. For young people in secondary schools, the barrier may be social, emotional or behavioural need, or mental health and wellbeing. There are changes over time. Young people who benefit from support as they move through secondary school may not have required that support in primary school. As a primary school teacher, I am well aware of the differences.

The Convener: Bob has something that he wants to pick up. Sorry—I am getting all informal.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): That is really helpful. I think that the committee would benefit from a structured approach to looking at the data. Mr Mulholland seemed to be talking about plotting the peaks in demand for additional support and the reasons for those.

A few months ago, a nursery in my constituency contacted me to say that one in three of their young people have some form of developmental delay, such as with speech or language. When

young people make the transition into primary school, that figure goes up to 50 per cent, which suggests that need will become even more profound, from one in three to one in two. Do you recognise those figures? I wrote to Glasgow City Council and was told that that situation is not unusual.

I am keen to know whether those young people will have additional support needs throughout their school career. Some of them will go to primary school and will start to catch up and to meet developmental targets. Does the badge of having additional support needs stay with them throughout their school career, or does that badge or label get taken away, so that they have support needs but not additional support needs? Is that mapped out?

Laura Meikle: An individual's journey depends on them. The framework allows for the recognition of both short and long-term needs. A young person may have additional support needs during early learning and childcare or during early primary school, while they are learning literacy and numeracy. Those needs may be very marked in that early period when they are learning how to learn and how to read and write. As they become more adept at those skills, their additional support needs may change because of the support that they have had, so their profile may change. If they no longer have additional support needs, they will come out of the system and will learn in the same way as others.

That same young person may come back into the system during secondary school if something else arises in their life that means that they again need additional support.

Bob Doris: I think that you are saying that the data for pre-school children is pretty consistent with what you are seeing elsewhere. There is some confusion about whether that is anecdotal for that nursery or for Glasgow, or whether you are seeing that across the country. It would be really helpful if someone could address that.

I will sneak in a second question while the convener is looking away.

The Convener: He is pushing his luck today.

Bob Doris: Is there resistance from parents? I have a kid in primary 2. I do not think that they have additional support needs, but I would want to keep that additional support if they were getting it, because that is my child. Is there a resistance—

The Convener: Can we have a question, Mr Doris?

Bob Doris: This is important. Is there cultural resistance from parents who do not wish to forgo the additional support once it has been put in place?

Laura Meikle: There might be. I am aware of circumstances in which that has been the case but also of circumstances in which it has not been the case.

With regard to your original point on data, we know that 16 per cent of children and young people in ELC have additional support needs and that the figure rises coming into primary. I made the point earlier around what children and young people are learning at that time—they might have needs at that particular point because that is the point at which they are in their learning.

Bob Doris: Did you say 16 per cent?

The Convener: Sorry—can I come in?

Bob Doris: One six.

The Convener: Yes, one six.

Laura Caven is indicating that she wants to come in on your original question, too.

I am struggling to recall how to manage a hybrid meeting.

Laura Caven: I was going to encourage the committee, when it takes forward the inquiry, to think about language. We certainly would not use the terms “label” or “badge” when it comes to ASN. As Laura Meikle said earlier, the focus is on inclusion. The framework and approach are highly inclusive and the terms “label” or “badge” are not in keeping with that. I am happy to pick up any terminology issues or questions with Mr Doris at a later stage.

The Convener: Does that sound okay? Bob Doris is nodding. That is great.

I have a couple of questions, if you do not mind—I am taking a bit of a liberty here.

I assume that widening the groups of children who are identified as having additional support needs will result in more children with, perhaps, a lower level of need—Laura Meikle, you spoke in your opening statement about record numbers of achievements—so would you not expect the outcomes for those children who are identified with additional support needs to improve?

Laura Meikle: Oh, yes. Part of the picture that I described is that, with a higher number of children and young people, one would also expect a greater number of children and young people achieving. When you look at the statistical analysis, you see that the latter increase, year on year, is higher than the number of children and young people who have come into the system during that year, so there is a marked improvement in relation to achievement and positive destinations for children and young people.

The Convener: Okay. I have a question for Scott Mulholland. You mentioned that you were looking at reprofiling resources to meet changing needs. Does that mean that reductions will be made elsewhere, or is there new money or new resource?

Scott Mulholland: When we are looking at the profile of need in our local authority and at the entirety of the resources that are available to us—so, not additional resource but available resource, such as grant funding or pupil equity funding, on which schools or headteachers can make decisions—if those needs are changing, we cannot continue to do what we have always done.

For example, school-based counselling services and community mental health funding all contribute to the support that can be provided for mental health and wellbeing needs in our secondary schools; that support is wider than what is available in the school environment. My point is that the support that is available to young people across the whole system is not necessarily just from education. Although the contribution that education will make will be significant, our partners in our health and social care partnerships, health services and third sector organisations will play a key role, too, in the support that is provided to families and to our children and young people.

However, I would always ask for more resource—I would never say no to more resource.

The Convener: Stephen, is your supplementary very brief, or can I move on?

Stephen Kerr: It is just to seek clarification on the term “positive destinations”, which we hear a lot. Did you say that that is the tracking of someone leaving school for the first three months?

Laura Meikle: Tracking is done at two points. There is the initial destination, which is at three months, and then there is follow-up.

Stephen Kerr: What is the follow up?

Laura Meikle: I think that it is at nine months—I can clarify that.

Stephen Kerr: If you would, thank you.

Laura Meikle: We can include that in the information—

The Convener: Sorry—Stephanie Callaghan, please.

09:45

Stephanie Callaghan: I am looking at my papers and there is a table in front of me that shows the number of pupils with an identified ASN and the time spent in mainstream classrooms. I see that you have that in front of you, too—that is great. I think that I know the answer to this

question, but I want to be clear. I take it that that does not take account of pupils being out of mainstream classes because of part-time timetables, or their class being at wellbeing rooms, nurture rooms or whatever. If it does not, is that data also available and could you provide us with it?

I am not sure who is best placed to answer.

Laura Meikle: It is me. The data that you have is based on the number of children and young people who are enrolled in particular provision. The time spent in mainstream classes is in relation to the whole school. If the nurture class is part of that school, it will be included in the figures that you describe.

Stephanie Callaghan: That is great—that is really clear. Is there data on, for example, how many children are on part-time timetables and not attending full-time classes, and on how much time they are spending out of the classroom in nurture rooms or wellbeing rooms?

Laura Meikle: The information that you have includes that.

Stephanie Callaghan: There is no separate information on that.

Laura Meikle: No.

Stephanie Callaghan: Okay. That is great. Thanks.

The Convener: Thank you for your patience, Stephanie—my apologies for the wait. Oh—Scott Mulholland wants to come in on that.

Scott Mulholland: Just briefly, convener. There are part-time timetable attendance codes on the SEEMIS information system, and local authorities will be able to produce figures on what that looks like in their area through their processes and procedures.

The Convener: As someone who uses SEEMIS, are you confident that the system is updated once short-term needs are finished?

Scott Mulholland: Different areas will take different approaches to the process of recording that information. It might be updated on SEEMIS at different points in the year, but it should be updated. My experience is that it is updated, but school-based staff are likely to need training on how to record some of that information. It will not be perfect, but my experience is that it will be updated as and when it should be. There are also some challenges to do with the part-time timetable information and the SEEMIS attendance recording that we could probably discuss.

The Convener: We will move on to questions from Pam Duncan-Glancy. Thank you for your patience.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: I want to ask a question about some of the findings of the Morgan review. First, I will read out a couple of quotes, which you will probably already have seen. Douglas Hutchison said:

“I might have Miss Honey this year as my teacher: she is a great teacher and I do not have any problems. Next year, however, I might have Miss Trunchbull. Suddenly, I have additional support needs, because she is not helping me to access the curriculum. I have not changed; the external environment has changed.”—[*Official Report, Education, Children and Young People Committee, 19 January 2022; c 35.*]

In her review, Morgan said:

“Where openness and transparency are not in place, the risks are of a culture of blame and/or a culture that lacks robust accountability for practice with vulnerable children and young people.”

In addition, at our predecessor committee, she said:

“I found that the system is overly dependent on those individuals, and it is fragmented and inconsistent.”—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee, 18 November 2020; c 2.*]

That does not feel like a sufficient system. To me, that is quite disappointing. Why is the system so varied, and what would need to change to address that?

Laura Meikle: The Morgan review was intended to look at implementation, to find out what required to be improved. That is the basis on which we work and have worked.

In our response to the Morgan review, we have said that there are 76 actions that we require to take to improve the experiences of children and young people with additional support needs and those are the framework through which we will do that. We are all aiming towards the same set of outcomes. We are trying to deliver cohesively and together the things that will make a difference for children and young people. We need to implement the Morgan review’s recommendations to make that change.

In doing so, we have conversations that go beyond straightforwardly just achieving the actions that we need to take to implement the recommendations. As a collective, the project board considers and reconsiders whether the actions that we will take to deliver the sub-actions are sufficient. The project board will continue to review the situation as we go, to ensure that we deliver properly and in the spirit of the Morgan review.

What I am trying to say—in quite a long-winded way, which I will stop doing—is that it is absolutely not only a race to try to get things done as quickly as possible. There are things that we will take our

time with, to ensure that we get them right, even if that feels quite challenging.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: I appreciate that, but some of the actions in the plan are for 2025-26, and by that time some children will either be out of education completely or will have lost significant time. Where do parents who come to members in our constituencies worried about their young people go to get some accountability?

The Convener: Fran Foreman, you wanted to answer the previous question, so do you want to come in first?

Fran Foreman: Yes. I just want to highlight some of the work that is being done to complement and support the Angela Morgan review and its recommendations. It actually links in very well to the work of sub-group 2, which is looking at information, guidance and professional learning.

Professional learning is a key thread running through improvement at the moment. That is about making sure that all of our practitioners, irrespective of their role and the level that they are working at, have a really good understanding about inclusion, additional support needs, wellbeing and equalities.

We are creating a new professional learning framework that is based on four themes: rights and equalities; relationships; wellbeing and care; and inclusion. It will be done over a period of time, because as Laura Meikle said, this is not a quick fix. We are using and complementing existing professional learning, and we have a plethora of high-quality professional learning. One of the difficulties is supporting practitioners across Scotland's 32 local authorities to have the opportunity to engage in it and link it in with the local authorities' own professional learning.

We have just finished a big engagement programme with pupil support staff who gave us some really good feedback on where improvement is required for professional learning. Professional learning has a key part to play in reducing the variation of support and high-quality learning and teaching practices, and there is a range of professional learning opportunities.

We are also linking in a national inclusion team and a wellbeing and equalities team with our colleagues in our professional learning and leadership team in Education Scotland, so we are linking to other programmes—for example, excellence in headship—to try to bring synergy.

On that note, we are working hard on all the recent reports, the Promise, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Morgan review, and we are looking in particular at the independent review and assessment and at

bringing all of those together, to support practitioners to understand what it is that they can do in their particular case.

Laura Meikle: I encourage anyone who has any concerns about their child or the support that they receive to raise that with their school—and we always recommend that they do that. A range of accountability mechanisms are in place through the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004) but also through local authorities' own processes, which are available. Enquire, which is the national advice and information service, publishes information about all those aspects, and that information is widely available. I encourage use of those.

Laura Caven: Laura Meikle made the point that I was going to make about raising issues with the school in the first instance if parents have immediate concerns. I recognise the concern that people have about how they are learning just now, and they will want that to be dealt with now. Teachers will want to know about those issues so that they can respond. I agree that, in the first instance, those issues should be raised with the school. There are clear pathways at a local authority level and through the legislation, which the Enquire website sets out clearly.

I am sure that the committee is aware of the Enquire website and where all that information is; if not, we could include that in our follow-up response to the committee. That information is clear for the parents and children and young people who use the service, as well as for the school workforce. That might be something worth looking at. The communications sub-group of the additional support for learning programme board will look at raising awareness of all the resources available where there are concerns, among other things.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: A lot of that relies on tenacious parents. My office has gone back to councils and has asked them to look at things differently, but they very rarely do.

The work with Audit Scotland on that is important, because it looks at the strategic answer, as opposed to relying on individuals who are already overstretched and, in some cases, burst, to be honest. How are the conversations with Audit Scotland progressing to ensure that it includes that work in its auditing of schools?

Laura Meikle: We have regular conversations with Audit Scotland about the proposed review that it will undertake. It has not confirmed a timescale for that work to us. I should be clear that Audit Scotland is absolutely separate from us, so I cannot speak on its behalf, but I can indicate that we are in regular discussion with it about that. The

committee might wish to follow up with Audit Scotland directly on that.

It is certainly our intention that Audit Scotland will come to a project board meeting so that it can hear directly from the board about our progress, our work, and how we conduct our work, which is also important. We have an agreement that it will do that, and I believe that plans are in place for that to happen. I will not go beyond my limitations on that.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: I appreciate that. Do I have one more question?

The Convener: Ask a brief question, please.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: The Morgan report talks about expenditure on additional support for learning, and it says that it is

“one of the areas of most unpredictable local authority spend”.

It goes on to say that

“it tends to be overlooked at corporate level in local authorities due to the focus on the other very real challenges of providing adult and older people services.”

Why is ASN being overlooked in local government expenditure in that way?

Laura Meikle: We analyse local government spend every year, so I am not sure that we overlook that. We review that regularly. Scott—would you like to come in?

Scott Mulholland: Laura Caven might want to come in, to give COSLA’s perspective. From my experience in the area, the finite resource that we have as a local authority is stretched. Demands are placed on local authorities in terms of budget pressures and what we could spend money on in a range of areas.

My experience in the budget-setting process in relation to additional support for learning has been positive. The reality is that a third or more of our young people have identified additional support needs. If we are not able to support them, we will have significant challenges across schools in relation to outcomes for young people.

My experience has been that we have prioritised resources for additional support for learning, but that does not always mean having more and more resources and people going into it. It is about what the people on the ground are doing, which touches on the comment that Douglas Hutchison made about variation in approaches. Universal approaches to training staff and understanding how we best support our young people will not impact on the experience of everyone else. It is to everyone’s benefit to have teachers who are confident in supporting young people and support staff who are confident in their approaches to

supporting our children and young people with additional support needs.

10:00

We have seen some real successes with the work that has been done using, for example, the CIRCLE—child inclusion: research into curriculum, learning and education—approach and the SCERTS Model. SCERTS stands for social communication, emotional regulation and transactional support. There is, however, definitely room to further grow and develop that work.

Laura Caven: The figures that we have show that national spending on ASL increased from £503 million to £830 million between 2012-13 and 2021-22, so there has been significant additional investment by local authorities.

I completely support Scott Mulholland’s point. A lot of support happens in the classroom and is not captured in the high line of additional support for learning spending. Teachers can access training, resources and professional support to provide additional support within the classroom, which is of benefit to all learners—not just to those who need targeted support.

Fran Foreman: Scott Mulholland spoke about enhancing universal support. That is not just about having more staff: it is about staff confidence, the quality of their professional learning and the opportunities that they are given that go on to make a difference to children and young people. That is one of the driving factors in the framework’s focus on professional learning to complement what already exists. As I said, a plethora of really good professional learning is out there and is being accessed.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I am finding this meeting a bit difficult, because what is being said does not match what I hear from teachers and parents. It all sounds very process driven, which—I understand—is your job. I will read one quote from the report on the national discussion on Scottish education that I think really cuts to the chase. I have abridged it. It says:

“In my class of 30, 4 have ASD ... 3 have longstanding separation anxiety difficulties ... one has been adopted, one has a difficult home life and experiencing a form of trauma, one is a young carer, 2 others have severe learning difficulties (not including the 8 with ‘normal’ behind-track difficulties). There is only one of me—I can’t give those 12 children enough of my attention to support their wellbeing, never mind ... the other 18”.

Fran Foreman said that this is not just about the number of teachers. No matter how brilliant the teacher is, how can she cope with that class?

Fran Foreman: If there was a pupil support assistant or a member of pupil support staff in that class, it would be really important for that member

of staff to have a good understanding of how to support effective learning and teaching.

Willie Rennie: There is only one of her in the class.

Fran Foreman: I appreciate that. I cannot speak about that particular class because I do not have that information. I am a teacher and have had classes that were very similar to that one. We know that focusing on having an accessible curriculum and ensuring that children and young people can engage with learning is a huge step forward.

A couple of weeks ago, I was in a school where I had previously done some professional learning. I spoke to a faculty head who shared some of the advice that they had been given and had followed, which had led to a tangible reduction in difficulties and to calm in the class that they had not seen before.

Some things do not cost money, but I totally take your point. It is for that school and that local authority to look again at the staffing allocation, but lifelong professional learning is really important. It will not solve absolutely everything, but we need to know how best to support children and young people within the curriculum, which is the totality of all the experiences that children and young people have. I do not in any way underestimate the difficulty that that class teacher has expressed that they have.

Scott Mulholland: I absolutely do not underestimate the difficulties and challenges that staff have in their day-to-day job of meeting the needs of children and young people with such a variety of additional support needs, but when I am in schools I see staff who do an incredible job in supporting and meeting the needs of the young people who are in front of them. That is the role that not just teachers but the whole variety of partners—which I spoke about earlier—play in meeting the needs of young people.

However, in our system, not every young person will be in a mainstream school. Our presumption to mainstream means that we want young people in our communities to be supported in their local school, but for some young people that is not appropriate, so they will be in our ASL provision, enhanced nurture provision or the other supports that exist in the various local authorities across the country.

I cannot comment specifically on the needs of the young people in the class that Willie Rennie mentioned, but my experience of visiting schools and working with headteachers and classroom practitioners tells me that although we could always ask for more and more resources, we need to make the best use of the finite resources that we have and then, potentially, make the case to

work with other partners in order to broaden out the range of supports that are available. Speech and language therapy is one of the recent examples of that.

Willie Rennie: Can I tease this out? Some teachers take exception to people who say that the behaviour of our young people is a mirror of the adult—the teacher or staff member. They take exception to that because it is almost like blaming them. I know that that is about behaviour rather than additional support needs, but there is some correlation between the two. You are saying that, with the support and training that is available, we can change the performance of the teachers and staff. How do we know when we are unreasonably blaming the staff, including the teachers? When can we go further? How do we deal with that challenge? In the current discussion, some teachers are feeling put upon. That is what I am hearing—tell me if I am wrong. Does that make sense?

Scott Mulholland: Yes—it makes sense. Just to be clear, I am not blaming teachers.

Willie Rennie: I know that you are not. I am trying to tease the issue out, because that is a feeling that is around.

Scott Mulholland: I think that that gets us into areas around culture and leadership and what that looks like at the school level, and how staff feel supported to do the job. I often think that, in order for our support staff—who are called different things in different areas, such as classroom assistants or pupil support assistants—to be able to fulfil their role, they need to be supported to do that. They need to be in receipt of training in order to understand the range of needs, including for autism, of the pupils whom they work with on a day-to-day basis. Although it will not solve all the challenges, and although resourcing is a pressure for all local authorities, if we provide staff with induction prior to starting their role and then with on-going professional learning, and get that right, we will make most progress through having a culture of inclusion and an understanding of what we need to do on the ground in order to best meet a young person's needs.

Rather than talk in generic terms, we need to be specific about what a plan looks like for the young person. If a young person is not making progress in a class such as Willie Rennie mentioned, in which there are 12 young people with additional support needs, we would bring on board the expertise of others from across our education system, including educational psychologists, to consider the appropriateness of their placement. The commitment to the presumption of their being in mainstream education means that we want our young people to be educated locally in their communities, but we also want them to be

educated in the place that it is most appropriate for their needs.

Fran Foreman: I concur with what Scott Mulholland said and reaffirm that I am in no way blaming teachers.

Willie Rennie talked about behaviour, which is part of additional support needs: it is not at all separate. If a young person is distressed, that is part of what we recognise as being additional support needs. Laura Caven mentioned language earlier, which is really important.

We recognise and know, because of feedback that we have had from pupil staff across Scotland—more than 2,500 pupil support staff and some senior leaders responded to the engagement programme—that some examples exist of their feeling very supported and having an opportunity to engage in good induction and on-going professional learning. Unfortunately, however, that is not the majority of the feedback that we received. That is why I was trying to put across the point that just putting a person in a situation will not necessarily alleviate the pressures or the stress. It is important that everybody has the appropriate training and information.

Effective planning should be in place for staged intervention, because that is our formal framework. The teacher, the pupil support staff member, if there is one, and any other partners who are involved should be able to contribute to the planning process. It is really important that the child or young person and their family also contribute, because the approach is supposed to be child centred.

The Convener: We will move to questions from Ross Greer. Thank you for your patience.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): One of Angela Morgan's overarching recommendations is that we move towards a system of universal, instead of additional, provision. You have all touched on that point in your various answers this morning, but it would be useful for us if you could provide a summary of what that principle means in practice in the classroom. What would be different if we were to take that approach instead of the approach that has been taken until now?

Laura Meikle: Angela Morgan's review directs us towards enhancing the offer that is available to everyone. You are right—we have all talked about the benefits of that approach. We know that getting it right for children and young people with additional support needs within a universal offer benefits everyone.

We recognise the points that have been made about upskilling staff and the workforce. Our approach has been about ensuring that a

programme of training and support is available for all those who teach children and young people. We recognise that one of our challenges is that children and young people come before different school staff each year—certainly, in secondary school, they will come across a number of different staff in each year. We therefore try to ensure that the training and support that we offer can be accessed on an on-going basis. Although the initial teacher education can be extremely attractive in relation to enhancing school staff's understanding of additional support for learning—that education is certainly there—people must have extra support and skills in relation to the children who come to them year after year, so we make that available.

Ross Greer: That sounds excellent, in principle; I do not think that any of us would disagree with that approach. However, how far can it go? The range of additional needs is so vast that not every teacher can be comprehensively trained in how to support every kind of additional need, even annually. Teachers might have children with one particular need one year and have to retrain the next year. That feels, ultimately, like quite a burden to put on a classroom teacher every single year, as opposed to there being a model that is more about having a plethora of specialist staff being available to be redeployed to the right setting each year.

Laura Meikle: Actually, a mix of provision and support is in place. As Fran Foreman highlighted, work is already in place on inclusive practice, which we regard as the universal approach. We have done significant work through Education Scotland to make that offer: two online inclusion resources for practitioners are in place, which are provided and available for free. However, a number of staff and partners provide support as well, so I am not trying to suggest that the universal offer is the only way in which support is provided. There is a range.

The Convener: Once Scott Mulholland has responded, we can bring Laura Caven in.

10:15

Scott Mulholland: We cannot train every member of staff in every way across every potential additional support need that they might face. We can, however, look at initial teacher education and at how we prepare our newly qualified teachers to enter a world in which one third of the young people who are in front of them might have additional support needs. What that initial teacher education programme looks like is part of it, but on-going career-long professional learning is also key. We now have a complex landscape with a range of different reforms coming forward. Professor Hayward's report on the

curriculum and what it looks like recognises that celebrating the achievements of all young people is key to understanding what the achievements are.

We are also looking at doing wider curriculum work on learning, teaching and assessment. Quality learning and teaching approaches in a classroom will benefit all the young people who are in front of the teacher.

In my experience, a number of young people are not attending school as regularly as we would hope. In fact, from looking at secondary schools in my area and from speaking to colleagues through the ADES network, I know that young people across the country are regularly doing a four-day week or attending school even less frequently than that. The attitude to school attendance has changed, so we need to look more broadly at how we support work on attendance. Public relations work needs to be done on the impact of non-attendance on young people's outcomes, but we also need to accept that sitting within the four walls of a classroom every day will not meet the needs of, or be suitable for, all young people. Approaches to outdoor learning or play pedagogy in the early years and stages of primary school, for example, are part of what a universal offer would look like.

A teacher's development or the approach that is taken at school or local authority level might not specifically focus on additional support needs, but research tells us that, ultimately, all young people receive wider benefit from evidence-based approaches and high-quality learning and teaching in their classrooms.

The Convener: Laura Caven wants to come in. Let us see if we have a better connection.

Laura Caven: I hope that the connection is better for you. None of the work to support the workforce happens in isolation. For example, the children and young people's mental health and wellbeing joint delivery board is shortly to publish a report on its work to date. A lot of that has been focused on how professionals can work together to support school staff to support children and young people in their learning. That is not just about training; it is also about resources and input from other professions that might not work directly with the children and young people, but which support teachers and school staff. The disabled children and young people's advisory group takes a similar approach.

As members and co-chairs of the ASL programme board, we are mindful that none of what we are doing is being done in isolation from what a range of other national groups are considering.

Ross Greer: I will move on to the action plan and the progress that has been made since it was revised last year. How is that progress being monitored, and what would you highlight as evidence of the progress that has been made since that latest revision?

Laura Meikle: As I said in my opening statement, the project board originally intended to meet quarterly. We have a work plan, which is so large that I have had to bring my laptop with me so that I can look at it if you ask me specific questions. Every single action and sub-action in that work plan is monitored by the project board and reviewed in the project board's discussions.

The project board has asked to meet more frequently, so it now meets every eight weeks so that it can monitor that progress, such is its motivation to deliver that work.

During those discussions, we consider whether there are concerns over any actions, such as whether we need to increase delivery of them, whether they are due in the short term, and whether they are on track. There is a tracking system—a red-amber-green system—that shows overall progress. The current status of the actions is that 44 are pending and 32 have been completed, so there has been progress since we reported in November. We expect that further actions will be completed by the point at which we next report, which is due to be in May 2024.

It is important for me to be explicit about the fact that, even when actions are marked as completed—for example, there is one to increase funding to support advice services for parents and carers, which has been completed—the progress report will then confirm that that funding has continued and will also mention which outcomes have been achieved as a result. We therefore have a much broader set of what we might call accountability measures showing the differences that the funding is making. I can therefore confirm that there has been progress.

Ross Greer: Are there any particular examples of completed actions that you want to highlight, which would illustrate matters for the committee? I recognise that it has not been that long since the latest revision, but is there anything that has not yet been completed and on which you would have hoped more progress would have been made by this point?

Fran Foreman: I could talk about one of the actions that Education Scotland led on, which was the development of a professional learning framework for pupil support staff. That was published in August 2021, so it was one of the earlier actions, but, as Laura Meikle has just explained, it is not done and dusted by any manner of means. We will continue to evolve that.

As I mentioned earlier, we have had really helpful feedback from pupil support staff, who have lived experience of the post, on what we can do to improve the system. We will map that and link it with the other professional learning framework. That framework has been accessed 32,262 times since its publication, and there has been lots of very positive feedback about it. That is just one example of how an action has been accomplished, but work will still be happening on it.

Scott Mulholland: I will talk briefly about the national measurement framework. In the review, Angela Morgan set that out to understand what progress looks like and to support self-evaluation in that area. I have taken on the role of chair of the sub-group that will lead on that work. It involves colleagues from the inspectorate, our trade unions and a range of other partners. We are working towards having the first iteration of the national measurement framework published by spring 2024. The framework will be an ever-evolving document.

We will require to work on training and support, particularly on the recording of some of the information, as we touched on earlier. We will support our school-based staff and our local authority colleagues in that work. It will also take into account readily available information that can be scrutinised and analysed at the level of young people with additional support needs, rather than referring to all pupils. We are at the early stages of that work, but it will feature as part of next year's update. There will be regular reports to the project board, and I believe that those minutes will be publicly available.

Stephanie Callaghan: I should declare an interest as a parent of autistic children. It is good to see that parents are central to what is going on, because they are a huge influence. There is positive stuff in the action plan on providing better information, but that can sometimes be quite overwhelming without guidance. There should be information on establishing parent carer groups, because peer support is so critical, and on the national advocacy service, which currently supports only a limited number of people.

I am interested in what changes pupils and parents are seeing as a result of the work that is going on, and why, despite the action plan, some issues that were raised in the Morgan report are coming up again in the national discussion. There is still a bit of a fight there.

Laura Meikle: As Angela Morgan herself said, there are no quick fixes. We have all referred to that in one way or another. There are actions that we must take and that will take some time to deliver. In some ways, we are talking about the process changes that Mr Rennie described, but

we are also trying to change the culture, which will take some time and effort.

The actions are substantial. We are midway through our delivery process. We have had our second year of reporting and expect to report on our progress three more times before the end of this session of Parliament. I regard us as being midway through our work, rather than being near the end or the beginning.

The delivery work requires sustained effort and consideration by all the partners on the project board. One way that we will know that something is different will be from the work on the national measurement framework, which Scott Mulholland talked about. We have a draft framework, but the work that Scott's sub-group is doing is about drawing that out and looking at how we deliver that framework. Part of that is about the experiences of parents and carers and how we know that those have changed.

We are trying to answer the "So what?" questions, but we are not in a position to evidence that at the moment. We can do that in some ways, but not as completely as we would like to. That is part of the on-going work.

Stephanie Callaghan: Scott Mulholland, do you want to add to that?

Scott Mulholland: We know, from the experiences of the parents and carers who may get in touch with you, that we still have challenges identifying young people with autism. That does not mean that those young people cannot access support in school through the approaches and staff training that we have talked about.

There will always be families who are in situations that we would not want to repeat or where things have not gone the way we would have wanted. Part of our networking role at ADES is to learn from what is working well and then share that practice across the country. We look at what is working well and we engage particularly with families, because we need a shared understanding of the approaches that are been taken in school and at home.

As part of the collaborative improvement work between ADES, Education Scotland and the inspectorate, we visit local authorities to look at a range of topics. Many authorities are looking at the challenges that they face with ASN support. Sharing good practice across the country has been a success and will not come to an end. We need to look at how we can build on that work, but there are definitely challenges.

Stephanie Callaghan: It is really important to gather that rich data about experiences. Are parents and carers involved in that working group?

Laura Meikle: The National Parent Forum of Scotland is represented on the project board and in all the work streams.

Stephanie Callaghan: That is really good.

The Convener: Fran Foreman wants to respond briefly, and Laura Caven wants to come in online. I have my eye on the clock and there is still a lot to cover.

Fran Foreman: To add to what Scott Mulholland said, we had a sharing good practice network event last week that was attended by all local authority inclusion officers. There were practitioners there who are participating in a new pilot for autism and inclusive practice, which builds on one of the modules that we have created and that is available on the Open University platform.

The special thing about that practitioner inquiry is that it was created to be about capacity building. Practitioners were able to share how they were sharing their learning with their teams in their establishments, which were ELC establishments right through to secondary schools, and 56 practitioners were involved in that programme.

Some really good work that is informed by children, young people and families is going on at the moment.

10:30

Laura Caven: The project board is a joint one. We regularly present to the COSLA children and young people board—which has an elected member from each local authority in Scotland with an interest in education, children and young people’s policy—reports on progress in the project board. As the people who are the first port of call when there are issues, those elected members are able to offer feedback about whether they are seeing change on the ground. The next opportunity for them to do that will be towards the end of the year so, at that point, it might be useful to consider whether we should come for another evidence session or could write to you after that meeting about the elected members’ feedback or considerations.

Stephanie Callaghan: That would be really helpful, thank you.

It is good to hear from Fran Foreman about what happened recently. The Morgan report and the national discussion will not tick all the boxes and solve everything for ever. Is there still more to do as far as parents, children and young people influencing policy design and delivery is concerned? Do we still need to focus on that? Is there anything specific that you would like to tell us about that?

Laura Meikle: Scott Mulholland said earlier that, in our implementation of the Morgan review, we need to take account of the other reviews that are happening. The implementation is not static. We need to adapt as we go in our responses to those reviews. As I have said, we have parental representation on the project board and in all the work streams. Our team regularly engages with parents and carers on the development of policy.

You will see that there are recommendations about us mapping policy together, and you are right that the national discussion also confirmed that we need to continually engage children, young people and families as part of policy development. We will continue to do that. We have been doing it. We have done it throughout the project board’s work. There was also a stakeholder group in place prior to the project board and there was parental representation in it as well.

It is important that, as we progress the work, we hear the views of all our partners, including parents, carers and young people, and that we keep doing that.

The Convener: We need to move on.

Stephanie Callaghan: I have a question on which I am looking for a quick yes or no answer. Have sensory issues been left aside and should there be more focus on them?

Laura Meikle: No, sensory issues are part of the considerations.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Annesland) (SNP): The panel has been terrific, as we all can see, in covering every aspect of what has been asked, but it would not do any harm to have a quick run over what has changed since the Morgan review in respect of initial teacher education or, indeed, the continuing professional development of teachers.

Fran Foreman: On initial teacher education, there is a group called the Scottish universities inclusion group—SUIG—which consists of the leads of inclusion programmes for initial teacher education. I am invited to join that group twice a year—actually, it might be once a year. I was there a couple of weeks ago sharing the national context. That involves sharing resources and letting the group know about the new framework that we are developing, so that the student teachers on those programmes can link into it, which is really important. It gives them short bites or quick overviews as they progress through the three-tiered incremental framework, and that could be of benefit to them.

My understanding is that those programmes all have a focus on inclusion. That will vary, however. We do not have a locus in telling initial teacher

education establishments what to include in their curriculum per se. The General Teaching Council for Scotland does a review and, in refreshing the standards in 2021 for teachers to have more focus on additional support needs, its review has also included a focus on inclusion and additional support needs for ITE. We do have engagement, therefore. One of the colleagues on the SUIG sits on our national autism group. We have created training resources for autism for ITE. Previously, we had training resources on inclusive practice and dyslexia that were available for ITE, provided through the making sense programme.

That is all about working collaboratively to ensure that, when a student comes out of initial teacher training and becomes a probationary teacher, they know where to access support: from places such as the autism toolbox, the addressing dyslexia toolkit and the national improvement hub. Those teachers also have their probation programmes, which the local authorities will develop. They are aware of what resources and opportunities are available.

Bill Kidd: Are the SUIG and others examining the balance between supporting all teachers to work with ASN children and teachers in the more specialist roles?

Fran Foreman: I am afraid that I cannot speak on behalf of the SUIG. I could try to find some more information, or you might be able to link with the group directly.

Bill Kidd: Do you think that that balance is being addressed across the board, broadly speaking?

Fran Foreman: I have not seen the content of individual courses, so it would not be appropriate for me to comment on that.

Bill Kidd: That is something that we can look forward to, then. Thank you very much.

The Convener: Scott Mulholland wants to respond to your point, too, Bill.

Scott Mulholland: Drawing from my own experience in our area, our local university is an initial teacher education university, and it is increasingly working with us. We are getting practitioners going into university to share their lived experience of being classroom practitioners and supporting young people in the classroom setting.

Could we do more? In my opinion, we could absolutely be doing more. I am sure that the work and the discussion with the universities will happen, but there is definite scope regarding the number of young people who require support. Our newly qualified teachers will continue to receive support through their induction year, and they will

benefit from that in order to support the children who are in front of them.

Bill Kidd: Fran Foreman wants to comment again, I think.

The Convener: Please do so briefly, if you do not mind.

Fran Foreman: I should have mentioned our stepping stones programme for newly qualified teachers—NQTs—and we are aware that additional support needs is one of the biggest asks.

Bill Kidd: That is very positive—thank you very much.

Ben Macpherson: I have a question for all the panel, and I then have a specific one for COSLA thereafter.

First, building on what Mr Kidd was asking about, are there any specialist roles in which you are aware of shortages, locally and/or nationally?

Scott Mulholland: Locally, we have a range of supports, including teachers of the deaf and teachers who support children with visual impairments. We do not have a shortage of those teachers in our area, although there are pressures and challenges in more rural areas. Only a small number of universities across the UK provide support for those teachers who are interested in achieving the qualifications for moving into that area of work. There are sometimes challenges around those members of staff being able to achieve the qualification that is required, and that is set out as a requirement in order to support those specific groups of young people.

We have other challenges around access to speech and language therapists and support. There are recruitment challenges in that, and I have been involved in discussions on those. There is work nationally to address some of those concerns and to look at more support for local areas where there are qualified experienced speech and language therapists. There is also work looking at regional improvement collaboratives, where speech and language therapy input would be part of the offer. There are particular challenges there, and, as I said earlier in relation to early language and communication, there will be increased demand for support from those professionals.

Fran Foreman: In relation to support for learning teachers—sometimes referred to as additional support for learning or pupil support teachers—we are exploring a certificated course rather than an accredited course, because there is always a cost involved in an accredited course. We would explore and develop a certificated course over a number of years that teachers who wish to move into the area of inclusion and

wellbeing inequalities would be able to participate in. The model that I explained earlier that we were doing with autism and inclusive practice has been considered in that way as well. We recognise that there is a need for staff working in the area to access high-quality professional learning.

Ben Macpherson: I have a question for COSLA, if I may. My question is related to the need to ensure that we have support and resource. We talked earlier about the increase that we have seen for all the various reasons that we have discussed, and Mr Mulholland spoke about the excellent work that is happening in schools and the excellent support that is being provided to people with additional support needs.

All that considered, I am also mindful of what Mr Rennie highlighted in relation to the national conversation. As a constituency MSP for seven years, I am aware of the great work that happens in my constituency, but I am also aware of the challenges that exist because of demand. I direct this question to COSLA. Given the pressure on the public finances that we are all aware of, and given that this is a collective issue for us all in Scotland, has realistic and robust analysis been done on an approximate figure that COSLA would ask of central Government to deal with that demand and/or any flexibilities? Has the additional resource that would make a difference been quantified? Has that ever been assimilated?

Laura Caven: I do not think that we have specifically looked at that issue in relation to budgetary requirements. Every year, COSLA produces a budget document on the needs of local government as a whole in relation to funding, but we have not drilled down into what would be required for additional support for learning. Partly that is because it is not just about what happens in schools but about the additional support outwith schools and the wider services that support children and families.

It would be difficult to do that, because we would not want to think about only the staffing requirements in a school or the teacher number requirements. Flexibility is needed in the support that children and families require for their learning experience and outcomes to be what we all want them to be.

Ben Macpherson: All those points are appreciated. If you were able to provide a figure on what would make a difference in the school setting, that would be useful and of interest to the committee.

The Convener: Thank you for those questions. We will move to questions from Bob Doris.

Bob Doris: We have heard a lot, rightly, about teachers. Teachers co-ordinate and lead the planning and delivery of teaching and learning in

the classroom, but they are not the only individuals in the classroom. We spoke a bit about pupil support assistance, and I had an exchange earlier with Mr Greer about what the board might or might not have done to support the continuous professional development of pupil support teachers. I have a couple of questions on that, but do witnesses have any comments at this stage about what they feel the board has done to promote continuous professional development to date?

10:45

Fran Foreman: Through sub-group 2, there will be a focus on professional learning, but that will be a continuation of work that is already being done. The Angela Morgan review made a specific recommendation about pupil support teachers and support for learning assistants. As I said earlier, we refer to them as pupil support staff because there are 32 different names and remits. The professional learning framework was the first step and the downloads of that have been well reviewed, but we know that work is needed to improve it.

A range of professional learning for specialist teachers is already available, and we know that staff are tapping into that. We have evaluations and feedback from it, which will be incorporated into the new plan.

Bob Doris: I note what you said about pupil support staff, but I am interested in those who are not teachers but are still professionals in the classroom and the wider school environment. We heard from Laura Meikle that there are 2,803 more of those in recent years. How many of them do we have in total, and how many have taken the opportunity of continuous professional development in the past two years?

Fran Foreman: That definition of pupil support staff does not just include people in the classroom. It includes wellbeing officers and sometimes youth workers.

Bob Doris: Okay. Laura Meikle, do you want to come in?

Laura Meikle: There are currently 16,606 pupil support assistants, 184 behaviour support assistants, 497 home-school link workers and 398 educational psychologists. All those figures have increased in recent years. We will provide that data to the committee, as agreed earlier.

Bob Doris: That is really helpful, but I want to drill down on pupil support assistants. All those jobs are really important, but pupil support assistants are at the coalface every day. They are directly involved in pupil interaction, and they work directly with other education professionals, mostly

teachers, to support pupils who have additional support needs. Do we track how many of the 16,606 are given professional development opportunities each year and how many of them avail themselves of that opportunity?

Fran Foreman: We explored that in the recent pupil support staff engagement programme, which will publish its report in July. The number is variable. We do not track it. The local authorities are the employers.

Some pupil support staff report that they do not have access to quality professional learning. Some report that they have access to it but that time is not given for it in their contract. The engagement programme had no locus to look at contracts; that is outwith the scope of the programme. Some staff said that they were able to participate in good professional learning opportunities and that they felt very valued. One of the comments that came back from quite a number of staff was about how people understanding their role is important, as is how they are valued by, for example, teachers. There is sometimes a bit of misunderstanding about the role of pupil support staff or classroom assistants, if that is what they are called in that particular local authority, and it is important, as Scott Mulholland mentioned earlier, to get the best out of that resource.

We have some highly skilled pupil support staff in Scotland. They do not necessarily all have the same qualifications, but they can build fantastic relationships with children and young people, and they are at the forefront in working with some of our most vulnerable children and young people. They might know them better than the teachers know them. We also have some pupil support staff who are more qualified than teachers, but it might just suit them at their stage in life to become pupil support staff. The situation is very variable.

Bob Doris: That is really helpful, Fran. I do not want to put words in your mouth, but it appears that you are saying that that should be tracked and that there should be more and more consistent opportunities for continuous professional development for pupil support staff or assistants. I do not want to misrepresent what you said, but it would be helpful if you let the committee know if that is what you are saying, and whether the project board would be involved in that.

Fran Foreman: The report did not comment on whether their professional learning should be tracked. That decision would be up to local authorities, but we are creating an induction pack as part of the professional learning framework that they could use if they wanted to. We feel that that would be very beneficial.

Bob Doris: I will bring in Scott Mulholland, but I am a wee bit frustrated—although it is no one's fault—because I thought that the board would have a view on that, as it is the meat and potatoes of what it is doing. However, I will leave that hanging.

Scott Mulholland: There is a recommendation about widening access to high-quality training for all staff, including pupil support assistants, in schools. At local authority level, there will be variation across the country in how that is recorded or tracked, but staff are entitled to a professional review and development process, and, as part of that process, there would be consideration of other training that they would benefit from to undertake their role.

Across the country, we are looking at induction for staff. To do their role, they need to be given the tools to be able to do it as effectively as they possibly can. That work is on-going, and, as Fran Foreman mentioned, it is part of the considerations and work of the board.

The Convener: Can you make your questions a bit more concise, Bob?

Bob Doris: Okay, convener. I am just trying to get as much benefit out of the session as I can.

Do any of the witnesses have a view on how the 16,606 PSAs are deployed in each local authority? We heard earlier about the different parts of the transitions to primary school, and S2 and S3 in secondary school and about tracking additional support needs. Are PSAs deployed consistently within each local authority and across local authorities? If so, could you say a little bit more about that? If not, do we have to do more about that?

Scott Mulholland: The deployment of additional support staff—or PSAs, as we will call them—will vary between local authorities. There are different approaches, which might be formula based and take account of the data that is available alongside the identification of the individual needs of individual children and young people.

There is a danger with having a consistent approach across the whole country that identifying the needs of local authorities could be missed as part of a national approach to the deployment of those staff. Local authorities employ staff and, through their own self-evaluation and work with families and schools and the data that they gather, they are able to determine how those resources are best deployed.

As I said, more resources will always be welcomed by schools, but each local authority could articulate how they deploy the finite resource that we have.

Bob Doris: My final question is a general one about culture, so it is moving away from the previous topic. How will the work of the board deliver the culture change that we are hearing about more generally, which was envisioned in the Morgan review? Laura Caven, quite rightly, chastised me earlier in relation to terminology and language, which are quite important when trying to deliver a culture change.

The Convener: To get a response to the culture change question, we will go to Laura Caven and then to Laura Meikle, and then we will move on.

Laura Caven: The membership of the programme board is important, because the membership across professional organisations is incredibly diverse. There are local government, unions, the National Parent Forum of Scotland, Children in Scotland, allied health professionals and social work, so it is about enabling—*[Inaudible.]*

Membership is important in delivering culture change, because each member can feed into and out of their groups, for those they represent, on the actions that the programme board is taking or is asking them to take. The membership of the board is important in guaranteeing culture change, which, as Laura Meikle said earlier, takes time. However, the board has a diverse membership, as does the stakeholder group, which contributes significantly.

Laura Meikle: As part of the package of information that we have discussed, we could provide a breakdown of where and what elements of the education system the support staff are working in.

The Convener: That would be helpful. In response to one of our questions, you said that there are now more than 300 educational psychologists. I want to contextualise that, given the evidence of the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists that we heard at our round-table session. It said that, in 2007, the number of children per educational psychologist was 85.8 but that, in 2022, it was 659.7 children. I ask you to consider that, and it might come up as you respond to questions from Stephen Kerr, to which we will now move.

Stephen Kerr: My question is very simple, because we have only minutes left. Does the board have a view on whether we have enough pupil support staff?

Laura Meikle: I genuinely could not answer that question.

Stephen Kerr: No? Okay. Does the board have a view on whether pupil support assistants have a career structure?

Laura Meikle: That is one of the recommendations of the review.

Stephen Kerr: So, you are recommending that they should have a career structure. What about pay?

Laura Meikle: There is no recommendation on pay in the report. I believe that Fran Foreman said earlier that that has not been within the remit of the sub-group that she has been working on.

Stephen Kerr: You acknowledged that we have some extremely talented and capable people, but they are not well paid at all.

Laura Meikle: We have provided funding for support assistants, and I was one of the people who worked out what that would cost, so I am familiar with those issues.

Stephen Kerr: You are familiar with that. I just wanted to get that out there.

The Convener: Fran was wanting to respond to those quickfire questions.

Stephen Kerr: Sorry—who was?

The Convener: Fran.

Stephen Kerr: Sorry. Okay.

Fran Foreman: There is another national working group—the national pupil support staff working group—which commissioned the engagement programme that I mentioned. It is reporting into the Morgan review, but it is also linked to the Bute house agreement. It had no locus to look at pay, terms and conditions. We have included some information about that in the report, because we received comments about it, but that subject was not within the group's locus.

Stephen Kerr: Yes, that is a great pity. I am a bit confused as to why it would have such a remit but pay would not be included.

I will move on. How many vacancies for speech therapists are there currently?

Laura Meikle: We would have to provide that information to the committee.

Stephen Kerr: You do not know. How many should we have in the system?

Laura Meikle: Again, we would have to provide that information.

Stephen Kerr: No? Okay.

Scott Mulholland: I can come in there as well. The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists published a report on the needs of young people, which highlighted the challenges on data in that area. It provided clear indicators of the challenges and of where we need to go next on speech and language therapy across the country.

Stephen Kerr: I am familiar with what the college has said, which is why I am asking these questions. I was wondering whether the board has a view on how many therapists we have and how many we need. Do you have a view on that? Do we need 10 or 20 per cent more?

Scott Mulholland: I would not put a figure on it, but my personal view is that we would absolutely benefit from having more qualified speech and language therapists to support children and young people. Work on that is happening across the country. For example, in my own health board area, we are looking at making such an investment in the workforce over time.

Stephen Kerr: Could you perhaps provide the convener with more detail on the numbers, as you began to do with the PSAs?

Laura Meikle: Yes.

Stephen Kerr: That would be very useful.

I will move on to my final question, which is about co-ordinated support plans. Of the 34 or 35 per cent of Scotland's pupils who have additional support needs, how many would have such plans?

Laura Meikle: Currently, 1,401 co-ordinated support plans are recorded in Scotland.

Stephen Kerr: Is that all?

Laura Meikle: Yes.

Stephen Kerr: What is your view on that?

Laura Meikle: Only a very small number of children and young people are currently in receipt of that particular plan. To provide context for that, I should clarify that 83,499 young people currently have recorded plans. A further 196,000 young people who are identified as having additional support needs have plans of some sort.

Stephen Kerr: How many co-ordinated support plans did you say there are?

Laura Meikle: There are 1,401.

Stephen Kerr: Why are there so few? What is your assessment?

Laura Meikle: The co-ordinated support plan is designed to perform a very particular function, which is to co-ordinate across multiple agencies the significant support that is required for children and young people with additional support needs. Therefore it generally relates to those whose needs are quite complex.

11:00

Stephen Kerr: But it is still a very low number, is it not? It has probably been commented on before, repeatedly, how few—

Laura Meikle: Evidence has certainly been provided to this committee previously about the number of co-ordinated support plans.

Stephen Kerr: And what is the board's view on what has to be done to address the gap?

Laura Meikle: There has been a review of the way in which co-ordinated support plans are being used, and we are currently in the process of implementing that review. Work is on-going in relation to that. Part of that work is about considering how the statutory guidance on additional support for learning can be improved around co-ordinated support plans, in particular, but a number of actions are under way in relation to that.

Stephen Kerr: It is quite disturbing, though, is it not? We have heard about this very broad, very inclusive approach—and yet, when it comes to co-ordinated support, it does not seem to add up.

Laura Meikle: As I said a minute ago in relation to the number of co-ordinated support plans, there are 32,898 individualised educational programmes, which are education focused. There are 49,200 child's plans, which are also multi-agency plans that have been opened for children and young people. They are not, however, the statutory plan. That is the distinction.

Stephen Kerr: That is what we are talking about, is it not?

Laura Meikle: Yes. The co-ordinated support plan is the statutory plan. The difference is that the co-ordinated support plan is established in law for children and young people who have significant needs and who require support from more than one agency.

Stephen Kerr: But, Laura, at the beginning of our session, you gave a very succinct answer to the question that the convener asked about whether any legislative change was needed.

Laura Meikle: So, no—

Stephen Kerr: But you are suggesting—

Laura Meikle: I do not think that there needs to be legislative change.

Stephen Kerr: You do not.

Laura Meikle: That is why we have put in place that work to improve. We recognise that there is a need to improve the approach around co-ordinated support planning.

Stephen Kerr: But the answer is not statute?

Laura Meikle: No. I do not think that it is about changing what the plan is; it is about how that plan is then used, and the statutory guidance is the place where we would do that, which is the action that we are taking.

Stephen Kerr: We have got the statute and the guidance.

Laura Meikle: Yes.

Stephen Kerr: It is culture that we are talking about, is it not? Or is it resources?

Laura Meikle: I think that it is probably a mix of culture and perhaps also understanding what the plan is for. We use the guidance. It is statutory guidance, so people are required to take account of it, which is why we have—

Stephen Kerr: Is something wrong with the statutory guidance, if it has created a lack of understanding?

Laura Meikle: The statutory guidance could be improved, which is why we have agreed to take action to do that.

Stephen Kerr: Okay. That is probably enough from me.

The Convener: That is good—I will not say more than that.

I have a final supplementary from Pam Duncan-Glancy, on the topic of co-ordinated support plans.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: I do not think that I caught all of the figures that Laura Meikle gave.

Laura Meikle: I can send them.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: Thank you—if you could.

I think that the figures included 83,499 recorded plans, 32,898 individualised educational programmes and 49,200 child's plans.

Laura Meikle: Yes.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: There was another 100,000 figure in the middle that I have missed.

Laura Meikle: That is okay.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: If they are not co-ordinated support plans, what are they, and what is the statutory basis for them?

Laura Meikle: The individualised educational programmes and child's plans are not statutory plans. Their basis is practice. They are recognised in the statutory code of practice as an appropriate planning mechanism.

The child's plan obviously relates to the getting it right for every child policy and practice approach. The individualised educational programme is a long-standing individualised planning mechanism for children and young people's needs, and it is a term-based programme around learning needs.

I have not answered one of your questions.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: No, I think that you answered them both.

The Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill, which is before this committee and is about care, support and justice for children and young people, would repeal the child's plan. What would the impact of that be?

Laura Meikle: The child's plan would continue. It is a policy approach, and therefore it would continue.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: Okay.

The Convener: To clarify, the bill does not repeal that plan, Pam.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: It does not?

The Convener: No. It is an expansion. We can get some clarity on that later. We will perhaps discuss that later.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: That would be helpful. Thank you for clarifying that.

If Laura Meikle could share the 100,000 figure that she gave, that would be helpful.

Laura Meikle: Of course.

The Convener: I am sure that the official reporters will have caught all of those figures, so we will have them all in the *Official Report* of the meeting. They are quite adept, so do not worry.

Stephen Kerr: And you will write?

Laura Meikle: Of course—yes.

The Convener: We briefly extended the session there. I thank all our witnesses for their time today. It has been a really helpful and informative discussion.

The public part of our meeting has now concluded. We will consider the final items on our agenda in private.

11:05

Meeting continued in private until 12:38.

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