

Additional Support for Learning Action Plan

**A Progress Report from Scottish Government
and COSLA**

Introduction

Scotland should be proud of our approach to supporting children and young people in their learning. It has inclusion at its heart and promotes values of acceptance, equality, equity and kindness. It seeks to deliver the values of the [National Performance Framework](#) – that children can grow up loved, safe and respected to realise their full potential.

Angela Morgan's [review of implementation of additional support for learning](#) (the ASL Review) was a significant moment in Scotland's educational landscape. The broad engagement that Angela undertook as part of the review had the voices of children and young people, parents and carers and professionals at its heart. It provided the opportunity to hear first-hand their experiences of how additional support for learning is being implemented across Scotland.

The ASL Review confirmed that the intention of additional support for learning legislation and policy was right. However, it highlighted that improvements are necessary to ensure that this is being effectively delivered across Scotland. We absolutely recognise the scale and ambition of the task ahead of us. To achieve the meaningful change that Angela Morgan envisioned we all must maintain the visibility of children and young people with additional support needs through continued co-creation and collaboration with them and their families.

In accepting the recommendations from the ASL Review, the Scottish Government and Local Government signalled our strong commitment to this, seeking to improve the experiences of children and young people, their families and those who support them. The [Additional Support for Learning Implementation Group](#) (ASLIG) have a key role to ensure that we achieve this by providing advice and challenge. ASLIG will produce a response to this report setting out their perspective on progress against each of the core improvement themes and recommendations identified in the ASL Review.

Delivery of the measures set out in our joint action plan, will require continuous review to ensure that we achieve the broad and deep change necessary to achieve our ambitions that all children and young people are valued, respected, included and supported to achieve and succeed.

Progress made against the ASL Action Plan

The [ASL Review](#) was published in June 2020. To support its conclusions and recommendations, the review engaged with a broad range of people and groups seeking to identify good practice and areas for further improvement in the ways that children and young people with additional support needs progress in their learning.

The review suggested several areas for improvement across 9 broad themes. These themes were:

- Theme 1 Vision and Visibility
- Theme 2 Mainstreaming and Inclusion
- Theme 3 Maintaining Focus but overcoming fragmentation

- Theme 4 Resources
- Theme 5 Workforce Development and support
- Theme 6 Relationships between Schools and Parents
- Theme 7 Relationships and behaviour
- Theme 8 Understanding Rights
- Theme 9 Assurance Mechanism and Education Scotland

The recommendations that the review made against these themes are interlinked and together they seek to improve the experiences of children and young people with additional support needs.

The Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) accepted¹ all the recommendations from the ASL Review . In October 2020, we published a [joint action plan](#) which set out the measures we would take to address the findings of the review.

Despite the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges it has brought to all our lives, the Scottish Government and COSLA have continued to work collaboratively with partners and a wide range of stakeholders to progress the actions set out within the ASL action plan. Significant progress has been made in a number of key areas.

The ASL Action Plan has been updated (link when available) to reflect the progress that has been made since October 2020. Through positive and sustained collaborative working, 8 of the actions have been completed fully within the first year and the vast majority of the other actions are ongoing and on track. A summary of the key activity is set out below:

Recommendation 1 focussed on children and young people’s participation. COSLA have had a range of representations to the Children and Young People Board from children and young people to inform policy positions. A participation plan is in development which will specifically focus on those children and young people who require additional support for learning. Work is also being undertaken to engage with children and young people with experience of suicide and mental health problems

Recommendation 1.1 asked for the creation of an overarching vision statement for success for children and young people with additional support needs. The Young Ambassadors for Inclusion (YAI), a network of children and young people with additional support needs from across Scotland, developed a vision statement with the support for ASLIG. This was published in August 2021.

Recommendation 1.1.3 was that the successes and achievements of children and young people with additional support needs should be recognised, celebrated, and promoted. **Recommendation 1.2** was the creation of a measurement framework to allow this diverse range of achievements of children and young people with additional support needs to be captured and celebrated, within a context of learning for life. Significant progress has been made to develop a new national measurement

¹ Recommendation 5.1.6 was partly accepted as this is a matter for individual institutions

framework to capture the wider set of data which will be used to measure and support improvement. It is anticipated that the framework will be published by Spring 2022. The framework will allow us to capture and celebrate outcomes and achievements of all children and young people nationally through the development of an annual report. This report will be co-created with children and young people and their families and will align with other initiatives around exam results time to provide further opportunities to celebrate and promote the successes and achievements of children and young people in equivalence to exams and attainment.

Recommendation 3.1.1 asked that the visibility of children and young people with additional support needs in Council Planning must incorporate the implications of additional support for learning for all Council and Partner services. ADES, SOLACE and COSLA will liaise on the approach to be taken at local authority level to ensure that council planning incorporates and makes visible the implications of additional support for learning. This will build on other related work already underway, for example, related to Equalities.

Recommendation 4.1 reflected the position that the review was carried out in the context of existing funding arrangements and resources. The review noted that the proper competence for an analysis of resource and spend on ASL sat with Audit Scotland. Their planned national performance audit on ASL did not commence as planned due to the impact of Covid-19 and is not expected to begin within the next 12 months. The Scottish Government have engaged with Audit Scotland and will contribute to their national performance audit as appropriate.

Recommendation 5.1.2 was that teachers understood their role in the identification of additional support needs and the need to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of children and young people. **Recommendation 5.1.3** asked that all teacher education and development included support for learners with additional support needs as a core element. Aligned with these actions we published the Autism Action Plan in December 2020, in partnership with stakeholders. The Majority of the actions are complete, including a refresh of the GTCS standards and the Autism Toolbox, to support practitioners. A short-life group has been convened and will monitor progress and implement the remaining actions with a view to reporting to Ministers in December 2021.

To further support **recommendations 5.1.2** and **5.1.3**, the Scottish Government and COSLA have committed to working with partners to ensure that there is appropriate career progression and pathways for teachers looking to specialise in additional support for learning.

Recommendation 5.2 was that work was undertaken to review the roles and remit of Pupil Support Assistants, including consideration of the development of clear specifications for how classroom teacher and pupil support assistant roles interact and complement each other. The Scottish Government and COSLA have committed to working with partners to explore options for the development of an accredited qualification and registration programme for pupil support staff. Proposals for this will be brought forward by Autumn 2023.

Recommendation 6.1 focused on relationships between schools, local authorities and parents and sought that positive, supportive relationships were developed between them. We have worked with partners to enhance the information and signposting that is available for parents and carers on additional support for learning in schools and early learning and childcare. The Scottish Government is working with a range of stakeholders to consider additional avenues to strengthen engagement with parents and carers to empower and support families to access the right support at the right time and promote positive communication between families and schools and local authorities. To support this, we have increased the funding available to Enquire in this financial year seeking to ensure that this service can continue to meet the needs of the families that it supports.

Recommendation 8.1 relates to the incorporation of UNCRC and its impact on ASL legislation. COSLA and Local Government have been fully supportive of implementation of the UNCRC Bill and its implementation. Alongside Local Government partners COSLA are represented on the UNCRC Strategic Implementation Board.

Recommendation 8.2 was that the review of the use of Co-ordinated Support Plans took account of the findings of the ASL Review. A short-life working group was established in December 2020. Meetings of the group have taken place throughout 2021. The short life working group has submitted a report summarising its findings to ASLIG. It is anticipated that this report will be published by the end of November 2021.

Next Steps

While the progress we have made is significant, we recognise that there is much more to do. The Scottish Government and COSLA are firmly committed to continuing to work with our key partners to deliver the ASL Action Plan.

However, we also must acknowledge the impact that Covid-19 continues to have on children and young, their families and professionals. We therefore commit to working closely with our partners in ASLIG to take the opportunity to review the current action plan, take stock of what we have achieved despite the challenging circumstances, and agree the priorities for the future to ensure that meaningful change is realised. As part of this, we will collaborate with ASLIG to identify opportunities to re-engage with families and professionals to ensure that their voices inform the agreed priorities for the future.

ASLIG will publish an updated action plan in Spring 2022. Alongside this, the Scottish Government and COSLA will work with partners to continue to deliver the measures set out in the ASL Action Plan to ensure that we achieve the broad and deep change necessary to achieve our ambitions that all children and young people are valued, respected, included and supported to achieve and succeed. We will continue to report on progress and as part of the updated action plan in Spring 2022, ASLIG will set out future reporting cycles.



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