

Independent Review of Additional Support for Learning in Scotland 2020

Additional Support for Learning Implementation Group (ASLIG): year 1 report - October 2021

December 2021



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This report summarises ASLIG's perspective on the progress that has been made since October 2020 to deliver the actions set out in the ASL Action Plan. The report also signals ASLIG's continued commitment to delivery of this work.

The Additional Support for Learning Implementation Group (ASLIG) works collaboratively to provide advice to Scottish Government, the Scottish Education Council and Scottish Ministers on key issues relating to the implementation of Additional Support for Learning. It has a clear focus on continued improvement, ensuring that every child and young person gets the support they need, when they need it. [Read more information about the group and its membership on the ASLIG web page.](#)

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1. Overview and background

As a group, ASLIG has welcomed the Independently Chaired Review of Additional Support for Learning (ASL), authored by Angela Morgan and published in June 2020, in the midst of the first wave of COVID-19. The group used this as a starting point in addressing current challenges around ASL implementation in Scotland.

ASLIG has noted the overwhelmingly positive response of parents, young people and other stakeholders to the findings of the report, and to the recommendations. We were very encouraged that parents and young people not only felt listened to, but that they felt 'heard' in the recommendations. ASLIG has also noted concerns that the Review did not consider fully the resource and budget implications of delivering ASL equitably for all pupils in all settings. However ASLIG is aware that this was out of scope of the Review, and is a priority for Audit Scotland to assess and for COSLA and the Scottish Government to consider as per the Review's recommendations.

Following our July 2020 meeting where the Group met to formally consider the findings of the Independently Chaired Review, ASLIG wrote to Angela Morgan to thank her for her excellent work on the Independent Review and to reassure her of the Group's commitment to its recommendations and values.

ASLIG is pleased that the Scottish Government and COSLA accepted the recommendations in full in October 2020. ASLIG wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to confirm that the Group was happy to take on the role as outlined in the Independent Review as follows:

Recommendation 9.1 Assurance mechanism

Following this Review, there must be a mechanism put in place to allow progress against these recommendations to be reported and scrutinised. This should be developed in partnership with the Additional Support for Learning Implementation Group. A progress report should be produced for Scottish Ministers and COSLA one year after the publication of this report and its recommendations.

2. ASLIG Activity

To date, the group has met formally once in advance of the publication of the Independently Chaired Review, and 6 times since its publication, with all meetings post publication held virtually due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

Pre publication:

January 28 2020

In person - to confirm roles and ToR of the new ASLIG group to prepare for the publication of the Independently Chaired Review of ASL.

Post publication:

July 21 2020

Via Teams - to consider initial Group response to the ASL Independently Chaired Review and to recommend it to the Scottish Government and COSLA.

September 24 2020

Via Teams - to consider work completed by ADES towards mapping a new Measurement Framework and recommendation on developing approach to recognising wider achievement of learners with additional support needs

December 9 2020

Via Teams

- To agree governance process for ASLIG decision making and recommendations to Scottish Education Council.
- Agree the scoping of a new National Measurement Framework for the achievements of learners with additional support needs (this was subsequently shared with the National Autism Implementation Team (NAIT) as a critical friend).
- Consider and comment on Education Recovery work for learners with additional support needs .

January 18 2021

Via Teams - to comment on supplementary COVID-19 guidance for children and young people with complex additional support needs

April 26 2021

Via Teams

- To consider new vision statement for success for learners with additional support needs , produced by the Inclusion Ambassadors.
- Approve the programme management plan (Outcomes Framework) to track outcomes against the recommendations of the Independent Review.
- Agreed that NAIT will now take forward the development of the National Measurement Framework.

In addition to the above, the Group met informally in February/March 2021, and again over the summer of 2021 to receive updates on the progress on the

Measurement Framework from NAIT, and to welcome a new representative from Social Work Scotland to the Group.

It has also met informally a number of times to develop this report.

Communications and engagement

Following the Scottish Parliamentary Elections in May 2021, a new Cabinet Secretary for Education has been appointed. ASLIG have yet to meet with Ms Somerville; the Group is keen to meet with the Cabinet Secretary to discuss progress / priorities.

The Chair of ASLIG met with the new Deputy Director of Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing Division in the Learning Directorate in June 2021.

A communications and engagement sub group was also convened during the summer of 2021, chaired by Children in Scotland, to progress this workstream.

The Independently Chaired Review recognised that many parents have lost trust and confidence in the ASL system. A key principle of our work is communications and engagement, and in being transparent.

The Group has an enhanced web presence, which contains minutes of all ASLIG meetings since January 2020.

As we emerge from the pandemic, the Group has plans to issue a regular newsletter on its work, which will be accessible to parents, young people and multi-agency professionals. ASLIG is actively considering additional ways to ensure communications and engagement with stakeholders.

3. Purpose of this report

ASLIG members bring the views and experiences of their representative bodies and groups to support and guide the implementation of the ASL Act. The activity and opinion of the Group as a collective is driven by evidence.

This report takes a thematic approach, and provides an ASLIG perspective on progress against each of the core improvement themes and recommendations identified in the Independent Review of ASL.

Whilst a Year 1 progress report has been produced by the Scottish Government for Scottish Ministers and COSLA, ASLIG have produced this report for young people, parents, education staff and other key stakeholders – the people the Group itself is accountable to.

4. Key year 1 headlines

In a challenging climate, ASLIG has made progress in setting up a robust and extensive programme management framework around the delivery of the

recommendations of the Independently Chaired Review of Additional Support for Learning.

Key achievements in year 1 have been the delivery of a Vision Statement for success. This has been developed by the Inclusion Ambassadors, a group of young people who have additional support needs, and the evidence led commissioning of a new measurement framework for 5 learners with additional support needs to help drive and monitor the achievement of this vision.

A degree of national cross policy discussion has started, but to limited effect. ASLIG considers that despite the best efforts of its members and the civil servant team, the inclusion of pupils with additional support needs as a priority across public service spending, resource, and policy making is still a significant challenge.

Inclusion of children and young people with additional support needs is still too often an after-thought. ASLIG members and the bodies they represent still experience very real challenges in advocating for the consideration of learners with additional support needs in mainstream policy making and resource allocation.

This is evidenced through the fact that key opportunities to align Additional Support for Learning outcomes as a key focus area in the National Improvement Framework, in the review of the OECD Curriculum for Excellence review, and in the Scottish Education Recovery Group financial plan have so far been either missed or significantly under-utilised.

It is the opinion of ASLIG that pupils who have additional support needs, their families, and their teachers require us to do more.

As it moves into year 2 of the delivery against the recommendations of the Independently Chaired Review of ASL, ASLIG will progress with the oversight of the delivery of those recommendations. In addition, ASLIG will take the opportunity to pause and reflect on evidence about the impact of the pandemic on children who have additional support for learning needs and the associated education recovery plan.

Beyond this, as an Implementation Group, in order to promote cultural, systems level change in the achievement of effective and additional support for all learners who need it, we also intend to reflect on evidence about what is working in other policy areas. An example is the approach recently taken by The Promise, which was commissioned at significant scale, role and profile to drive the work of change demanded by the findings of the Independent Care Review: [#KeepThePromise - The Promise](#).

ASLIG considers that the Independently Chaired Review of Additional Support for Learning has provided a very welcome first step in identifying where focused improvements will be made, and we are committed to driving its implementation. We have proposed to the Scottish Government and COSLA that the Group takes the opportunity to reflect on the above, and to re-engage with families and other key stakeholders to inform the ongoing priorities of the Group into Year 2 of its work programme.

5. Year 1 ASLIG summary position

The following pages contain a thematic summary of ASLIG opinion on the status of progress against each recommendations of the 2020 Independently Chaired Review of Additional Support for Learning.

Children and young people participation

ASLIG is pleased to report that progress has been made on setting the groundwork for achieving this recommendation with the Inclusion Ambassadors. ASLIG will champion more engagement activity with children and young people which is now critical in securing the overarching recommendation.

Measurement framework

ASLIG are pleased with the progress being made against this, in partnership with NAIT. ASLIG is concerned about the lack of priority for pupils with additional support needs within the National Improvement Framework, and considers that associated funding opportunities/priorities are not yet being realised. ASLIG will write to the Cabinet Secretary to encourage adjustments to the NIF measurements, and influence the forthcoming 2022 review of the National Improvement Framework.

Integration of ASL in the Independent Review of CFE

ASLIG considers that OECD Report did not take sufficient account of those with Additional Support Needs. Moving forward, ASLIG will ensure that the recommendations from the OECD Review of Curriculum for Excellence takes more account of the needs of children and young people with additional support needs . ASLIG will prepare a response to the Education Reform consultation, and request a meeting with Ken Muir who is leading the review.

Scottish Education Council

ASLIG notes that the SEC was inactive during the pandemic, with CERG being the key group convened to shape the Education response. As such, the SEC had not met since early 2020. ASLIG understands that SEC was reconvened on 8 October 2021. ASLIG will re-establish its governance arrangements with the SEC.

Leadership and strategic planning

ASLIG considers that there continues to be a siloed approach to leadership learning across education health and social care. ASLIG will seek the opportunity to input into the Guidance around Children's Service Planning, and engage with the Care Inspectorate around the inspection of children's social care services as they relate to integrated delivery of additional support for learning. ASLIG will also reflect this within our response to the education reform consultation. We will recommend a focus on measures of where partnership and collaborative leadership and learning /planning for CPD are evidenced.

Fully integrated policy making

ASLIG considers that whilst there is some evidence of a degree of national cross policy discussions, and increased involvement of young people, parents and carers in the development of key policies and guidance, it isn't enough. This is not yet translating into meaningful and active consideration, impact and inclusion of children with additional needs in all policy areas which impact on their lives. ASLIG considers that in order to truly deliver the aims of the Additional Support for Learning Act, a national cross policy programme of work to promote and drive Inclusion for All, is required. This should go beyond simply focusing on a work programme to implement the recommendations of the Independently Chaired Review. The Group is watching with interest the progress of other initiatives such as The Promise with a view to considering how a similar scale of model may impact on inclusion. ASLIG will consider this at our next formal meeting with a view to making recommendations to the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Education Council in Year 2 of our work programme.

Audit Scotland

ASLIG has not had a direct engagement with Audit Scotland in year 1. Audit Scotland have not yet scoped their national audit of outcomes for pupils with additional support needs. In year 2, ASLIG will seek a confirmed timeline from the Auditor General on its delivery of a national performance audit on outcomes for pupils with additional support needs. ASLIG will ensure that this complements the work of NAIT in developing a national outcomes framework for pupils who have additional needs.

Role of Grant Aided Special School (GASS)

ASLIG have strong representation from the GASS sector, but considers that the opportunities for the GASS within the context of supporting more pupils to access additional support for learning still requires to be scoped out fully.

Teacher education and development

ASLIG is aware that the refreshed general teaching council for Scotland (GTCS) Professional Standards for teachers for use from August 2021, include a sharper focus on additional support needs, as a result of engagement with the findings of the Independently Chaired Review.

Beyond this, to date, ASLIG considers progress to have been limited in the area of teacher education and development. This largely being based around pre-existing activity, much of which rests with partner agencies, rather than being supported by additional government and/or local authority funded activity to support teacher education and development.

However, ASLIG is encouraged by specific agreements within the Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party: draft shared policy programme - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) on this area as follows:

- work with the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers to ensure there is appropriate career progression and pathways for teachers looking to specialise in Additional Support for Learning, with the intention that this will result in an overall increase to the 8 number of teachers who specialise in ASL in Scotland's schools, with particular emphasis on ensuring that the Lead Teacher structure delivers on this outcome.

ASLIG will now engage with the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers to establish the status of this work.

Pupil Support Assistants

The Pupil Support Staff Working Group (PSSWG) was set up in 2020.

The PSSWG is chaired by Scottish Government, and includes other members from Scottish Government, members from CoSLA, Children in Scotland, Education Scotland, UNISON, ASLO, AHDS, ADES, and Voice.

ASLIG has not received a formal update from this group. However, we understand it is considering three areas of work:

- job descriptions
- training
- standards.

ASLIG is encouraged by the specific commitment in the Scottish Government and Green Party: draft shared policy programme on this area as follows:

- Explore in collaboration with trade unions and other key stakeholders options for the development of an accredit qualification and registration programme for Additional Support Needs Assistants with final proposals to be brought forward by Autumn 2023.

ASLIG will now engage with the PSSWG to ensure that the proposals for Additional Support Needs assistants are on track to be delivered by 2023.

Relationships between schools and parents

ASLIG is not yet in a position to cite the evidence of positive change following the agreed actions on partnerships and relationships between schools and local authorities and parents and carers. Monitoring these actions will be a priority and focus as we move to post pandemic education recovery. ASLIG notes and welcomes the additional investment in the Enquire service.

Relationships and behaviour

ASLIG does not decide on the priorities or membership of the Scottish Advisory Group on Relationships and Behaviour in Schools (SAGRABIS).

ASLIG has to date not received a formal update from SAGRABIS on the progress it has made in reviewing the remit of the group, in line with the recommendations of the Morgan review. ASLIG will request this.

ASLIG remains committed to ensuring that progress is made in the production of updated guidance on seclusion and restraint, commissioned by the Deputy First Minister in December 2019, and reflecting this in the new ASL measurement framework. We understand that a draft is due out for consultation in Autumn 2021.

Rights

ASLIG will consider whether a Children's Rights Impact Assessment should be carried out to make sure that implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act fully meets the requirements of the UNCRC and upholds children's rights.

CSP Review

The report of the co-ordinated support plans (CSP) short-life working group will be published by the end of November 2021. ASLIG will publish a direct response to the CSP report after this time, and consider its implications in our future work programme.

Assurance mechanism

ASLIG is pleased to report that a progress report has been produced for Scottish Ministers and COSLA, in line with Recommendation 9.1.

ASLIG has gone further and is producing its own report for the stakeholders the Group members represent.

Education Scotland

ASLIG is encouraged by the impact of the Independently Chaired Review in the Regional Collaboratives to date. ASLIG will ensure further sustained engagement by partners within the Regional Collaboratives to ensure that inclusion, equalities and health and wellbeing is embedded and strengthened in their ongoing improvement activities.

ASLIG will submit this report to Scottish Ministers and COSLA, and circulate with our networks of parents, carers, young people, education staff, social care staff, GASS staff, and Allied Health Professionals. It will also be published on the ASLIG webpage.

We will use this report as a guide for a stocktake of current priorities at our forthcoming meetings. We will liaise with the SEC, Scottish Government, COSLA and other stakeholders as appropriate to continue in the delivery of our commitment to ensuring that every child and young person in Scotland gets the support they need, when they need it.



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