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*Den Stewart,*

Thank you for your letter of 17 February 2016 requesting further information from me in relation to my response to the Education and Culture Committee's report on the attainment of pupils with a sensory impairment.

I will respond to each of the points on which the Committee has requested further information.

#### **Data on attainment**

##### Data on prevalence of sensory impairment

*During the course of the inquiry, the Committee was told about various concerns relating to the lack of precise data on the number of children affected by a sensory impairment in Scotland. We highlighted some specific concerns in our report (at paragraphs 18 and 19), but they were not referred to in the Scottish Government response.*

***The Committee requests a response to these specific concerns and would like to know how the Advisory Group for Additional Support for Learning is seeking to address them as part of its "outcomes focus" for data collection.***

[For ease of reference paragraphs 18 and 19 are as follows:

**'18. Concerns were raised with us about a lack of precise figures for the number of children affected by a sensory impairment in Scotland. We were**

told there was a growing body of evidence pointing to under-registration of blind and partially sighted children. It was suggested part of the problem was that registering a child is voluntary. The Scottish Sensory Centre said that because local authorities use registration data as a guide to anticipating demand for services, this left them with the —difficult task of delivering services based on information that may not describe the full scale or spectrum of children needing support. The RNIB said more rigorous collection of statistics on pupils with a visual impairment, along with an agreed definition of what is considered to constitute a visual impairment, —was essential.

19. Similarly, the National Deaf Children's Society called for —more robust and complete data sets on numbers of deaf children and young people in Scotland. It said that while the pupil census has improved over the years there is insufficient information on children with mild hearing loss and with no formal education plan in place.']

Paragraphs 18 and 19 of the Committee's report raise a number of points. In relation to the first point regarding potential under registration of children (not pupils), we recognise the concern raised by the Scottish Sensory Centre representative in evidence that there may be under-registration of children and young people with visual impairment, because indeed the registration of severe sight impairment and sight impairment is a voluntary matter. This is the case for both children and adults. It is my belief that the decision whether or not to register a child as having either severe sight impairment or sight impairment is a matter for the family and should continue to be so.

The second point indicated 'that because local authorities use registration data as a guide to anticipating demand for services, this left them with the —difficult task of delivering services based on information that may not describe the full scale or spectrum of children needing support.'. Education authorities use a wide range of information, including information from health and early years services, and the outcomes of assessment and identification to inform the need for services. It should also be noted that education authorities are required under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 to identify the additional support needs of the pupils for whom they are responsible. In addition, education authorities are also required to respond to requests for assessments of additional support needs, which would include those arising from sensory impairment. It would therefore not be fair to indicate that the data relating to registration of severe sight impairment or sight impairment, or the pupil census data on pupils with additional support needs are significant features in the decision making of education authorities in relation to service provision.

In relation to the point about the need for information about children who are identified as having a hearing or visual impairment, as I indicated in my response to the Committee, on 26 May 2015, during the 27-30 month Development and Wellbeing Review, hearing and vision are assessed. This Highlights at an early stage concerns about hearing or vision. Data from these assessments are collected and published. As part of the Universal Health Visiting Pathway in Scotland (in addition to the 27-30 month review) there will also be a Development and Wellbeing Review at 13-15 months at which hearing and vision will also be considered, and



again at age 4-5 prior to the child starting school. Data will be collected at each of these points and will provide a comprehensive picture of the numbers of children who are identified as having a concern related to hearing and visual impairment and a number of other development areas.

In relation to the requirement for more rigorous collection of data on pupils with visual impairments, the Committee will be aware that the pupil census is the annual collection of data about pupils including information on those pupils who receive additional support for their learning, including as a result of sensory impairment. The data collection has been improving over recent years and has now been collected in a consistent manner for 5 years. The pupil census data represents the information that schools hold in relation to their pupils additional support needs on a particular day, and therefore provides a consistent snapshot of the picture of additional support needs. This data is linked and matched to the data in other collections, for example leaver destinations and qualifications data to provide a picture of the outcomes for children and young people with additional support needs.

The committee has also sought further detail on the role of the Advisory Group for Additional Support for Learning (AGASL) in relation to these issues, including the need for a definition. AGASL, as part of our move to an outcome focussed model, will support the development of further guidance to education authorities to support further improvement in the pupil census statistical collection on additional support for learning.

Paragraph 19 focusses on the need for more robust and complete data numbers of deaf children and young people in Scotland, in particular the assertion that 'there is insufficient information on children with mild hearing loss and with no formal education plan in place'. As part of the pupil census collection, data is collected on the number of pupils who receive support through an educational plan, but also those who receive support through a Child's Plan and with 'Other Support Needs'. The 'Other Support Needs' category is designed to enable recording and reporting of the support provided to pupils as part of classroom or school provision but which does not need to be formalised through an educational plan. Therefore information for children whose additional support needs are such that formal planning mechanisms are not required, but for whom support is provided, are featured as part of the information collected within the pupil census. For pupils with a hearing impairment the statistical information indicated that 64% of all pupils with a visual impairment have a CSP, IEP, Child Plan, or are Assessed/Declared disabled. The remaining 36% are recorded as having 'other support needs' and therefore their support is provided in the way described above. Similarly for pupils with a hearing impairment 64% of all pupils with a visual impairment have either a CSP, IEP, Child Plan, or are Assessed/Declared disabled and the remaining 36% are recorded as having 'other support needs'.

#### Scottish Government data

*The Committee was also told about concerns relating to some of the attainment data published by the Scottish Government. We note one of these concerns in our report at paragraph 20, to which you also refer in the Scottish Government response, namely the inability to compare directly the attainment of ASN and non-ASN pupils at a single specified age, for example, S4.*



*The Committee is aware of the data the Scottish Government collects in relation to school leavers (this is cited in the SPICe briefing at page 5). However, the data does not necessarily account for the possibility that ASN pupils may take longer to achieve their qualifications compared with their non-ASN peers and, therefore, does not allow a like-for-like comparison to be made for ASN and non-ASN pupils. **The Committee would be grateful for your response to this issue.***

We fully accept that ASN pupils may take longer to achieve their qualifications compared with their non-ASN peers. This coupled with the fact that under Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), schools and their partners are able to offer greater personalisation and choice in the senior phase (S4 to S6), including delivering qualifications over a variable timeframe in response to young people's needs and prior achievements, means making comparisons of attainment at a certain age or stage of schooling is not a suitable way to make comparisons. Looking at the attainment of pupils at the point they leave school is the most appropriate way to make comparisons at pupil characteristic level. School leaver attainment data does account for the possibility that ASN pupils may take longer to achieve their qualification compared with their non-ASN peers as this gives pupils the maximum chance to attain before we count their achievements.

For relevant published statistics and more information please see: Table 6 – Percentage of school leavers attainment by pupil characteristic

Summary statistics for attainment, leaver destinations and healthy living 2015 – <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00479422.pdf>

Tables A3.1 and A3.2 – Highest qualification and qualifications attained by school leavers from secondary and special schools, broken down by ASN category.

Summary statistics for attainment, leaver destinations and healthy living 2015 supplementary tables – <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/leavedestla/follleavedestat/attainmentandleavers1314>

#### Local authority data

*Others told the Committee they were concerned about how local authorities collect attainment data on children with a sensory impairment. As noted in our report at paragraph 22, Education Scotland suggested more could be done to “standardise and achieve greater consistency” of data collection by local authorities. Again, the Scottish Government response does not provide detail in response to this issue. **Given Education Scotland’s role in sharing best practice among local authorities, the Committee seeks details of what Education Scotland (perhaps along with the Scottish Government) can do to establish consistency across local authorities in terms of identification of ASN for data collection purposes.***

Education Scotland are part of the Advisory Group and through this role, and through direct engagement between Education Scotland and the Scottish Government we



will ensure that the guidance is accurate, appropriate and fit for purpose. This guidance will in turn support the consistent recording and reporting of information on pupils additional support needs.

## **Models of education provision**

*The Committee welcomes Education Scotland's intention to publish a best practice document for education providers of sensory-impaired pupils.*

*The Committee notes what the Scottish Government's response states regarding Education Scotland's work:*

*"Education Scotland has identified the need for schools and authorities to identify and address the barriers to learning identifying and tackling barriers to learning before they become entrenched, finding new ways to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse population of learners and personalising learning and support to take account of individual needs, choices and circumstances while relentlessly reinforcing high expectations."*

***The Committee requests more detail showing how Education Scotland works with local authorities (and other providers) to improve support for pupils with a sensory impairment. In particular, the Committee would like to know what, specifically, Education Scotland's work as referred to in the quote above has involved. Can examples be provided to illustrate how this work has benefited learners?***

Education Scotland works with local authorities and other partners through a range of approaches to continually improve outcomes for children and young people with sensory impairments. A Review of Practice for those with Sensory Impairment was published in February 2016. It includes information from an Annual Report to Parliament on implementing additional support legislation, examples of good practice, recent inspection evidence, background papers and links to other resources.

Recently, Education Scotland has led on events for deaf young people and practitioners who work with them. In February 2015 over 70 deaf young people from 19 different local authorities across Scotland took part in a Deaf Learners Conference in Glasgow. This event was the first of its kind, providing deaf young people with an opportunity to come together and discuss their school experiences, achievements and challenges. A joint report by NDCS and Education Scotland about the conference for deaf young people has been produced and sent to all members of NDCS. This report not only provides a useful overview of the event but will help schools identify their own strengths and areas for development against the views of young people. A presentation summarising the highlights of the conference and the views of young people was shared with practitioners at the Scottish Learning Festival in September, with a young deaf person leading the event. To enable teachers who work with deaf children and young people an opportunity to consider the outcomes of the conference, Education Scotland held a conversation which was attended by approximately 40 practitioners from schools and voluntary organisations.

Education Scotland Languages Team is working with organisations including Edinburgh University to provide further information about BSL and the teaching of BSL in schools as part of the 1+2 languages initiative.

In the course of inspections, Education Scotland evaluates provision for children and young people with additional support needs, including children with sensory impairments. This includes evaluating provision using the How good Is Our School 3 Quality Framework, Quality Indicator 5.3, Meeting Learning Needs, which focuses on identifying the needs of, and providing support and challenge for groups and individuals who may have additional support needs. In a number of recent inspections, strengths have been identified in relation to supports and interventions for children and young people with sensory impairments, for example:

- Bannerman High School Glasgow
- Grange Academy Kilmarnock
- Stranraer Academy Dumfries and Galloway
- Clydevue Academy Inverclyde

Education Scotland continues to work with education authorities and partners. Recent work has included consultations with sensory support services in two local authorities to help them review and improve support services and models of provision for sensory impaired children.

### **Habilitation lessons as part of the curriculum**

*The Committee notes that Curriculum for Excellence provides ways for habilitation skills to be part of the personalised approach to learning, including offering personal development units and personal achievement awards. Nevertheless, the Committee was told that a greater emphasis on teaching habilitation skills in mainstream schools would help to improve attainment and employment opportunities for pupils with a sensory impairment. **The Committee requests further information on the availability of habilitation lessons, and the scope to enhance this important area of skills development in the curriculum.***

Models of habilitation services vary within each authority or school. In some, this is an education model (Glasgow and Royal Blind School) whilst in the majority, habilitation is delivered by social work services or other partners, such as Guide Dogs for the Blind. Inspectors do not evaluate specific habilitation programmes but do evaluate how well the school meets the needs of visually impairment children and young people, which may include their skills in mobility and independence.

In a recent inspection of the Royal Blind School in Edinburgh, inspectors evaluated the mobility service and highlighted a number of key strengths:

- The mobility and independence needs of pupils are very well met through specific habilitation assessments and interventions. Suitably challenging



activities allow pupils to develop life skills, travel on public transport and gain independence both with the school and in the wider community.

- There is a well-planned progressive habilitation programme which ensures that young people have very good opportunities to develop their mobility and independence.

Education Scotland is a member of the Visual Impairment Network for Children and Young People (VINCYP) and has worked in partnership with other agencies in order to devise minimum standards for habilitation. Standards were approved by the Steering Group in October 2014 and include Standard 8:

***Each local authority has a service for children with VI through which all children have an assessment of need by a habilitation specialist, qualified to work with children, within 4 weeks of referral.***

Education Scotland supports the standards agreed by the VINCYP. The guidance, as detailed in Standard 8, will help schools and services identify the habilitation needs and subsequent supports to improve the mobility and independence of children and young people.

### **Number of qualified teachers**

*The Committee made two recommendations, at paragraphs 64 and 65.*

*While the Scottish Government response does not cite these recommendations directly, the Committee notes the information provided about the work underway to collect data on numbers of teachers and their qualifications. The Committee welcomes this work. **However, the Committee requests a response to the point made in paragraph 64 about incentivising teachers: "We recommend that the Minister considers the options available to incentivise teachers to become ToD and QTVI, building on the actions already implemented by Moray House School of Education."***

*At paragraph 65, the Committee noted that some local authorities have developed good examples of workforce planning (some examples are included at paragraph 59). The Committee was not clear, however, about the extent to which such good practice is disseminated, and recommended that Education Scotland, the Scottish Government and local authorities work together to ensure good practice is adopted across all schools. The Committee notes in the Scottish Government response that "Education Scotland, the Scottish Government and local authorities can work together to ensure that existing good practice on workforce planning is more widely adopted through engagement within the Advisory Group on Additional Support for Learning". **The Committee requests further information on this important issue. In particular, it seeks examples of how the engagement referred to in the quote above has resulted in improved workforce planning.***

Teachers' pay and conditions are determined nationally by the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT), the tripartite body encompassing membership from local authorities, teacher unions and Scottish Government. There are no national incentives for any further qualification for teachers although employers can make local arrangements as they see fit.

The Scottish Government's role in teacher workforce planning is to undertake a national exercise which provides guidance to the Scottish Funding Council on setting student teacher intakes to initial teacher education to meet the requirements for newly qualified teachers. Workforce planning to provide additional support for learning teachers is a matter for individual local authorities.

### **Qualifications of teachers**

*Thank you for the information provided on this matter. When you gave oral evidence to us, we were interested in your comment that "there needs to be much broader deaf awareness and training among secondary teachers ... There is much more that we need to do on that". The Scottish Government response refers to current teaching standards, but does not mention any plans for 'broader deaf awareness training among secondary teachers'. **The Committee requests an update on this issue.***

All teachers in Scottish schools have a contractual obligation to undertake Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) to ensure that their skills and knowledge are maintained and therefore they should identify and agree their training needs with their line manager on an annual basis. Any lack of confidence in this issue could quite appropriately be addressed through CLPL. However, it is local authorities who are the employers of teachers and therefore they are responsible for the provision of teachers professional learning and so any broader deaf awareness training for secondary teachers would be a matter for them to consider.

As part of broader work flowing from the committee's enquiry we will engage in discussions with key stakeholders to understand where the gaps are and what the opportunities are for promoting awareness.

### **Technology and access to the curriculum**

*The response helpfully states Education Scotland's view that "it is unacceptable that breakdowns in technology cause children and young people barriers to their learning". It also states that Education Scotland "is seeking to ensure that digital learning is a supportive aspect for all learners".*

*However, the Committee remains concerned about this issue. As the Committee was told in evidence, the effective use of assistive technologies is vital in allowing many sensory-impaired learners to engage with the curriculum. In addition, it is clear that some schools are able to facilitate these technologies better than others.*



***The Committee requests further details of the work that Education Scotland is carrying out to resolve the problems experienced in relation to the use of assistive technologies in the classroom, to share good practice and, crucially, to ensure that such good practice is fully implemented.***

The Pupils In Scotland supplementary data 2015 indicates that 15,899 pupils were reported as 'assessed or declared as having a disability. Further, the data indicates that there were 18,626 assessments of required adaptations to school provision, of which 3,003 were physical adaptations, 10,228 were curriculum adaptations and 5,395 were communication adaptations.

In recognition of the importance of technology in education, the Scottish Government is developing a Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland. The strategy will be built upon four themes: empowering leaders to invest and innovate; improving access to technology for all learners; ensuring curriculum and assessment relevance in a digital context and improving the skills and confidence of teachers. These themes will deliver a comprehensive approach to digital learning and teaching and help to eliminate breakdowns in technology and other problems traditionally experienced in relation to the use of technologies in the classroom. The strategy will also promote equality of opportunity in order to ensure that all learners can benefit from the use of digital technology in their learning; this includes learners who require access to assistive technologies.

The Scottish Government provides funding to CALL Scotland to support the use of technology for children and young people with additional support needs through the provision and support for technologies, and through the provision of training. Education Scotland supports CALL Scotland through membership of their steering group and through collaboration for relevant national events, such as the Curriculum for Excellence leadership conference. Further information on the full range of services which CALL Scotland provide is available from <http://www.callscotland.org.uk/about-us/>

The Committee may also be aware of recent legislative developments through section 31A of the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Bill which requires that Scottish Ministers must, to such extent as they consider necessary to meet all reasonable requirements, provide or secure the provision of; communication equipment, and support in using that equipment, to any person who has lost their voice or has difficulty speaking.” This is intended to support the provision of assistive technologies, and will include children and young people.

Education Scotland can support the engagement of practitioners, local authorities and supporting organisations. The Committee will understand that it is the responsibility of schools and local authorities to identify, assess and make provision for pupils' needs.

Education Scotland are attending the Visually Impaired Teachers Network meeting on 18th March. This will be an opportunity to actively explore the key challenges

faced by those with sensory impairment and discuss how those can be most appropriately supported.

### **Conclusion**

I hope that this additional information is helpful to the Committee. As a Government we remain committed to ensuring that all learners can access the support they need to reach their full potential and we will continue to work with our partners and key stakeholders to anticipate and respond to that changing landscape.

**ALASDAIR ALLAN**