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PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Moving to mainstream

The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools

KEY POINTS

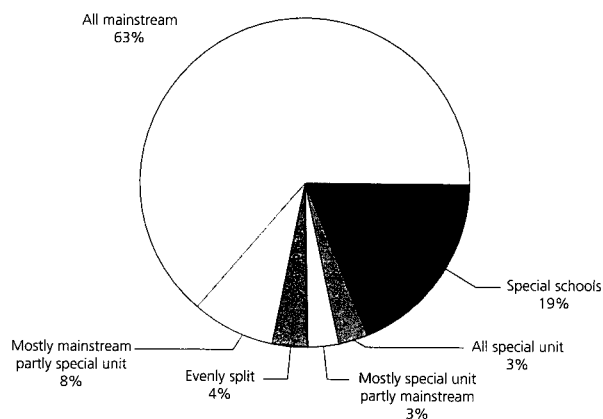


MOVING TO MAINSTREAM

The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools

THE STUDY

There are currently around 44,000 pupils in Scotland with special educational needs (SEN), around 1 in 20 pupils. Nearly 2/3 go to mainstream schools, with the remainder split evenly between special schools and special units attached to mainstream schools.



Expenditure on SEN in Scotland is around £388 million. The majority (£273 million) is in education and represents around 9% of councils' total education spend. The remainder comes from social work, the NHS or is funded via specific grants from the Scottish Executive.

The statutory 'mainstreaming presumption' is likely to result in more children with SEN being educated in mainstream schools. It comes into force in August 2003.

The term SEN covers a very wide spectrum – from mild and temporary needs, to profound, permanent and multiple impairments. Because of this range, decisions on how best to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN must be made on an individual-by-individual basis. For example, while many children with SEN reap great benefits by attending a mainstream school which can support their needs effectively, others can become socially isolated.

These individual decisions have also to be made within the context of ensuring effective and affordable education for all children. Changes in legislation, with resulting cost pressures, will challenge the ability of councils, working with the NHS, to provide effectively for all their pupils' needs.

This study looks at:

- what is likely to change as a result of the mainstreaming presumption
- what the impact of these changes on costs and services might be
- how prepared councils and the NHS are for these changes
- how well the needs of pupils with SEN can currently be met in mainstream schools.

FINDINGS



MORE CHILDREN WITH SEN WILL BE EDUCATED IN MAINSTREAM IN THE FUTURE...

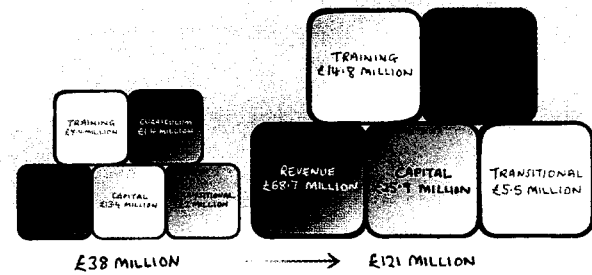
- between 2,000 and 5,000 more children with SEN could be educated in mainstream settings in future. The midpoint of the range would mean a 9% increase on now
- the number of pupils educated in special schools could fall from around 8,000 at present to between 3,000 and 6,000

- NHS therapists will be required to cover more schools than now – this will stretch already limited resources
- the level of change required will be greater in some (mainly urban) councils than others
- new and refurbished school buildings will need to meet the needs of pupils with SEN
- the PPP projects reviewed showed there had been little consultation by client councils with staff and interest groups who knew about SEN requirements.

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THIS INCREASE COULD COST COUNCILS BETWEEN £38M & £121M PER YEAR IN TOTAL. THIS WOULD INCREASE SEN EDUCATION BUDGETS BY 15-40%. IT REFLECTS...

- capital costs of making schools more accessible
- transitional costs of closing special schools (sometimes offset by capital receipts)
- revenue costs (largely staffing and training) of more pupils with SEN in mainstream schools



In addition, there will be the increased cost of providing NHS therapy services to a greater number of schools.

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PLANNING FOR THESE CHANGES IS PATCHY AMONG COUNCILS AND MINIMAL AMONG HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS...

- few councils were able to provide evidence of either strategies to meet the requirements of mainstreaming, or of Best Value reviews of SEN.
- there was little or no planning in NHS bodies for the presumption of mainstreaming. Many managers were waiting to take the lead from councils.

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PARLIAMENT NEEDS TO KNOW THE COST OF AMENDMENTS TO BILLS...

- the financial consequences of proposed legislation, including amendments introduced during consideration of a Bill, should be robustly analysed and considered by Parliament. This is essential for effective democratic scrutiny.

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MAINSTREAMING PUPILS WITH SEN CAN WORK WELL WHERE...

- the curriculum is tailored to individuals' needs
- there is good NHS support and teamwork between health, education and social work professionals
- there is good communication with parents.

In these cases, all pupils in the schools benefited from the inclusion of pupils with SEN. The best practice was found in schools that had been working on inclusion for a number of years. These developments were the result of work in individual schools, rather than of systematic, authority-wide approaches.

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BUT THERE ARE PROBLEMS TO BE OVERCOME...

- therapists felt there were obstacles that limited the effectiveness of the support they could offer to pupils in schools
- published 'league table' information for some effective and inclusive schools gave the impression of lower achievement. This led to some parents sending their children to schools where they thought standards were higher.

- headteachers and other staff have the time to lead inclusion
- there is a realistic assessment of school capacity to support pupils with different needs. Often this was addressed by the school specialising in particular disabilities
- all staff are trained, and there is a strong core committed to inclusion

- mainstreaming does not work for every pupil. Most of the successful schools had found that they had not been able to meet the particular needs of one or more pupils

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Councils, schools and the NHS should take account of the good practice outlined in the full report as they include more pupils with SEN in mainstream schools and classes. This will require commitment from councillors, headteachers and senior management in councils, in the NHS and in other agencies.

PLANNING FOR INCLUSION OF PUPILS WITH SEN

- **Councils and NHS bodies** should jointly develop a strategy for inclusion that sets out their policy and proposed actions to meet the mainstreaming presumption. This should reflect a careful appraisal of likely effectiveness of different mainstreaming options and the costs, and should be subject to consultation with parents, headteachers and the voluntary sector. **NHS bodies** should take a proactive role with councils in the joint planning of provision for pupils with SEN.
- **Councils** should provide strategic guidance to schools on their expectations of them over the long term in respect of inclusion and mainstreaming.
- **Councils, schools and the NHS** should consider ways of improving arrangements to ease the transition of pupils particularly from the primary stage to the secondary stage, including ensuring continuity of therapy and other support services.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INCLUSION

- **Councils** should ensure that the needs of pupils with a wide range of SEN and disabilities are considered when designing new or refurbished schools.
- **Councils** should ensure that schools' physical environments are adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEN, and that essential adaptations are made before pupils are admitted.
- **Councils** should ensure that senior managers in schools have sufficient time for leading and managing provision for pupils with SEN.
- **Councils** should keep under review the demands on each school and ensure that it has the capacity to function effectively without excessive demands on the headteacher and other members of staff.
- **The NHS** should review the capacity of services (in particular therapy services, child and adolescent mental health and the school nursing service), to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of pupils with SEN in the light of the presumption of mainstreaming.
- **The Scottish Executive** should examine ways of improving the co-ordination of initiatives between departments, with clear links being made between the various funding streams supporting the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

- **The Scottish Executive, councils, the teacher education institutions and the General Teaching Council–Scotland** should consider how best to ensure that all teachers are equipped to teach children with SEN.
- **Councils and schools** should ensure that there is training on inclusion for class and subject teachers and special needs auxiliaries (SNAs) and, in particular, that there is effective development and training to meet the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- **The NHS** should review the number of training places for therapy staff to ensure that there is an adequate number of paediatric therapy staff to meet demand.

QUALITY AND ATTAINMENT

- **The Scottish Executive and councils** should consider how to assist schools to fulfil the requirement to publish information on attainment in relation to 5-14 level, and SQA awards in ways which give full credit to the high standards of all pupils and to the school in general.
- **Councils and schools** should ensure that they have rigorous approaches to monitoring and evaluating the quality of inclusive provision for pupils with SEN.

PARLIAMENTARY CONSIDERATION OF COSTS

- **Parliament** must have a robust analysis of the potential financial consequences when they are considering Bills and amendments.
- **Parliament** should consider how best to ensure that there is full consideration of relevant costs when Bills and amendments are scrutinised.