Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
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Clare Adamson MSP
Convener
Education and Skills Committee
T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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Dear Clare

In response to the Education and Skills Committee report on additional support for learning in 2017, I committed to commissioning independent research into the experiences of children receiving additional support and to ensuring that the final version of the guidance on the presumption of mainstreaming took account of both the responses to the consultation on the guidance and the final research report.

I wrote to you on 30 October to let you know that following the publication of the report 'Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved: A report on the experiences of autistic children missing school', that I wished to pause and reflect on this and engage with the organisations involved in producing the report before committing to publishing the presumption of mainstreaming guidance and the research into children's experiences of additional support for learning.

I have undertaken a period of reflection and engagement, including attendance at the Cross Party Group on Autism on 23 October 2018, hosted a meeting with the organisations involved in producing the report in November 2018, and hosted a roundtable on autism on 27 February of this year.

The Conservative Party led debate on 30 January on the presumption of mainstreaming provided a further opportunity to debate the principle of the presumption of mainstreaming and the implementation of additional support for learning.

Today we will publish the research, 'Additional Support for Learning: Research on the experience of children and young people and those that support them', an Implementation Report that sets out additional support for learning actions over 2017-18 and 'Guidance on the presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting'. Copies of these documents are attached for your information. We will also be formally launching an inclusion resource for education professionals developed by Education Scotland.

This online module is part of a suite of free professional learning resources being developed to support those working with children and young people who require additional support.
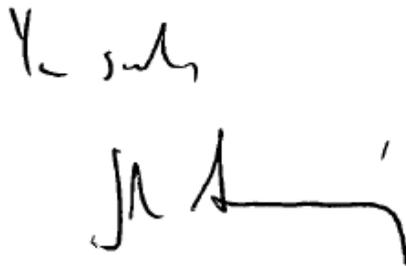
Having taken time to reflect and engage as set out above, and taking account of the evidence from the research, the implementation report and wider sources of evidence, it is clear that more needs to be done to ensure the effective implementation of additional support for learning. There is cross party consensus around the policy and principles but further work is required to ensure that *all* children are receiving the support that they require.

Our Programme for Government commitment shows our continued commitment to this area and I have agreed that a short life working group on autism be convened to consider:-

- Consistency of approach amongst ITE providers to ensure that provision on autism has a strong platform is as strong as we need it to be;
- How we can ensure there is a distillation of the work being undertaken on inclusive pedagogy so there is a shared understanding of this approach;
- Wider sharing of quality practice and good standards that is being both gathered and delivered by Education Scotland, local authorities, professional associations, autism organisation and others;
- How to confidently put in place a continuum of support for ongoing professional practice and development

 Within the debate on 30 January, I further committed to consider a review of the implementation of additional support for learning, including where children learn and my officials are currently working on the terms of reference for that review.

I hope this information is helpful to you and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that *all* children get the support they need to reach their full potential.

JOHN SWINNEY