Additional Support for Learning in Schools Unit
Care, Support and Access Unit
01 July 2026

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic
Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs

Priority and Purpose

[Out of scope]

[Out of scope]

[Out of scope]

Neurodevelopmental Support

1. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the numbers of people seeking neurodevelopmental diagnosis. Although there is no national dataset for neurodevelopmental diagnostic waits, data published by the Scottish Parliament reported that over 42,000 children and young people were seeking a formal neurodevelopmental diagnosis as of March 2025. The same source indicates that there were over 23,000 adults seeking a formal diagnosis in 2025.

2. The National Neurodevelopmental Specification for Children and Young People (2021) sets standards for services to meet the neurodevelopmental support needs of children and young people. Much like ASN, framed within the GIRFEC approach, the focus is on ensuring that children and families receive the support and access to services that meet their needs at the earliest opportunity, which does not necessarily rely on a formal diagnosis. For many children and young people, support is likely to be community-based and accessible through universal services, including health, social care and education, including Additional Support for Learning.

3. In relation to adults, in the absence of the universal services available to children, there are fewer options for pre and post-diagnostic support. Additionally, adults who seek a diagnosis for neurodevelopmental conditions (e.g. autism or ADHD) are typically referred to general adult psychiatry. However, current levels of demand far outweigh what these services were designed for and is proving unsustainable. The two cross-party Summits chaired by the previous Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing arrived at a consensus that adult services need to be redesigned to take support and diagnosis out of secondary mental health / care services for all but the most complex cases.

4. While there has been significant progress to address the neurodevelopmental support needs of children and young people through the CYP ND Specification and related implementation review work, this remains an area of ongoing system change, with a continuing focus on embedding a whole-system, multi-agency approach. In contrast, proposals for redesigning adult services are at a more formative stage. However, work by the National Autism Implementation Team (NAIT) and the proposals set out by the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland (RCPsychiS) reflect the general consensus that a stepped care model that moves diagnosis and support out of general adult psychiatry is required, and is

broadly aligned with the whole-system approach being embedded for children and young people.

Manifesto and 100 Days Commitment

5. The SNP Manifesto Commitment is to work with partners across Scotland to adopt the Royal College of Psychiatrists' (RCPhysiS) 4-level national pathway for neurodevelopmental (ND) conditions, ensuring that anyone with or without a formal neurodevelopmental diagnosis can access the support they need when and where they need it. This commitment focuses centrally on the needs of adults. [Out of scope]

6. The 100 days commitment specifically proposed bringing stakeholders together to establish timelines and route-maps for adoption and integration of both the RCPsych ND pathway. [Out of scope]

7. . [Out of scope]. However, there are some immediate challenges posed by the terms of the manifesto commitment that will need to be worked through given that the focus of the RCPsychiS 4-level model is to address pressure affecting support for adult ND where universal provision is lacking. [Out of scope]

[Out of scope]

Work to Date

[Out of scope]

<u>Neurodevelopmental Support</u>

14. A joint SG and COSLA review of the ND Specification for Children and Young People set out a programme of agreed actions, which are now being taken forward. An established cross-sector CYP ND Taskforce, was established in mid-2025 to take this work forward. It is actively supporting SG and COSLA to progress the actions from the review. The Taskforce is co-chaired by ADES and an NHS Chief Executives (from NHS Highland) and co-owned by Scottish Government and COSLA.

15. For adult ND, there is currently no active stakeholder network held by SG. However, NAIT has a number of networks and communities of practice available to support ongoing work as we develop the adult ND pathway.

Actions to meet the 100 days commitments

16. [Out of scope] The other will involve a separate roundtable to explore the timeline and route-map for taking forward the 4-level ND pathway for adults.

[Out of scope]

<u>RCPychiS 4-level Model</u>

[Out of scope]

8. Implementation of the RCPsychiS model will require significant financial investment. The RCPsych estimates costs of around £20 million per year, but further work is required to understand whether that figure is credible.

Quality Assurance

9. This submission has been approved by Lewis Hedge, Deputy Director, Curriculum and Qualifications and Gavin Gray, Deputy Director, Improving Mental Health and Neurodevelomental Services.

[Out of scope]

(i)Continuation of the two existing linked workstreams referred to in paragraphs 14-16 above(ie one relating to staged intervention and the other to adult ND) with a view to producing the routemap(s) for Ministers approval within the 100 day period.

[Out of scope]

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Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers Copy List	**For Action**	**For Information Portfolio interest**	**For Information Constituency interest**	**For Information General awareness**
Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic	X			
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Care		X		
Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs	X			

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