



Councillor Tony Buchanan
Children and Young People Spokesperson

4 November 2025

Clare Haughey (MSP)

Convener

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh

By email: HSCS.Committee@parliament.scot

Dear Convener,

COSLA welcomed the opportunity to respond to the committee's recent call for views on ADHD and autism pathways and support, recognising this as a critical area of current concern, and focus of work in order to provide appropriate and sustainable support for our communities.

Noting that the subsequent evidence sessions have made reference both to the role of education, the [joint COSLA /Scottish Government review](#) of the implementation of the Neurodevelopmental Service Specification and the Taskforce progressing its recommendations, I would like to reiterate a number of points, with a particular focus on support for children and young people.

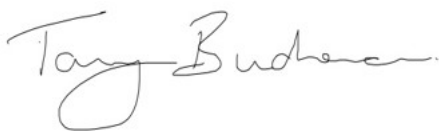
- Education and school support provision in Scotland is underpinned by the long-standing commitment to the Getting It Right For Every Child approach, and the Additional Support for Learning Act. This intends to provide support for children and young people when they need it to help them reach their full potential. This legislation and approach does not require a diagnosis and in the majority of cases schools will have sought to meet the needs of a child in the education setting before a diagnosis is undertaken.
- The review of the implementation of the neurodevelopmental service specification, published in 2025 found that new processes/ pathways for neurodevelopmental support and diagnosis 'front loaded' work into school settings resulting in significant challenges for education; with educational staff facing increased expectations and workload, including leading the neurodivergent assessment pathway. Respondents indicated that they did not have sufficient time, capacity, support or resources to service this, and the wider requirements of their role, fully. This sits within a wider context of significant demand, and related challenge for Additional Support for Learning (ASL) within

education. It is also important to note a great deal of education spend is directed, for example to maintain teacher numbers. Local authorities are therefore limited in where they can invest to support learners through other means.

- The review noted the importance of services such as family support. We also recognise the importance of wider locally based opportunities such as sports and learning opportunities that reduce isolation and foster communities of support. Many such opportunities are provided through local authorities who are currently subject to significant fiscal challenge.
- We welcomed the recommendation within the implementation review to consider a funding model in the medium term. However, COSLA has strongly reflected that any work in this area will only be to the scale of the available resource to support it. Further, we have stressed the need to ensure appropriate resource for this work at a national and local level in order that substantive progress can be made.

In considering current and future pathways for neurodevelopmental support we must continue to be mindful of the impact of increased awareness of neurodevelopmental conditions and the associated increase in demand for support and diagnosis across the whole system. This includes education. Any asks of Local Government, including schools, must be both appropriate and fully resourced so that the needs of our children and young people continue to be met.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Buchanan'.

Councillor Tony Buchanan

Children and Young People Spokesperson