

The ASN (Additional Support Needs) Learning Network – target population

1. Introduction

A theme of network discussions since its inception in October 2021 has been the target population and subsequently the number of people across the South of Scotland that the work aims to make a difference for.

Although the term additional support needs was used when the network was established the target population is autistic people and people with learning disabilities.

Members have cited an invisible population and the challenges created by not knowing how many people with learning disabilities and autistic people live locally for planning and support.

The Fraser of Allander Institute stated in their Scotland's employment landscape for people with learning disabilities 2021 report that:

“Lack of data is part of the reason why people with learning disabilities often feel invisible in policy debates.”¹

Three data sources were looked at to inform this paper:

1. Scotland's census (analysis of the 2011 census has been carried out but the 2022 census analysis is still to be published)
2. Learning Disabilities Statistics Scotland
3. The pupil census. Annual school data compiled by local authorities and the Scottish Government.

Data for these three sources is collected for different purposes and does not include the same cohorts. For example, every household has a legal obligation to complete the census and it is a national collection based on self or proxy reporting so will generate a different cohort when compared to the Learning Disabilities Statistics Scotland which is based on people accessing services.

For the pupil census, recognition of learning disabilities or autism as the reason for additional support needs opens up access to additional support for learning so there are benefits to children and young people being recorded.

The purpose of this paper is to provide information and opinion with network members in line with the network's ambition to:

- help to identify where gaps are in service provision
- act as a credible reference group for statutory sector partners

¹ <https://fraserofallander.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Learning-disabilities-employment-report-final.pdf>

- help to inform the regional economic strategy and therefore maximise economic investment into South of Scotland through funding.

2. Estimated numbers

Dumfries and Galloway

At the point of the 2011 census the population size was **151,324**. Of this:

- There were 718 people of 151,324 with a learning disability
- 543 of 16-64 year olds with a learning disability
- 52 people with a learning disability in paid employment
- There were **8.7% of adults with learning disabilities with paid employment, compared with 55.9% of all adults**
- 953 of 151,324 (0.6%) people are autistic
- 379 of 16-64 year olds were autistic
- 68 autistic people in paid employment
- 3% of known autistic adults have paid employment, compared with 55.9% of all adults

The Scottish Borders

At the point of the 2011 census the population size was **113,870**. Of this:

- There were 612 people of 113,870 with a learning disability
- 426 of 16-64 year olds with a learning disability
- 55 people with a learning disability in paid employment
- There were **11.3% of adults with learning disabilities with paid employment, compared with 58.2% of all adults**
- 635 of 113,870 people were autistic
- 305 of 16-64 year olds were autistic
- 93 autistic people in paid employment
- 9% of known autistic adults have paid employment, compared with 58.2% of all adults

3. Conclusion

This brief paper highlights the difficulties that planners and service providers have in accessing accurate information about people with learning disabilities and autistic people in local areas, in order to be well informed about what employment gaps there are and who could fill these.

- Of a combined population between the two local authorities of **265,194** there were **2,169 people** between 16-64 years old who reported or were reported as having a learning disability or autism.
- Only **268** were in paid employment.

- The percentage of known people with learning disabilities and autistic people with paid employment varied between **3-11.3%** compared to between **55.9-58.2% of all adults**.

The analysis of the 2022 census will be a useful gauge of any change.

Appendix

1) Analysis of the 2011 Census

This is taken from the [Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory](#) which is based on the returns to the 2011 national Census. The 2011 Census was the first time people had the chance to say whether or not they had a learning disability and/or autism.

Dumfries and Galloway

In 2011 the population size was 151,324.

Learning disability

Population data²
718 people of 151,324 with a learning disability
0-15 year olds - 122
16-64 year olds - 543
Over 65 year olds - 53
Employment data
377 long term sick or disabled
52 in paid employment
8.7% of adults with learning disabilities have paid employment, compared with 55.9% of all adults

Autism

Population data
953 of 151,324 (0.6%) with autism
0-15 year olds - 548
16-64 year olds - 379
Over 65 year olds - 26
Employment data
126 long term sick or disabled
68 in paid employment
3% of known autistic adults have paid employment, compared with 56% of all adults

²Source: <https://www.sldo.ac.uk/census-2011-information/autism/local-authorities/dumfries-and-galloway/>

In the whole population of Dumfries and Galloway, 0.6% of people are known to be autistic. The prevalence of autism in the 0-15 age group is 2.2%. This increase in prevalence reflects availability of diagnostic services for autism, which have improved considerably over the last two decades.

The Scottish Borders

In 2011 the population size was 113,870.

Learning disabilities

Population data
612 of 113,870
0-15 year olds - 127
16-64 year olds - 426
Over 65 year olds - 59
Employment data
260 long term sick or disabled
55 in paid employment
11.3% of adults with learning disabilities have paid employment, compared with 58.2% of all adults

Autism

Population data
635 of 113,870
0-15 year olds - 322
16-64 year olds - 305
Over 65 year olds - 8
Employment data
156 long term sick or disabled
93 in paid employment
9% of known autistic adults have paid employment, compared with 58.2% of all adults

In the whole population of Scottish Borders, 0.6% of people were known to be autistic. The prevalence of autism in the 0-15 age group is 1.7%. This reflects availability of diagnostic services for autism, which have improved considerably over the last two decades.

2) Learning Disability Statistics Scotland

Learning Disability Statistics Scotland (LDSS) provides information on adults with learning disabilities who were known to Scottish local authorities in the 3 years before the report date. Information is included on demographics, accommodation, employment, further education and day centre use. This data is from the [Learning Disability Statistics Scotland 2019 report](#).

In Dumfries and Galloway (data relates to between April 2018 and March 2019) there were **900 adults** (aged 16 or over not in full time education) with learning disabilities who were known to services.

Additionally as this is a count of people known to services, it suggests the actual number of people with learning disabilities and those with greater support needs is likely to be much higher.

According to the LDSS report in The Scottish Borders in 2019, there were 555 adults (aged 16 or over not in full time education) with learning disabilities who were known to services.

3) Pupils with additional support needs

The definition used in education for children with additional support needs is broad and includes a child or young person who, for any reason, needs extra or different support to benefit from their education.

A pupil census is carried out every year and the 2021 data for the two local authorities reported the following:

Dumfries and Galloway

- 3,059 secondary pupils with additional support needs (of 8,594 pupils)
- The reasons for support for secondary pupils with Additional Support Needs by local authority in 2021 reported that there were 106 pupils with learning disabilities and 260 autistic pupils.

Scottish Borders

- 2,584 secondary pupils with additional support needs (of 6,615)
- The reasons for support for secondary pupils with Additional Support Needs by local authority in 2021 reported that there were 102 pupils with learning disabilities and 180 autistic pupils.

Pupil census: supplementary statistics Scottish Government March 2022
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>