

Report on demographic growth and the increase in the percentage of pupils with additional support for learning (ASL) needs and Complex needs (CN) in Midlothian

Report by Dr Grace Vickers, Head of Education

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to highlight the significant increase in ASL & CN needs within Midlothian and to request that Cabinet increase the funding in the 2018/19 budget to reflect the 7.93% increase in recorded ASL needs.

2 Background

2.1 Midlothian has now been identified as the fastest growing local authority in Scotland. The most recent NRScotland statistics highlight the following:

- The mid-2017 population estimate in Midlothian was 90,090, an increase of 1,480 over the corresponding mid-2016 figure of 88,610.
- The population increase in Midlothian between mid-2016 and mid-2017 was 1.67%, which was the largest increase in any of Scotland's local authorities. For comparison, the corresponding figure for Scotland as a whole was 0.37% and the second-fastest growing area was Edinburgh, at 1.19%.
- The 1.67% increase figure in Midlothian is a combination of a 1.43% increase due to net migration and 0.24% due to natural change (births minus deaths). Both of these figures are the highest of all Scotland's councils.
- Midlothian's population has increased by 12.1% between mid-2007 and mid-2017. This is the second-largest increase of all Scotland's councils. The biggest increase has been in Edinburgh (12.5%), while the corresponding figure for Scotland was 4.9%.

The above points can be considered with the latest population *projections*, which are 2016-based. They show an expected growth of 13.3% from 2016 – 2026, which is the largest in Scotland by some distance and compares to a Scottish average of 3.2%. Figure 1 below shows the percentage change in population for all local authorities from 2016 to 2026.

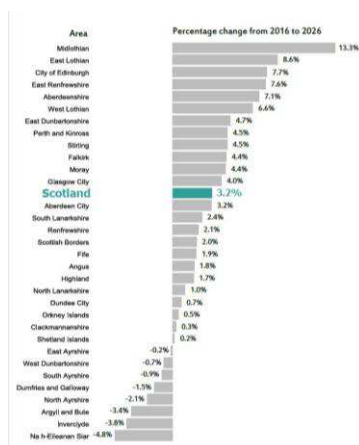


Figure 1

In terms of absolute numbers, they show a projected increase in Midlothian's population from 88,610 in 2016 to 100,410 in 2026, which is a rise of 11,800.

The NRS publishes a PDF of infographics and has an interactive online site that allows variables to be adjusted and comparisons with the national average and other local authorities. The following figures come from these web links:

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/nrs-visual/mid-17-pop-est/mid-year-pop-est-17-info.pdf>

<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/population-estimates/>

The high rate of growth is expected to continue as outlined in figure 2 which shows percentage increase in population in Midlothian compared to Scotland over the 25 year period from 2016 to 2041. The graph shows the average projected population increase.

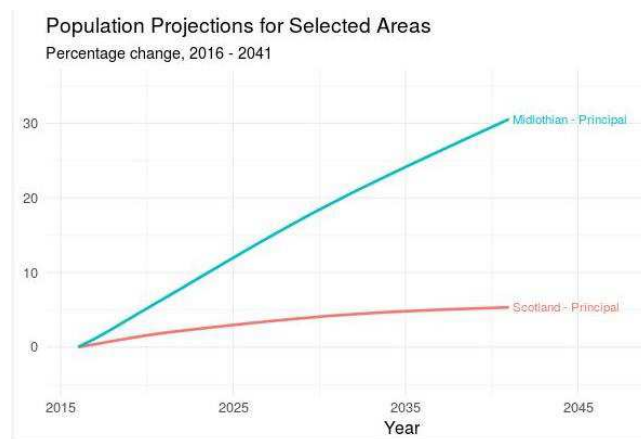


Figure 2

Breaking the population down into age groups highlights that the increases are significantly higher than the Scottish average in the under 15 and 25-44 and 75 and over age groups as outlined in Figure 3 overleaf:

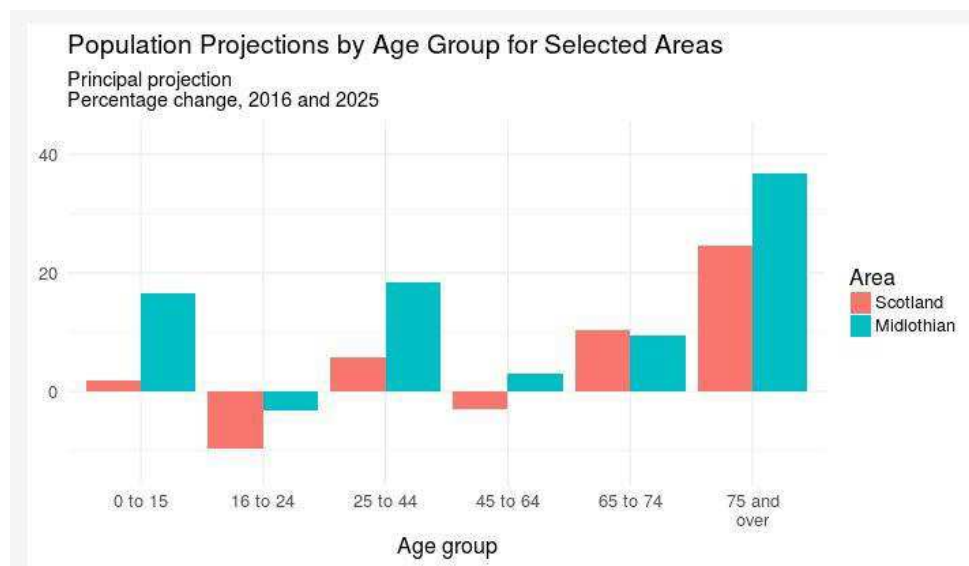


Figure 3

The full data can be accessed at the following link:<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates/mid-2017>

2.2 ASL in Midlothian: the Inclusion Review and the National drivers

As part of the inclusion review one of the tasks was to make sense of historic ASL funding against the pupil population. It was established that the budget was based on 18.6% ASL from 2014/15 and that any subsequent increase in ASL was not then reflected in the budget assigned.

A recent research document published by the Centre for Research in Education Inclusion & Diversity (CREID), part of Moray House School of Education at the University of Edinburgh found that in 2007 the percentage of pupils with ASL in Scottish schools was **5.28%**, and in 2017 the percentage of pupils with ASL in Scottish schools has risen to **24.89%**. This has also been confirmed in Scottish Government publications.

In Midlothian Council the latest data pulled from SEEMIS identifies the percentage of pupils with ASL at **26.53% which is currently slightly above the national average.**

This increase is in part due to the change in legislation regarding the presumption of mainstream and the very clear steer from the DFM stating:

“The Scottish approach to inclusion is already unparalleled, our legislative and policy commitments are amongst the most extensive in the world. However, we must improve the experience of inclusion for all children and young people, whether that is in mainstream, special or shared settings, if we are to deliver on the promise of such an ambitious framework.”

There is currently a national consultation on the presumption of mainstream, and inclusion and equity will remain very much at the forefront of thinking when all Scottish schools are trying to close the attainment gap, and reporting on the NIF drivers.

When Saltersgate School was expanded into St. Davids High School, the pupil numbers increased significantly. We now have established a tracking document that shows the two spikes in pupil numbers and how we track them through over the years to predict allocation needs. This means, for session 2018/2019, we were confident with the number of pupils moving out of Saltersgate and enhanced complex needs provisions that we had enough space to accommodate the referrals and pupils transitioning from P7 into S1.

However following on from the Placement Allocation Group (PAG) meeting on 22nd February there were 37 referrals for pupils moving into Primary 1 with complex needs, which far exceeds the historic number of requests we have typically received which tends to be around 15. This has resulted in Saltersgate and all Primary & Secondary complex needs provisions being at capacity with no available spaces.

3 Budget Position 2018/2019

Through a budget analysis exercise, it was identified that the budget allocation for session 2014/2015 was based on 18.6% ASL. As stated before this figure has now risen to 26.53%. However the allocated budget has not increased in line with this. Therefore an additional **7.93%** of pupils are now requiring support with their ASL need. This means, if we do not increase the % allocation we will provide less than **2hrs support per week** to each child with an ASL need.

For the complex needs provisions we are now in a staff: pupil ratio which is at its highest, based on the SNCT guidance document for supporting pupils with complex needs.

4 Risk

There is significant risk to the Council when allocating support to schools, if we do not have enough support in line with National policy to provide the presumption of mainstream education, and ensure equity of access to curriculum for our most vulnerable young people, then the likely hood of expensive external placing request will increase. This in turn could lead to be an increase in references to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal (ASNT) and if these are refused, which will also have a significant cost to the council.

The risk around complex needs is even more significant, if even one pupil comes through at the next PAG meeting in May 2018 who require the enhanced levels of support we cannot place them. Additionally if any new pupils move into Midlothian with complex needs we cannot accommodate them in any provision. For Saltersgate and all provisions with the exception of Gore Glen PS there is no space to add an additional class. However Gore Glen has the physical space to open another complex needs class, but there would be staffing implications for this, this requires; 1 additional class teacher and 60 hours of Learning Assistant time per week.

Due to the provisions being at capacity we also have significant risk around staff absences and being able to cover the classes. If we had 1 more class teacher at this point, that teacher could be split between the two smallest provisions to provide some breathing space, and then they could be allocated to cover absences, and if needed to staff an additional class in Gore Glen.

If Cabinet does not agree to the recommendations there will be a significant risk of overspend within the budget to fulfil our statutory duties.

Moving forward this academic year we will be working closely with early year's teams to plot next year's arriving complex needs pupils against those leaving complex needs provision, however Midlothian is facing a significant rise in children with complex needs and this will result in us having to open another primary & secondary complex needs provisions imminently: I will bring another paper forward with the plan and associated costs as soon as possible.

4.1 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

4.2 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Reducing inequality of educational provision and support for our learners.

4.3 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Reducing inequality will impact on closing the gap and therefore outcomes for all.

4.4 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Schools will work with parents and wider partners to ensure best use and allocation of support and resources.

4.5 Ensuring Equalities

There are significant equality implications arising from this report, around access to curriculum.

4.6 IT Issues

When we open any new provisions, these will require IT installation, computers, internet and software / adaptive technology for supporting alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) within complex needs. There is also a requirement for us to ensure our ASL IT stays up to date.

5. Recommendations

Cabinet is requested to note:

1. The content of the report.
2. The rate and type of demographic growth in Midlothian.
3. That planning will now commence to open a minimum of 1 primary and 1 secondary complex needs provision to meet our statutory duty to provide education to pupils with complex needs and a further report will be brought to Council.
4. Forward this report to Council in order to recommend:
 - a) An increase in the 2018/19 budget allocation for ASL to reflect the 7.93% increase in ASL need, 478hrs per week based on 6031hrs allocated this session at a cost of £288,712.
 - b) Increase the Complex needs staffing by 1 FTE Class teacher and 60 Learning Assistant hours per week for session 2018/19, at a cost of £48,095 for the Class teacher and £36,240 for the learning assistants.
 - c) That the ASL budget allocated each year should increase to reflect the % ASL need identified for that specific year.

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