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Inclusive education in Scotland: Key Informants' Perspectives

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- Officially, social justice and school inclusion form central part of Scottish educational agenda
- SNP administration – goal is to create ‘wealthier & fairer Scotland’ – education at centre of this goal
- This presentation explores key informants’ accounts of trends in ASN in Scotland including:
 - (i) expansion of numbers and categories,
 - (ii) reduction in proportion of children with statutory support plans
 - (iii) austerity and the crisis of the welfare state

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Key informants

- Senior Officer, Scottish Government, Support and Wellbeing Unit
- Co-ordinator, Enquire, National Advice and Information Service
- Solicitor, Govan Law Centre, Chair of Scottish Government Advisory Group for Additional Support for Learning
- Senior Officer, Additional Support for Learning Services, Fife
- Senior Officer, Additional Support for Learning Services, Edinburgh
- President, Additional Support Tribunals for Scotland
- Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People, .



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Existing broad principles still in place



- Presumption that child will be placed in mainstream school – but with following caveats:
- If mainstream placement would involve unreasonable public expenditure
- If mainstream placement would be against interests of child or other children in the class
- If parents request a special school placement

Special schools will continue to cater for small minority (about 1% of the population)

Some city authorities like Glasgow and Edinburgh re-investing in special schools to avoid placement in independent special schools, grant aided special schools and outwith authority (deemed to be too expensive)

Since 2007 no ring-fencing of ASN funding – part of block grant from SG to LAs – funds allocated by LAs to schools



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Key policy developments: Children and Young People Bill



Children and Young People Bill – mentioned by all interviewees.

Legislation to underpin *Getting it Right for Every Child* But confusion about target group - **all** children or **some** children in difficulty

All children will have Named Person to be point of contact and to co-ordinate services. **Some** children (those whose 'wellbeing' is compromised) will have Child's Plan.

Wellbeing defined as: safe; healthy; achieving; nurtured; active; respected; responsible; and included.

Duty placed on health and social work to 'co-operate' with education in providing services (already have duty to 'help' education)



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Key policy developments: Children and Young People Bill



Range of measures intended to boost implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (originally separate children's rights legislation promised).

Duty on Scottish ministers to promote public awareness and understanding of rights of children

Duty on LAs and health boards to prepare a children's services plan

Greater powers given to Commissioner for Children and Young People to investigate institutions failing to adhere to principles of UNCRC.

Children & young people regarded right of appeal in relation to decision of Children's Hearing Panel to place child in secure accommodation.



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Other policy developments



Doran Review of services for children with complex difficulties – removal of rolling funding for grant aided special schools (Donaldson’s School for the Blind, Royal Blind School etc.)

Grant aided schools will have to bid for funds and demonstrate that they are providing a national service.

Extension of reasonable adjustments element of Equality Act – duty placed on education providers (including independent schools) to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled children.

Schools failing to provide auxiliary aids and services will be guilty of discrimination.



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KIs' comments on new policy developments



Govan Law Centre informant: Lack of clarity about qualification criteria for Child's Plan

Lack of clarity about fit of Child's Plan with Co-ordinated Support Plan-control shifting from education to other agencies?

Ambiguity in relation to new duties on health and social work to 'co-operate' with education – already have duty to help – difficult to enforce.

Is new legislation needed or would regulation have worked? Will rights of disabled children be diminished?

Edinburgh City Council – Are CSPs still needed?

Children's Commissioner – welcomed extended remit.



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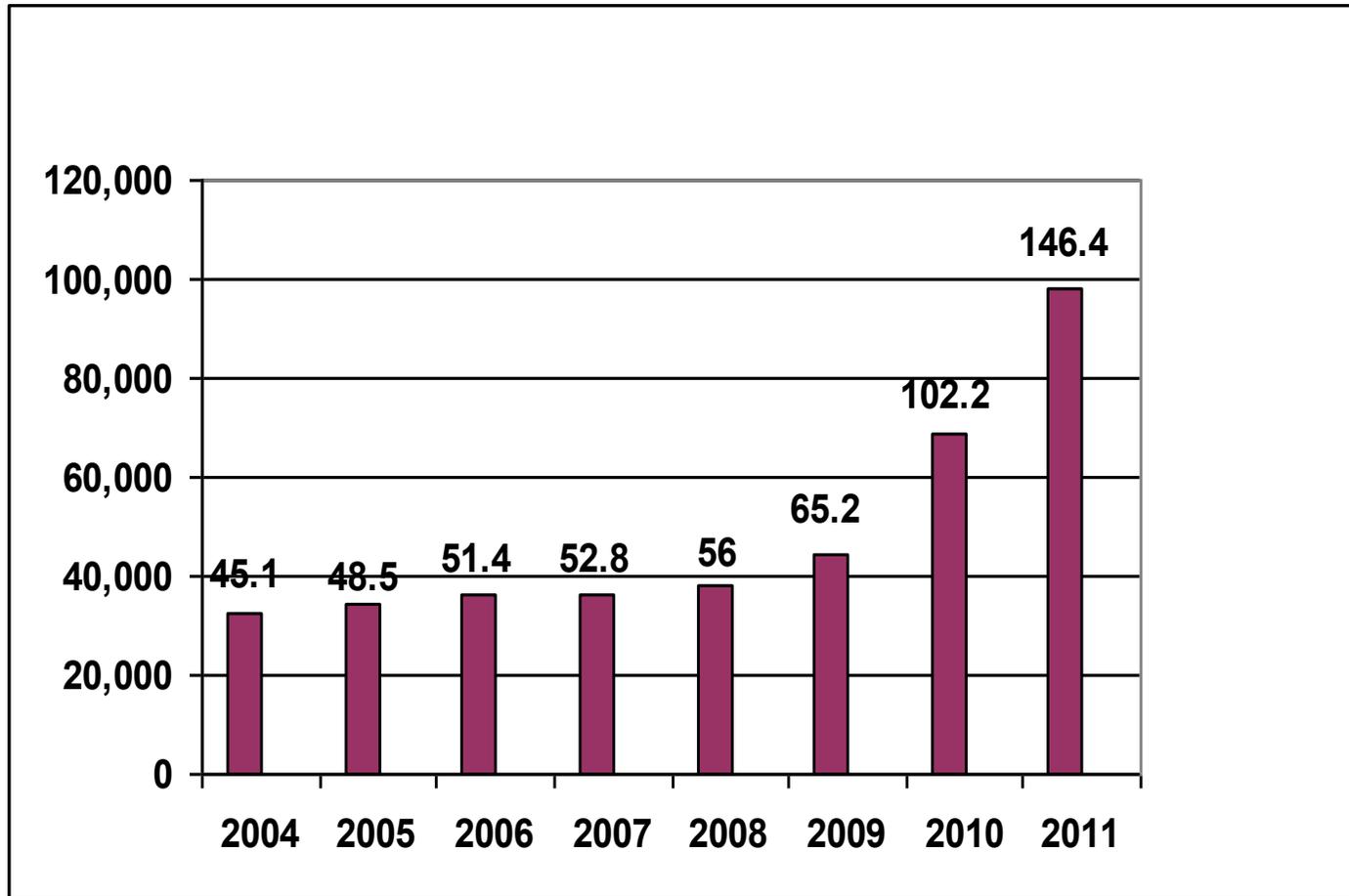


Trends in official statistics and KIs' interpretations



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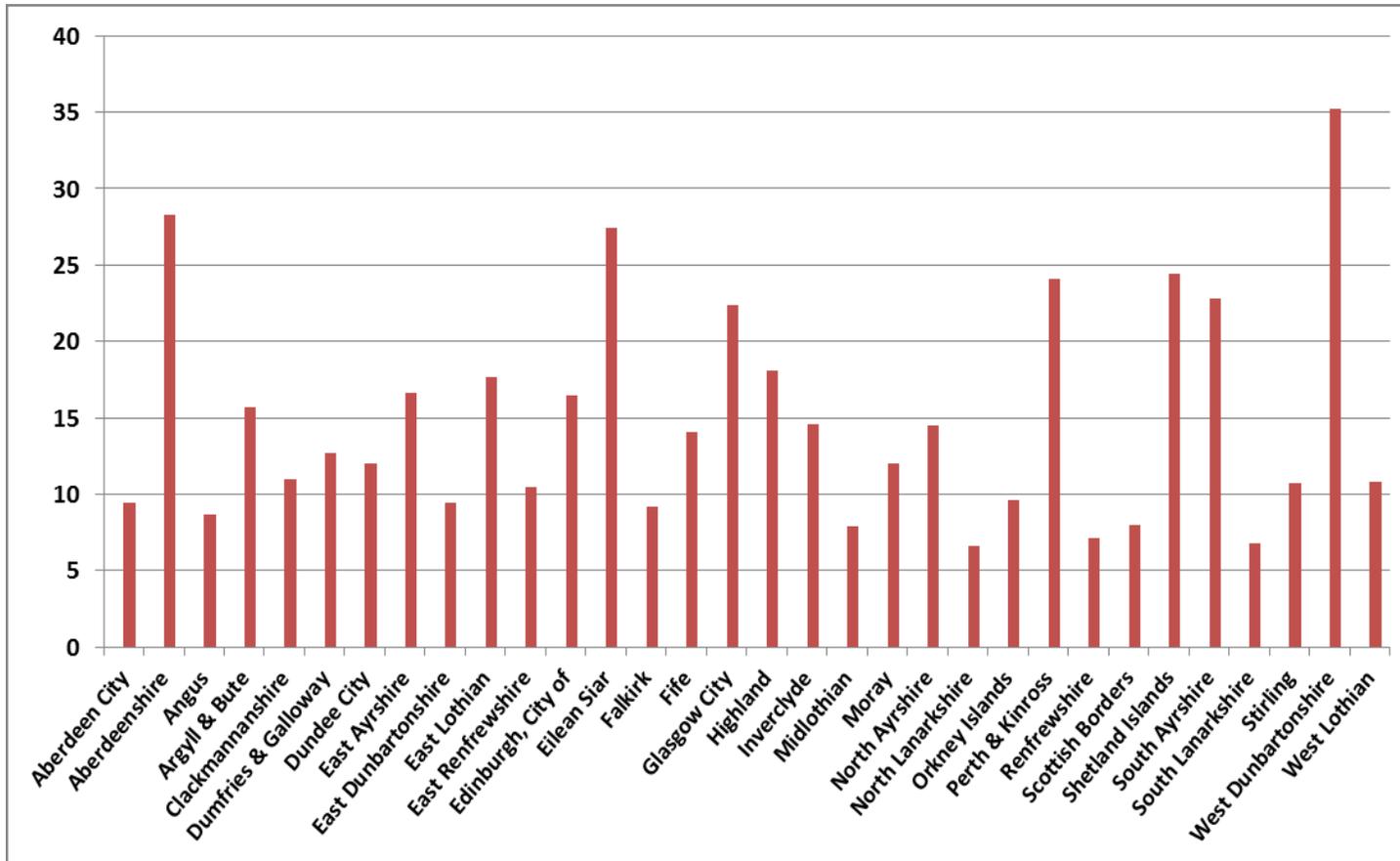
Increase in number of pupils identified as having ASN in Scotland- further increase in 2012 to 17.5% of pupil population





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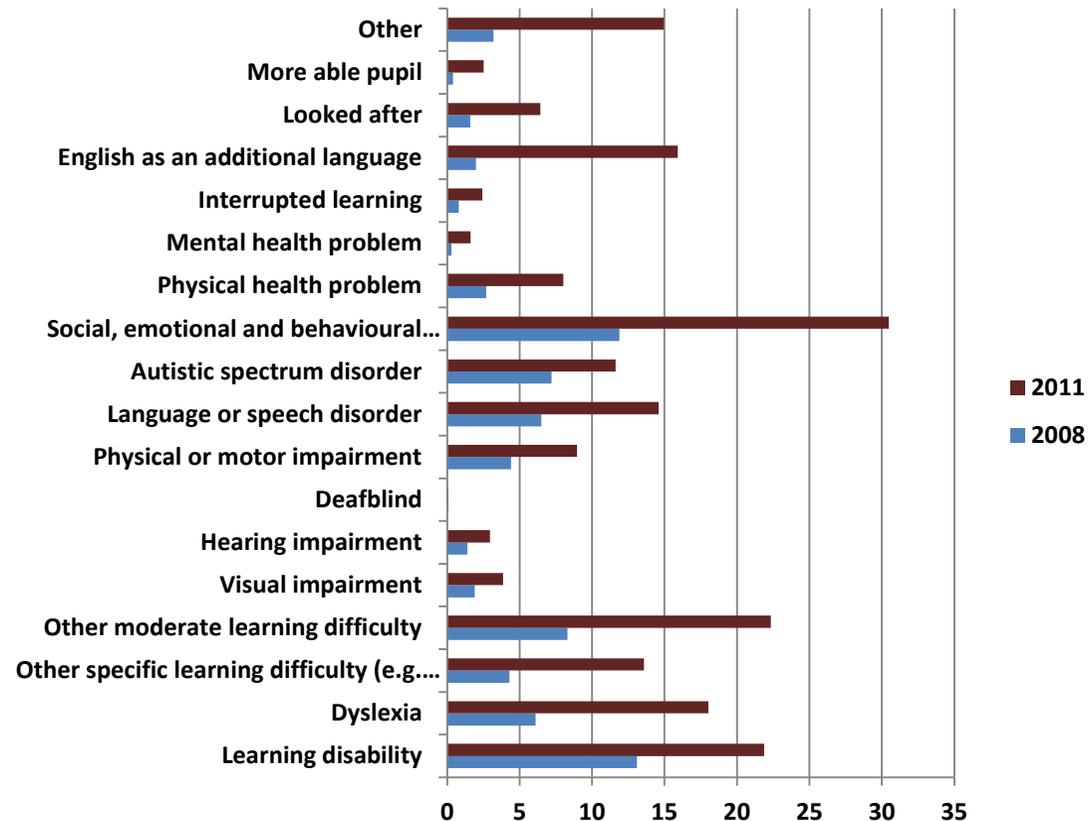
Wide LA variation in percentage of total pupil population identified as having ASN





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Marked growth in certain categories plus increase in categories used (young carers, bereaved, short term support e.g. broken arm)





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KIs' views of expansion of ASN numbers



- SG informant – better recording – goal of 2004 ASfL legislation and 2009 amendment on data collection – reflects good practice - assumption that identifying more children means that better support is being delivered
- Other informants – artefact of changes in Management Information System following amended legislation - more boxes to be ticked on School Census form
- LA informant raised questions about meaning of identifying 37% of pupil population as having ASN (West Dunbartonshire) – need to reconsidered what is included in 'normal' school provision



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KIs' views of expansion of ASN categories



- Enquire respondent – concern that expansion of categories will lead to neglect of children with learning difficulties and disabilities
- Govan Law Centre respondent – good to recognise new groups e.g. young carers.
- LAs still neglecting looked after children despite 2009 amendment to ASfL legislation – requirement for all looked after children to be assessed for ASN. Few CSPs opened for this group



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Specific approach in Fife

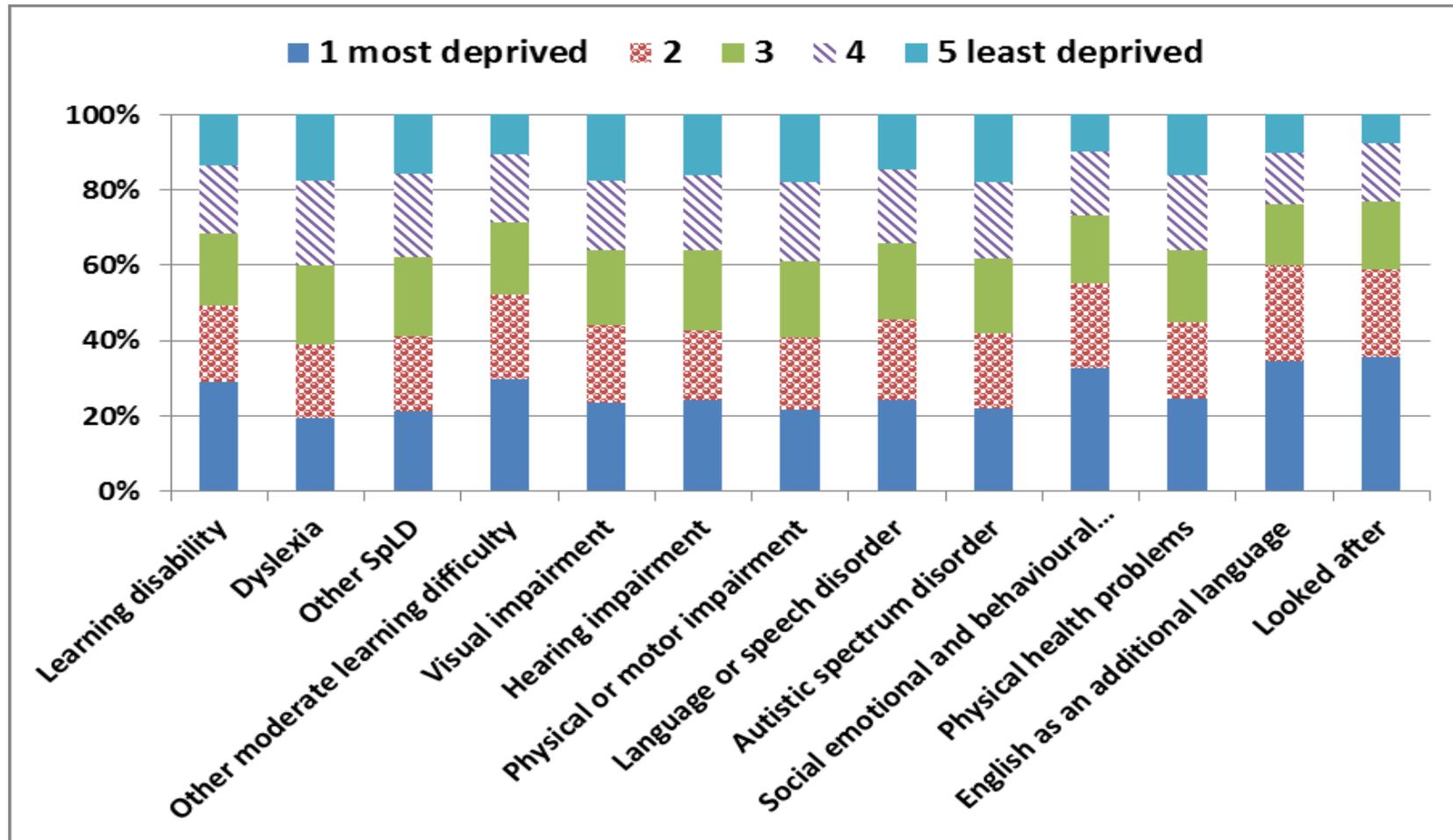


- Recent election of Labour council has produced different policy priorities – much greater recognition of role of social deprivation in creation of ASN
- Channelling of additional resources into schools in areas of social deprivation (factor of 5 built in to resource allocation)
- Closure of small schools in rural areas – much higher per capita costs
- Reconfiguring of primary and secondary school catchment areas to achieve better social mix



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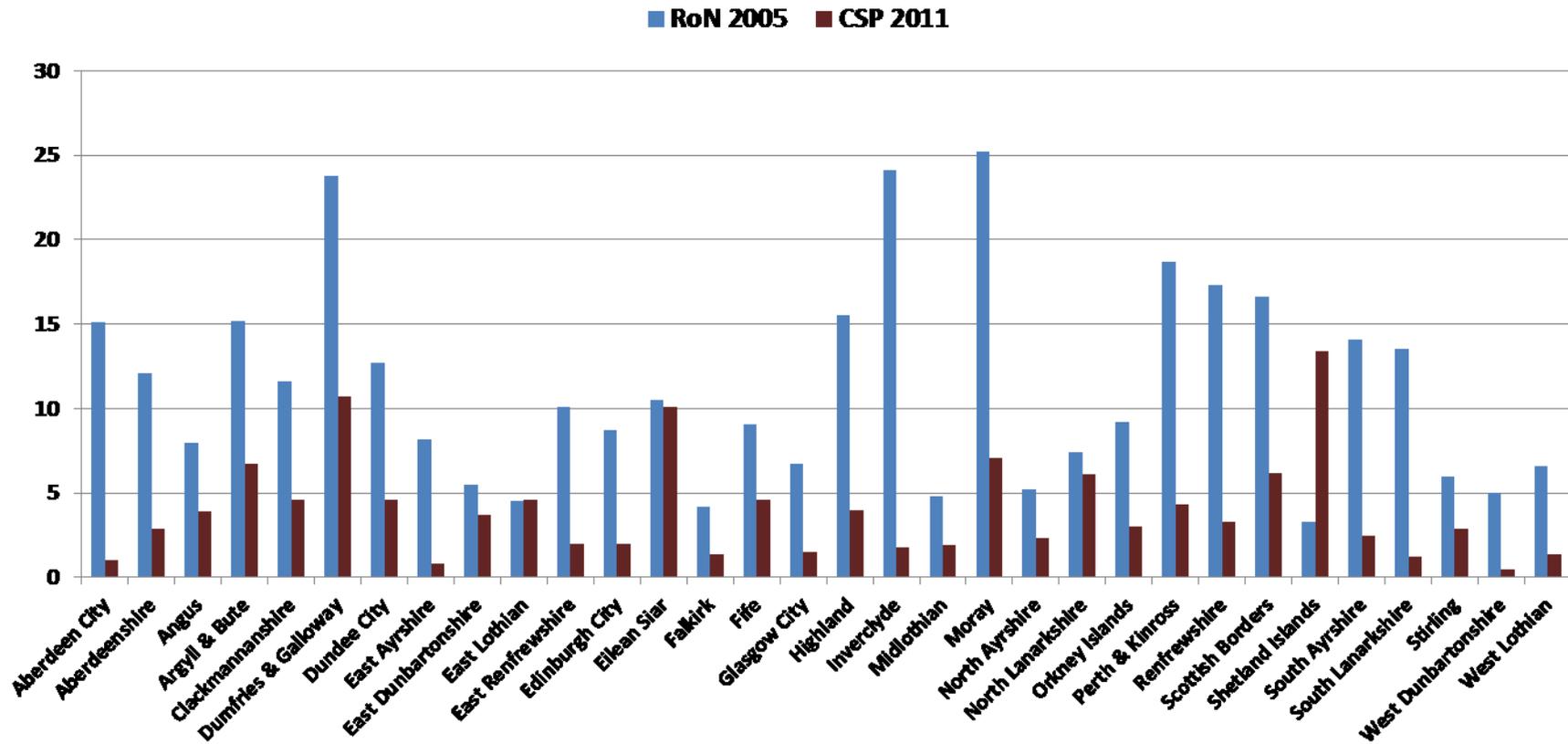
Analysis of patterns of identification of ASN suggests association between social construction and certain categories - negative effects of material deprivation or social stereotyping?





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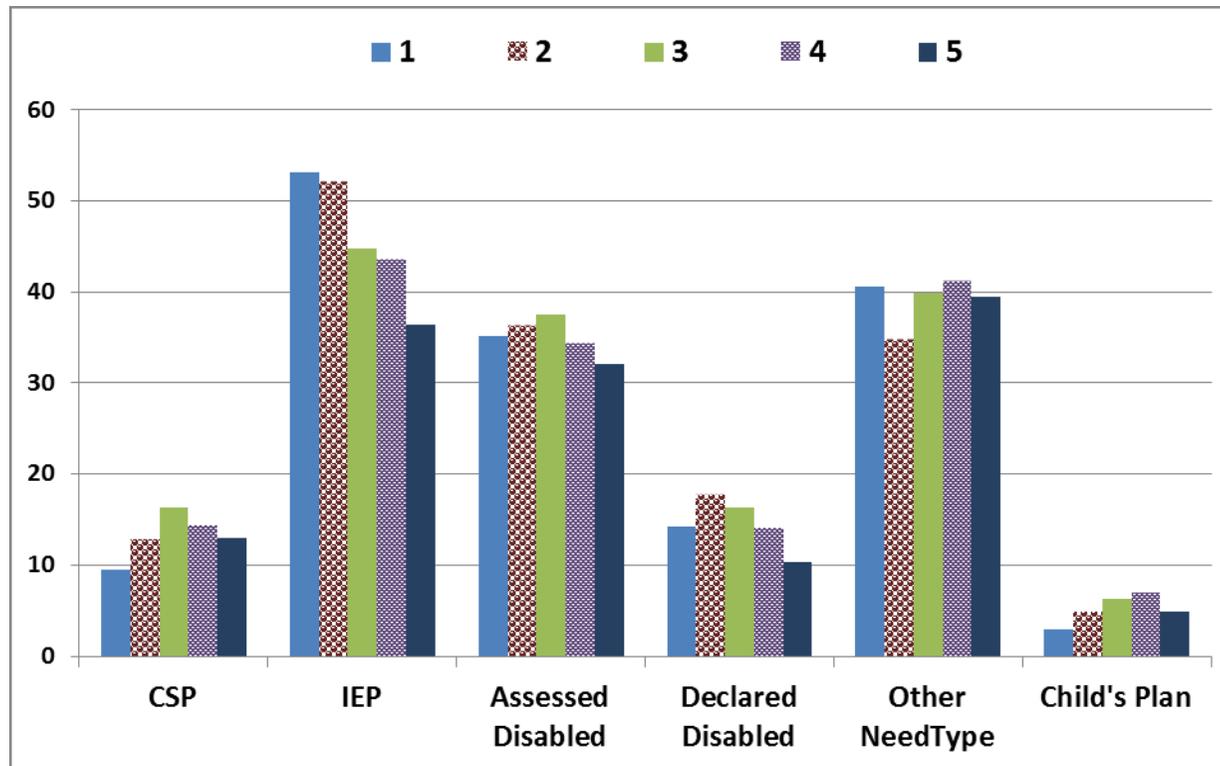
Decreasing use of statutory support plans over time – reluctance to attach funds to individual children





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Higher proportion of children in more affluent neighbourhoods have CSPs



Source: Scottish Government



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KIs' views of accountability



- ASN Tribunal introduced through ASfL Act 2004 – mirrors SEN Tribunal in England but very strict criteria and few cases
- Earlier research suggested that tribunal resisted by LAs – seen as characterising English disputatious system – at odds with Scottish consensual approach – but supported by parents
- President of ASN Tribunals reported reduction in cases progressing to hearing – would welcome ‘doing himself out of a job’. Actively promoting mediation as alternative.
- Take Note – (service charged with supporting children and families in dispute with LA) discourages use of tribunal
- Govan Law Centre respondent favoured adjudication over tribunal – particularly if parents could get school ‘on side’.



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Decrease in exclusions – but strong association with deprivation – KIs believed there was increase in unofficial exclusions



	Cases of exclusions	Rate per 1,000 pupils
Assessed or declared disabled	798	70
Not assessed or declared disabled	29,114	44
Looked after by local authorities	3,875	355
Not looked after by local authorities	26,336	40
Pupils with Additional Support Needs	7,651	174
Pupils with no Additional Support Needs	22,261	35
Lowest 20% of SIMD (Most deprived)	13,076	91
Highest 20% of SIMD (Least deprived)	1,614	12



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Curriculum

- KIs - LAs trying to encourage increased differentiation
- Curriculum for Excellence – idea that all children will have same high level goals but that there will be much greater variation in type of learning – life skills and vocational education for some groups.
- Some academics argue that there is a danger that curriculum is ‘content-lite’ and children from poorer backgrounds will be deprived of access to high status knowledge – as enshrined in idea of Scottish democratic intellectualism.



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Conclusion

Increase in identification of children with ASN and expansion of categories – coupled with decline in resources targeted at individuals.

Also reduction in accountability to parents – coupled with greater emphasis on children's rights

In line with Deborah Stone's argument, significant reduction in LA resources necessitates shrinkage of category of disability.

Similar trends across developed world?