

Including children with additional support needs in Scottish schools using new technologies: Rhetoric and reality

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Scottish education and inclusion

The concept of additional support needs (ASN)

Expansion of the ASN population - pros and cons

Categories and implications

New technologies and curricular access

Lessons from the Covid-19 crisis

Conclusions

Scottish education and inclusion

All Scotland's state schools are comprehensive and co-educational.

80% of state schools are non-denominational – the other 20% are Catholic.

About 6% of children are educated in private fee-paying schools which are academically selective.

Special schools and units cater for about 1% of the total school population.

Since 2000, there has been a presumption that all children will be educated in their local mainstream school.

There are major social class differences in educational outcomes (OECD, 2008)

The concept of Additional Support Needs (ASN)

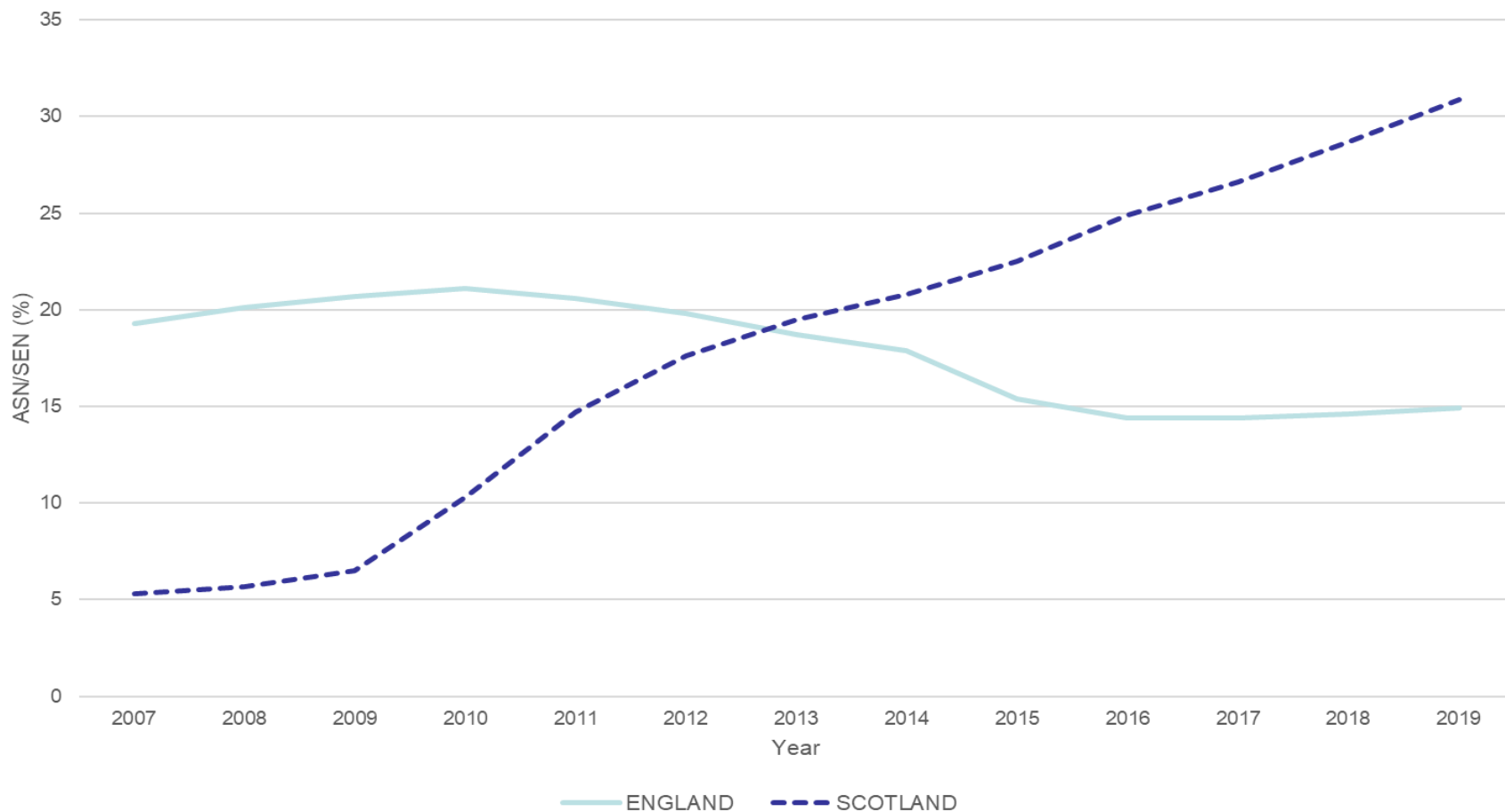
In 2004, the concept of additional support needs (ASN) replaced special educational needs (SEN).

ASN includes children who have difficulties in learning for any reason (social problems, physical/sensory impairments, learning disabilities).

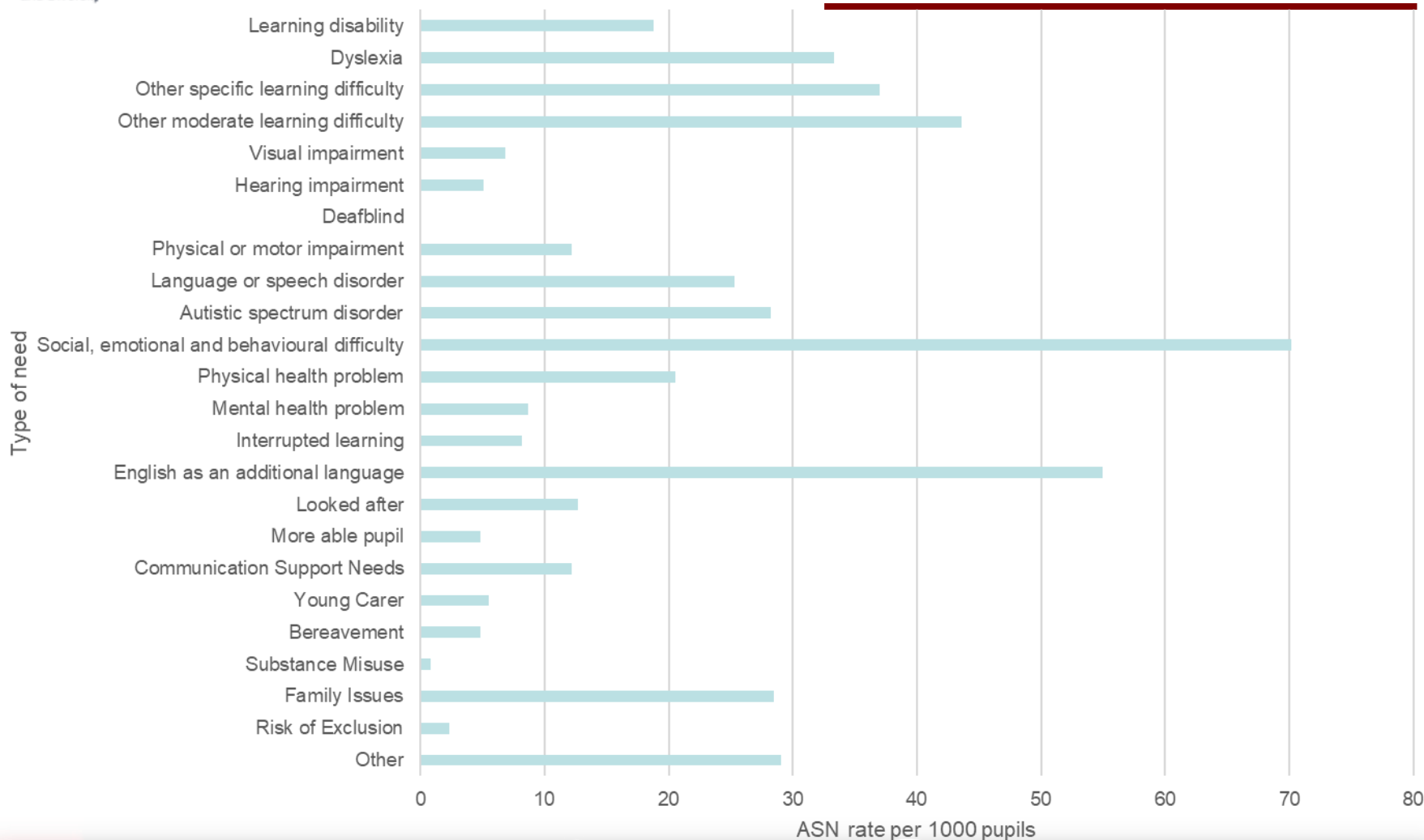
Between 2004 and 2020, the number of official ASN categories increased from 12 to 24, leading to a massive expansion of the ASN population.

Local authorities have a legal duty to provide additional support for those identified as having ASN – including access to new technologies and other reasonable adjustments.

Expansion of the Scottish ASN population (compared with decline of SEN population in England)



Categories used in Scotland

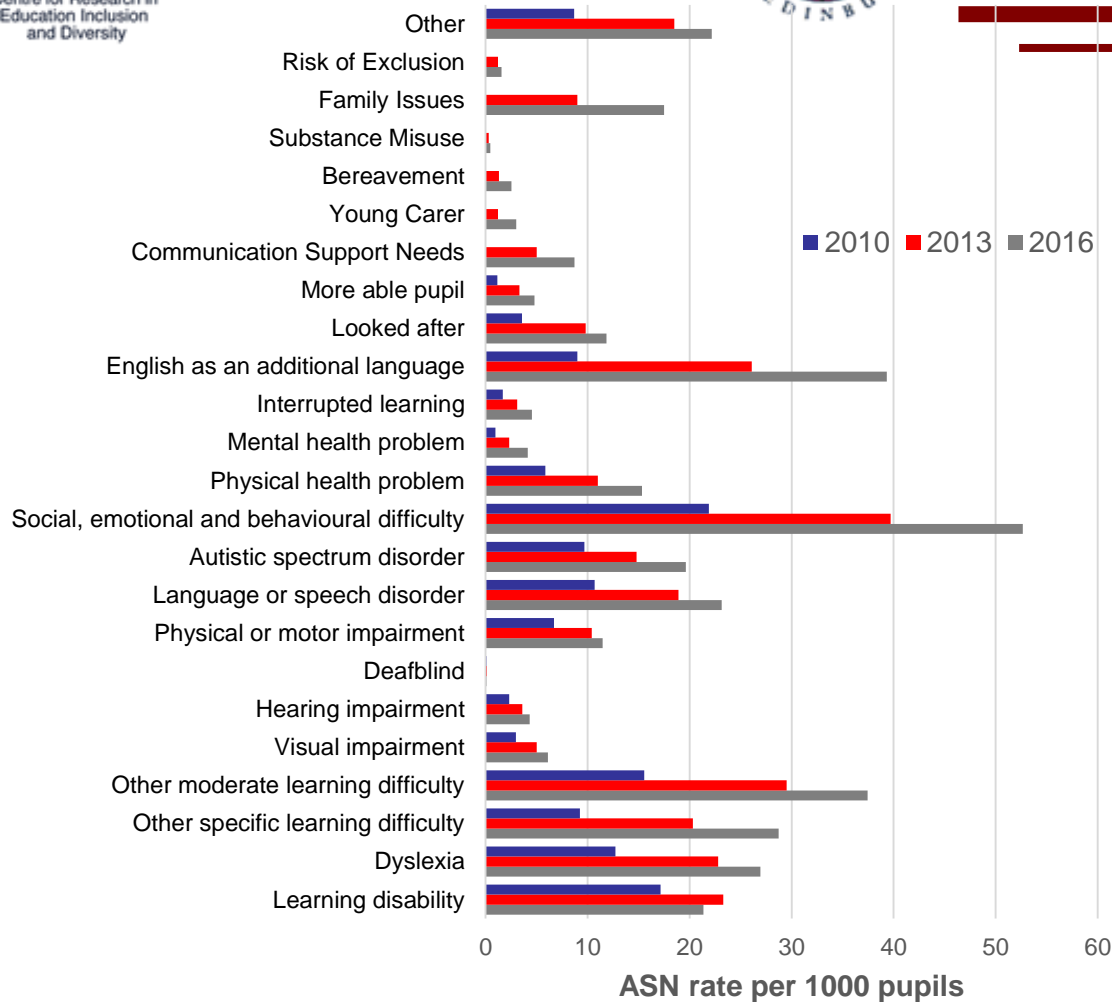




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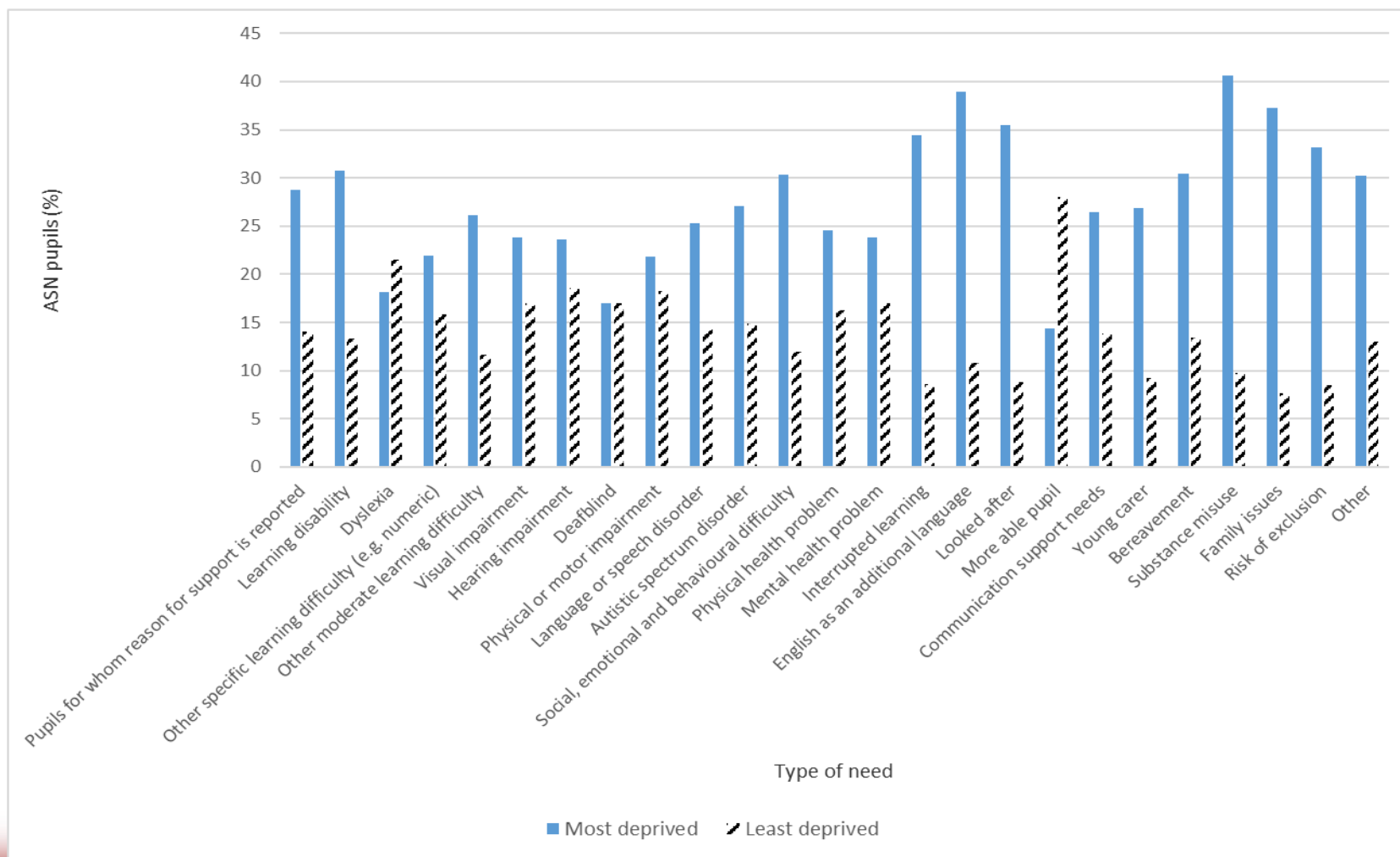


ASN pupils by each type of need in Scotland, 2010, 2013 and 2016



Source: Scottish Government, 2010, 2013, 2016.
Entries per category are not discrete; a child
with multiple needs will be recorded in
multiple categories.

Percentage of ASN pupils by type of difficulty in most deprived (SIMD1) and least deprived (SIMD 5)



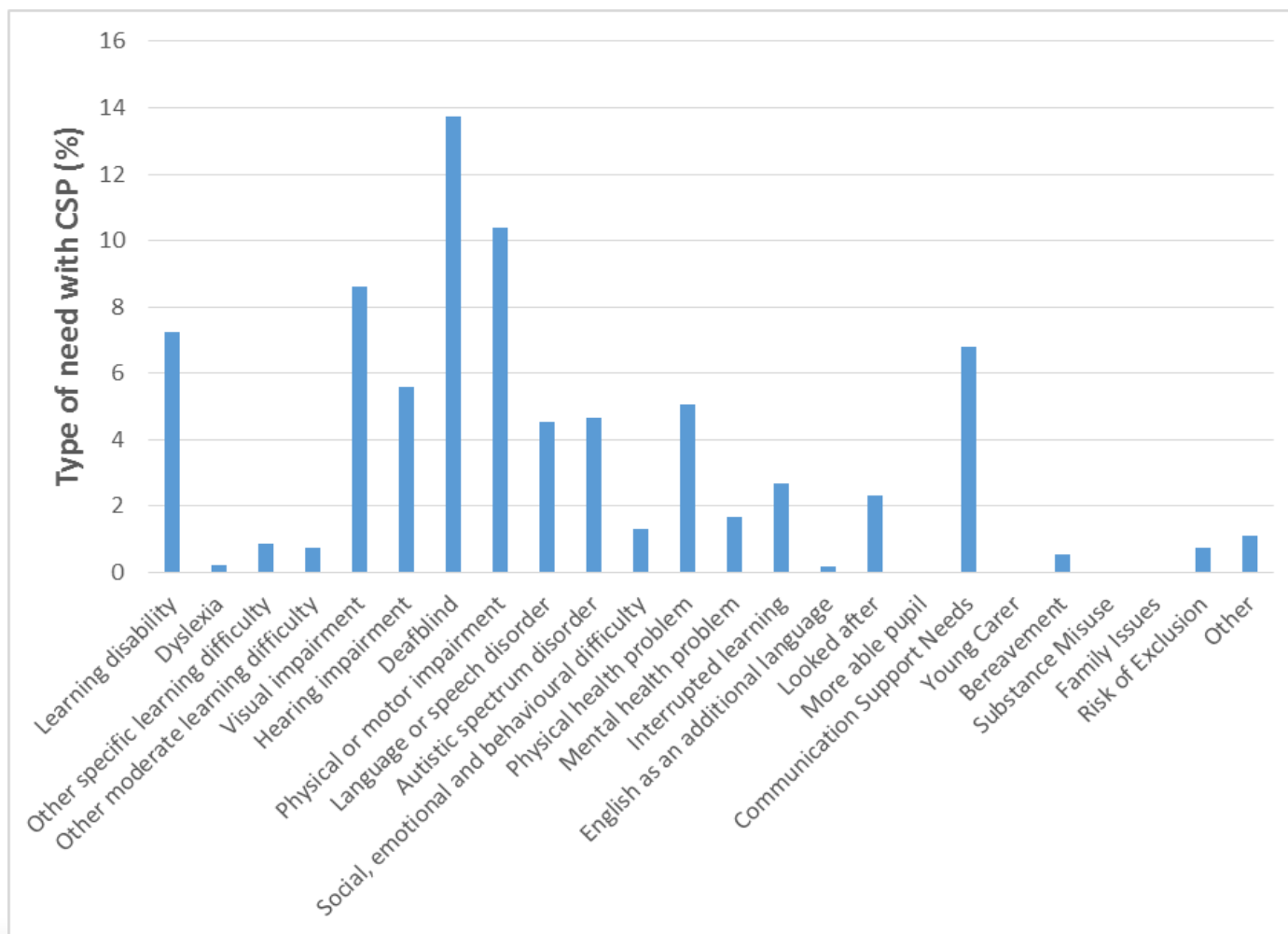
Reasonable adjustments, including access to new technology

Equalities and education legislation requires Scottish LAs to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled children and those with ASN to ensure that they are able to access school buildings, the curriculum and assessment. Reasonable adjustments cover a wide range of goods and support services such as wheelchairs, IT, physiotherapy, sign language interpreters.

However, if the local authority or school does not make the requested adjustment, it is difficult to mount a legal challenge without a statutory support plan – available to only 0.2% of Scottish pupils.

Those experiencing social deprivation unlikely to have a statutory support plan, compared with those with sensory and physical impairments.

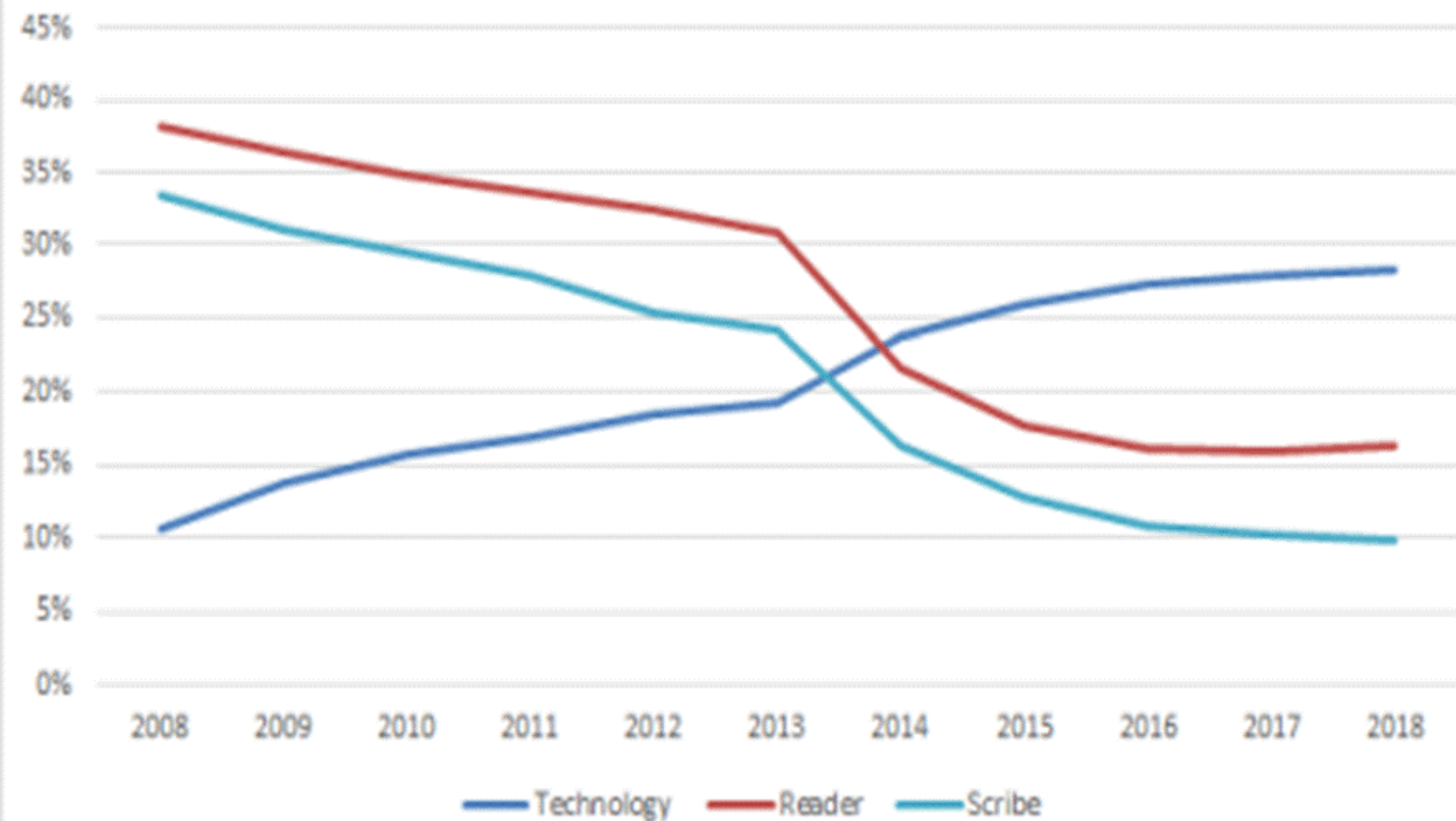
Percentage of children with statutory support plan by type of difficulty



Requests for digital assessment

Requests for digital assessment have increased over time – but independent schools are more likely than state schools to make such requests.

Percentage of Requests for Assessment Arrangements that include technology, reader or scribe 2008 - 2018



Lessons from Covid-19 pandemic

From late March until mid-August, Scottish schools were closed, with children having to rely on on-line learning.

A Children's Rights Impact Assessment <https://www.ed.ac.uk/education/rke/centres-groups/creid/news-events/latest-news/cysrg-independent-cria> showed that many aspects of children's rights were neglected during the pandemic, including their right to education. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds, were often unable to access online learning due to: lack of internet access; lack of access to digital devices; poor home environment; unsuitable on-line resources; varying teacher and school competence.

Research (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2021 forthcoming, European Journal of Special Needs Education) showed the specific problems relating to education and care experienced by disabled children.

Scotland has a longstanding commitment to inclusive education and to the use of new technologies in education.

Children with ASN and disabilities have enforceable legal rights to reasonable adjustments to ensure educational access.

However, a growing ASN population means that many children are not receiving the additional support they need.

The Covid-19 global pandemic has revealed the possibilities and limitations of new technology as the future key to learning.

