

Talking points

The NNPCF is a membership organisation and our mission states that “we aim to empower our members to ensure that their voice is heard at a local, regional and national level.”

Working with our membership we have identified a number of key “talking points” - these are topics and themes that are the most important to our membership and the ones that have been prioritised by the NNPCF.

Based on feedback from our membership and from other partners and stakeholders, the “talking point” summarise:

- The lived experience of our members about each topic,
- What is working and what is not working, and
- What we would like to see changed.

The talking points have been created using a range of feedback which includes:

- Surveys (including the SEND surveys)
- Feedback from our annual conferences
- The topics raised at regional meetings
- Themes and topics raised by our membership on social media
- Face to face conversations with our membership

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Social, emotional and mental health represents one of the four broad areas of need and support for children and young people with SEN.¹ The NNPCF believes that improving mental health support and services is critical to improving the wellbeing of all children and young people with SEND.

Disabled Children and those with Special Educational Needs are more likely to achieve poorer educational outcomes than their peers and or become NEET due to their mental health needs.²

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-children-in-need>

The government recognises that wellbeing and mental health difficulties can be a barrier to children achieving good educational and wider outcomes.³

The SEND Code of Practice (birth-25) introduced Social Emotional Mental Health as a category of SEN in 2014.

CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services)

The lack of support for mental health and wellbeing for children and young people with SEND is being raised as a major concern by forums. In a recent survey 37% of forums reported that on average families are waiting over a year to access a CAMHS assessment in their local area. 69% of forums reported that they are aware of children and young people with emotional and mental health needs (not related to their SEND) who have been turned away from their local CAMHS service because they have SEND. This figure raises to 87% for children and young people with emotional and mental health needs (related to their SEND) e.g. high anxiety and autism. 100% of forums who responded to the survey are aware of children and young people with SEND in their local area who have been isolated in school, placed upon reduced timetables or become school refusers because of their mental health needs.

There is an unclear and/or uneven pattern of support, delivery and provision meaning that too many children with SEND are not accessing the help that they need.

The NNPCF welcome the government's commitment to transform children's and adolescents' mental health services (CAMHS) by 2020. This programme will take forward recommendations from the NHS England and Department of Health report *Future in Mind* (2015) to improve and integrate services and to support children and young people to be more involved in decisions about their care.⁴

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-provision-a-green-paper>

⁴ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/transformation/>

The NNPCF believe that there needs to be a focus on earlier intervention and prevention, especially in and linked to schools and colleges. The NNPCF welcome the government's work to provide earlier mental health support for all children and young people including those with SEND through new Mental Health Support teams in trailblazer areas and plans to support all schools and colleges to put in place a Designated Senior Lead for Mental Health by 2019-20⁵.

Many forums are reporting that they are unaware of the Mental Health trailblazer and are not involved in this programme locally.

Data & Co-morbidity

In January 2018 the **primary** type of need for all children in schools with a special educational need⁶ was:

Specific Learning Difficulty	12.6%
Moderate Learning Difficulty	21.6%
Social, Emotional, Mental Health	16.6%
Speech Language Comm. Need	21.1%
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	10.3%
Other	17.8%

However, this data does not present a full and accurate picture in terms of mental health and wellbeing as it does not reflect those children and young people who present with co-morbid needs. This makes the effective commissioning of evidence-based and outcome-focussed services more challenging.

Forums describe how children and young people with autism are 'bounced' between services until finally a service agrees to take them on.

⁵ <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/government-names-first-25-areas-to-get-school-mental-health-support-teams/>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2018>

Low Prioritisation of SEND across health

In the last few months, the NNPCF have seen an increase in concerns from Forums regarding local CAMHS services. This is supported by the findings of local area inspections by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.⁷

Forums report that SEND is not a high priority for the majority of clinical commissioning groups. This means that many local health commissioners have not focussed on the requirements of the SEND reforms resulting in many practitioners not being aware of their responsibilities under the Children and Families Act 2014. Families reporting shortages in key services such as CAMHS and Autism diagnostic pathways and services not delivered in a joined up and effective way.

The impact of this is seen in poor quality EHC plans, an increase in school exclusions for children and young people with SEND and an increase of children and young people being admitted to Assessment and Treatment units.⁸

Better joint working and joint understanding of local needs

Local leaders must develop a better joint understanding of needs and work together across the system more effectively.⁹

The NHS long term plan includes much that is good and necessary for children and young people with SEND. It is vital that the joined-up decision making, commissioning and coproduction are placed at the heart of the emerging implementation plans. The role of Integrated Care Systems in this will be key.

NHS England Long Term Plan

The NHS Long Term Plan¹⁰ sets out proposals to address forums concerns including:

⁷ <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>

⁸ https://www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/care/ctr/commissioners/#ctr_cetr

⁹ <http://www.nnpcf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/State-of-the-Nation-2019.pdf>

- increasing funding for children and young people’s mental health
- bringing down waiting times for autism assessments
- providing the right care for children with a learning disability

The NNPCF will continue to work with NHS England, local NHS organisations and their partners to turn the ambitions in the plan into improvements in services for children and young people with SEND in England.

This is in addition to the significant NHS England change programmes already under way which all have a major impact upon the SEND agenda. Each of these programmes has separate governance at a local, regional and national level which can be a challenge for not only for local parent carer forums but also the local area to engage with.

A greater focus on Mental Health

The NNPCF believes that improving support for mental health is critical to improving the wellbeing of children and young people with SEND. This can be achieved by:

1. providing the right support at the right time
2. robust data which reflects co-morbidity
3. effective joint commissioning which is person-centred and outcome focussed
4. Specialist keyworkers who can support families at key transition points or when a crisis arises.

¹⁰ <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-long-term-plan/>