

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

SEN Support

SEN Support is part of the graduated response to meet additional needs that came about from the SEND Reforms of 2014. It replaced the School Action and School Action Plus support programmes.

SEN support should arise from the Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle known as the graduated approach. The graduated approach starts at whole-school level. Teachers are continually assessing, planning, implementing, and reviewing their approach to teaching all children. However, where a potential special educational need has been identified, this cyclical process becomes increasingly personalised to meet the needs of the child.¹

¹ Nasen’s SEN Support and Graduated Approach <https://nasen.org.uk/uploads/assets/7f6a967f-adc3-4ea9-8668320016bc5595/SENsupportpress.pdf>

SEN support is being raised as a major concern by families at present. There is an uneven pattern of support, delivery and provision meaning that too many children with SEN in mainstream schools are being let down:

- There is a move away from children with SEND being educated in mainstream schools with increasing numbers being placed in specialist provision
- A disproportionate number of children with SEND are being effectively excluded
- There is a lack of transparency on funding for children with SEND in mainstream schools.
- Parents lack confidence that SEN Support is meeting their child's needs and that it does not provide sufficient resources to ensure their children make good progress.
- Mainstream schools are not being incentivised to include children with SEND.
- Local Authorities are struggling to hold mainstream schools to account for their SEN provision.

This is echoed by the findings of the Ofsted Local Area SEND Inspections Report 2017:

“Children and Young people identified as needing SEND support have not benefitted from the implementation of the Code of Practice well enough”.

In addition, parents lacked *“confidence in the ability of mainstream schools to meet their child's needs”*²

The House of Commons Committee for Public Accounts' review into SEND was scathing about of the current position:

“Many of the 1.3 million school-age children in England who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are not getting the support that they need.... Children with SEND but who do not have EHC plans risk missing out on the support they need, especially in mainstream schools that are under significant financial pressure. Parents still feel left out of decisions that affect their children, and they do not have full confidence in the system... the

² CQC and Ofsted Local area SEND inspections: one year on
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652694/local_area_SEND_inspections_one_year_on.pdf

weaknesses in support for children with SEND are already well known—what we expect from the Department now is concrete action to address these significant failings.”

The NNPCF welcomes the report, which echoes the recommendations that the NNPCF conference submitted into the ongoing SEND Review. The report references the evidence that NNPCF co-chair Mrunal Sisodia gave to the Committee in September, which was based on the work of parent carer forums across the country³.

The UK Parliament Education Committee Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND): Education Committee published Government response to report from the Chair:

“...Government recognises the system ‘must improve’, as it is clear that many of the provisions for those with SEND are not working as they should be. The legislation had good intentions but has just not worked in practice. Families continue to face a treacle of bureaucracy, a postcode lottery of provision, buck-passing and confusion in a system that breeds conflict.

The Committee will consider the Government's response in detail over the coming weeks and will be following-up with the Secretary of State in the autumn. The coronavirus pandemic has brought new challenges for young people with SEND. Our committee will continue to be a voice for children and families to ensure they receive the support they both need and deserve.”⁴

At the time of updating this Talking Point we are aware that the anticipated SEND Review that we had been expecting to report in 2020 will be pushed back to 2021.

³ NNPCF Evidence to the Public Accounts Committee : <http://www.nnpcf.org.uk/nnpcf-gives-evidence-to-the-public-accounts-committee/>

⁴ House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts Support for children with special educational needs and disabilities First Report of Session 2019–21
<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/941/documents/7292/default>

The move away from SEN support

The number of children with recognised SEN without a statement or EHCP has fluctuated dramatically over the last 9 years. In 2010 there were 1,481,035 children and young people with SEN without a statement or EHCP compared to 1,047,200 in 2019. In 2020 this has bounced back to 1,373,800⁵. This is partly explained by changes to how the data is reported.

Across all schools, the number of pupils with an EHC plan has increased by 8.7%, from 271,200 to 294,800 in January 2020. This represents 3.3% of all pupils, an increase from 3.1% last year. This continues the trend of increases seen from 2018, after remaining steady at 2.8% of the total pupil population from 2007 to 2017.⁶

These statistics mirror the reports we hear from local parent carer forums and families.

Forums report schools 'encouraging' families to request and EHC Needs Assessments as a means to secure scarce additional resources or a specialist placement. There is a clear need to improve the SEN Support offer in mainstream schools.

Mainstream schools are becoming less inclusive.

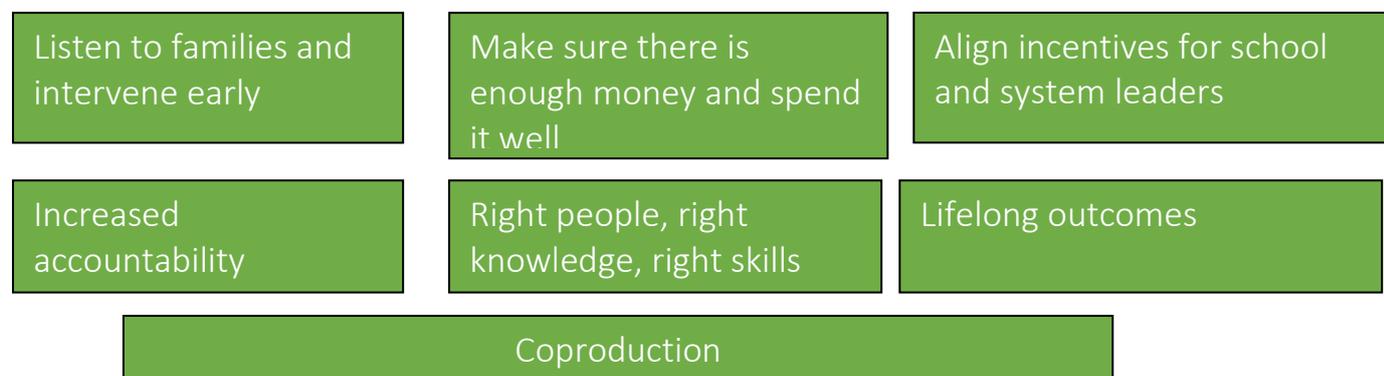
Parents report increased confidence in special school provision with many choosing it over a mainstream school option where both may be applicable. This is supported by statistics which show the number of pupils in state-funded special schools has increased by 6,400 (5.3%) to 128,100, continuing a trend seen since 2006.

⁵ DfE SEND In England Data 2019-2020 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>

⁶ Lbid

The NNPCF SEND Review Submission

The NNPCF outlined seven key messages for the SEND Review in 2020⁷. Our feedback was structured around these themes:



For SEN Support the key messages were:

- Because families are not heard early, concerns become problems and problems become crises. This leads to untold damage to families who sometimes have to wait for years before services intervene.
- Greater emphasis on the graduated response – more focus from inspectors and more training for practitioners.
- Early intervention in schools for those children and young people without a diagnosis.
- Spend the money early. Don't wait until concerns become problems and problems become crises.
- Help should start even before SEN support.

The NNPCF are concerned that the high level of 'ring fencing' of the schools' budget at a local level (often decided by the Schools Forum(s) in the Local Authority) has made it more difficult for LAs to respond to the high needs of children and young people. Increasing financial pressures within LA's exacerbates this.

Forums report that although LAs must respond to children whose needs are brought to their attention, they often have little ability to influence school's

⁷ Rebooting the SEND system to make it work for children, young people and families NNPCF submission to the SEND Review

implementation of SEN Support, especially as more schools have become academies.

Failures at SEN Support are driving up demand for high needs funding. They report that reasonable adjustments to enable a young person with SEND are not always made in schools, meaning a child is removed not just from an education setting but also from the heart of a local community. Reports of some schools telling parents that they can no longer meet the needs of their child or that they do not have the funding to do so are not uncommon. Other parents have been told at open evenings that their child's needs cannot be met and are, therefore, actively discouraged from applying. As noted above, some schools also see EHCPs as a way of securing additional resources or moving children to other provisions.

There is a drive towards more specialist provision. The number of children with an EHCP of school age in mainstream schools has decreased in since 2018. At the same time, there has been a marked increase in the number of children with an EHCP attending specialist schools – there are over 30,000 more children in specialist settings in 2019 compared to 2010. In 2019 there were 138,630 children of school age with an EHCP in mainstream schools compared to 128,114 EHCPs in 2018 and 128,100 in 2020.⁸

The NNPCF recognises the need to develop a holistic support offer at SEN Support including stronger communication between education and health professionals, a focus beyond 'formal' education to social opportunities and access to appropriate mental health services.

Official and unofficial exclusions

Taken from the latest data release in July 2020:

- The rate of permanent exclusions has remained at 0.10 in 2018/19.
- The number of permanent exclusions has decreased by 11, to 7,894 permanent exclusions in 2018/19.
- The rate of fixed period exclusions has increased, from 5.08 to 5.36 in 2018/19. This continues an increasing trend from 2013/14.

⁸ DfE SEND In England Data 2019-2020 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>

- The number of fixed period exclusions has increased from 410,800 to 438,300.
- Persistent disruptive behaviour is the most common reason for both permanent exclusions (35%) and fixed period exclusions (31%).

The Exclusions rate for children with SEND is significantly higher than for children with no SEND, as the table below illustrates.⁹

<u>Type of Exclusion</u>	<u>EHCP</u>	<u>SEN support</u>	<u>No SEN</u>
Permanent	0.16%	0.34%	0.06%
Fixed period	15.95%	15.1%	3.36%
More than one fixed period exclusion	6.43%	6.09%	1.68%

Data 2017/18 school year.

- The permanent exclusion rate for SEN pupils with an education, health, and care (EHC) plan is 0.15, and for pupils with SEN with no EHC plan (SEN support) is 0.32, compared to 0.06 for those without SEN.
- The fixed period exclusion rate is higher also, at 16.11 for EHC pupils and 15.59 for SEN support pupils, compared to 3.57 for those not eligible.

This strongly suggests that schools are failing pupils with SEND. There needs to be a greater understanding generally and clarity of explanation for parent/carers around thresholds and funding arrangements.

Forums report that where mainstream schools are not able or willing to find the £6000 threshold from their notional budget, the impact that this may have includes off-rolling, part-time timetables, families being encouraged to home educate and exclusions. In many cases there are illegal practices taking place and parent carers are too often unaware of when this is happening or felt unable to challenge it.

This message is supported by the NNPCF survey with its members to obtain evidence about school exclusions.

⁹ Department for Education. Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England: Academic Year 2018/19
 9 Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england>

95% of PCFs who responded were aware of children and young people (CYP) with SEND in their Local Authority (LA) that have been excluded from school. There was also overwhelming evidence of unofficial exclusions from the majority of forums including:

- Part-time timetables
- Encouragement to be home schooled
- Children with SEND being taught separately
- Parents and carers being asked to take children home early
- Missing school activities (e.g. trips)
- Being asked to be kept at home for a period

Our survey found that this is overwhelmingly an issue for children and young people with ASD and ADHD. There were also reports these practices are more prevalent in academy schools rather than local authority-maintained schools.

The Timpson Review¹⁰ identified vulnerable groups of children (including children with SEN) are more likely to be excluded. The Review makes 30 recommendations to ensure exclusions are used appropriately and includes making schools accountable for the pupils they exclude.

School incentives

Forums have identified a number of potential drivers for these practices. There are concerns that the incentives for schools do not encourage inclusive or SEN friendly practices.

Funding for schools

Schools and colleges are under ever increasing pressures financially. With a lack of transparency about notional SEND budgets, there is a perception that children with SEND cost too much.

From April 2018 the Government introduced a national funding formula for schools, high needs, and local authority services for schools.¹¹ The dedicated

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/edward-timpson-publishes-landmark-exclusions-review>

¹¹ Dedicated schools grant for 2019-20 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2019-to-2020>

schools grant (DSG) will be split into 4 blocks – for schools, high needs and early years. The changes also introduced new rules on ability to transfer monies between the 4 blocks. This will have an impact on how special needs in schools are funded.

How the notional SEND budget for each school is used varies both across local authority areas and between schools within a local area. Many local authorities request a provision map which sets out how the notional funding for a child or young person has been used before agreement to top up funding or an EHC needs assessment.

There needs to be a better and more easily accessible system for accessing support and funding beyond the £6,000 core without the need for an EHC Plan. The Local Authority has a key role to play in challenging schools on how SEN resources are spent.

Ofsted school inspections

The focus on academic attainment through published data and the Ofsted school inspection regime means that children with SEND can impact a school's performance. There is a perception that this is a disincentive for schools to retain pupils with SEND who may adversely impact the school's overall academic attainment.

The new Ofsted Schools Inspection Framework brings a new focus on a more balanced curriculum and provision for children with SEND. See the NNPCF School Inspection Talking Point.

The role of SENCOs

SENCOs report that they are under constant time pressure with many being expected to perform their roles as an "add on" to their existing responsibilities.

Also, SENCOs report that often they have little influence with the senior leadership at schools that are focussed on budgets and targets.

Many parents report that whilst many SENCOs are supportive, too frequently they do not have the dedicated time, influence, or support to do the role effectively.

The NNPCF would like to see more support for SENCOs. Forums can offer support to SENCOs by facilitating workshops or coffee mornings for SEN Support families. This will also ensure that the SENCO and all their colleagues are fully aware of the SEND agenda and the graduated approach.

Curriculum

Forums, schools, and colleges report concerns that the national curriculum has narrowed and is focussed on more academic subjects and attainment. This means that from an early age, it is more difficult to develop inclusive and person-centred teaching and develop a child in a way that makes sense for them. In addition, the narrowing of choices of vocational courses in post 16 education means that young people with SEND find it difficult to find the right courses for them.

Culture

The culture of schools set by head teachers, governors and SENCOs is key. Many parents report that the culture of some schools is not inclusive. There are examples of good practice in almost all areas - parents know which local schools and head teachers are supportive of SEND (the ones that “get it”). These schools often become oversubscribed becoming “SEND magnets” as families with children with SEND gravitate towards them.

The NNPCF would like to see:

- *Wider adoption of the whole school approach to SEND. This will require more consistent awareness and prioritisation of the whole school agenda from school leaders and head teachers.*
- *Promotion of early and effective identification of needs by listening to the child, young person, and family.*

The NNPCF continues to work with the Whole School SEND Consortium – the Consortium brings together schools, organisations and individuals who are

omitted to ensuring that every child and young person with SEND can achieve their potential at school.¹²

A greater focus on SEN in mainstream schools – SEND Review

In the DfE September 2020 briefings to Forums and the sector, the DfE's messages remain that the long-awaited SEND Review will be a 'fundamental, cross-government review that will consider measures to make sure that:

- The SEND system is consistent, high quality, and integrated across education, health and care.
- Money is being spent fairly, efficiently, and effectively; and
- support available to CYP is sustainable in the future

They restated their commitment to work with partners to understand the full impact of the pandemic on the SEND system. It acknowledges that the issues are long-standing and complex and there was a determination to deliver real, lasting change.¹³

A greater focus on SEN Support will be central to achieving this.

The NNPCF welcome the increased focus on SEN support and the opportunity to work with schools and other partners to improve SEN Support by:

Identifying and sharing good practice. For example, one forum held a series of events focussing on reaching parents of children and young people in mainstream schools entitled Education for Everyone. The forum invited keynote speakers to address parents, local authority officers and schools and shared materials coproduced with Whole School SEN programme.

Working with partners to improve individual support services for families on SEN support, most particularly independent advice, and support services. Our membership reports that SENDIAS services are of very variable quality across the country.

¹² Whole School SEND Consortium <http://www.wholeschoolsend.com/>

¹³ Regional SEND Covid-19 Forum – 22nd October 2020 DfE Briefing – Taking stock: the return to school and college for children and young people with SEND

Talking points



National Network of Parent Carer Forums

'Our Strength Is Our Shared Experience'

Ensuring robust, transparent SEND Information reports. Parents need to know what good SEN Support looks like. There needs to be stronger communication of the SEN Support offer which ensures that parents are aware of what support can be expected in mainstream schools.