

## 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 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
- Mainstream schools are not being incentivised to include children with SEND

This is echoed by the findings of the local area SEND inspections who report that

*“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”<sup>5</sup>*

### SEN Support – the statistics

There are 1,022,535 school age children who receive SEN support in England as of January 2018<sup>1</sup>. This represents 11.7% of the school age population as compared to 253,680 with EHCPs (or 2.9% of the school age population) in a school setting. The total number of statements / EHCPs has increased to 319,819 in January 2018 – note this includes children and young people not in school settings.

The following table outlines the primary type of need for all children in schools with a special educational need:

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%

### The move away from SEN support

The number of children with recognised SEN without a statement or EHCP has fallen dramatically over the last 7 years. The numbers have dropped by over 30% and by almost half a million.

In 2010 there were 1,481,035 children and young people with SEN without a statement or EHCP compared to 1,022,535 in 2018<sup>1</sup>.

At the same time, the number of children and young people with statements or EHCPs has risen dramatically. By approximately 90,000, an increase of over 38%. About half of this increase relates to pupils of non-school age that are now covered by EHCPs (which statements did not) shows an increase of 77,000 or over 33%.

In 2010 there were 232,760 children with statements compared to 319,819 in 2018.

There were 305,643 statements or EHCPs for children and young people aged 0-19 in January 2018<sup>2</sup>.

These statistics mirror the reports we hear from local parent carer forums and families which are evidenced in come concerning trends.

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

Many forums report that mainstream schools are becoming less inclusive.

In 2010 55% of children and young people of school age with a statement attended a mainstream school. In 2018 that had fallen to 44%<sup>2</sup>.

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.

We have heard reports of 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. 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 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 a statement or EHCP of school age in mainstream schools has remained largely the same since 2017. At the same time, there has been a

In 2010 there were 126,479 children of school age with a statement or EHCP in mainstream schools in 2010 compared to 128,114 in 2018<sup>2</sup>.

In 2010 there were 95,788 children of school age with a statement or

marked increase in the number of children with a statement or EHCP attending specialist schools – there are over 30,000 more children in specialist settings in 2018 compared to 2010.

### Official and unofficial exclusions

The exclusions rate for children with SEND is significantly higher than for children with no SEND as the table below illustrates<sup>2</sup>:

Type of Exclusion	EHCP or statement	SEN support	No SEN
Permanent	0.17%	0.32%	0.05%
Fixed period	15.04%	13.72%	2.67%
More than one fixed period exclusion	6.3%	5.93%	1.46%

This strongly suggests that schools are failing pupils with SEND.

This message is supported by the NNPCF survey with its members to obtain evidence about school exclusions (see attached link). 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.:

- 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

NNPCF exclusions survey April 2018<sup>4</sup>.

66% of survey respondents reported these practices in academy schools compared to 35% in local authority maintained schools<sup>4</sup>.

academy schools rather than local authority maintained schools.

### 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. The dedicated 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.

For details see government information on dedicated schools grant<sup>6</sup>.

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

### 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 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 who 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

## 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.

## **A greater focus on SEN in mainstream schools**

On 5th July 2018, the Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds spoke to the Association of Directors of Children's Services Conference.

For a transcript of the speech see [gov.uk](http://gov.uk)<sup>8</sup>.

The Secretary of State highlighted SEND as a priority for him and his Department referencing both the financial pressures on the SEND system and the experiences of children with SEND in mainstream schools.

### Our recommendations

*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, Bromley Parent Voice have 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.*

*More support for SENCOs. Offer to support the SENCO by facilitating workshops or coffee mornings for SEN Support families. This will also ensure that the SENCO and all of their colleagues are fully aware of the SEND agenda and the graduated approach.*

*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.*

For more information see Whole Schools SEND website<sup>7</sup>

*Promote the early and effective identification of needs by listening to the child, young person and family.*

*Work 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.*

*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.*

*Developing easier access to funding. 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.*

*Developing a Holistic support offer at SEN Support level including stronger communication between education and health professionals, a focus beyond 'formal' education to social opportunities and access to appropriate mental health services.*

*We would like to see Ofsted school inspections place greater emphasis on the importance of high quality SEND provision in mainstream schools. We have fed these messages into Ofsted as it reviews its inspection framework in 2019. Similarly published school attainment data needs to reflect a more holistic view of how well schools meet the needs of pupils with SEND.*



**Notes:**

1. Department for Education. Special Educational Needs in England January 2018.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2018>
2. Department for Education: Statements of SEN and EHC Plans: England 2018  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statements-of-sen-and-ehc-plans-england-2018>
3. Department for Education. Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England 2015-16. SFR 35/2017  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2015-to-2016>
4. NNPCF member survey on exclusions – March 2018  
<http://www.nnpf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NNPCF-Member-Survey-Exclusions-20180319.pdf>
5. Ofsted and CQC Local Area Inspections: One year on - October 2017  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/652694/local\\_area\\_SEND\\_inspections\\_one\\_year\\_on.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652694/local_area_SEND_inspections_one_year_on.pdf)
6. Dedicated schools grant for 2018-19  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2018-to-2019>
7. Whole School SEND  
<http://www.wholeschoolsend.com/>
8. Transcript of Secretary of State for Education Damian Hind's speech to the Association of Directors of Children's Services  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-makes-inaugural-speech-to-childrens-services-sector?utm\\_source=ab7315e3-57d3-41bb-a6ae-64ddcceace54&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=daily](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-makes-inaugural-speech-to-childrens-services-sector?utm_source=ab7315e3-57d3-41bb-a6ae-64ddcceace54&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=daily)