

National developments, what's next?

Current developments in SEND thinking and policy

NAPEP Conference

Friday 16th May 2025

Latest developments in SEND



Department
for Education

The government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

On 4th December 2024 we announced:

- **£740 million new funding** that can be used to adapt classrooms to be more accessible for children with SEND, and to create specialist facilities within mainstream settings that can deliver more intensive support adapted to suit the pupils' needs.
- This capital funding will be unringfenced funding so it can be used for EY and colleges as well as both mainstream and special schools.

Ofsted Reform

- We welcome Ofsted's response to the Big Listen, and we are working with Ofsted to strengthen the inspection of inclusion across education settings.
- Following the removal of single headline grades, the DfE and Ofsted have been consulting on plans for report cards and an inspection framework – with a specific new evaluation area for inclusion.

Curriculum and Assessment Review

- In July 2024, the government announced an independent expert-led Curriculum and Assessment Review chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE.
- This will cover Key Stage 1 to 5 and seek to address the barriers that children and young people face in their education, with a particular focus on ensuring positive outcomes for pupils with SEND.
- A **call for evidence** gathered the views of education professionals and other experts, parents/carers, teachers, young people and stakeholders. The feedback received will help the review group to consider its next steps and recommendations and the interim report placed a strong focus on inclusion.

6,500 new teachers

- We are committed to recruiting an additional 6,500 new expert teachers across our schools, both mainstream and specialist, and our colleges over the course of this parliament.

Latest developments in SEND



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Dame Christine Lenehan has been named as **Strategic Advisor on Special Education Needs and Disabilities**

Purpose:

- To provide advice and expertise to the Secretary of State for Education and the Minister of State for School Standards on SEND reform programme.
- To play a key role in convening and engaging the sector to help ministers communicate the DfE's delivery of the key SEND reforms. Dame Christine will provide a route to get timely and strategic feedback from system leaders, practitioners, children and families to inform the development of SEND reforms.
- Contribute to the work of the **Expert Advisory Group (EAG)** on inclusive mainstream and the **Neurodivergence Task and Finish Group**, supplementing policy development.

Expert Advisory Group (EAG) for Inclusion



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Purpose: To advise ministers on how to improve mainstream education outcomes and experiences for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The group will consider how reforms focused on improving inclusion will interact with wider system reforms including the Curriculum and Assessment Review and reforms to Ofsted and accountability.

Duration: From November 2024 to June 2025.

Focus Areas:

- **Inclusive Classroom Practice and Culture:** Embedding effective curricular and pedagogical approaches.
- **Partnerships with Families:** Enhancing collaboration with parents for successful mainstream inclusion.
- **Identification of Children with SEND:** Improving early and accurate identification of needs.
- **Additional Support:** Providing more targeted and specialist provisions.
- **Workforce Capability:** Building expertise and capacity within mainstream settings.
- **Enabling Conditions and Incentives:** Removing barriers and enhancing systemic support for inclusive education.

Membership:

- **Tom Rees**, CEO, Ormiston Academy Trust (Chair)
- **Susan Douglas**, CEO, Eden Academy Trust
- **Annamarie Hassall**, CEO National Association for Special Educational Needs
- **Dr Anne Heavey**, Director of Insights for Ambition Institute
- **Andrew O'Neill**, Headteacher at All Saints Catholic College
- **Claire Jackson**, Principal Educational Psychologist at Salford City Council
- **Heather Sandy**, Executive Director of Children's Services at Lincolnshire County Council

Neurodivergence Task and Finish Group



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Purpose: To advise government on how to help improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream settings in a way that works for neurodivergent children and young people.

To provide an expert view and make recommendations on the best ways to support and meet the needs of neurodivergent children and young people in mainstream education, including consideration of the types of support that need not, or should not, depend on diagnosis.

Duration: From December 2024, lasting for up to 8 months.

Membership:

- **Professor Karen Guldberg**, Director of the Autism Centre for Education and Research and Head of the School of Education at the University of Birmingham (Chair)
- **Anita Thapar Douglas**, Professor of Psychological Medicine and Clinical Neuroscience at University of Cardiff; Chair of the ADHD Taskforce
- **Dr Jo Bromley**, Service Lead and Consultant Clinical Psychologist for the Clinical Service for Children with Disabilities & CAMHS at Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- **Professor Duncan Astle**, Gnodde Goldman Sachs Professor of Neuroinformatics in the Department of Psychiatry
- **Professor Mark Mon-Williams**, Chair in Cognitive Psychology at the University of Leeds & Professor of Psychology at the Bradford Institute of Health
- **Tim Nicholls**, Assistant Director of Policy, Research and Strategy at National Autistic Society
- **Ellen Broomé**, CEO of the British Dyslexia Association
- **Dr James Cusack**, Chair of Embracing Complexity & CEO of Autistica
- **Heba Al-Jayoosi**, Assistant Headteacher and SENCO, Mayflower Primary School
- **Zoe Burlison**, Inclusion Lead at The Ruth Gorse Academy, Leeds
- **Hayden Ginns**, Assistant Director for Children (Performance and Commissioning) across Portsmouth City Council and Portsmouth ICB places (NHS)
- **Adam Micklethwaite**, Director of the Autism Alliance and Chair of the Autism Education Trust

Our ambitions for SEND



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This Government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

- We are committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.
- We will strengthen accountability on mainstream settings to be inclusive including through Ofsted, support the mainstream workforce to increase their SEND expertise, and encourage schools to set up Resourced Provision or SEN units to increase capacity in mainstream schools.
- We've published independently commissioned insight that suggests if the system was extensively improved, including using early intervention and better resourcing mainstream schools, it could lead to tens of thousands more children and young people having their needs met without an EHCP - and having their needs met in a mainstream setting, rather than a specialist placement.
- This work forms part of the government's Opportunity Mission, which will break the unfair link between background and opportunity – starting with giving every child, including those with SEND, the best start in life.

Building on existing good practice



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There are already several examples of good practice in the SEND system. These include:

- Early intervention programmes funded by DfE:
 - **Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)** – deploys health and education specialists to identify/meet needs of neurodiverse children in around 10% of mainstream primary schools.
 - **Early Language and Support for Every Child (ELSEC)** – improves early identification and support for CYP with speech, language and communication needs.
 - **Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI)** – helps schools identify early language difficulties and improve children’s language skills and behaviour.
- DfE also funds the What Works in SEND programme – research, resources and effective practice models as well as free seminars to build evidence base.

The Government wants to ensure every child has the best chance in life by prioritising early intervention, expertise and inclusive provision in mainstream settings.

- Educational psychologists play a critical role in the support available to children and young people, including those with SEND.
- We know that LA EP services are facing growing recruitment and retention issues, driven by dissatisfaction at increasingly assessment focused workloads and competition from the private sector employment.
- 76% of Principal EPs reported that some of their staff already work part time in the private sector and LAs are increasingly reliant on private services to meet demand for statutory assessments.
- We know this has implications for EHCP timeliness, access to support, and rising costs for outsourced assessments as well as time taken on internal quality assurance, case work management and complaints, and a decrease in morale amongst LA workers.

We want to work with the sector to ensure EPs' expertise and experience are used more effectively to meet the needs of children and young people.

Questions for you



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1. What does the term 'inclusive mainstream' mean to you?
2. How do you see the EP role within inclusive mainstream?
3. What do you hope for in the SEND system and what do you fear?
4. What, if any, are the main evidence gaps in your sector? E.g. use of assistant EPs
5. What training or progression routes would you like to see for EPs in your LA?
6. What short term solutions would you implement to help the SEND system?
7. What would you do if you could design the system from scratch?