COUNCIL FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

National SEND Picture

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Agenda

- Short intro on CDC and SEC
- Best Start in Life
- Government priorities for EY / SEND
- Sufficiency
- The Schools White Paper and the 5 principles
- The specialist workforce
- What can we do? (let's clarify what we mean when we talk of inclusion)

Best Start in Life Strategy

There will be help for families of children with additional needs: **Each Best Start Family Hub will have a children and family services professional** specifically trained in working to support parents of children with additional needs. This will help identify children with SEND who may need extra help early on, making links with local early years settings and health services. They will assist parents in navigating what can be a complex landscape of services, including making links with local early years settings and health services, so that families can get the right support as soon as possible.

Government priorities on EY SEND

- A focus on mainstream inclusion
- Early Years is understood to be a crucial part of the SEND system but surprising lack of mention in Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill
- SLCN
- Thinking on professional profiles of EY workforce
- Expansion: in entitlements, in SBN

Is this the biggest EY / SEND challenge?

- Only 4% of LAs in England report having full sufficiency for Children and young people with SEND (Coram Childcare Survey, 2025).
- We are recognising significant gaps in understanding the reasonable adjustment duties (Equality Act, 2010).
- Who is turning children with SEND away, and why? (is there an over-reliance on 1:1?)

Resource example: EY Childcare Works

- Dingley's Promise Inclusion Reflection Tool
- Self – evaluation on:
  - transitions; leadership; environment; educator knowledge; educator practice
- Includes a spreadsheet to collate results and create action plan

Training offer

- We need to get this right from the very start of a child's education. For all early years practitioners, a new national CPD programme will provide free, accessible training focused on inclusive practice, child development, and practical strategies for supporting children with SEND as soon as their education journey begins. (SOS for Education)
- Any concerns around this?

Five Principles for SEND Reform

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1. Early. Children should receive the support they need as soon as possible. This will start to break the cycle of needs going unmet and getting worse, instead intervening upstream, earlier in children's lives when this can have most impact.

2. Local. Children and young people with SEND should be able to learn at a school close to their home, alongside their peers, rather than travelling long distances from their family and community. Special schools should continue to play a vital role supporting those with the most complex needs.

3. Fair. Every school should be resourced and able to meet common and predictable needs, including as they change over time, without parents having to fight to get support for their children. Where specialist provision is needed for children in mainstream, special or Alternative Provision, we will ensure it is there, with clear legal requirements and safeguards for children and parents.

4. Effective. Reforms should be grounded in evidence, ensuring all education settings know where to go to find effective practice that has excellent long-term outcomes for children.

5. Shared. Education, health and care services should work in partnership with one another, local government, families, teachers, experts and representative bodies to deliver better experiences and outcomes for all our children.

CDC project considering the role of the specialist workforce

- Do you meet specialists in your daily role? How often? How does it look?
- Does their intervention support individual children; the whole group / class / room; or both?
- The ‘professional gaze’, or the ‘guiding question’
- Are there any ‘easy wins’ to work differently with specialists to increase inclusive practice?

Data: one example

Children with the lowest Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED) scores at age five were 100 times more likely to receive an EHCP during primary school, highlighting PSED as a critical early indicator for SEND

Education Policy Institute, February 2025

Identifying SEND

So, what is inclusion?...

- Inclusion in this sense is what might be described as an integrative position, between rights-based inclusion, concentrated on the inclusion of all children in mainstream education and needs-based inclusion, in which a range of provision best meets individual needs (Ravet, 2011, in Stroglios and Ward, 2024)
- **And it is you on the front line who need to find that balance**.
- A question I recently heard: when does ‘inclusion’ become exclusion?