

Author: Lorraine Petersen OBE
Organisation:
Date of publication: 5 May 2015



Exclusively sponsored by:



The SEND Reform Journey – Where are we now?

As we approach the end of April we are eight months into the SEND reforms. So, how is it all going?

New SEN (Special Education Needs) Support category

Schools have been working hard to introduce SEN Support, the single category replacing school action and school action plus. Many schools have completed an audit of needs and have made some very difficult decisions about who should be on their SEN Register. Are they pupils who are underachieving or are they pupils with SEND? Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) find it very difficult to let go and want to keep an eye on those pupils who are causing concern but do not have SEN. My suggestion is that schools develop an additional needs register, of which SEN is just one category. English as an additional language, medical needs, disability, looked-after, monitoring, being just a few of the other categories that the SENCO might be “keeping an eye on” but not classified as SEN.

Key message

The key message of the SEND Code of Practice is that all teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class. The first response to SEN being high-quality differentiated teaching. Many schools have used this as their starting point, ensuring that all teachers have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of all pupils in their class. At the same time, schools have reviewed the deployment of the support staff to ensure that they are being used effectively and use their skills to support teachers.

Children without SEN

One of the greatest challenges has been helping/supporting those pupils who have no learning needs but have needs that have to be monitored and supported to prevent learning difficulties developing. For instance: a young person with high-functioning autism in a primary classroom is making excellent progress; the teacher understands their needs and has strategies to support

Copyright: When reproducing this document, you must fully acknowledge the author of the document as shown at the top of the page. Please see Network Autism Terms & Conditions for details.

Author: Lorraine Petersen OBE
Organisation:
Date of publication: 5 May 2015

the pupil when difficulties occur. This young person does not require SEN Support, but does need to be monitored, especially at times of transition to a new class, new school, etc.

SEN Information Report

Schools have also been producing their SEN Information Report and placing it on their website. This document provides information about the implementation of the school's SEN policy and all schools are required to publish it online by the end of this term.

Local Offer

Local authorities have published their Local Offer. These should have been available from September 2014, but many have been produced over the last eight months and some are still being developed. The Local Offer will provide parents and young people one place where they will be able to find all the information they need about the services they can expect to be available in their local area from education, health and social care. This will include information about the statutory assessment process, personal budgets and how to contact an Independent Supporter. It will also contain information about local community organisations that can support SEND.

Updated version of the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25

Just as everyone was getting to grips with the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 launched in July 2014, an updated version was published in January 2015 to be implemented on 1st April 2015. Luckily there were only a few minor changes to the majority of the code; the main changes concern children and young people with SEN who are in youth custody (chapter 10).

Transfers from statements to Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans

Transferring statements to EHC Plans has presented the greatest difficulties. This huge task has been a huge challenge for every local authority and some appear to have dealt with this better than others. The only young people who were had to move to EHC plans this year (September 2014 – August 2015) were:

- those who were transferring to a post 16 institution or an apprenticeship (Year 11),
- young people moving to a FE College
- children and young people with a non- statutory EHC Plan issued in some Pathfinder Local Authorities.

Many local authorities have tried to do much more than this, some more successfully than others. Schools have found themselves in untenable positions at times, being asked to undertake far more than is their duty. The transfer from statement to EHC plan requires an EHC needs assessment to be carried out. The local authority triggers this process by writing to parents two weeks before a review meeting is due to take place. Schools then have a duty to co-operate with the local authority and may be asked to co-ordinate the meeting, gather reports etc.

Copyright: When reproducing this document, you must fully acknowledge the author of the document as shown at the top of the page. Please see Network Autism Terms & Conditions for details.

Author: Lorraine Petersen OBE
Organisation:
Date of publication: 5 May 2015

It is too early to tell how well this process is going. Those who have been involved say that it is time consuming but, if done well, can result in an EHC plan that has aspirational outcomes and offers the support needed to achieve these. Local authorities have until April 2018 to complete this transfer process. Trying to do it too quickly will create problems and may involve parents and young people being unhappy with the end result, seeking mediation and even more concerning, seeking support from a tribunal.

The SEND Reform journey is just beginning, we are only just pulling out of the station with a long way to go. By taking time and embedding good practice at all stages we should develop a system that will be fit for purpose and will support all children and young people with SEND.