



SEND review: Nacro Response

Summer 2022

About Nacro Education:

Nacro is one of the country's largest not-for-profit, independent training providers.

Our education delivery includes the running of 14 Education & Skills FE training centres across the country, serving approximately 3,000 of the most disadvantaged 14-19-year-olds, annually. Our main programme is the 16-19 Study Programme.

Most of our learners have had issues at school or a broken or interrupted academic career and work with us to tackle any barriers to learning. Despite these barriers, the majority of our learners make progress from their starting points, achieve their qualifications, and move into work or further training.

Below, we have selected specific questions to answer from the consultation based on the nature of our service delivery. We have therefore not answered all of the questions listed on the consultation.

1: What key factors should be considered when developing national standards to ensure they deliver improved outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND and their families? This includes how the standards apply across education, health, and care in a 0-25 system.

The development of national standards to drive improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND must:

- Be based upon a consistent framework
- Contain a clear set of realistic aims, acknowledging that outcomes will vary dependent on the learner and that not all young people identified with a SEN will be able to progress towards employment; specifically, the review's 'greater emphasis' on 'achieving individual outcomes for learners on education, health and care plans (EHCPs)' needs to be both practical and realistic
- Set out clear pathways to achieve these outcomes and be wholly inclusive by catering for SEND learners at all ages and levels of attainment, to be applied across the entire range of providers
- Produce cross-authority work and cooperation

Unrealistic expectations and avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach: one issue that we wish to highlight is the current expectation within the SEND review that every learner will reach certain standards in maths and English. This creates subsequent expectations of future outcomes, such as smooth transitions towards apprenticeships or directly into employment, which are entirely unrealistic. We know that not all SEND learners will progress into an apprenticeship or a job and that the proposed new system must take into account the different starting points of young people. Reforms to SEND provision must therefore reflect this, acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all approach to developing national standards would be entirely inappropriate.

The need for flexible funding streams and support: to guard against this one-size-fits-all approach, it is vital that the proposed single national SEND system does not lead to rigid, and narrow funding streams. As we consistently highlight throughout this response, there are learners who do not necessarily fit into set categories and will therefore require different levels of ad-hoc support. There will also be providers that do not fit into set categories.

Reforms backed by additional investment to support fully resourced provision: the necessary resources and funding need to be in place to support the development and implementation of a new system of national standards. This is as proposed outcomes can only be achieved if local authorities are supported to ensure successful outcomes. For example, there is currently a shortage of occupational therapists – a role which is vital to the provision of SEND support. The key is therefore to highlight any gaps in current provision, both locally and nationally, to ensure that outcomes can be achieved through properly resourced provision.

2: How should we develop the proposal for new local SEND partnerships to oversee the effective development of local inclusion plans whilst avoiding placing unnecessary burdens or duplicating current partnerships?

As a national provider with small pockets of high needs learners across the country, there is a risk that independent training providers such as ourselves will be excluded from new, local SEND partnerships. We therefore urge the Government to ensure that all types of providers, catering for all age-groups, are covered by any proposed local SEND partnerships, not just mainstream providers.

4: What components of the EHCP should we consider reviewing or amending as we move to a standardised and digitised version?

We are pleased to see this review committing to the introduction of standardised EHCP templates and processes. This question is particularly important for our provision given that 22% of our learners have EHCPs. We believe that there are several issues with EHCPs that require reviewing and subsequently amending.

- They are poorly written and do not provide providers such as ourselves with the information that we need or reflect the learner we are meant to support. Without a

complex and accurate overview of a learners' needs, it creates insurmountable barriers to getting the right support in place for each individual

- The plans are also outdated, with targets set often unachievable, and with needs that are no longer applicable listed on a learner's plan
- Speaking to staff working in our education centres, we have also been informed that completing these reviews within an agreed time period is often difficult

We believe that the following recommendations would improve the production of a new standardised and digitised version of EHCPs.

- **A more consistent/efficient review of EHCPs** – we urge the Government to implement a more consistent and efficient review process of EHCPs to ensure that they accurately match the needs of learners at any given point.
- **Updating new templates/processes regularly** – we strongly urge that new templates and processes are updated regularly – this is particularly given the issues faced by providers working across local authority boundaries. For example, our Newcastle Centre spans several councils and, as a result, there are different templates for our learners on EHCPs based on the responsible local authority. Standardising the EHCP process is therefore a necessary step to reduce extra bureaucracy for providers, and to ensure simplicity in highlighting the needs of learners on EHCPs
- **Review of the consult process** - we would also like to note that current timeframes on consults for learners on EHCPs is unmanageable, particularly given that the information contained within a learner's EHCP is not always up-to-date or accurate. The Government needs to review the consult process, focusing on timeframes, to ensure that providers are given the time to make quality, informed decisions with the right information to hand.

5: How can parents and local authorities most effectively work together to produce a tailored list of placements that is appropriate for their child, and gives parents confidence in the EHCP process?

It is vital that placements are being communicated effectively so that parents and guardians are aware of what is on offer, but also so that they have confidence that these placements are appropriate for the needs of their children.

It is also essential that both learners and parents/guardians are given access to all different types of providers, so that they are able to make the best-informed choices.

10: To what extent do you agree that we should strengthen the mandatory SENCo training requirement by requiring that headteachers must be satisfied that SENCo is in the process of obtaining the relevant qualification when taking on the role?

The mandatory SENCo training requirement is a robust, occupational qualification that does provide the individual with the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills for the SENCo role. It is important to acknowledge that this should not exclude the importance of gaining experience in relevant roles as part of the qualification.

We believe that Pupil Premium Plus funding, as we set out in [our policy report](#) highlighting the 16-19 disadvantage gap, would specifically support and reinforce the work of fully-qualified SENCOs at every post-16 institution.

Paid directly to post-16 providers to enable personalisation on the basis of individual circumstance, a Pupil Premium Plus would extend existing Pupil Premium funding in schools to post-16 settings. The funding of £1,000 per year, per learner, to be paid at the age of 16, 17 and 18 would apply broadened disadvantage criteria to include: those eligible for free school meals (FSM), 'children in need' (CIN) and those identified as having a special educational need or disabilities (SEND).

The funding – as set out in the previous paragraph – cannot be overly prescriptive and instead should reflect the needs of individual learners. In this context, it would help to provide additional targeted academic and practical learning support, which would be of particular benefits to SEND learners. An example of additional support would be through the hiring of a progress coach or intervention worker, tasked with engaging parents and guardians and to work with the learner holistically, focusing on progression and acting as the key point of contact for each learner's support network.

12: What more can be done by employers, providers and government to ensure that those young people with SEND can access, participate in and be supported to achieve an apprenticeship, including through access routes like traineeships?

It is important to acknowledge that each individual's progress towards higher level skills, and/or into employment is unique to them, and the support for this cohort must reflect that. This is why we continue to urge against an arbitrary defunding of a range of qualifications at Level 2 and below, which act as key stepping stone qualifications, but also – in some instances – as direct entry points into employment (in the case of Level 2 qualifications).

There also remains a significant gap in attainment outcomes between pupils identified with a special educational need and their non-SEN peers. To close this gap for SEN learners, we recommend that more emphasis is placed on supported internships as opposed to apprenticeships and traineeships.

This is as supported internships can be a more realistic options given the entry requirements for traineeships and apprenticeships can be too high for many SEND learners. In 2019/20, only 33.1% of young people with a diagnosed SEN achieved grade 4 or above in English and maths GCSE, compared to 78% of all non-SEN pupils.

We acknowledge that entry requirements are in place to protect standards but urge a middle course to reflect the needs of all learners.

We would also recommend both local and central government offering supported internships – acting as the employer – given the current poor promotion of supported internship opportunities.

Further, we recognise the utility of supported internships but would like to highlight that they mainly benefit the most able of SEND students. There is a broad expectation that every student will reach certain standards in maths and English, which attainment outcomes for SEND learners clearly highlight as incorrect. As we have continuously highlighted in our response, the Government must not implement a one-size-fits-all approach, as this will not be appropriate for all SEND learners.

We also recommend that the Government works with employers to develop prospective financial incentives for taking on young people on support internships so that more effective ways of getting young people into employment can be developed.

13: To what extent do you agree or disagree that this new vision for alternative provision will result in improved outcomes for children and young people?

The fact that there is a focus on alternative provision is a positive in itself, but any new framework must be inclusive of all learners, all different types of providers and, as we have consistently emphasised, must be fully resourced, with a clear delivery timetable and clearly defined accountability.

16: To what extent do you agree or disagree that a statutory framework for pupil movements will improve oversight and transparency of placements into and out of alternative provision?

We agree that there is the need for more joined-up thinking and cooperation between all providers, and it is important that any framework for pupil movements will enable this.

We should also acknowledge that for AP learner, independent training providers is a very common option for these types of learners when they transition to post-16 providers.

17: What are the key metrics we should capture and use to measure local and national performance? Please explain why you have selected these

Employment outcomes over a set period of time should be captured, with set intervals (developed among key stakeholders) to mark progress at agreed intervals. It is also important to note, as we have referenced previously in this submission, that not every SEND learner will be able to obtain employment and it will therefore be necessary to also focus on 'softer' outcomes and social skills development, such as a person's ability to live independently, along with other, more realistic goals for this particular cohort of learners. This requires being clear on what 'success' for SEND learners looks like at every level of attainment. There also must be clarity on what the 'successful transition' into employment and adulthood – as the Government sets out – tangibly looks like.

Outcomes must therefore take into account not just employment but look at the progress of those who will either never go into employment, and those who will reach employment at some stage, but will have a longer journey to reach that point.

Any new performance framework, beyond what the Government is suggesting, must incorporate life and social skills, and independence, as outcomes to be tracked.

We have included these recommendations as it is vital that the Government acknowledges the varying level of attainment among SEND learners, and therefore the outcomes set out must reflect this.

18: How can we best develop a national framework for funding bands and tariffs to achieve our objectives and mitigate unintended consequences and risks?

Making sure that all providers in this space are listened to/consulted with closely. It is also important that there is appropriate transitional protection to a nationally agreed rate so that certain providers do not lose out on funding during any implementation period of a new funding framework.

20: What will make the biggest difference to successful implementation of these proposals? What do you see as the barriers to and enablers of success?

The vital juncture/s for young people towards adult and into employment are the transitions to post-16 and post-18 provision. Yet this review continues the recent trend of focusing at schools, to the exclusion of other sectors of the SEND system – including independent training providers.

We therefore urge the Government to ensure that attention is also focused on post-16 provision, as – for example – measures that work for schools, will not necessarily have the same impact or produce the same outcomes if applied within the post-16 space.

22: Is there anything else you would like to say about the proposals in the green paper?

We welcome the Government's commitment to improving national SEND provision but reiterate that such a commitment must be reinforced with the appropriate funding and resources. Staff recruitment and retention must be an absolute priority for any additional investment in SEND provision, not just across all types of providers but also across local authorities, social care and adult services provision.

On that front, there also needs to be a better link between SEND provision, the transition to adulthood/employment and adult social care. The link between the end of adult education and adult social care is broken which the Government, to its credit, has acknowledged. There needs to be a multi-agency approach to fixing this problem.

We will also continue to urge the Government to acknowledge that while disadvantage does not stop at 16, pupil premium funding does. Given the wide gap in attainment between SEND and non-SEND learners, it is essential that support provided by the Government through this review both recognises this gap, but then ensures that the funding is in place to help close it.

