

MEDIA RELEASE

*Under embargo until
Thursday 2 March 2023*

nasen Responds to the publication of The SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan

nasen – the National Association for Special Educational Needs (SEND) – the leading charity that exists to support and champion those working with, and for, children and young people with SEND and learning differences, has today (Thursday 2 March 2023) responded to the publication of ***The SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time***.

Publication of the plan is the culmination of the government’s consultation on proposals laid out in the ***SEND Review: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time***, the responses to which highlighted very real concerns and a dire need for change in a system that is hampered by inequity, difficult and lengthy processes, and funding shortfalls.

The SEND and AP Improvement Plan outlines the first steps that the government will take in addressing the issues raised. It is hoped that it marks the start of a journey to the creation of ‘a society that celebrates, encourages, and enables the success of all children and young people, including those with SEND and in alternative provision. A society where we hold high aspirations for all children and young people, recognising that although success looks different for everyone, it is no less worthy of celebration’¹.

Annamarie Hassall MBE, nasen CEO and Chair of Whole School SEND, said: “During the consultation we worked hard with members to gather as much intelligence as we could in an effort to provide insights into the daily challenges faced by all those with lived experience of a complicated system – from children and young people with SEND and their families, to those working in education, health, care, local government, and those who offer support across the SEND and AP system.

¹ *SEND and AP Improvement Plan: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time*, 2023, p.22

“We feel encouraged by the plan that the government has put before us today. It appears that they have listened, acknowledged the issues, and committed to change. We recognise alignment with nasen’s vision of an equitable learning experience for all.

“The government’s reimagination of what a more positive experience for children and young people with SEND and their families should look like is warmly welcomed. The ambition of achieving a *“more inclusive society that celebrates and enables success in all forms”* outlined in the plan is central to nasen’s work and was a key pillar in our response to the consultation.

“We acknowledge that this improvement plan is not presented as a finished article, but rather marks the beginning of a new phase. In taking this approach, they are unlocking the true spirit of coproduction, enabling those most impacted to help determine the detail, and offering opportunity to test and learn as the process evolves. Authentic coproduction can only be positive.

“There are many children and young people for whom this transformational change to the system will arrive too late. And there is a great deal of trust required that the emphasis on SEND, the progress we’ve made to date and the plans for future change, will not be diminished by subsequent governments.”

Among the changes set to be implemented is the introduction of a leadership level SENCO National Professional Qualification (NPQ), which will be mandatory for those who do not already hold the National Award for SEN Co-ordination (NASENCO).

On NPQs, Annamarie said: “The absence of a SEND focused NPQ has been an omission from the NPQ portfolio for too long, so we welcome all prominence to SEND and inclusion across the NPQ suite. SENCOs holding the NASENCO Award will not be expected to acquire the SENCO NPQ. As the content and structure of the new NPQ is likely to be at an early stage, nasen would be delighted to input to the development. I would caution any suggestion that the SENCO NPQ replaces the NASENCO Award, these will be different qualifications. Indeed, it is the DfE requirement and subsequently the Code of Practice that will change.

“Despite common misconceptions, the NASENCO Award does not belong to nasen nor do we derive any kind of income from it, however we recognise the quality of this Masters level award and the depth of knowledge and understanding that it delivers, and we would encourage the current providers of the NASENCO Award to maintain their offer for those wishing to study SEND and inclusion at a higher level.”

Additionally, the plan confirms the intention to introduce new evidence-based SEND and AP National Standards, which will establish what support should be ordinarily available in mainstream settings, and for those receiving SEN Support and with Education Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans). They will also clarify who is responsible for delivering provision and from which budgets. This should result in the financial responsibility for SEND being shared more fairly across education, health and social care, and provide clear sightlines of accountability, reducing the need to pursue routes of redress.

Since the intention is that the National Standards will raise the quality of universal provision, it is hoped that more needs will be met at an earlier stage. The National Standards will also provide the basis for developing a national approach to funding bands and tariffs, leading to greater equity between local areas.

Reflecting on National Standards, Annamarie continued: “As an organisation, nasen will look to work closely with decision makers to shape thinking around the development of National Standards, so that they achieve their goal of ordinarily available access to the right provision for each and every child in England. We will continue to stress the importance of sufficient funding throughout the system, and to influence how funding is shared.”

Initial details of the national standardisation of EHC Plans were also unveiled, aimed at easing the bureaucracy that many SENCOs face when working across local authorities (LAs). Once standardised, there will be increased use of digital technology.

The move towards a digitised and standardised EHC Plan is something nasen believes has the potential to transform accessibility and equity for children and young people, their families and agencies. The plan falls somewhat short of nasen’s vision for a swifter route to digitisation, and it is notable that LAs will be ‘encouraged’ to adopt the standard template, rather than mandated, but it is a step in the right direction.

“The details of standardised, digitised EHC Plans offer a promising start, but we believe there could be more pace and ambition shown in this area,” said Annamarie. “We must move towards a future where the power of assistive technology is harnessed to ensure that anyone with accessibility needs can readily interact with the system, therefore amplifying the authentic voice of EHC Plan owners, i.e. children and young people with SEND and their families. It should also offer the right level of quick and easy access to teachers, parents and multi-agency practitioners, helping to cut red tape and speed up processes to enable timely support.”

The SEND and AP Improvement Plan can be found – in full – on nasen’s online [Policy Hub](#). We have also produced role-specific guides that explore the most relevant points for SENCOs, mainstream leaders, teachers, early years specialists, specialist schools, AP and post-16 settings.

ENDS

Further Information

For further information or to speak to a member of the team contact ginaw@nasen.org.uk or mariacarney@nasen.org.uk / 07855 375065

Notes to Editors

About nasen

- nasen – the national association for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) – is the leading membership charity that exists to champion, connect and support those working with and for children and young people with SEND and learning differences
- A fully inclusive and equitable education must be the aspiration for all children and young people. We exist to champion, connect and support all those involved in the education community - from the early years to schools, post-16, specialist schools and wider settings - to make this a reality
- Our free membership network, leading campaigns, trusted experience and training are empowering a generation of knowledgeable and effective leaders and practitioners who are transforming outcomes for the learners they serve day in, day out. We will not rest until we live in a world where learning is meaningful and accessible for every child and young person
- Over the past 30 years, we have worked in partnership with over 85,000 education practitioners in more than 70% of schools and settings in England and are deeply committed to ensuring that our expertise in SEND is available to every school and setting in the UK
- nasen’s work spans the delivery of international programmes of support through to direct, ‘on the ground’ engagement with schools and settings in the UK through the Whole School SEND consortium and wider project and programmes
- For further information, visit www.nasen.org.uk
- Follow nasen on Twitter [@nasen_org](#), Facebook [@nasen.org](#) or LinkedIn [@the-national-association-for-special-educational-needs-nasen](#)