

NICCY *'Too Little, Too Late'* (2020): Report Recommendations Progress Monitoring Table

Action planned or taken by relevant authorities to date: 15 March 2022

Colour Key	Number
	Good progress evident 1
	Evidence of fledgling progress or potential 32
	No evidence of progress 7

PROGRESS AGAINST RECOMMENDATIONS TABLE		
<p>Accessibility, Availability and Effectiveness of Statutory Supports and Services (Recommendations 1 – 8)</p> <p><i>NB: Stage 3 services will be replaced by Stage 2 when the new SEN Framework is commenced. Nonetheless, the recommendations below are still applicable. When the new SEN Framework is implemented, the below recommendations will remain relevant to Stage 2 services.</i></p>		
Recommendation	Relevant Authorities' Input - Action taken or planned	NICCY Response
<p>1. The EA must conduct a systematic review of all supports and services for children with SEN. This should include:</p> <p>a. a review of the accessibility and availability of services, the extent to which they are appropriately resourced, evaluated, and founded on evidence-based practice; and</p> <p>b. a review of the gaps in services, including the</p>	<p>In mid-2020, the decision was taken to formally initiate the scoping phase of a SEND Strategic Development Programme (SEND SDP) which will include a systematic review of all supports and services for children with SEN across 13 specific projects over the 2021/22 & 2022/23 academic years, reviewing all issues relating to current service delivery models.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In October 2020, a cross-sectoral Programme Board was established chaired by the EA's Chief Executive as the programme's Senior Responsible Owner, including senior representation from DE, DoH and NICCY. A temporary programme scoping team was established within the EA. A stakeholder Programme Reference Group was also established, including wider representation from across the education, health and social care and community and voluntary sectors.</p>	<p>NICCY welcomes the SEND SDP process and diligence taken with regards to implementation. We note that the following four projects are currently underway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of the SEND Act (NI) 2016 - SEN Area Planning Frameworks - SEN Placement Project - Statutory Assessment Improvement Project <p>A further nine projects will be implemented over the next 18-24</p>

<p>lack of numeracy support services for children and young people with dyscalculia.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> From March 2021 to June 2021 a wide-ranging stakeholder engagement programme was completed to help shape the SEND SDP planning process. <input type="checkbox"/> The SEND SDP will draw together and co-ordinate the SEND development work which was already underway across various agencies and will also deliver a range of new projects to address additional SEND priorities (including those specified in NICCY’s TLTL report). <input type="checkbox"/> Before the programme can move into full implementation, additional resource must be secured. As such an outline business case was developed and submitted to DE in November 2021. The OBC includes a project proposal which will consider numeracy support in other jurisdictions and how an equivalent NI approach could be built into an integrated SEN pupil support service model 	<p>months, subject to available resources.</p> <p>NICCY notes that additional resource must be secured before the programme can move into full implementation and request an update on outcome of the outline business case, submitted in November 2021, as soon as a decision has been made.</p>
<p>2. The EA should review and make explicit the criteria to access Stage 3 services and take all necessary measures to ensure that access to services is always allocated on the basis of need. This should involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the development of a comprehensive awareness raising 	<p>An Integrated Model for CYPS Pupil Support Service is proposed as part of the SEND SDP project. A detailed project specification for the project has been included in the overall SEND SDP OBC and provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> An overview across all current Stage 3 services; <p>A baselining of current capacity and demand;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> An analysis of current delivery models and associated management information, considering the interdependencies between services; 	<p>NICCY welcomes this project which will review the current form, function and resourcing of EA’s SEND Pupil Support Services, including referral pathways, eligibility frameworks, and which aims to determine whether a more integrated model could be more effective, efficient and child-centred.</p>

<p>programme for schools, EPs and other health and education professionals, to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are aware of the referral criteria for each service;</p> <p>b. the involvement of relevant stakeholders and service users in service reviews; and</p> <p>c. openness, transparency and the use of co-design processes in the restructuring and redevelopment of Stage 3 services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The aim of stakeholder engagement across spring 2021 was to articulate the rationale and basis of the programme; to determine if, from a stakeholder perspective the strategic issues identified are correct; to consider the appropriateness of the proposed approach to potential specific projects; to review the proposed sequencing of projects and whether the appropriate barriers and risks have been considered and addressed. □ Stakeholders (including children and young people with SEN, their parents/carers, school leaders, education partners including voluntary and community and EA staff), were asked to consider the most urgent priorities for change and identify the type of additional projects that will be required to address the various recommendations for change and deliver the desired programme outcomes; □ Stakeholders were also asked to consider how longer-term engagement and co-design could best be approached as individual SEND SDP projects are rolled out over the next 18-24 months, subject to the programme being appropriately resourced. <p>The SEND SDP already has a standing stakeholder Programme Reference Group (PRG) which has advised the programme and OBC development process to date. When programme funding is secured the PRG will be expanded to include a Practitioner Forum and the overall</p>	<p>However, we are very disappointed that this project, which was due to be initiated in November 2021, has not yet commenced and request an update on revised timeframes when available.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes the completion of data discovery processes across all of EA's SEND Pupil Support Services and the initial data improvement roadmaps currently being developed, as part of preparatory work across SEND Pupil Support Services.</p> <p>Given the timeframe involved in the implementation of this project, NICCY strongly recommends that specific measures are taken in the interim period, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that Stage 3 services are allocated on the basis of need.</p> <p>We welcome that the project includes the identification and implementation of a range of immediate actions to address</p>
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	<p>PRG will continue to guide programme implementation. At project level, individual stakeholder/user forums will also be established to advise their delivery, including the projects which focus on the review and reform of Stage 3 services.</p> <p>EA SEN pupil support services have also published details regarding their individual service areas on the public facing EA website.^{1 2}</p> <p>Service specific SEND Plans are also nearing completion and will be made publicly available via EA website. SEND Plans will clearly detail service type, offer, access criteria etc.</p> <p>Information regarding EA SEND Services has also been shared with education settings at awareness raising events held with principals, staff and governors.</p> <p>EA awaits full commencement orders from DE relating to the SEND Act (NI) 2016. On receipt of the orders, consultation would follow and publication of resulting arrangements to schools should be scheduled for 2022/23 academic year.</p>	<p>pressures within existing service. We note that work on these actions will not be commenced until funding has been secured to allow project initiation and the recruitment of a dedicated project team.</p> <p>NICCY considers the completion of the stakeholder engagement process in spring 2021 as a positive development and would welcome the opportunity to review findings of this engagement process.</p> <p>We note that EA SEND Services have published details regarding their individual service areas on the public facing EA website. Please clarify, as per our recommendation, where details of explicit criteria to access these services can be found.</p>
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¹ [Pupil Support Services | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](https://eani.org.uk/pupil-support-services)

² [Services | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](https://eani.org.uk/services)

		<p>We note that EA awaits full commencement orders from DE relating to the SEND Act (NI) 2016 prior to consultation and subsequent publication of resulting arrangements to schools which should be scheduled for 2022/23. We consider it vital that this is achieved to avoid unnecessary delay in accessing services by those who need them.</p>
<p>3. Comprehensive Stage 3 pupil support services must be made available. Information on referral pathways, criteria for access, waiting times, expected outcomes and processes for monitoring and evaluation must be transparent and publicly available.</p>	<p>DE and EA fully accepted all of the recommendations made in the NICCY report and those made in the other reports³ (more than 150 recommendations in total). All those recommendations are being addressed by the SEND SDP.</p> <p>1. The development of an integrated SEN pupil support service model which would span :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Autism Advisory and Intervention Service (AAIS); <input type="checkbox"/> Language and Communication Service (LCS); <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory Service (SS); <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy Service (LS); <input type="checkbox"/> SEN Inclusion Service (SENIS); <input type="checkbox"/> Behavioural Support and Provisions Service (BSPS). 	<p>NICCY welcomes that this recommendation will be addressed by three separate SDP projects.</p> <p>As stated above at recommendation 2, the review of EA’s Stage 3 Pupil Support services will include the identification and implementation of a range of immediate actions to address pressures within existing service models. Work on these actions will not be commenced until funding has been secured to allow</p>

³ Including NIAO 2017 (<https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/special-educational-needs>), NIAO 2020 (<https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/impact-review-special-educational-needs>) and PAC 2021 (<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/committees/2017-2022/pac/reports/special-educational-needs/report-on-impact-review-on-special-educational-needs.pdf>).

	<p>2. The review of EA’s SEN Early Years Inclusion Service 3. The review of EA Educational Psychology Service</p> <p>The objectives of the proposed integrated service model are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) identify a range of more integrated SEND pupil support service models used in other jurisdictions which may be replicable in NI; 2) commission a rapid evidence review regarding literacy and numeracy support models in other jurisdictions, their comparative effectiveness and potential applicability in NI; 3) identify and implement a range of immediate actions to address pressures within existing service models and build ‘readiness for change’ as potential new models are scoped and piloted, including opportunities for increased cross-service working; 4) engage stakeholders in an evidence-based co-design process to define and characterise a preferred SEND pupil support service model for NI; 5) pilot the preferred service model within a defined geographic area; 6) develop an outline business case and implementation plan for NI-wide roll out of a refined preferred SEND pupil support service model. <p>This project will have significant linkages to the Review of Early Years SEND Supports and the Review of the Educational Psychology Service Model.</p>	<p>project initiation and the recruitment of a dedicated project team.</p> <p>NICCY is disappointed that funding to finance the review of EA’s SEN Early Years Inclusion Service and the review of EA Educational Psychology Service is not yet secured and that budget uncertainty poses a risk to their scheduled implementation.</p> <p>Gaps in numeracy support services for children with dyscalculia were highlighted in NICCY’s TLTL report. Further, we note that numeracy services are not listed within the suite of pupil support services detailed on EA’s dedicated web page. Consideration of numeracy support models, as part of the SEND SDP projects in 2021/22 and 2022/23, is necessary. This does not address however, the needs of children in school who currently require support for dyscalculia. Immediate action is needed for them to access numeracy support at the earliest stage possible.</p>
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	<p>All three projects will be progressed in parallel within the SEND SDP to allow full co-ordination and alignment by the SEND SDP Board.</p> <p>Each of these projects will require dedicated project teams to be established over a two-year period and appropriate funding must be secured via the programme OBC before they can be initiated.</p> <p>In parallel to the wider SEND SDP, work is progressing in preparing the first edition of the EA's annual plan of SEN service provision and in line with the full commencement of the SEND Act (NI) 2016, will be published on the EA website in July 2023.</p> <p>Information regarding EA SEND Services has also been shared with education settings at awareness raising events held with principals, staff and governors.</p>	<p>We welcome that EA's Education Directorate, supported by staff from Pupil Support Services and school leaders is developing resources and assessments for numeracy within Learning Support Classes.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes the proposed linkages between EA's Review of Stage 3 pupil support services, Review of Early Years SEND Supports and Review of the Educational Psychology Service Model, and that these projects will be fully co-ordinated and aligned.</p> <p>We do not see an explicit reference to 'parents' in the tables setting out target audience within the in CYPS training calendar. Please confirm whether 'other' refers to parents or if training for parents is referenced elsewhere.</p> <p>While it was welcome, in Spring 2021, that no child was waiting outside the statutory time limit</p>
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		<p>(STL), we note that this trend is increasing again. We are concerned therefore that as we move to the 22 STL this could result in an increased number of children not having statement process completed within STL. Detail on actions being taken by EA to address this is required</p> <p>The SEND SDP Stage 3 Services project to better meet the holistic needs of CYP with SEND is welcome.</p>
<p>4. The EA must assess the feasibility of using school-based assessment to inform access to Stage 3 services.</p>	<p>The SEND SDP project to review the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) business model will provide recommendations for strategic change, along with an associated outline business case and longer-term implementation plan.</p> <p>The primary focus of the project will be to scope and build stakeholder support for a sustainable EPS model which will be efficient, effective, flexible, responsive to</p>	<p>NICCY notes that this recommendation will be addressed as part of the SEND SDP review of EPS business model. We welcome that this review will examine a broad range of areas including the feasibility of using school-based assessments, time allocation model,</p>

	<p>needs⁴ and will improve the accessibility and availability of appropriate supports so that all children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can achieve the best possible outcomes in life.</p> <p>The project will be progressed in parallel to the reviews of other EA SEND pupil support services which are taking place under the SEND SDP to ensure that all aspects of the resulting SEND support system are fully 'joined up'.</p> <p>The review will drill down into areas like the feasibility of using school-based assessments, time allocation, research on unmet need, comparative models and more.</p>	<p>research on unmet need and comparative models.</p> <p>Attention to mitigating specific barriers as part of this project faced by the IME sector (previously highlighted by NICCY) is also welcome.</p> <p>Again, we note that progression of this recommendation is subject to additional resource being secured and look forward to confirmation of this as a matter of urgency. We are disappointed that project work has not been able to start as envisaged within the original project schedule.</p>
<p>5. The EA must progress the development and provision of guidance to schools on supplementary evidence-based strategies that can be implemented whilst referrals for assessment are being processed.</p>	<p>Each stage 3 support service has a dedicated web tile on the EA's public facing website⁵, where they specify service contact details and a wide range of specialist resources. These resources are freely available for download and EA Staff from each of the services are available to signpost, advise and support as required.</p>	<p>We note with some concern that the feedback provided refers only to standard support services available. Although welcome, it is unclear if bespoke guidance on supplementary evidence-based strategies has been developed and provided to schools. Clarification of</p>

⁴ Including mitigation of specific barriers faced by the IME sector;

⁵ <https://www.eani.org.uk/services/pupil-support-services>

	<p>EA's SEND Implementation Team facilitate a SENCO specific 'G Suite'. The G-Suite hosts a SEN Resource Bank for school SENCOs.</p> <p>Schools can make direct requests for EA Behaviour Support via C2k and access resources on the EA website.⁶</p> <p>EA's CYPS Training calendar for staff/parents has been developed, including training on a range of evidence-based SEN strategies.⁷</p>	<p>specific action to address this recommendation, planned or already undertaken, is required.</p> <p>Monitoring of training provided would be helpful. As requested earlier, clarification of whether 'others' category in training calendar includes parents is requested.</p>
<p>6. Quality training opportunities and funding for appropriate assessment tools should be provided to EPs by the EA.</p>	<p>DE provides funding each year for two whole service training days as part of on-going professional development for the EPS. In 2020/21 EPs attended training on 11 March 2021 with Wayne Denner on "Cybersafety and Tech Specialist – Online Reputation: Future Proofing your life and career" and on 20 May 2021 Licette Gus, Director of Emotion Coaching provided training.</p> <p>The whole service received assessment training in September 2021. Further training took place on 15 December 2021</p> <p>In addition, the EPS hold a full service day each term which includes an element of CPD.</p>	<p>We welcome that training will be made to EPS on a range of areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equality and Diversity Project: Supporting Children and Young People with linguistically diverse language difficulties; - Solution focused approaches; - SEN Strategic Review, Views of the Child; Running Nurture Clusters; Cluster Groups and School Based Support Team Model; and

⁶ <https://www.eani.org.uk/services/post-primary-behaviour-support-provisions>

⁷ <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/children-and-young-peoples-services-training-programme>

	<p>On the 15 September 2021 staff attended training on the SEN Strategic Review, Views of the Child; Running Nurture Clusters; Cluster Groups and School Based Support Team Model.</p> <p>In addition, the EPS will be trained on ‘solution focused approaches’ over the next 2 years, with the initial cohort of 2-day training taking place in September 2021. Further training is planned alongside colleagues in SARS regarding attending SEND tribunals and ‘dealing with difficult situations’ in 2021/22 (dates yet to be confirmed).</p> <p>□ Educational Psychologists as registered members of the Health and Care Professional Council have a professional duty to ensure they access continuing professional development (CPD) to keep their skills and knowledge up to date ensuring they can practise safely and effectively. They must maintain a CPD log which is open to random audit every 2 years to ensure that appropriate professional standards are maintained. EPs must adhere to HCPC guidance outlined in the “Continuing professional development and your registration” (2017). The EPS ensures that time is ‘ring fenced’ against each staff member’s annual work plan to ensure they can engage in ongoing professional development. To facilitate this process the EPS revised their ‘Supervision Policy’ which includes an oversight of staff professional skill development required within the service to meet business objectives.</p>	<p>- SEND tribunals and ‘dealing with difficult situations’ in 2021/22.</p> <p>Further detail on the specific training completed in 2021/22 is requested.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes that the EPS service received assessment training in September 2021. Specific detail of training received and funding for appropriate assessment tools is requested.</p>
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	<p>□ All EPs have access to a wide range of assessment tools including the digital gold standard 'Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children' which is regarded as the most useful of all cognitive tests available and allows the EP to fulfil their duties. In addition, an annual audit of assessment tools is conducted across the service to ensure that new assessment tools are included ensuring high standards.</p>	
<p>7. Systems must be developed by the EA to ensure the routine collection and monitoring of waiting time statistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. waiting times between a referral for assessment being made by the school and the assessment being conducted by the EA Educational Psychology Service; b. waiting times between a referral being made for a Stage 3 service and the referral being accepted or not accepted; and c. waiting times between the referral being accepted and the child gaining access to a Stage 3 service. 	<p>As detailed in the SEND SDP OBC, the management information systems (MIS) currently in place across the EA's SEND services have significant deficiencies which limit the reliable reports and analyses which can be extracted. Within the Statutory Assessment and Review Service (SARS) these issues have already be resolved across 2020 and 2021, with a full suite of metrics now being reported on monthly to DE and the SEND SDP Board. The availability of these high quality analytics was central to driving through wider SARS performance improvement to date and allowing the back log of statutory assessments to be cleared.</p> <p>A similar approach to addressing current MIS deficiencies is proposed across key projects under the SEND SDP which focus on Stage 3 services and the EPS. Although those projects cannot be fully initiated without appropriate funding being provided by the OBC, the EA has already begun preparatory work, with initial data discovery</p>	<p>NICCY welcomes measures taken so far to address deficiencies in management information systems, with further work planned following commencement of key SEND SDP projects that focus on Stage 3 services.</p> <p>It is unclear whether these projects will include the development and implementation of appropriate systems to ensure routine collection and monitoring of data relating to each of the specific 'phases' of waiting times, as detailed in our recommendation (a – c). NICCY considers this vital and requests clarification.</p>

	<p>workshops and short-term improvement planning already completed across all Stage 3 services.</p> <p>EA's Educational Psychology Service has already identified performance improvement metrics which have been developed and formulated with the assistance of EA's Corporate Performance and ICT teams to allow regular monitoring and assessment of progress. These feed into the wider Performance Management Framework for CYPS and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Number of children currently open to psychology service from date of referral; <input type="checkbox"/> Number and % of assessments completed within 26 weeks of a new referral <input type="checkbox"/> Number and % of new referrals waiting longer than 26 weeks for an assessment to be completed shown by time-bands. 	
<p>8. Processes must be established by the EA to ensure that children with SEN in both statutory and non-statutory early years' settings can avail of the services and support they require.</p>	<p>EA's early years SEND support services⁸ are available for children aged 2+ (in their preschool year and the year immediately preceding that). Typically, initial differentiated educational support for children with SEN is provided across Stages 1 & 2 of the Code of Practice¹ (CoP)⁹ by their preschool education provider (regardless of whether statutory or non-statutory). In the case of</p>	<p>NICCY welcomes the range of services detailed that are currently available to children at Early Years stage. We strongly advise that uptake of services is monitored to enable evaluative processes to</p>

⁸ With exception of the EA's Sensory Service which provides support from birth;

⁹ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/the-code-of-practice.pdf>

	<p>more complex needs, a child may be referred for a Stage 3 assessment by the EA's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and onwards access to Stage 3 services and/or statutory assessment. In statutory nurseries¹⁰, that referral can be made directly to EPS. In most non-statutory preschool settings or in cases where the child is 2+ but not attending preschool, that referral can be made via a community paediatrician. Once the referral to EPS has been made, a child will be able to access the full range of supports and services offered by the EA, regardless of whether in statutory or non-statutory provision.</p> <p>The differential routes to EPS referral have been specified as a key issue to be addressed in the proposed project under the SEND SDP which will review early years SEN supports. In advance of the necessary funding for that project being provided via the programme OBC, the</p> <p>EA's Educational Psychology Service is working towards assigning a link Educational Psychologist to each DE funded non-statutory preschool setting</p> <p>Whilst non-statutory DE funded settings are not included in the C2K system all correspondence relating to SEN training, resources, and events is shared with settings</p>	<p>determine whether support is reaching all children who need it.</p> <p>We note with concern the current disparity regarding availability of support to statutory and non-statutory pre-school settings, including links to EPS Educational Psychologists and access to C2K system (and therefore SENCO G-Suite). Update is requested on action taken or planned to address this disparity.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes the Review of Early Years SEN support, including assessment and referral pathways, intervention effectiveness and impact, integrated working with health and early intervention focus, as part of the SEND SDP. However, we are very disappointed that this project, which was due to be initiated in November 2021, has not yet commenced and request an update on revised timeframes when available.</p>
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¹⁰ And non-statutory preschool education settings in the former SEELB area;

	<p>via the Preschool Education Programme (PSEP) mailbox.</p> <p>EA's SEND Implementation Team also provide SEN resource drops to DE funded non-statutory settings as without a C2K account they cannot access the SENCO G-Suite.</p> <p>The Getting Ready to Learn programme (GRtL) promotes parental involvement in children's pre-school learning. The programme is open to all DE funded preschool settings. EA's Educational Psychology Service hopes to assign a link Educational Psychologist to each DE funded non-statutory preschool setting and work is underway to develop this support. Whilst non-statutory DE funded settings are not included in the C2K system all correspondence relating to SEN training, resources, and events is shared with settings via the Preschool Education Programme (PSEP) mailbox.</p> <p>EA's SEND Implementation Team also provide SEN resource drops to DE funded non-statutory settings as without a C2K account they cannot access the SENCO G-Suite.</p> <p>During 2020/21 over 900 children with significant SEN were referred to the SEN EYIS from the EYH. The Getting Ready to Learn programme (GRtL) promotes parental involvement in children's pre-school</p>	<p>Clarification is needed that all children with SEN, in both statutory and non-statutory settings, can avail of the services and support they require.</p> <p>The Getting Ready to Learn programme (GRtL) which promotes parental involvement in children's pre-school learning is welcome.</p>
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	learning. The programme is open to all DE funded preschool settings.	
Capacity Building in Schools (Recommendations 9 – 15)		
Recommendation	Action taken or planned	
<p>9. The DE and EA must ensure that all school staff are trained, guided, supported and assessed on their ability to meet the diverse needs of pupils with SEN and disabilities in mainstream schools:</p> <p>a. The EA and Teacher Training institutions must introduce a mandatory programme of early (EPD) and continuous professional development (CPD) for all school staff in identifying, providing for, and ensuring full and equal inclusion of children with SEN. This</p>	<p>As part of DE’s Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion, Capacity Building Programme, the SEN Resource File was designed to assist teachers and the education workforce to support children with special educational needs in schools.</p> <p>On initial publication, 3 copies of the Resource File were delivered to every school in Northern Ireland and all of the chapters are available to staff via the DE website or C2K.</p> <p>The Resource File is under review and recent updates to the SEN Resource File include chapters on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety and Autism¹² <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding Memory Difficulties¹³ <input type="checkbox"/> The beginning reading programme¹⁴ <input type="checkbox"/> The importance of an integrated approach when learning to spell¹⁵ <input type="checkbox"/> Working with the whole community to understand nurture and to support social behavioural and emotional wellbeing¹⁶ 	<p>NICCY considers the ongoing review of the SEN Resource as a positive step. Clarification of specific measures that will be taken to ensure that SEN training is explicitly integrated for teachers, SENCOs, classroom assistants and other professionals in mainstream schools is requested.</p> <p>EA’s ongoing work with Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) (including the facilitation of training, resource sharing and engagements sessions with lecturers, 3rd year BEd students and PGCE students) is welcome. Regarding trainee Teachers’ uptake of opportunities for work experience in a specialist</p>

¹²Resource File - new Anxiety & Autism Chapter PDF (3.1 MB)

¹³ Resource File – 2020 Update: Understanding Memory Difficulties PDF (913 KB)

¹⁴ Resource File – new Chapter: The beginning reading programme, the importance of a balanced approach PDF (1.5 MB)

¹⁵ SEN Resource: The importance of an integrated approach when learning to spell PDF (1.7 MB)

¹⁶ SEN Resource: Working with the whole community to understand 3333 and support social behaviour and emotional wellbeing PDF (6.4 MB)

<p>should expand on the existing Children and Young People's Services Training Programme 2019-2020¹¹. NB: 20-21 one is available now.</p> <p>b. Teacher training colleges should ensure that all trainee teachers have opportunity to work in a specialist classroom setting within mainstream and/or in a special school to gain direct experience of assessment/intervention work with children who have SEN and disabilities.</p> <p>c. The DE and EA must ensure comprehensive pre- and in-service SEN and disability equality training for teachers, SENCOs, classroom</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Speech, Language & Communication</p> <p>Information has been published on the EA website in respect of DE Guidance for Special Educational Needs Framework including links to the Code of Practice and Supplement and to other relevant SEN guidance/resource information which schools may find helpful.¹⁷</p> <p>Training in a variety of area of SEND is accessible via the EA CYPS Training calendar.¹⁸</p> <p>EA's SEN Inclusion Service – Down Syndrome provides an early language and reading programme specifically developed for young children with Down Syndrome ('See and Learn') to all preschool children with Down Syndrome in MS schools in N Ireland.</p> <p>EA's Primary Behaviour Support and Provisions have developed the High Five Newsletter which is a resource pack for families and primary aged pupils in relation to staying safe physically but also emotionally and mentally using the Health and Social Care Take 5 framework. The newsletter is available in English, Irish and accessible versions.¹⁹</p>	<p>classroom setting, we strongly advise that numbers are recorded and monitored.</p> <p>We also suggest monitoring uptake of training via EA CYPS Calendar.</p> <p>It is unclear whether action has been taken to implement a mandatory programme of early (EPD) and continuous professional development (CPD) for all relevant school staff in identifying, providing for, and ensuring full and equal inclusion of children with SEN. Clarification of how and when this will be progressed is required.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes the development of the High Five Newsletter and that this resource is made available in English, Irish and accessible versions.</p>
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¹¹ <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/children-and-young-peoples-services-training-programme-2019-2020>

¹⁷ <https://www.eani.org.uk/parents/special-educational-needs-sen/useful-publications/department-of-education-guidance-for>

¹⁸ <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/children-and-young-peoples-services-training-programme>

¹⁹ <https://www.eani.org.uk/high-five-primary-behaviour-support-provisions-newsletter>

<p>assistants and other professionals.</p>	<p>EA's SEND Implementation Team have been working with Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and have facilitated a range of training, resource sharing and engagements sessions with lecturers, 3rd year BEd students and PGCE students. A named officer from the team maintains links with TTCs and provides resources as requested.</p> <p>EA's Autism Advisory and Intervention Service (AAIS) have delivered annual input into the Early Years Childhood Studies Degree at Stranmillis College, Belfast.</p> <p>EA's Sensory Service delivers annual input to second year teachers training at Stranmillis. The service aims to make contact with St Marys to replicate this year. The Service also provides input to Educational Psychology students at Queens</p> <p>Accessibility Planning – An extensive range of resources have been produced by EA's SEND Implementation Team, including a template policy and guidance documentation for schools.</p> <p>DE has provided additional funding directly to schools so as they can prepare for implementation of the new SEN Framework.</p>	<p>Additional funding provided directly to schools to support preparation of the new SEN Framework is welcome.</p>
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<p>10. Specific guidance must be provided to teaching staff on the identification and assessment of SEN amongst Newcomer children. Existing assessment of SEN from other countries should be recognised and services provided accordingly.</p>	<p>EA has developed a model Diversity and Inclusion Policy for schools.²⁰ This policy seeks to support schools in embedding a diverse and inclusive ethos within their school. The Policy is accompanied with a child friendly version a self-audit that will help a school assess its ethos in terms of diversity and inclusion. Subject to the outcome of the self-audit, schools can also avail of a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion whole school training module.</p> <p>The model policy and associated tools are available on the EA website and schools are regularly reminded of the support in EA communications</p> <p>STARs</p> <p>The Intercultural Education Service (IES) is currently piloting a Schools Trauma and Referrals (STARs) Pilot to schools with Syrian Refugee Pupils from the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). This pilot programme will establish a functional early identification pathway for schools with refugee experienced pupils and establish access to specialist intervention at the earliest point. It will also ensure that there is an appropriate referral process.</p> <p>To date there have been 34 pupils and 34 schools supported via the Schools Trauma and Referrals (STARs) pilot. 100% of these support consultations have commenced within one month of referral.</p>	<p>Despite some positive steps, we are disappointed that the full implementation of our recommendation, which includes that provision of 'specific guidance . . . to teaching staff on the identification and assessment of SEN amongst Newcomer children' has not been progressed and request specific details of plans to take this forward.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes the actions noted relating to newcomer pupil support. Clarification of timeframe for completion of the Schools Trauma and Referrals (STARs) pilot and any plans to make available to all newcomer children would be helpful. We request that we are informed of the outcome of the pilot evaluation when completed in Autumn 2022.</p> <p>With regard to Diversity and Inclusion whole school training</p>
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²⁰ <https://www.eani.org.uk/about-us/equality/equality-and-diversity-policy-for-schools>

	<p>Due to Covid pressures formal evaluation of this pilot has been delayed until Autumn 2022, however feedback from schools has been overwhelmingly positive during this school year.</p> <p>In addition, STARs Projects have also delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 Trauma Informed Practice training (ready for online rollout for September 2021)<input type="checkbox"/> Consultation with Stranmillis research team and work is ongoing to deliver:<input type="checkbox"/> 3 x Therapeutic stories and teacher/parent guidebooks<input type="checkbox"/> Cluster groups (6 x primary and 12 post-primary) <p>The Schools of Sanctuary programme is an award scheme being piloted in the Urban Villages areas of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry with support from the NI Executive’s Urban Villages Initiative, the Belfast City of Sanctuary Group and the Education Authority’s Intercultural Education Service. The award is aimed at helping schools to develop further the concept that schools are welcoming places for pupils and their families, where every child feels safe, where they are fully accepted and that these schools will become beacons in the community as places where cultural diversity is valued and celebrated. There are presently 50 schools who have this award since 2017.²¹</p> <p>EA recently funded research on Syrian refugees in collaboration with Stranmillis University College.²²</p>	<p>module, we strongly advise that uptake levels are monitored.</p> <p>The Schools of Sanctuary pilot is also welcome. Confirmation of whether this will be mainstreamed is requested.</p> <p>NICCY is aware of issues in respect of refugee and asylum-seeking</p>
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²¹ <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/intercultural-education-service-ies/schools-of-sanctuary>

²² <https://www.stran.ac.uk/research-paper/school-based-support-for-syrian-refugee-pupils-in-northern-ireland/>

	EA's Statutory Assessment and Review Service considers all professional documents and evidence from other jurisdictions in decision making on a child's case. EA however do have a statutory duty to adhere to NI legislation regarding the Statutory Assessment process.	children and has addressed these previously.
11. The EA must introduce robust evaluation of learning and development opportunities, to monitor reach throughout the region, and impact on the knowledge, skill and capacity of professionals supporting children with SEN in mainstream settings.	<p>Each EA SEND support service has a training offer²³ which involves capturing evaluations from attendees and follow up longitudinal evaluations to measure effectiveness at individual service level.</p> <p>EA are hoping to develop a more centralised training hub for CA staff, teaching staff, and school leaders related to SEND. This will link closely with the work of a number of the SEND SDP projects over the next two years (dependent on appropriate funding being provided via the programme OBC).</p>	<p>NICCY notes that evaluations, including longitudinal service level evaluations, are conducted by each EA SEND support service.</p> <p>Further detail of these evaluation processes, particularly in relation to how reach, impact and outcomes are monitored and subsequently influence future content and delivery would be useful to allow assessment of their robustness.</p>
12. Area based learning clusters must be consistently and regularly facilitated by the EA across the region as a mechanism for staff in pre-school, primary and post-primary settings, including	<p>EA Services offer a range of clustering opportunities for school leaders and staff:</p> <p>EA's SEND Implementation team have been facilitating newly/recently-appointed SENCO Clusters since 2019 consisting of 2 days training and 2 days non-contact school time for SENCOs in mainstream primary & post</p>	NICCY welcomes the delivery of a range of clustering opportunities to school leaders and staff. This has significant potential to ensure sharing of good practice and peer support, particularly during implementation of SEND. We are

²³ <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/children-and-young-peoples-services-training-programme>

<p>both mainstream and special schools, to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. share learning and best practice techniques; b. identify opportunities for collaboration; and c. facilitate transition planning. 	<p>primary settings A link officer is allocated to each SENCO to offer support throughout year – SENCO Handbook and resources provided. Non-Statutory DE funded preschool setting SENCOs have been offered annual briefing and engagement sessions since 2019.</p> <p>A Scoping project for Nursery School SENCO induction is underway. PEGs offered annual briefing/engagement session 2019 - 21</p> <p>In 2020/21 EA’s SEN Early Years Inclusion Service (SENEYIS) delivered the following themed clusters remotely for professionals in early years settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Early Language Development <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Resilience <input type="checkbox"/> Toileting Training <input type="checkbox"/> Early Years Transitions <p>‘Leadership & Management of SEN and Inclusion’ was offered to pre-school staff in Nurseries and Playgroups. This training took place over 5 sessions with 2 different cohorts. It is planned that participating settings who completed the full programme will receive follow up support in relation to management themes covered. Service pressures meant that the follow up support did not happen in Term 1, but is now scheduled for Term 3 2021/22;</p>	<p>concerned, however, that facilitation of learning clusters may be patchy and, from the information provided, it is difficult to assess the extent to which clusters are ‘consistently’ and ‘regularly’ facilitated across the region.</p>
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	<p>EA Locality Leadership Networks are opportunities for senior leaders in schools to build relationships with EA officers supporting and advising on regional services.²⁴</p> <p>Nurture Clusters have been facilitated by EA for staff working in DE funded nurture provisions.</p>	
<p>13. School leaders, including Boards of Governors and Principals, must be supported to foster an inclusive culture and ethos founded on equality, and to ensure that children with SEN and disabilities maximise their educational potential.</p>	<p>EA have developed a model Diversity and Inclusion Policy for schools.²⁵ This policy seeks to support schools in embedding a diverse and inclusive ethos within their school. The Policy is accompanied with a child friendly version and a self-audit that will help a school assess its ethos in terms of diversity and inclusion. Subject to the outcome of the self-audit, schools can also avail of a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion whole school training module.</p> <p>The model policy and associated tools are available on the EA website and schools are regularly reminded of the support in EA communications.</p> <p>EA's SEND Implementation Team offers training and resources on reasonable adjustments, views of the child and accessibility. This training is available via the EA School Development Service Portal²⁶ and contains four 15 minute programmes for Governors covering the following topics:</p>	<p>While the development of a Model Diversity and Inclusion policy for schools is welcome, we are disappointed that this policy makes only a brief reference to SEND. We strongly advise that the policy is further developed to take greater account of SEN and disability.</p> <p>Further detail on uptake and content of the D & I whole school training module is requested.</p> <p>While we recognise potential obstacles to uptake of training by Governors, NICCY is concerned that provision of 4 x 15 min sessions may be insufficient to ensure participants are equipped</p>

²⁴ <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/locality-leadership-networks>

²⁵ <https://www.eani.org.uk/about-us/equality/equality-and-diversity-policy-for-schools>

²⁶ <https://www.easds.org.uk/booking/browse/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The Legislative Framework²⁷ <input type="checkbox"/> The Learning Continuum <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Roles and Responsibilities for SEN Provision within Mainstream Primary and Post-Primary Settings</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Information and Next Steps for Governors <p><i>Online training replaced face-to-face training for Governors – Jan-March 2019 & Jan - Feb 2020)</i></p> <p>EA's Tier 1 ASD training provided by AAIS has had a high uptake to date and is available in pre-recorded format which can be accessed at any time. Primary (including Foundation Stage) and Post Primary versions can be accessed by all setting-based professionals including classroom assistants. The course aims to help setting professionals to develop knowledge and understanding of ASD and to adapt classroom based approaches to facilitate the strengths and needs of pupils of pupils with ASD. Tier 2 training is about to be rolled out.</p> <p>EA's Sensory Service support education settings to complete acoustic audits for children who are Hearing Impaired (HI) and environmental audits for children who are Visually Impaired (VI) as required to provide recommendations for accessibility.</p>	<p>with the requisite skills and knowledge. We strongly recommend that the uptake of training is monitored, particularly when training is optional.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes the provision of Tier 1 ASD training for Governors and positively note the high level of uptake to date. Roll out of Tier 2 training is also welcome.</p>
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²⁷ NB New duties on Boards of Governors – not yet commenced - full training roll-out to Governors of all mainstream and Special and all phases (nursery, P and Post-P) planned in line with implementation

EA facilitate a range of leadership and management and School Governor training via the School Development Service Portal.²⁸

EA's SEN Early Years Inclusion Service provide training in Leadership & Management of SEN and Inclusion' to pre-school staff in Nurseries and Playgroups.

EA's Primary Behaviour Support and Provisions Service have developed training and resources including a sample Positive Behaviour Policy template for Schools.²⁹

EA's SEN Inclusion Service - Medical Needs supports Principals and, upon request, Boards of Governors in relation to the successful and inclusive implementation of health care plans.³⁰

The EA Literacy Service procured Read&Write software³¹ and there are now over 75, 000 unique users between c2k.net home and school users with training provided through the ReadWrite portal and C2k Exchange.

EA's SEND Support Services incorporate the views/voice of the child and the parent into the programmes of intervention

²⁸ <https://www.easds.org.uk/booking/browse/>

³⁰ <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/behaviour-support-and-provisions-bsp-regional-training-calendar/positive>

³⁰ <https://www.eani.org.uk/services/pupil-support-services/sen-inclusion-service>

³¹ Literacy support for students in N.Ireland

<p>14. Schools should be inspected by the Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) on their willingness and ability to establish the conditions required to foster an inclusive culture.</p>	<p>The inspection of schools remains paused. However, ETI district engagement and thematic evaluations have continued to be carried out.</p> <p>ETI inspects the ethos of schools, including the inclusivity of the school culture through the evaluation of leadership and management, including governance, the quality of provision, care and welfare, safeguarding and the outcomes for learners. Inspection involves the gathering of first-hand evidence through lesson observation, the scrutiny of key documentation and the harnessing of the views of staff, parent and pupils through the use of questionnaires and discussions.</p> <p>In March 2022, as part of its Empowering Improvement: Stepping Forward Together' Programme, ETI will undertake comprehensive engagement with its stakeholders on its inspection strategy for September 2022 and will present its revised vision, mission and strategic priorities, all of which will align really well with this recommendation.</p>	<p>While we recognise that the response to the Covid pandemic has necessitated a modified approach, it is important that inspections resume as soon as possible to enable a full range of 'first-hand evidence' to be collected.</p> <p>We welcome ETI's recent publication of 'Stepping Up & Stepping Forward: a Series of Ten Learning Insights', a valuable resource which addresses issues that include an inclusive approach to decision making, working collaboratively and the importance of a curriculum that reflects the values, culture and priorities of society.</p> <p>Planned engagement with stakeholders, in March 2022, as part of ETI's Empowering Improvement: Stepping Forward Together' Programme is also welcome.</p>
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<p>15. ETI should inspect schools on their ability to fulfil their duties regarding the preparation and review of Individual Education Plans (IEPs)³².</p> <p>Where health and social care provision is to be made, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) should work with ETI to ensure compliance of the statutory duty upon every children’s authority to cooperate³³. This should include an assessment by ETI and/or RQIA of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the effectiveness of collaborative processes to support the joint planning and identification of pupil targets and outcomes in IEPs between education and health professionals; b. evidence from schools that children and 	<p>ETI does evaluate the school’s processes for the preparation and review of IEPs, including the appropriateness of the targets for and progress of individual pupils as part of school inspection and related evaluations.</p> <p>ETI inspectors also observe the use of IEPs by teachers in the classroom, paying particular attention to how the learning needs of children who have special educational needs are being met. As part of inspection, ETI evaluates the extent to which the school identifies appropriately and accurately the special educational needs of individual children and maintains effective links with parents, other professionals and support agencies (as detailed in ETI’s Inspection and Self-evaluation Framework).</p> <p>During October 2021 to March 2022, ETI are undertaking a survey of SEN Learning Support Centre provision in mainstream schools, including the support provided by the Education Authority. The evaluation will be completed at the end of March 2022, with the report due to issue in May 2022.</p>	<p>NICCY welcomes the range of actions taken by ETI to review IEP targets and progress as part of school inspections.</p> <p>Clarification of the scope for ETI and RQIA to work collaboratively to ensure compliance of the statutory duty upon every children’s authority to cooperate is required. Clarification is also needed in respect of Allied Health Professionals and RQIA respective roles.</p> <p>NICCY looks forward to opportunity to review survey findings following report issue in May 2022.</p>
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³² To be later replaced with Personal Learning Plans through implementation of the new SEN Framework.

³³ Section 2, Children’s Services Cooperation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, available online at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2015/10/pdfs/nia_20150010_en.pdf. Also, Article 4 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Act 2016 (SEND Act)

<p>parents/carers have been facilitated to actively contribute to the process; and</p> <p>c. the extent to which outcomes identified within IEPs have been fulfilled.</p>		
<p>Strategic Planning for Behavioural Support Services (Recommendations 16 – 17)</p>		
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Action taken or planned</p>	
<p>16. An early intervention and preventative approach to behavioral management should be introduced by the DE and implemented by the EA. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. support for parents and families; b. investment in workforce development; c. early access to EA specialist supports; and d. tracking children’s progress against 	<p>The EA’s Behaviour Support and Provisions Service (BSPS) provides advice and support when pupils present with social, behavioural, emotional or wellbeing (SBEW) needs. Although the service is split into primary (PBSPS) and post-primary (PPBSPS) phases, the underlying continuum of provision remains the same - BSPS provides school staff and parents/carers with training and support tailored to their needs.</p> <p>In more complex cases, individual children or young people are referred to the service for intensive support to be provided by BSPS field staff, delivered in the pupil’s school. An initial time bound programme of support is typically tapered over the course of an academic year. However, where appropriate progress is not made, the child or young person may remain registered with BSPS</p>	<p>We note that a review of Stage 3 pupil support services is underway, while a number of positive steps have already been taken, including the development of training resources and opportunities for parents to attend themed clusters. While very welcome, we consider that more needs to be done in the immediate term, <u>through early interventions and preventative approaches</u>, to ensure support is available when needed.</p>

<p>agreed milestones and outcomes.</p>	<p>and receive continuing support in school. In particularly complex cases, including occasions where pupils have been expelled from school, a child or young person may temporarily attend an 'Education Other Than At School' (EOTAS) centre³⁴ and EOTAS centres also fall under BSPS management. The BSPS was established in 2018, amalgamating a wide range of pre-existing Education and Library Board (ELB) provisions.</p> <p>The proposed SEND SDP project to develop an integrated SEN pupil support service model, will explore the potential for an outcomes focussed and child centred, multidisciplinary model of support for children, parents and staff which will include behavioural management.</p> <p>The DE SEN Resource File chapter on 'Working with the whole community to understand nurture and to support social behavioural and emotional wellbeing'³⁵ was updated by EA's BSPS.</p> <p>EA's Primary Behaviour Support and Provisions Service have developed training and resources including a sample 'Positive Behaviour Policy template for Schools'.³⁶</p>	<p>We highlight the importance of integrating internal EA support services, in the interests of children and best practice, and request clarification of any plans to develop links between BSPS and EPS.</p> <p>NICCY considers that monitoring of children's progress against agreed outcomes is vital and request details of systems, planned or already in place.</p> <p>We note that a business case has been submitted to DE to fund expansion and extension of the SEN EYIS (early years inclusion service) and request an update of outcome/progress to date.</p> <p>Development and updating of resources, including the High Five Newsletter, Positive Behaviour</p>
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³⁴ This descriptor spans a wide range of types/titles of provision inherited across former ELBs.

³⁵ SEN Resource: Working with the whole community to understand nurture and support social behaviour and emotional wellbeing PDF (6.4 MB)

³⁶ <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/behaviour-support-and-provisions-bsp-regional-training-calendar/positive>

	<p>EA's Primary Behaviour Support and Provisions have developed the High Five Newsletter which is a resource pack for families and primary aged pupils in relation to staying safe physically but also emotionally and mentally using the Health and Social Care Take 5 framework. The newsletter is available in English, Irish and accessible versions.³⁷</p> <p>EA's SEN Early Years Inclusion service offered parents the opportunity to attend the following themed clusters remotely during 2020/21</p> <p>Early Language Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Resilience <input type="checkbox"/> Toileting Training <input type="checkbox"/> Early Years Transitions <p>Parents were also signposted to a range of online resources and training videos available via the SEN EYIS web tile on the EA website.³⁸</p> <p>A business case has been submitted to DE to fund expansion and extension of the SEN EYIS (early years inclusion service) to address the increasing referral numbers and staffing capacity issues as recommended</p>	<p>Policy template and the SEN Resource File is welcome.</p> <p>Plans to explore the potential for an outcomes focussed and child centred multidisciplinary model of support for children, parents and staff , including behavioural management, as part of SEND SDP project to develop an integrated SEN pupil support service model is welcome.</p> <p>Parental uptake levels are requested.</p> <p>As stated earlier, NICCY is concerned that funding to finance the review of EA's SEN Early Years</p>
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³⁷ <https://www.eani.org.uk/high-five-primary-behaviour-support-provisions-newsletter>

³⁸ <https://www.eani.org.uk/services/pupil-support-services/sen-early-years-inclusion-service-sen-eyis>

	by the Expert Panel for Underachievement in the Fair Start Report. ³⁹	Inclusion Service and the review of is not yet secured and that budget uncertainty poses a risk to its scheduled implementation.
17. A comprehensive range of therapeutic interventions including nurture groups, sensory rooms, and counselling in all primary settings must be made available to children and young people in mainstream settings.	<p>15 new Nurture Groups have been established.</p> <p>A programme of well-being support to schools and young people under the DE EHWP Framework (Doing Well, Being Well) is planned and this will deliver a service which is accessible to all educational settings. The business case has not as yet been agreed and therefore this is subject to approval.</p> <p>The EA Youth Service has delivered the Facilitating Life and Resilience Education Programme (FLARE), which is a programme to develop mental health interventions to support the emotional wellbeing of Young People. A range of programmes are in place.</p> <p>In addition, the service has delivered the REACH programme (Resilience Education Assisting Change to Happen) which delivers school-based mental health programmes to support the emotional wellbeing of Children and Young People. Since April 2021 over 2300 young people have participated in REACH programmes in their school setting. Emerging themes include: resilience, anxiety, bereavement and transitions. Summer programmes have been delivered with local</p>	<p>We note a range of positive developments, including the establishment of 15 nurture groups, FLARE programme, REACH programme and post-primary counselling services. These initiatives are welcome, and we look forward to evaluations of their reach and impact, disaggregated for children with SEND, when available.</p> <p>Regarding the Children Looked After Project, we are concerned that the optional nature of this project will not ensure that support is targeted towards all children and young people who need it.</p> <p>NICCY also notes the pilot programmes that are underway, namely, the Health Happy Minds Therapeutic and Counselling</p>

³⁹ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/A%20Fair%20Start%20-%20Final%20Report%20and%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

	<p>teams throughout the region. Capacity building programmes for teaching staff was rolled out in August 2021 with a pilot programme ongoing in 3 schools offering training to teaching staff.</p> <p>Training on sensory rooms⁴⁰ and sensory processing issues⁴¹ is currently available online for Pre-school settings, Early Years, Primary and Post-primary school staff. 'Sensory bytes' videos are available on the EA AAIS Website for school staff and for parents.⁴²</p> <p>EA's Behaviour Support and Provisions Service have engaged in a pilot project with five schools to explore the effective provision of safe spaces to support emotional regulation and maintenance of mainstream provision for children facing barriers to learning.</p> <p>EA created the 'Supporting Learning' resource portal for return to school post lockdown⁴³, this portal hosts a wide range of resources for schools to support wellbeing</p> <p>EA has facilitated webinars in -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Resilient Leaders – approx. 220 participants attended. 	<p>Service pilot and programme to explore provision of safe spaces to support emotional regulation and maintenance of mainstream provision for children facing barriers to learning. We look forward to sight of programme evaluations and confirmation of plans for roll-out across all schools.</p> <p>While a range of positive developments is evident, NICCY strongly recommends that greater collaboration with relevant stakeholders particularly health and social care agencies, including CAMHS, is undertaken.</p> <p>Detail on the range and uptake of programmes and resources provided to schools, through EA's Supporting learning portal,</p>
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⁴⁰ <https://www.easds.org.uk/booking/?bookingid=3d51d5f9987c3134>

⁴¹ <https://www.easds.org.uk/booking/?bookingid=cc3ab0fb678be65f>

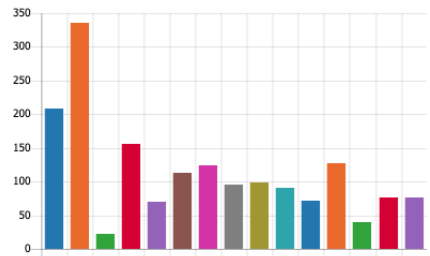
⁴² <https://www.eani.org.uk/services/pupil-support-services/autism-advisory-intervention-service-aais>

⁴³ <https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/teacherprofessionallearning-ea/home>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flourishing Schools -lead by SDS Summer 2020 and ETC subgroup October 2020 • The Daily Mile Makes You Smile - 60 participants plus an additional 60 enquiries <p>EA has worked in partnership with services and agencies to deliver the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reverse the Trend - 64,000 registrations for Neuronimo Programme⁴⁴ wellbeing initiative in schools • Action Mental Health Gearing Up Session for Primary & Post Primary Schools (August 2021) 669 registrations • Level 1 Trauma Informed Practice Ace Awareness Training - 473 registrations • The Daily Mile - 1739 views of the Recorded Webinar <p>DE's Wellbeing Fund was issued in November 2020. Below is an overview of how it was used within schools:</p>	<p>facilitated webinars and partnership working, is welcome.</p>
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⁴⁴ <https://www.reversethetrend.org.uk/our-programmes>

● Enhancing a room/classroom ...	209
● Playground equipment and re...	336
● Healthy Eating	23
● Play and games	156
● Individual/group support	70
● Nurture Spaces	113
● Staff Wellbeing training	124
● Mindfulness/meditation/relaxa...	95
● Exercise/active lifestyle sessio...	98
● Online/digital resources e.g a...	90
● Individual Wellbeing support f...	71
● Group Wellbeing support for p...	127
● Individual Wellbeing support f...	39
● Group Wellbeing support for s...	76
● Other	77



Post Primary Counselling Mainstream & Special

Total Number of Sessions provided:

- Post Primary Mainstream: 29,141
- Post Primary Special: 3,652

Primary School Counselling/therapeutic Interventions

A pilot is to launch shortly within primary schools. This will be evaluated to assess efficacy and impact in supporting primary school age children.

Children Looked After Project

Support and interventions offered by this service will be available to children looked after and foundation key stage 1 and key stage 2. This will include trauma and attachment informed spaces; The TAP Programme; Training for Schools etc

Suspensions and Expulsions (Recommendations 18 – 22)		
Recommendation	Action taken or planned	
18. Robust data is required to identify the causes of the variance in rates of suspension and expulsion between children with and without SEN.	DE has taken steps to ensure more robust data as part of its ongoing review of the arrangements for the suspension and expulsion of pupils.	While NICCY views this as a positive step, considerably more detail is needed regarding both the specific steps taken by DE to ensure more robust data, and of the review itself (e.g. timeframe, objectives, etc)
19. The DE should undertake an urgent review regarding potentially unlawful informal or unregulated exclusions and issue comprehensive guidance to schools and the EA. This guidance should include formal recording of practices such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. sending children home early from school; b. placing children on reduced school hours outside the statutory framework and guidelines for school exclusion; c. informally excluding children from 	<p>DE is currently reviewing the arrangements for the suspension and expulsion of pupils. Any proposals for change will be subject to Ministerial approval.</p> <p>As part of the ongoing review on suspensions and expulsions, the Department issued a circular (2021/04) on 5 March 2021 reminding Boards of Governors and Principals of all grant-aided schools of the current legislative basis for suspensions and expulsions and their statutory responsibilities, including towards pupils with special educational needs (SEN), informal suspensions/reduced hours.</p> <p>Training currently provided by the Education Authority's (EA) Primary and Post-Primary Behaviour Support and Provisions Services covers the following areas;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Legislation and Guidance related to Behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> De-escalation and diffusion strategies 	<p>NICCY is encouraged that a Review of Expulsions, Suspensions and Informal Exclusions was undertaken as part of the SEND SDP programme and note plans to submit a report to the Minister by March 2022. Further detail on the scope of the Review is requested.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes DE's dissemination of circular 21/04 to remind BoGs of their responsibilities in relation to suspensions and expulsions.</p> <p>We are aware that additional research, to bridge the information</p>

<p>participation in school activities such as classroom based-activities, school trips, school plays and school photos;</p> <p>d. placing children in isolation or segregating them from peers; and</p> <p>e. where children are 'managed out of school' (told to find another school to avoid expulsion).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding and Managing Children that Present with Social Behaviour Emotional and Wellbeing (SBEW) needs <input type="checkbox"/> Managing a Child In Crisis <input type="checkbox"/> Positive Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> 6 Stages of a Crisis <input type="checkbox"/> The Brain and Behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> Positive language <input type="checkbox"/> Body language and listening skills <input type="checkbox"/> Calm Plan training <input type="checkbox"/> An Overview of the Principles and Practice of Nurture <input type="checkbox"/> Whole School Behaviour Framework training: which addresses effective staff structure, professional development, space, ethos and resources with emphasis on preventative and solution focused approaches and nurture principles <input type="checkbox"/> A Positive Approach to Risk Reduction <input type="checkbox"/> Development of a Positive Behaviour Policy (includes COVID-19 Addendum Guidance and Template) <input type="checkbox"/> Further training on safe handling for mainstream schools is also available on request, and as appropriate. This course covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Circular 1999/09 - Use of reasonable force and Safe handling - De-escalation and diffusion strategies - 6 stages of a crisis - The brain and behaviour - Positive language <input type="checkbox"/> Safe handling 	<p>gap around informal exclusions, is being considered and request an update on decision made as soon as possible. NICCY considers it vital that appropriate steps are taken to gain an in-depth understanding of practices around potentially unlawful informal or unregulated exclusions.</p> <p>Further clarification of plans to address formal recoding of practices detailed at a, b, c, d and e, including the issue of comprehensive guidance to schools, is required.</p>
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<p>20. ETI must include the reviewing of these records as part of the school inspection process.</p>	<p>ETI does include the reviewing of these records as part of school inspection and related evaluations. In 2016, to support the dissemination of effective practice from our school inspection findings, ETI developed 24 case studies of effective practice in managing attendance. Also, ETI does report on its findings, including when practice is evaluated as needing improvement, within individual school inspection reports.</p>	<p>NICCY welcomes the review of records by ETI as part of school inspection and related evaluations. Further detail of the review process regarding suspension and expulsions records, including informal exclusions, is required.</p>
<p>21. Boards of Governors must be satisfied that schools have evidenced that all appropriate pastoral measures have been employed before suspension, expulsion or informal exclusion has been considered.</p>	<p>ETI does review school data on attendance, suspension, expulsion or informal exclusion as part of the inspection of care and welfare, and safeguarding. ETI also monitors, inspects and reports on the extent to which governors promote high standards of care and welfare and consistently high standards of attendance through being well informed by senior and middle leaders and their own analysis of first-hand evidence (as detailed in the ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework for Governance).</p>	<p>NICCY welcomes ETI's review of school data on attendance, suspension, expulsion or informal exclusion as part of the inspection of care and welfare, and safeguarding. Monitoring and reporting on the extent to which governors promote high standards of care and welfare and consistently high standards of attendance is also welcome. However, further detail on process involved and evidence considered is necessary.</p>
<p>22. The EA should work constructively with parents/carers to ensure that</p>	<p>EA has produced EHE Guidelines⁴⁵ which have been co-designed with Home Education Northern Ireland, the Children's Law Centre, the Safeguarding Board for NI</p>	<p>NICCY views the development of the EHE guidelines as a positive step (while disappointed at lack of</p>

⁴⁵ <https://www.eani.org.uk/services/elective-home-education>

<p>any children with SEN being educated outside of school, whether statemented or not, are provided with the specialist SEN services required. This should include additional support to parents/carers home educating children with SEN.</p>	<p>and DE, and were the subject of a public consultation in 2019. The Guidelines are designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Promote good practice by clearly defining the legislation, the respective roles and responsibilities of parents, the EA and schools and any other relevant partner; <input type="checkbox"/> Support parents in ensuring that children receive a suitable education when educated at home; <input type="checkbox"/> Promote good practice by clearly defining the legislation, the respective roles and responsibilities of parents, the EA, and schools and any other relevant partner; <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage working relationships that respect the parent’s duty to educate and their role as decision maker in ensuring their child’s right to an education; <input type="checkbox"/> Outline the obligations of the EA to children of compulsory school age and children up to the age of 19, for whom the EA maintains a statement of special educational needs; <input type="checkbox"/> Make clear to other organisations, the role of EA; and, <input type="checkbox"/> Will have application for schools and other organisations. <p>Parents and carers can contact EA via the SEN helpline and/or via the various EA SEND support services for advice, support and signposting. Contact details are all publicly accessible on the EA website.</p>	<p>legislative reform previously noted) however, the actions outlined do not fully address our recommendation which requires a proactive approach to ensure that the needs of children with SEN, who are home educated, are met effectively.</p> <p>Further details of additional support being provided to home educated children with SEN, particularly those who have been de-registered, is required. (We are mindful that EHE numbers may have risen during the pandemic). This should include clarification of processes to identify need for additional support, the nature of additional support provided, and systems in place to monitor provision.</p>
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	As noted earlier a systematic review of SEND services is planned under the SEND SDP and will include accessibility for children and young people with SEND who are being educated outside of school.	We welcome the planned systematic review of SEND services which will include accessibility for children and young people with SEND who are being educated outside of school.
The Role of the Educational Psychology Service (Recommendations 23 - 25)		
Recommendation	Action taken or planned	
23. The EA must review and systemically revise its existing model for enabling children access to an EP assessment. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. reviewing and replacing the current Time Allocation Model so that the needs of all children suspected to have SEN are assessed at the earliest opportunity; and b. the development of mechanisms to enable schools, EA and DE to record data on unmet need. This should include 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fundamental review of the Educational Psychology Service model is planned under the SEND SDP and will provide co-developed recommendations for strategic change, along with an associated outline business case and longer-term implementation plan (subject to appropriate funding being provided via the SEND SDP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The primary focus of the project will be to scope and build stakeholder support for a sustainable EPS model which will be efficient, effective, flexible, responsive to needs⁴⁶ and will improve the accessibility and availability of appropriate supports so that all children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities can achieve the best possible outcomes in life. □ The project will be progressed in parallel to the reviews of other EA SEND pupil support services which are taking place under the SEND SDP to ensure that all 	<p>NICCY welcomes plans to consider revision of the time allocation model as part of the EPS review, which will focus on improving accessibility and availability of appropriate supports so that all children with SEN can achieve the best possible outcomes in life. We are very disappointed that this project, which was due to be initiated in November 2021, has not yet commenced and request an update on revised timeframes when available.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes that a range of intervening steps have been taken to increase the accessibility of EPs and SEND Pupil Support Services, including:</p>

⁴⁶ Including mitigation of specific barriers faced by the IME sector;

<p>recording the number of children awaiting referral to the EA Educational Psychology Service for a Stage 3 assessment</p>	<p>aspects of the resulting SEND support system are fully 'joined up'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ It will include developing a snapshot of current unmet need (i.e. Stage 3 assessments which are not being completed) will be captured through a standalone research study to be completed by the EPS during the first term of the 2021/22 academic year. <p>The proposed SEND Strategic Development Programme (SEND SDP) includes projects which will fundamentally review the EA's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and the EA SEND support services to which EPS can refer children and young people at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice after assessment. These projects will include formal review of referral pathways (including whether EPS assessment should always be required to access Stage 3 services) and will also address assessment bottlenecks and resulting unmet need, all with the aim of ensuring that that all children and young people can access appropriate services and supports at the earliest opportunity regardless of their socio-economic background. Detailed specifications regarding these projects have been approved by the SEND SDP Board and are included in the outline business case (OBC) currently being reviewed by DE. The OBC envisages these projects being initiated as early as possible in the 2021/22 academic year. –</p> <p>EA has made significant improvements to the EA website in order to reduce the barriers experienced by</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the piloting of a Stage 3 referral process to the Literacy Support Service utilising school-based scores; - Introduction of additional referral pathways with Consultant/Community Paediatricians to ensure children with complex and significant needs are brought to the attention of the EPS as soon as possible - Actions to streamline and rationalise EPS processes e.g., dedicated SEN mailboxes for advice. - Recruitment of Psychology Assistants (n=13) and assistant Eps (n=9) to support the work of EPS - Establishment of a working group by EPS to review their Annual Work Plan including Time Allocation Model - EPS rollout of self-evaluation processes across all areas of service delivery - Introduction of more robust performance metrics to
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	<p>people with disabilities, incorporating Recite Me⁴⁷ - a web accessibility tool allowing users to customise their website experience in the way that works best for them.</p> <p>The EA website endeavours to conform to the Worldwide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0) at level AA.⁴⁸</p>	<p>inform decision making and improve the service.</p> <p>Improvements made to the EA website to enhance accessibility is very welcome.</p>
<p>24. A more efficient and effective model of Educational Psychology service delivery is required with appropriate levels of investment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. EPs should be assigned to schools on the basis of age and stage; b. EP specialisms should be harnessed and more regular opportunities provided to deliver specialist advice and training of school staff; c. Appropriate levels of professional autonomy for EPs, 	<p>See 23 above. In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The EPS is a fully aligned regional service which ensures that staffing compliments are based on the size of the school population across 3 localities. The allocation of staff is reviewed annually based on the school estate and staffing resource available within the service to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of staffing. □ The introduction of the doctorate grade enhanced the proficiency of all psychologists therefore it is felt that the specialist management tier, over recent years had become less relevant. The service does however recognise that there is a wide range of expertise and specialist knowledge within the service and this data is held centrally and where staff have particular skills and knowledge these are deployed against projects or initiatives for example work on MOD and VPRS and IM. □ Issues associated with professional autonomy will be fully considered as part of the SEND SDP review of the 	<p>As above, while the EPS review is welcome, NICCY is very concerned that it will be medium to long-term before full benefits of this process are realised.</p> <p>Effectively, the needs of many children who currently require SEN support will remain unmet due to continued delays in accessing the requisite specialist supports and services.</p> <p>It is vital that interim measures, including increased resourcing and sharing of good practice, are implemented as a priority to ensure that all children with SEN have access to appropriate services and support at the earliest opportunity.</p>

⁴⁷ <https://www.eani.org.uk/accessibility#block-accessibilitytrigger>

⁴⁸ <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>

<p>including to decide to move to Stage 4 or 5 of the Code of Practice without the requirement to exhaust Stages 1 to 3.</p>	<p>EPS model, particularly within its workforce development component;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Psychological advice is requested when the EA believes that a child may have special educational needs greater than may be met within the child's current learning context. The responsibility of the educational psychologist is therefore to ensure that the child's needs are properly assessed and that recommendations that will allow the child to achieve the best outcomes are outlined. Educational psychologists are responsible for identifying the type of support a child may require to overcome barriers to learning however they must not be influenced by consideration of the name of a specific school/setting at which the child might eventually be placed. Educational psychologists must work within the confines of SEN legislation and the Code of Practice which recommended a staged approach whereby school based resources are accessed before external support is requested.</p> <p>The service however, follows a child centred approach where the child needs are paramount and where it is evident that a child has both significant and complex needs?... and should be given consideration for a statutory assessment EPs have the necessary autonomy to progress this.</p>	
<p>25. The DE and EA must issue a policy that ensures that all</p>	<p>Section 2 of new Code of Practice (yet to be commenced) stipulates EA Policy for SpEP will sit</p>	<p>NICCY warmly welcomes the planned provision of a more robust</p>

<p>children who have, or may have SEN, have equal access to assessment and services regardless of their socio-economic background. Such a policy therefore must address the use of private Educational Psychology and other professional assessment reports.</p>	<p>alongside EA Plan for SpEP (2.12,2.13, 2.14). Both are under development – Section 2 cannot be commenced without these in place.</p> <p>The new regulations and Code of Practice will provide for a more robust SEN framework to ensure that all children with SEN, regardless of their socio-economic background, receive the educational support they need to allow them to achieve improved outcomes and fulfil their potential.</p> <p>The proposed SEND Strategic Development Programme (SEND SDP) includes projects which will fundamentally review the EA’s Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and the EA SEND support services to which EPS can refer children and young people at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice after assessment. These projects will include formal review of referral pathways (including whether EPS assessment should always be required to access Stage 3 services) and will also address assessment bottlenecks and resulting unmet need, all with the aim of ensuring that that all children and young people can access appropriate services and supports at the earliest opportunity regardless of their socio-economic background. Detailed specifications regarding these projects have been approved by the SEND SDP Board and are included in the outline business case (OBC) currently being reviewed by DE.</p> <p>EA has made significant improvements to the EA website in order to reduce the barriers experienced by</p>	<p>SEN framework to ensure that all children with SEN, regardless of their socio-economic background, receive the educational support they need to allow them to achieve improved outcomes and fulfil their potential which will be provided for under the new regulations and Code of Practice. We consider that monitoring of their effectiveness will be crucial.</p> <p>However, we are not satisfied that the actions detailed directly address the use of private assessments and the role they will play in the formal SEN process. Clarification is needed of how implementation of the new CoP/regulations will explicitly address the use of private assessments and related inequality of access to assessment and services.</p> <p>To ensure transparency, we strongly recommend that, as a minimum, records clearly reference if/when consideration of private EP assessments have been a factor.</p>
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	<p>people with disabilities, incorporating Recite Me48 - a web accessibility tool allowing users to customise their website experience in the way that works best for them. The EA website endeavours to conform to the Worldwide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0) at level AA.49</p>	
<p>Statutory Assessment and Statementing (Recommendations 26 - 27)</p>		
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Action taken or planned</p>	
<p>26. The EA must ensure that its operational processes enable legal compliance with statutory time limits.</p> <p>An action plan to address the delays in the statutory assessment process must be agreed between the health services and EA.</p> <p>Accountability measures must be established and investigative action taken by ETI and RQIA if breaches arise.</p>	<p>A Statutory Assessment Improvement Project (SAIP) was initiated in February 2020. Progress in this area includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Work is ongoing to ensure compliance with statutory timeframes (26 weeks). At the end of March 2021, no children or young people had been waiting more than 26 weeks for their statutory assessment process to be completed. This compares to a figure of 1,070 at November 2019. Compliance has remained high since then, although higher numbers of referrals over the last six months meant that at the end of February 2022, 11 cases (<14% of all open cases) had been open more than 26 weeks. Expansion of the staffing complement within the Statutory Assessment and Review Service (SARS) is already underway and this will ease current pressures faced, whilst also preparing for new requirements under the SEND Act (NI) 2016 – including reduction of the 26-week timeframe to 22 weeks; <input type="checkbox"/> SARS, EA's SEND Implementation team, EPS & EA's SEND Pupil Support Services are now all under the 	<p>NICCY notes that significant progress has been made in compliance with statutory time limits. However, we are concerned that available data indicates that compliance with the 26-week time limit may not be sustainable e.g. latest figures indicate that 6% of cases (n=93) in Dec 2021, 2% of cases (n=36) in Jan 2022, and 11 cases at end of Feb 2022 were in breach.</p> <p>Further, we are significantly concerned about how prepared the system is to meet the 22-week deadline notwithstanding the recruitment process that is underway to increase staffing complement in SARS.</p>

same management structure with continuous emphasis on building/expanding multi-disciplinary working;

- Re-structuring and regionalisation of processes and procedures has been completed, including enhanced pro-active case management and resource targeting;
- A fundamental shift from paper-based to digital information sharing has been completed;
- An online Statutory Assessment Request form and Transport Notification System went live May 2021;
- Improved data governance, file security measures and MIS reporting are in place;
- New digital system being rolled out to validate, manage and resolve exceptional circumstances when they arise within the statutory assessment process timeline;
- Consistent procedural handbook in place along with a bespoke programme of professional development for staff working to carry out statutory assessments;
- A significant expansion of the SARS staffing complement is underway;
- Plans are in place under the proposed SEND SDP to allow peer review with English Local Authority statutory assessment systems;
- SBRI findings to be reflected in wider SEN data management strategy and ETS requirements. Future development will build on reviews of pupil support services and EPS, once SEND Act implementation is complete.
- Revised parental materials to be rolled out alongside wider SEND Act implementation across 2021/22;

We reiterate, as stated at Rec' 24, that interim solutions must be implemented as a matter of urgency.

Details of specific accountability measures that will be introduced to address breaches of statutory time limits is required.

NICCY is aware of, and welcomes, the introduction of a new online referral system, which enables parents to request statutory assessments directly.

	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> DoH/DE/EA/PHA/HSCB cross-agency working has continued to improve operational processes. Preparatory audit of health/stat ops collaboration being led by DE/DOH jointly chaired SEN Steering Group with representation from EA, PHA, HSCB & HSCTs. </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Longer-term stakeholder engagement and communications will be taken forward via the <u>SEND SDP Programme Reference Group and associated mechanisms.</u> </p> <p> Section 4 of the SEND Act (once commenced) places a duty on education and health to co-operate in the identification, assessment and provision of services to meet the needs of children who have or may have SEN and to prepare a joint plan to show how then intend to fulfil this duty. </p> <p> A joint inspection team, of RQIA and ETI must review this plan at least every three years and publish a report to show how authorities have co-operated. </p>	<p> We are disappointed that work on the Joint Plan, outlining how duty on education and health to co-operate in the identification, assessment and provision of services to meet the needs of children who have or may have SEN will be fulfilled, has been delayed by Covid related pressures and other priorities and urge that this is progressed as a matter of urgency. We anticipate that the Joint Plan will include details of joint inspection and reporting by RQIA/ETI. </p>
<p> 27. The EA must establish a more robust and transparent model of quality assurance and decision making at the statutory assessment stage. This must include: </p> <p> a. a review of existing </p>	<p> As noted above, to date the Statutory Assessment Improvement Project (SAIP) has ensured that a wide range of enhanced governance, accountability, quality assurance and performance management measures have been put in place. </p>	<p> We welcome the work that has commenced through SAIP to ensure enhanced quality assurance, accountability etc. We also note revision of the SAP operational model as a very positive step. However, the repose provided does </p>

<p>assessment panels to explore the effectiveness, efficiency, and validity of their role in informing the route of children and the supports they will receive;</p> <p>b. the immediate publication of details about all existing assessment panels. This should include the terms of reference for each panel, the composition of the panel, frequency of meetings and the criteria used for making decisions. Evidence must be provided to validate the independence of panel members; and</p> <p>c. the introduction of a revised model of quality assuring assessment decisions.</p>	<p>In addition, the operational model for the Statutory Assessment Panel has been revised.</p> <p>A diagnostic review of appeals and SEND Tribunal trends has also been completed in collaboration with the SEND SDP's Programme Reference Group (PRG). A range of recommended actions is currently being developed and will be considered by the SEND SDP Board and PRG.</p>	<p>not address how transparency and quality of decision-making, of existing/interim processes, have been or will be improved. Without sufficient level of detail, we cannot be confident that decision making is driven by children's' needs rather than resources available.</p> <p>It is unclear whether details about all existing assessment panels have yet been published. This should be addressed as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>We note the completion of a diagnostic review of Appeals / SEND Tribunal trends and request detail of anticipated timeframe for taking forward recommended actions.</p>
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Transparency of the SEN Process (Recommendations 28 – 31)		
Recommendation	Action taken or planned	
<p>28. Steps must be urgently taken by the EA Board and DE to investigate feedback from Educational Psychologists that their advice is not routinely accepted, and that recommended provisions are not put in place, at the statutory assessment and statementing stage.</p>	<p>This had been reviewed since the report and the Statutory Assessment and Review Service now routinely accepts EPS recommendations for statutory assessment and accepts the advice provided.</p>	<p>We note that the Statutory Assessment and Review Service now routinely accepts EPS recommendations for statutory assessment and accepts the advice provided. While this is very welcome, specific detail of processes put in place to ensure this is consistency the case is required.</p>
<p>29. The EA should immediately adjust its statutory operation processes to ensure compliance with the legal requirement under Article 16 of the Education (NI) Order 1996 to specify special educational provision in Part 3 of statements of special educational need.</p>	<p>Revised guidance on the specification of statements of special educational need have been included in the regional SARS staff handbook and is reflected in the bespoke professional development programme currently being rolled out across the service.</p> <p>DE is also leading on-going work to clarify the specificity requirements relating to each section of statements as defined under the new SEN framework and these will be fully operationalised by EA as the relevant commencement orders are made.</p>	<p>NICCY welcomes that revised guidance on the specification of statements of SEN have been included in the regional SARS staff handbook. It is important that this guidance adequately addresses the requirement for both specification and quantification, as we have previously highlighted. Further clarification on this is needed.</p> <p>We also note the on-going work to clarify specificity requirements relating to each section of</p>

		Statements, as defined under the new SEN framework, and look forward to these being operationalised. Further detail on timeframes involved is required.
30. The EA must, as a matter of urgency, publish, review and revise plans in relation to SEN provision, as per its new duty ⁴⁹ in the SEND Act.	<p>DE Officials continue to take the relevant steps to finalise SEN Regulations and seek Ministerial approval before laying before the Assembly for debate.</p> <p>Thereafter provisions of the SEND Act (NI) 2016 will be commenced on a phased basis in late 2022/early 2023.</p> <p>EA's initial 'annual plan of SEN provision' to be consulted upon in March 2023.</p>	<p>We understand that provisions of the SEND Act (NI) 2016 will be implemented on a phased basis from late 2022/early 2023 and will follow up in due course.</p> <p>While we welcome EA's annual plan of SEN provision, we are disappointed that consultation date for this has been delayed until March 2023.</p>
31. The Annual Review process must be evaluated to examine its effectiveness in improving outcomes for children with SEN in mainstream settings. This should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. identify the extent to which the existing 	<p>EA's SEND Implementation Team are reviewing the annual review process in preparation for the new Code of Practice being rolled. The effectiveness of the process will be reviewed substantively beyond Phase 1 of the proposed SEND SDP;</p> <p>The SARS regional staff handbook is currently being updated as far as possible in line with Code of Practice</p>	<p>While EA's review of the Annual Review process is welcome, the extent to which this process evaluates parts a, b, c and d of our recommendation is unclear. We would be grateful to receive details on this, as well as specific timeframe for the review.</p>

⁴⁹ Article 2 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Act 2016 (SEND Act)

<p>process is sufficiently outcomes focused;</p> <p>b. explore the extent of the active involvement of children and parents/carers;</p> <p>c. review the criteria used by the EA when considering whether to maintain, amend, or cease to maintain a statement; and</p> <p>d. assess the adequacy of processes involved in reviewing the effectiveness of existing provision.</p>	<p>and Regulations (which are not yet finalised or commenced;</p> <p>Annual review cluster training was delivered throughout Feb 22 – 160 new SENCOs were invited and it was also offered to all mainstream nursery, primary and post-primary schools (extra sessions were added to accommodate level of uptake). Sub-cover for attendance and follow-up admin were provided.</p> <p>Personal Learning Plans replacing Individual Education Plans will facilitate a more outcome focused method of reviewing when commenced under the SEND Act (NI) 2016.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>NICCY welcomes delivery of cluster training throughout Feb 2022.</p> <p>Personal Learning Plans, once commenced, are also welcome.</p>
<p>Communication and Engagement (Recommendations 32 – 33)</p>		
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Action taken or planned</p>	
<p>32. The EA must review its policies for communication with parents and carers. Mechanisms must be established to give clarity to the SEN process for children,</p>	<p>The range of SEND service review work proposed under the SEND SDP will ultimately lead to revised communication processes and mechanisms with parents and carers, all of which will be fully aligned with these recommendations.</p>	<p>We note positive developments to-date, including the development of guidance for parents/carers relating to the new SEN Regulations and CoP.</p>

<p>young people and their families. Therefore, the EA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. should develop user-friendly guidance for children, young people and their parents/carers which explains the various stages of the SEN process; their entitlements at each stage; and guidance on where they can access additional information/support; b. conduct a comprehensive review of community based services for children and young people with SEN, and their parents/carers, and produce a directory to be shared with parents/carers and schools; c. give consideration to the development of a free, accessible and one-to- 	<p>EA SEND services currently host guidance on their individual service pages within the public facing EA website.</p> <p>EA's first annual plan of arrangement for SEN provision is also under development, for publication in July 2023. Information regarding EA SEND Services has been shared with education settings at awareness raising events held with principals, staff and governors. EA awaits full commencement orders from DE relating to the SEND Act (NI). On receipt of the orders, consultation would follow and publication of resulting arrangements to schools should be scheduled for 2022/23 academic year. EA has also launched an online Statutory Assessment Request form.⁵⁰</p> <p>Children and young people at stages 4 and 5 of the Code of Practice have a named SEN Link Officer. Each school setting has a link Educational Psychologist. The SEN helpline⁵¹ is available to all stakeholders and service users should they wish to seek support.</p> <p>Throughout the Covid Pandemic a COLO (Cross Organisational Link Officer) has been assigned to every statutory education setting to provide help, support and guidance.</p> <p>EA SEND Services have facilitated a range of parent clusters and training events over the past 18 months.</p>	<p>Development of EA's first annual plan of arrangement for SEN provision is also positive, however NICCY is disappointed that anticipated publication date has been delayed to July 2023.</p> <p>We also welcome EA's commitment to ongoing communication with Parents and Carers.</p> <p>Going forward, we stress the importance of ensuring that enhanced communication with parents and carers is both sustained and further improved throughout the process of transition to the new Regulations and Code of Practice.</p> <p>We consider ongoing evaluation of effectiveness of actions to improve communication as imperative, and that feedback from parents and children will be integral to this</p>
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⁵⁰ <https://statutoryassessment.eani.org.uk/>

⁵¹ <https://www.eani.org.uk/help-available/sen-helpline>

<p>one service and where each family has a named EA officer who could hear concerns and issues as well as provide individual advice from Stage 1 to Stage 5 of the current Code of Practice.</p>	<p>In collaboration with the Health and Social Care Trusts, SENIS Medical Needs has jointly developed a booklet for parents in relation to Type 1 Diabetes – ‘What Diabetes Care to Expect in School’. A current update is underway. This updated booklet will be provided to parents at time of diagnosis as appropriate by the health team.</p> <p>The Literacy Service publishes a Newsletter that parents can share with their children. It aims to share the views of the child, what is enjoyable, likes, dislikes, worries and concerns. Click on the links below to access past issues of the EA Literacy Service Newsletter</p> <p>Edition 1 - Literacy Service Newsletter: Issue 1 - Spelling;</p> <p>Edition 2 - Literacy Service Newsletter: Issue 2 - Reading</p> <p>Edition 3 - Literacy Service Newsletter: Issue 3 - Memory.</p>	<p>process.</p> <p>The feedback provided does not reference a comprehensive review of community-based services – clarification of whether this has been conducted is requested.</p>
<p>33. The DE and EA must establish meaningful and robust consultation mechanisms concerning proposed changes</p>	<p>The EA is committed to fully involving service users, local communities staff and the wider public in the planning and development of services. The recently published Consultation framework outlines EA’s approach to consultation and engagement by setting out EA’s aims and commitments in line with the EA values.⁵²</p>	<p>NICCY warmly welcomes the range of consultation processes that have been implemented to date by the PRG, including engagement with school leaders and SENCOs (through LLF meetings and a programme of FGs); direct</p>

⁵² <https://www.eani.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/External%20Consultations%20Framework.pdf>

<p>in SEN policy or models of service delivery.</p>	<p>The scoping and development of the SEND SDP to date has involved extensive stakeholder engagement across 2021. This includes the establishment of a Programme Reference Group (PRG) which has met seven times to date and will continue to operate right across the programme's lifespan. The PRG includes representatives from key parent/carers organisations and facilitated a programme of engagement with parents/carers regarding the SEND SDP in the spring. A further parent/carers webinar regarding the resultant SEND SDP plan and the PRG's future role is planned once the programme business case has been approved.. Individual projects initiated under the SEND SDP will also have their own stakeholder/user forums to ensure meaningful co-design and delivery.</p> <p>Schools leaders and SENCOs were also engaged in two tranches, firstly through the Locality Leadership Forum meetings in March which all principals were invited to attend and secondly through a programme of focus groups in June which all schools and funded preschool settings were invited to send representation to (more than 400 participated in the focus groups). A programme of direct engagement with children and young people with SEND was also delivered by the EA's Youth Service.</p> <p>A range of engagement sessions with EA senior management and wider staff were also undertaken to advise the SEND SDP's development. When the SEND</p>	<p>engagement with CYP with SEND through EA youth service); engagement with EA senior management/staff).</p> <p>We also welcome planned further improvements to engagement mechanisms, including parent/carers webinar and stakeholder/user forums, which aim to ensure meaningful two-way engagement at programme and project level right across the SEND SDP's lifespan. NICCY welcomes these plans to ensure that engagement is an ongoing rather than time-limited process and will continue to monitor this.</p>
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	<p>SDP moves into full implementation, all of these engagement mechanisms will be further developed to ensure meaningful two-way engagement with stakeholders at programme and project level right across the SEND SDP's lifespan.</p> <p>EA Early Years Services in collaboration with the Public Health Agency held a workshop in June 2021 where a range of key stakeholders came together to highlight priority areas for better integrated working in the bests interest of children, families and staff. The work is ongoing and a survey to baseline all early years services across Northern Ireland will issue soon.</p>	
<p>Involvement of children and young people (Recommendation 34)</p>		
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Action taken or planned</p>	
<p>34. In order to ensure that decisions are made in their best interests, children and young people must be placed firmly at the heart of the SEN system. Systems must be developed for engaging children and young people, and their parents and carers, and evaluating the impact of their contribution.</p> <p>a. Guidance should be developed by the EA to support schools to</p>	<p>The EA's Youth Service has established mechanisms to ensure the participation and inclusion of children and young people within all decision making and provision across EA. Recent activity has included a stakeholder engagement event co-designed and facilitated by young people focusing on the needs of children and young people post-lockdown.</p> <p>Also, an engagement with young people for the Department of Communities' Anti-Poverty strategy (report submitted May 2021) and engagement with children and young people with SEN focusing on the SEND SDP (report submitted July 2021).</p>	<p>We note the establishment of mechanisms by the EA's youth service, as well as other 'one-of' engagement processes, all of which are welcome. It is unclear from the level of detail provided whether these mechanisms are sufficient in both scope and reach in engaging and involving children and young people in decision making processes.</p> <p>We note that the participation of advocates and intermediaries is</p>

<p>ensure the active involvement of all children and young people in decision making processes.</p> <p>b. The involvement of intermediaries and advocates should also be explored and their participation considered, particularly where children or young people are reluctant to speak to parents, carers or education professionals.</p>	<p>Advocates and intermediaries are welcome to attend statutory statement annual reviews, school meetings and multidisciplinary discussions as requested by children and their parents/carers.</p> <p>EA's Sensory Service uses questionnaires to prompt conversations with children on reasonable adjustments in school, success or otherwise of the support they receive. Answers to questionnaires guide Sensory staff to inform support.</p> <p>DE commenced Section 1 of the SEND Act in December 2020 placing a duty on the EA to have regard to the views of the child.</p> <p>Section 11 of the SEND Act once commenced, will confer new rights on children over compulsory school age who have or may have SEN, allowing them to make decisions that would normally have been undertaken by a parent.</p>	<p>welcomed by EA. However, NICCY calls for a more proactive approach to ensure awareness among all relevant stakeholders, including children, parents and intermediaries.</p> <p>As noted, Section 11 of the SEND Act, once commenced, will confer new rights on children over compulsory school age who have or may have SEN, allowing them to make decisions that would normally have been undertaken by a parent. NICCY considers it imperative that appropriate action is taken by the EA to ensure awareness and understanding of these new rights among young people.</p>
<p>Multi-Disciplinary Working (Recommendations 35 - 36)</p>		
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Action taken or planned</p>	
<p>35. Article 4 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Act 2016 (SEND Act) must be enacted immediately.</p>	<p>The Department is committed to introducing Section 4 of the SEND Act as soon as reasonably practicable.</p> <p>Following consideration of comments received as part of the consultation process, officials are continuing to work with key stakeholders and Departmental Solicitors to</p>	<p>We note that Section 4 of the SEND Act is still not commenced but will be introduced 'as soon as is reasonably practicable'. Clarification of anticipated timeframe for this is requested.</p>

	<p>finalise the draft SEN Regulations before seeking Ministerial approval to lay before the Assembly for debate. It is anticipated that the majority of the provisions of the SEND Act will be commenced in a phased approach during 2022/2023 subject to Ministerial approval and each organisations readiness for implementation.</p> <p>Procedures are in place between EA and Health around the identification and assessment of children with SEN, including a triage system in operation between EA's Educational Psychology Service and HSCT paediatric services.</p> <p>As part of the Notification, Referral and Statutory Assessment (NRSA) project, EA and HSCTs have worked jointly to improve collaboration across the statutory assessment process and this has included the appointment of SEN Co-ordinators and Data Analyst posts within each HSCT. Work continues to improve information flow between Health and Education including the continuing roll out of a common digital communication platform (Anycomms+).</p> <p>EA and the PHA have also commenced planning on the joint plan on co-operation. Initial discussions have also taken place with ETI and RQIA colleagues about the structure of their 3 yearly inspection programme.</p>	<p>We note that the majority of the provisions of the SEND Act will be commenced in a phased approach during 2022/2023. Specific details of and timeframes for implementation of distinct 'phases' is required from DE once available.</p> <p>NICCY welcomes the ongoing work to improve information flow between Health and Education, including the continuing roll out of a common digital communication platform (Anycomms+).</p> <p>We look forward to an update on the impact of improved collaboration, as well as detail of further opportunities for enhanced co-ordination and collaboration as these are progressed.</p> <p>We look forward to sight of joint plan, when completed, outlining how duty on education and health to co-operate in the identification, assessment and provision of</p>
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	<p>Consideration of further opportunities for enhanced co-ordination and collaboration are also being considered under the SEND SDP.</p>	<p>services to meet the needs of children who have or may have SEN will be fulfilled.</p>
<p>36. The DE, EA, the Department of Health (DoH), the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and Public Health Agency (PHA) must review and revise arrangements for the planning, assessment, diagnosis and implementation of supports/services to ensure that key services work collaboratively. This should include the establishment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. localised, specialised, multi-disciplinary teams across Northern Ireland. These teams should have a clear remit for cross-consultation, assessment and provision of advice and support for children with SEN in mainstream schools; b. protocols for the joint planning, assessment, diagnosis and implementation of 	<p>Department of Health/Department of Education/Education Authority/Public Health Agency/Health and Social Care Board cross-agency working has strengthened and improved operational processes throughout the pandemic (see 35 above).</p> <p>A number of integrated forums have been established between EA services and multiple HSCT services led regionally with support from the PHA & HSCB. These are informed by staff in services and agencies and are bespoke to each individual working group.</p> <p>The Preschool Education Group (PEG) is a multidisciplinary group of statutory, voluntary and community services/agencies/departments. PEG has widened its scope this year to include information sharing around key messages across the early years phase.</p> <p>EA Early Years has developed working relationships with Early Years Specialists, linkage with the Childcare Partnerships at round table events, linkage with regional Dental Teams across NI, RISE NI, and Early Years organisation, Public Health Agency, Health Visiting and CYPSP.</p> <p>SENIS Medical Needs partners with relevant health professionals in relation to the care of individual children</p>	<p>We commend the positive developments to date, including improved cross-agency working and operational processes, the establishment of integrated forums between EA services and multiple HSCT services, with support from PHA and HSCB.</p> <p>The widening of PEG’s scope to include information sharing around key messages across the early years phase is also welcome.</p> <p>NICCY also considers the establishment of working relationships between EA Early Years and a range of health agencies/professionals as a very positive development.</p>

<p>supports/services. These must be informed by the staff and professionals working across the agencies involved; and</p> <p>c. fora across Northern Ireland, which involve statutory education and health & social care agencies and VCS organisations to develop local relationships and exchange knowledge. Consideration should be given to a facilitative role for the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) through its Outcomes and Locality Planning Groups.</p>	<p>and young people in mainstream settings. Partners include Community Children's Nursing Teams, Paediatric Diabetes Specialist Nurses; School Nursing and PHA. In relation to Type 1 Diabetes referrals are received directly from Paediatric Diabetes Specialist Nurses. It is hoped that a structured approach to further collaboration will strengthen the partnership between health and education and will lead to a widening of the remit of this service stream to include medical conditions other than Type 1 Diabetes.</p> <p>EA's Sensory Service established multidisciplinary working with ENT, Audiology, Ophthalmology, Low Vision clinics, Auditory Implant Centre, S&LT, Sensory Social work teams and Deaf CAMHS. Models differ for each Health and Social Care Trust. This includes joint paediatric clinics led by Health with input and attendance from Sensory Service.</p> <p>A draft Paediatric Audiology Standards document is pending final approval and acceptance across all H&SCTs. This document will include reference to a duty to establish local multi-disciplinary groups. Membership of these local groups will likely include, Education, ENT, and Audiology, Voluntary agencies, S&LT and parents.</p> <p>Clear guidelines are in place for Education and H&SCTs to work jointly for actions and responsibilities arising from New-born Hearing Screening.</p> <p>Joint working established between Education and Guide Dogs NI for Habilitation work with CYP Vision impaired.</p>	<p>Clarification of whether protocols for the joint planning, assessment, diagnosis and implementation of supports/services have been established is required.</p> <p>While the potential for partnerships between health and education to lead to a widening of remit of Paediatric Nurses (Diabetes specialists currently) is highlighted, we do not consider that strong commitment to ensuring that this is the case is evident from the response.</p>
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	<p>SLAs in place for statemented CYP with vision impairment. Regular meetings in place between Education and voluntary and outside agencies including NDCS, RNIB, Guide Dogs, Action Deaf Youth.</p> <p>Since the publication of the NICCY report, education and health colleagues are committed to working together at a departmental, regional and local level to further strengthen and enhance the co-operation that already exists. While the establishment of localised and specialised teams are recommended by NICCY, education and health need to deliver a consistent pupil support service in relation to assessment, provision and advice across the province by collaboratively working with multiple disciplines, as required, and ensuring the voices of parents/carers, children and young people are heard and acted upon.</p> <p>Education and health colleagues are working more efficiently and effectively in the identification, assessment and statementing process. Smarter ways of working have been employed involving technology, use of uniformed templates and the appointment of dedicated health co-ordinators across each of the Health and Social Care Trusts. An integrated early years planning workshop has also taken place to further co-ordinate services across these sectors.</p> <p>Arrangements for the planning, assessment, diagnosis and implementation of supports/ services are routinely reviewed and will be enhanced with the introduction of</p>	<p>Clarification of whether a facilitative role for CYPSP been considered through its Outcomes and Locality Planning Groups is required.</p> <p>We note that the first meeting of the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) SEN sub-group was held on 02 February 2022 and welcome plans to ensure perspectives of those with lived experience are integrated in the development of SEN policy and services. Plans to establish sub-group link to the education/health joint plan on co-operation also welcome.</p> <p>NICCY considers the jointly led project (DE/DoH) which will examine the current transitions planning process for those children turning 14 and who have a Statement of SEN as vital to ensure smooth transition for children and young people with SEND. We are very disappointed that project has been paused due to competing priorities and resource issues within</p>
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	<p>the new SEN Framework and the commitments contained within to improve collaborative working</p> <p>A jointly led project (DE/DoH) has been initiated to examine the current transitions planning process for those children turning 14 and who have a Statement of SEN. The project aims to put in place a mechanism by which the process can be easily transferrable for those children who have a disability but not a statement of SEN. Several other departments are involved in this project including the Departments for Communities and Economy.</p> <p>DE is currently drafting a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Education and Department of Health. In February 2022, DE established a SEN sub-group under the CYPSP to strengthen links between with the voluntary, community and youth sector partners as well as those with lived experience. The purpose of the group is ensure these perspectives are integrated in the development of SEN policy and services. The sub-group will link into the education/health joint plan on co-operation and would be the operationalisation of the strategic level MoU</p>	<p>DE and DoH. Detail of revised timeframes is requested.</p>
<p>DARS and Appeals (Recommendations 37 – 39)</p>		
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Action taken or planned</p>	
<p>37. The EA must ensure that the opportunity to resolve disputes as early as possible is made available to parents/carers.</p>	<p>In September 2019 EA transferred provision of the Dispute Avoidance and Resolution Service (DARS) to an independent provider called Global Mediation. The service is provided under a contract arrangement,</p>	<p>NICCY is mindful of the lack of awareness of DARS, as highlighted by our TLTL research findings, and call for enhanced proactive</p>

<p>a. Information should be produced to raise parents/carers' awareness of the Dispute Avoidance Resolution Service (DARS).</p> <p>b. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the new mediation mechanism should be conducted in order to engender confidence in the process and encourage other individuals to participate.</p>	<p>subject to quality assurance and performance management requirements. Information about DARS and mediation is available on the public facing EA website and included in statutory assessment correspondence to parents.⁵³</p> <p>It is proposed that evaluation of mediation provided by Global Mediation will be covered by the contract review process already in place and the findings considered by the SEND SDP Board and PRG.</p>	<p>communication about this service to parents and carers – perhaps as part of an overall induction pack provided by schools.</p> <p>Clarification of whether Global Mediation are obliged to promote this service is required.</p> <p>We request timeframe for dissemination of DARS evaluation, completed in January 2022, to the SEND SDP Board.</p>
<p>38. An action plan should be prepared by the EA outlining the steps which will be taken to reduce the number of appeals to SENDIST.</p>	<p>As noted above, to date the Statutory Assessment Improvement Project (SAIP) has ensured that a wide range of enhanced governance, accountability, quality assurance and performance management measures have been put in place right across the statutory assessment process.</p> <p>In addition, the operational model for the Statutory Assessment Panel has been revised. A diagnostic review of appeals and SEND Tribunal trends has also been completed in collaboration with the SEND SDP's Programme Reference Group (PRG).</p>	<p>We are optimistic about the potential of this work to address both the unacceptable number of tribunals and appeals to SENDIST, many of which we know are conceded by the EA prior to hearing.</p> <p>We note completion of diagnostic review of appeals and SEND Tribunal trends. An update on</p>

⁵³ <https://www.eani.org.uk/help-available/dispute-avoidance-and-resolution-service-dars>

	A range of recommended actions is currently being developed and will be considered by the SEND SDP Board and PRG.	progress in respect of taking forward recommendations is requested.
39. The Department of Justice (DoJ) must provide legal aid to support parents/carers' requests for appeal at SENDIST.	<p>Legal Aid is not currently available for representation at the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal. This is in line with the position in respect of similar tribunals and in other jurisdictions in the UK.</p> <p>Legal Aid for advice and assistance on any point of Northern Ireland law, which would include advice regarding a parent/carer's requests for appeal at SENDIST, is available to financially eligible applicants.</p>	NICCY has raised this previously with DoJ and requests current situation and plans.
Systemic Review (Recommendation 40)		
Recommendation	Action taken or planned	
40. The Terms of Reference for the 'external, independent review of education provision' ⁵⁴ must include the structure and effectiveness of the EA in meeting the needs of children with SEN and disability.	<p>An independent review team to assess the EA's effectiveness has been appointed and has completed Stage 1 of the project (Desktop research). Stage 2 of the project (Stakeholder Engagement) is currently underway. The project is expected to be completed by the end of April 2022.</p> <p>DE continue to progress the commission of an independent, external review of SEN service provision and processes, with the objective of evaluating whether they are fit for purpose in terms of progress made by</p>	<p>NICCY looks forward to further engagement with the Independent Review Panel and to the opportunity to review the outcome of their work in this area.</p> <p>We look forward to the outcome of the external Landscape Review of the Education Authority once</p>

⁵⁴New Decade, New Approach published 9th January 2020.

	<p>children / impact on children's outcomes and, in terms of funding, whether these services can be delivered more effectively and efficiently. Procurement is at an advanced stage and once commenced, it is anticipated the review will take six months.</p>	<p>available.</p> <p>We understand that the evaluation findings are of relevance to the Independent Review of Education, currently underway.</p>
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