



Special educational needs and their links to poverty

by Bart Shaw, Eleanor Bernardes, Anna Trethewey and Loic Menzies

This report explores the links between special educational needs and disability (SEND) and poverty. It shows that poverty is both a cause and an effect of SEND and makes a series of recommendations.

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Why are the links between special educational needs and disability (SEND) and poverty so strong?

Governments across the UK have made substantial reforms to SEND policy and it is crucial that this period of change is used as an opportunity to break the links between SEND and poverty.

This report shows that poverty is both a cause and an effect of SEND and makes a series of recommendations, including:

- Policy-makers and school and early years leaders should prioritise SEND.
- Staff in schools and early years settings should be trained to identify needs so that they can be spotted early and over-identification and under-identification are reduced.
- Targeted funding for pupils with SEND who are at risk of exclusion should be provided so that schools can support them before they are excluded.

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List of abbreviations

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ALN	Additional learning needs
ASN	Additional support needs
DfE	Department for Education
EHC	Education, Health and Care plan
ETINI	Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
IPSEA	Independent Parental Special Education Advice
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NICMA	Northern Ireland Childminding Association
PACEY	Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years
SCMA	Scottish Childminding Association
SEN	Special educational needs
SENCO	Special educational needs co-ordinator
SEND	Special educational needs and disability
UK	United Kingdom

Executive summary

Across the United Kingdom (UK), children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) are more likely to experience poverty than others. They are also less likely to experience a fulfilling education or leave school with outcomes that reduce the chances of living in poverty as adults. As such, SEND can be a result of poverty as well as a cause of poverty. While UK education policy has taken significant steps to improve the educational experience of this group of children, there is some way to go before all children with SEND are able to receive the kind of high-quality educational provision that they deserve.

This report examines the links between SEND and poverty in the UK. It reviews the literature on:

- the definition of SEND
- the prevalence of SEND in UK educational settings
- the overlap and causal links between SEND and poverty
- the educational outcomes of children with SEND as a group
- recent and ongoing policy reform in the SEND sector.

The report discusses how UK educational policy impacts on the educational experience of children with SEND from low-income families, and suggests ways in which it might be improved.

The report focuses on ten key areas:

- **Identification.** Children with SEND make up a sizeable proportion of children in UK education, although identification of SEND is inconsistent, leading to both over-identification and under-identification of need in UK schools.
- **Navigating the system.** Although recent policy changes have attempted to help parents find and access support for their children with SEND, the system remains difficult to navigate, and parents find that access to support and services for children with SEND varies geographically.
- **Funding.** Changes to the way funding is targeted at children with SEND, especially at local authority level, have resulted in confusion for practitioners and parents.
- **Early years.** High-quality early years provision has a particularly positive effect for both children with SEND and children living in poverty. Across the UK, the early years system is fragmented and underfunded, leading to many children with SEND who are living in poverty being unable to access high-quality provision.
- **Access to quality schools.** School admission processes across the UK mean that children with SEND who are living in poverty are less able to attend high-quality state schools than others. In particular, converter academies in England are less likely to admit children with SEND, and so children with SEND find it harder to access high-quality schools of this type.

- **Maintaining and increasing the quality of provision for children with SEND in school.** Although some schools offer high-quality SEND provision and support, these examples are isolated and not all children with SEND are able to achieve their potential at school. Work is needed to share good practice across the UK school system.
- **Parental engagement.** Parents of children with SEND, particularly those living in poverty and those with SEND themselves, are not always able to engage positively with their child's learning. Schools and other educational settings must improve the way they communicate with parents of children with SEND so that they are better able to shape their child's educational support, and better able to help their child learn at home.
- **'Pushed-out learners'.** Children with SEND are more likely than others to be isolated at school or excluded from mainstream settings. Greater support is needed within schools, particularly around transitions from primary to secondary school, and from secondary school to further education and adulthood, so that children with SEND are less likely to become marginalised.
- **Special schools.** Special schools face particular challenges in recruitment and accountability. Policy reform is needed if all special schools across the UK are to be able to help their students leave school and experience fulfilling adult lives.
- **Ethnicity, SEND and poverty.** There is some evidence that ethnicity plays a part in children's likelihood of being identified as having SEND. Greater understanding of the links between ethnicity, SEND and poverty is needed, in particular for at-risk groups such as children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Overall, we recommend that steps are taken to ensure that SEND are higher up education policy-makers' and practitioners' list of priorities. A full summary of our recommendations can be found in Chapter 6.

1 Introduction

‘Special educational needs and disability’ (SEND) is a broad term that encompasses a range of disabilities, disorders and difficulties. Some, such as physical impairments, may be relatively straightforward to identify; others are less obvious and are in some cases contested. Identification of need is therefore problematic. Children are identified with additional needs, and have those needs supported, on the basis of their educational difficulties. These may arise as a result of a disability or disorder but equally may arise from other factors such as behaviour towards teachers or structural factors such as the home learning environment.

There is a strong link between poverty and SEND. Children from low-income families are more likely than their peers to be born with inherited SEND, are more likely to develop some forms of SEND in childhood, and are less likely to move out of SEND categories while at school. At the same time, children with SEND are more likely than their peers to be born into poverty, and also more likely to experience poverty as they grow up.

Across the United Kingdom (UK), children with SEND from low-income families face particular barriers that prevent them from growing up into more affluent adults. Many factors play a role, including:

- the outcomes they achieve and qualifications they gain as part of their education – they leave school with particularly low attainment
- their wellbeing as children
- access to support for their needs
- their diminished chances of finding well-paid work as an adult.

Pupils from low-income families are more likely to be identified as having SEND, but at the same time are less likely to receive support or effective interventions that might help to address their needs. This is partly because their parents are less likely to be successful in seeking help. They are also less likely to receive help from their schools, and more likely to end up excluded from school or dropping out of education.

As such, children with SEND from low-income families face multiple disadvantages and increased vulnerability from the very start of their lives. Yet their needs are not always prioritised by schools or policy-makers.

Government knows this. Reforms that aim to improve outcomes for these children are either under way or have recently been completed in all of the UK’s education systems. These reforms have admirable intentions, and are yielding some improvements. However, deep-seated problems remain and some children are still falling through the gaps in a fragmented education system.

Methodology

To inform this report, we conducted a review of the literature relating to SEND and poverty in the UK. We also conducted interviews with ten experts in the field.

Outline of the report

This report:

- gives some background on SEND and reviews the evidence relating to the causal links between SEND and poverty (Chapter 2)
- provides an overview of policy and legislation relating to children with SEND in different parts of the UK (Chapter 3)
- examines the key issues impacting on children with SEND from low-income families and suggests ways in which the SEND system might be improved to better meet their needs and those of their parents (Chapters 4 and 5)
- provides a summary of recommendations for the way forward (Chapter 6).

We acknowledge that schools and early years providers do not exist in a vacuum; there are many non-educational factors, for example to do with health or stresses for families of children with SEND, that have implications for SEND and poverty. While this report deals primarily with factors within the education system, it also briefly highlights some of the areas in which these wider factors play a role.

Our aim in writing the report

It is vital to remember that children with SEND have heterogeneous needs and characteristics. This creates challenges for the SEND system, since approaches vary in how well suited they are to meeting different needs. Generalising is therefore difficult and this report should be regarded as an overview rather than as a prescriptive document. We hope that it will nonetheless raise awareness of the particular vulnerability of this group of children and improve knowledge about their needs and how to address them. By doing so, we hope that it will prompt policy-makers, teachers, carers, health professionals and parents to challenge and improve the system so that all children with SEND from low-income families have a better chance of growing up free from poverty. Until we have a system of identification and support for children with SEND, many of these children, especially those also living in poverty, will continue to experience an education that limits their opportunities later in life.

2 Context

What are SEND?

The administrations of the UK share the view that some children require different provision from the majority of pupils as part of their education. As such, some children are educated in different settings in so-called ‘special schools’ while others receive differentiated educational support within mainstream educational settings. In Scotland, such children are referred to as having ‘additional support needs’ (ASN) while in Wales the term ‘additional learning needs’ (ALN) is used. In England and Northern Ireland, they are referred to as having ‘special educational needs and disability’ (SEND). ASN, ALN and SEND cover a wide range of needs.

The Department for Education’s (DfE) definition of SEND in England encompasses all children (or young people up to the age of 25) who have:

‘significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or ... a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.’

DfE and DH, 2014, p. 16

The DfE gives the following examples of special educational needs (SEN) that affect a child’s ability to learn:

- behaviour or ability to socialise (for example, not being able to make friends)
- reading and writing (for example, they have dyslexia)
- ability to understand things
- concentration levels (for example, they have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder – ADHD)
- physical needs or impairments (DfE, 2015a).

Using a general term for such a heterogeneous group with diverse needs presents difficulties and where possible in this report we highlight specific issues facing children with particular needs. However, even this may mask the highly personal and specific needs that each child faces.

For the purposes of this report, we refer in the main to SEND, except in reference to issues only arising in Scotland or Wales, where the terms ASN and ALN are respectively used. Pupils with English as an additional language, looked-after children and gifted and talented children – who may also be considered to have particular needs – are, for the purposes of this report, considered outside of the scope of the review.

Disability

There is considerable overlap between pupils who have special *educational* needs and those who have a disability (Parsons and Platt, 2013). Overall, the prevalence of disability is lower than that of SEN. The Life Opportunities Survey has identified 9% of children aged 11 to 15 in Great Britain as disabled (Office for Disability Issues, 2011); while others, using a different definition of disability, have indicated that about 7% of children from birth to 18 years in the UK are disabled (Blackburn *et al.*, 2010). In contrast, the proportion of children identified as having SEND in the UK varies, from 15.4% in England to 22.5% in Wales (Scottish Government, 2014; DENI, 2015a; DfE, 2015e; Welsh Government, 2015a).

How are SEND identified?

Disabilities and SEN are identified and assessed in different ways. Disabilities are usually identified by the medical profession, and involve ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’ (Equality Act 2010). In contrast, the term ‘SEN’ is a fluid concept and children may move in or out of categories of SEN over the course of their schooling. Accordingly, teacher perception plays an important role in determining whether a pupil is eligible for extra support. Some SEN are identified by medical experts or child psychologists (for example, ADHD and dyslexia), while others are identified by teachers within the child’s school (for example, SEN with some aspects of social, emotional and mental health). We consider the implications of these forms of identification and assessment for those children living in poverty in Chapter 4.

The changing prevalence of SEND

Prevalence in England

Of the pupils in schools in England, 15.4% have identified SEN (1,301,445 pupils), while 2.8% have statements of SEN or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan¹ (235,165 pupils) (DfE, 2015a). England is unusual in UK terms in that the proportion of pupils with SEND has fallen significantly since 2010 (when it was roughly equivalent to that in other education systems in the UK). Furthermore, the number of pupils with identified SEND in the lower categories of need has fallen in each of the past five years, from 21.1% of pupils in 2010 to 15.4% in 2015 (DfE, 2015a). Sixty-three per cent of special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) have said that the number of children on their school’s SEND register has declined in the past year (H. Curran in Bloom, 2015). In contrast, the proportion of pupils with a statement or EHC plan has remained constant since 2007 – at 2.8% of all pupils – although in absolute terms the number of pupils has increased due to increases in the school-age population (the number increased by 3,975 between January 2014 and January 2015) (DfE, 2015a).

The most prevalent forms of SEND in England are moderate learning difficulties, while for children with statements/EHC plans the most common primary need is autism spectrum disorder (DfE, 2015a, p. 5).

Prevalence in Scotland

The proportion of children identified as having ASN in Scotland is higher. In 2014, 20.8% of pupils in Scotland had ASN, while 6% were identified as having more complex needs. Of those identified with ASN, 28.9% had more complex needs, 2.2% of pupils had a Co-ordinated Support Plan and 26.7% had an Individual Education Plan² (Scottish Government, 2014). Scotland has seen a rapid increase in the number of children identified with ASN in the past few years – from 69,587 in 2010 to 140,524 in 2014 (or from 10% to 20.7% of the pupil population) (Scottish Government, 2014). This is because of a change in the recording of children with ASN, from just those with Co-ordinated Support Plans and Individual Education Plans and those attending special schools, to all those with additional needs identified by schools (Scottish Government, 2015a).

Prevalence in Wales

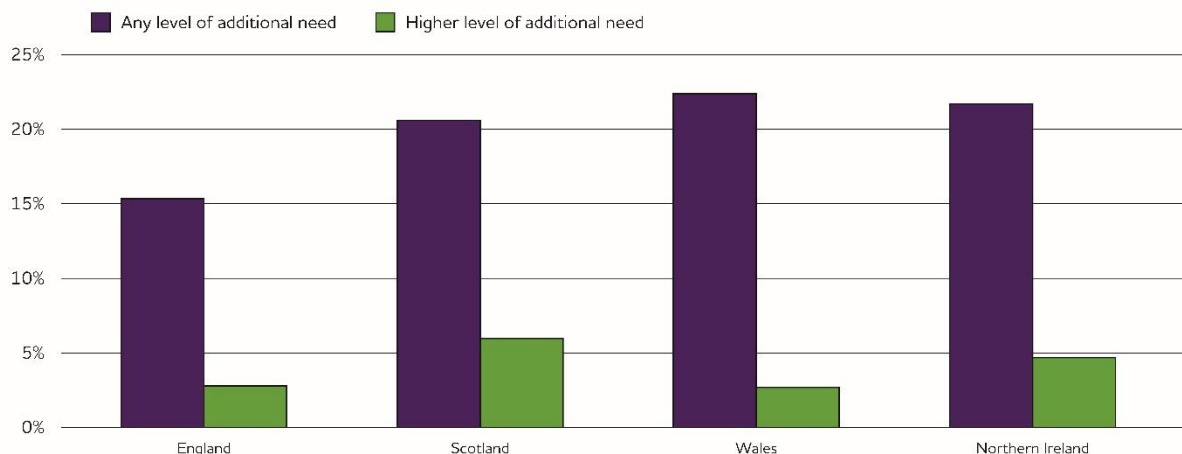
In Wales, 22.5% of children in schools have an identified ALN, while 11.8% of those also have a statement to address their more complex needs (amounting to 2.7% of all children) (Welsh Government, 2015a). This figure has remained fairly stable over recent years.

Prevalence in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, 21.8% of children in schools are identified as having SEN, while a smaller proportion – 4.7% – are identified as having more complex needs and as a result have a statement of SEN. These numbers have increased steadily since 2003/04 (DENI, 2015a).

Figure 1 gives a snapshot of the identification of SEND among children in each nation of the UK as a percentage of all UK school pupils in 2014 (the most recent comparable year at the time of writing), by level of need.

Figure 1: Children identified as having SEND as a percentage of all UK school pupils, 2014



Source: Scottish Government (2014), DENI (2015a), DfE (2015a), Welsh Government (2015a)

How many children have SEND and are facing poverty?

This report looks in particular at the issues facing children who have SEND and are from low-income families.

Poverty and SEND in England

DfE statistics show a clear link between SEND and children living in poverty. Of the pupils who are eligible for free school meals in England,³ 28.7% are identified as having SEND (DfE, 2015a). Thus, SEND are more prevalent among disadvantaged pupils than among their less disadvantaged peers – a situation that is common to all four nations of the UK.

Poverty and SEND in Northern Ireland

Figures from the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI) show that almost half of all pupils who are eligible for free school meals in Northern Ireland have SEN (DENI, 2015a).

Poverty and SEND in Wales

In Wales, pupils eligible for free school meals are twice as likely as pupils who are not eligible to have ALN (Welsh Government, 2014).

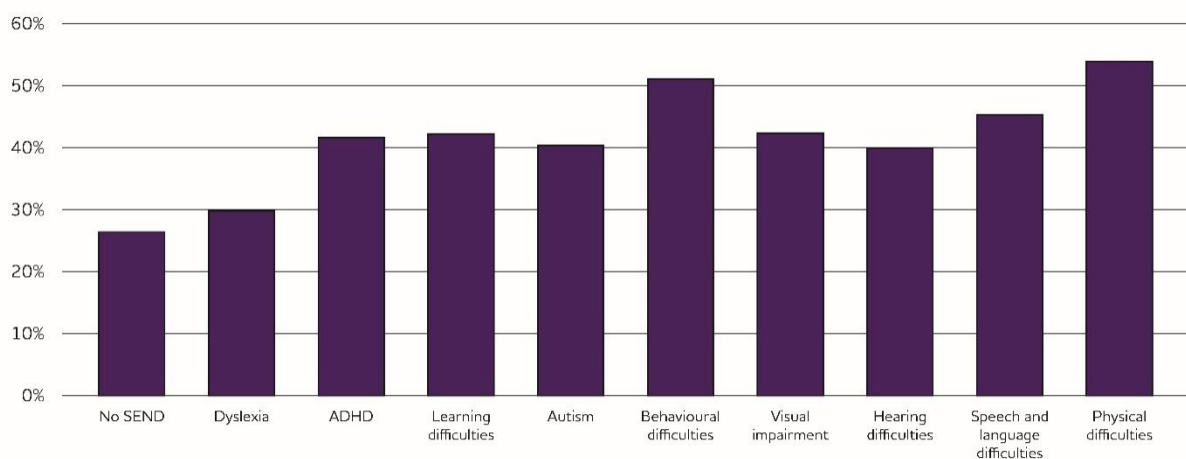
Poverty and SEND in Scotland

In Scotland, there is a notably higher prevalence of ASN among children living in the most deprived 20% of families (Scottish Government, 2012b). For example, six times as many children in the most deprived families are identified as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties compared with the least deprived families (Scottish Government, 2012b).

Variation between needs

Poverty is associated with different types of SEND to varying degrees. A higher proportion of children with all forms of SEND live in income poverty compared with those without any SEND. However, certain forms of SEND, such as physical difficulties and behavioural difficulties, are particularly strongly associated with low socio-economic status. Some conditions, such as dyslexia, are more associated with a higher socio-economic status relative to other forms of SEND. These variations are shown in Figure 2, which gives a snapshot of the socio-economic status of children in the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) – which is following the lives of around 19,000 children born between September 2000 and January 2002 – when they were aged 9 months, including those who were later identified with SEND. It shows, for example, that more than half of children with behavioural difficulties or physical difficulties were living in poverty at the age of 9 months, while the socio-economic status of children with dyslexia was more similar to those with no SEND.

Figure 2: Percentage of children living in income poverty at 9 months by SEND status



Note: Income poverty is usually defined as less than 60% of median income.

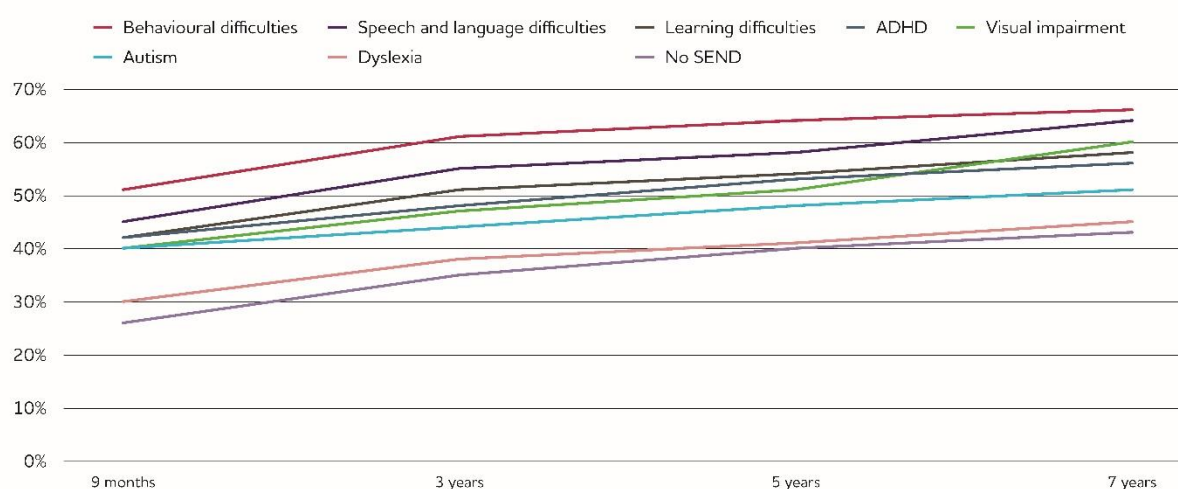
Source: Parsons and Platt (2013)

Links to age

The proportion of children with SEND who are living in poverty increases with age for all types of SEND (see Figure 3). The reasons for this are twofold:

- children who live in poverty are more likely than their affluent peers to develop some forms of SEND, such as behavioural difficulties, as they experience 'persistently challenging family circumstances'
- the families of children with SEND are more likely to move into poverty (for example, as a result of the costs and/or family stress associated with their child's SEND status pushing them into poverty) (Parsons and Platt, 2013, p. 20).

Figure 3: Percentage of children experiencing income poverty over time by SEND status



Note: Income poverty is usually defined as less than 60% of median income.

Source: Parsons and Platt (2013)

Why is there such a strong link between SEND and poverty?

There is a strong relationship between SEND and poverty and causality runs in multiple directions. Figure 4 gives an illustration of the various links, which are explored in detail below. Chapter 4 sets out recommendations for breaking these links and these are summarised in Chapter 6.

Why are poor children more likely to have SEND?

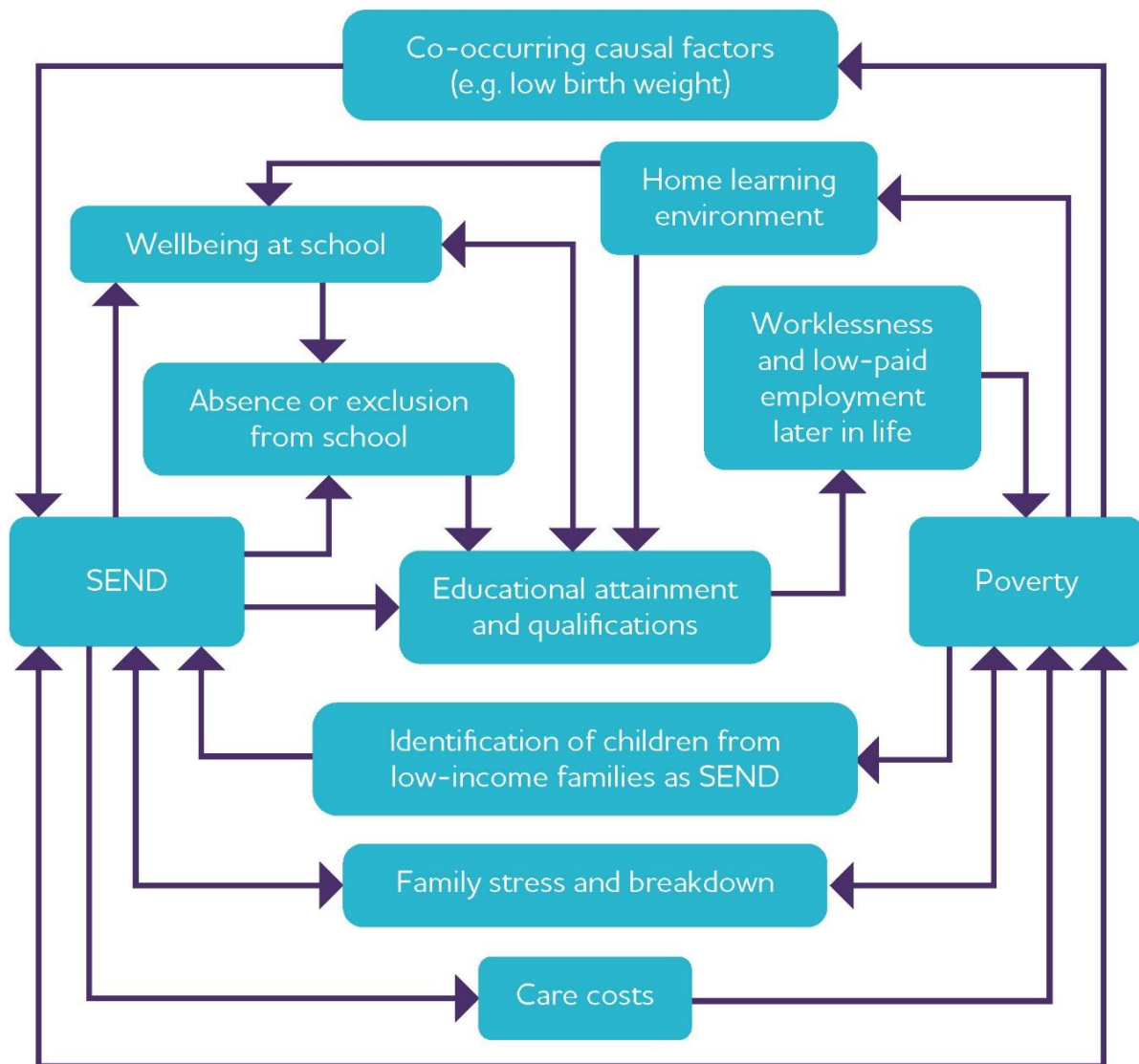
Intergenerational disability

Intergenerational disability plays a role in the link between poverty and SEND, although the evidence is limited. Blackburn *et al.* (2010) found a high prevalence of disabled children living with disabled parents. Given the relationship between adult disability and poverty and the hereditary nature of a small number of disabilities and learning difficulties (such as dyslexia and autism), a link to child poverty is unsurprising. There is also strong evidence that parental disability is a driver of poverty as certain disabilities lead to a 'decline in income and employment rates ... following disability onset' (Jenkins and Rigg, 2004; DWP, 2014). Furthermore, inheriting a disorder is also likely to impact on a child's future employment and earning potential.

Co-occurring causal factors

Low levels of maternal education frequently co-occur with poverty, and mothers without qualifications are 2.3 times more likely to have children identified as having SEND compared with children whose mothers have a degree or higher degree (Anders *et al.*, 2011). Other factors associated with poverty – for example, smoking and consuming alcohol during pregnancy, low birth weight, parental stress and family breakdown (DWP, 2014) – can also contribute to the likelihood of a child developing certain types of SEND (Anders *et al.*, 2011; Parsons and Platt, 2013).

Figure 4: The links between SEND and poverty



The identification of SEND in some schools

Poverty and SEND are often conflated in schools, with some children identified as having forms of SEND because of under-achievement attributable to cultural and social factors associated with living in poverty (such as a poorer home learning environment or more challenging behaviour) rather than because they have an underlying disorder (Dyson and Gallanbaugh, 2008; Keslair and McNally, 2009). The precise nature of the link is hard to unpick, with behavioural difficulties for example being associated with poverty as well as other forms of disability (Fauth *et al.*, 2014).

Why are children with SEND more likely to go on to be poor?

We have seen above how poverty can cause children to have SEND, but causality flows in both directions – SEND also play a role in causing or aggravating poverty.

The role of SEND in exacerbating poverty

Where parents need more time away from work to provide care for their child with SEND, this can decrease family income (Blackburn *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, care often comes at a high cost (DWP, 2014). Childhood SEND can therefore lead to increasing financial disadvantage for families.

Having a child with SEND can also lead to family stress and breakdown. This results in a heightened prevalence of children with SEND living in single-parent households (Blackburn *et al.*, 2010). This, in turn, has a small causal effect on child poverty, which is greatly increased if the parent is out of work (DWP, 2014).

Educational achievement

Children with SEND from low-income families have poorer educational outcomes – whether in terms of academic achievement, wellbeing or exclusion rates – and these outcomes have a direct effect on their earning potential later in life. For example, Jenkins *et al.* (2007) estimate that ‘men with between one and four GCSEs [General Certificates of Secondary Education] at A*–C are expected to earn around £85000 more over their working lives than those who do not achieve any GCSEs at grades A*–C, for women this figure is £60000’. Similarly, the Department for Work and Pensions finds that A-Levels are a significant protective factor against poverty later in life (DWP, 2014).

Primary school achievement in England

In England, there is an attainment gap between primary school children who are eligible for free school meals⁴ and those who are not. In English primary schools, 64% of pupils known to be eligible achieved the expected level in the combined reading, writing and maths measure in 2014, compared with 82% of all other pupils (DfE, 2015b).

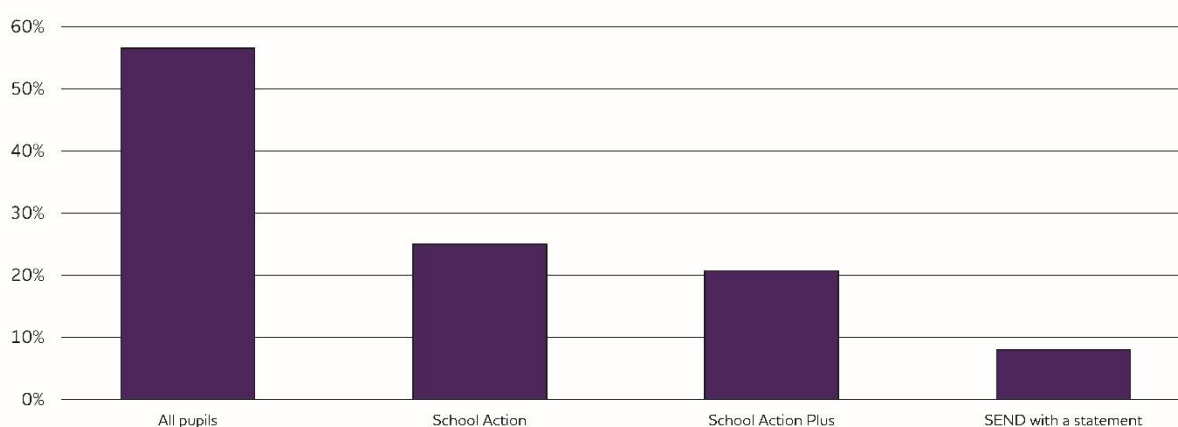
The attainment gap between children with SEND and others is smaller at primary school than it is at secondary school, but it is still pronounced – 38% of all pupils with SEND achieved the expected level in the combined reading, writing and maths measure in 2014, compared with 90% of pupils with no identified SEND (DfE, 2015b).

Secondary school achievement in England

The same gaps in attainment exist at secondary school in England. In 2013/14, 33.5% of children eligible for free school meals achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C including English and maths compared with 60.5% of all other pupils (DfE, 2015c). Figure 5 shows the attainment gap in A*–C grades at GCSE (including English and maths) in 2013/14 between pupils in the SEND categories used until September 2014⁵ and all pupils.

In terms of progress, this is lower for pupils with SEND and for pupils who are eligible for free schools meals than for other pupils. Between Key Stage 2 (age 11) and Key Stage 4 (age 16), 48.9% of pupils with SEND made expected progress in English and 36.5% made expected progress against a national average in England of 74% in English and 67% in maths in 2013/14 (DfE, 2015c). Of pupils who were eligible for free school meals, 56.9% made expected progress in English compared with 74.1% of all other pupils, while 45.6% of pupils eligible for free school meals made expected progress in maths compared with 68.8% of all other pupils.

Figure 5: Percentage of children achieving 5+ GCSEs at grades A*–C or equivalent (including English and maths), 2013/14



Source: Education Funding Agency (2015a)

Educational achievement in Scotland

The Scottish Government's analysis of the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)⁶ study tests found that the effect of socio-economic status on educational outcomes was particularly marked in Scotland compared with other countries in the PISA analysis (Scottish Government, 2010). It also found that 39% of pupils from the most deprived 20% of families achieved one or more Highers or better in 2013/14 compared with 79.7% of those from the least deprived 20% of families (Scottish Government, 2015b).

Pupils with ASN (including those in special schools) also achieve less highly in Scotland, with only 32.3% achieving one or more Highers or better in 2012/13 compared with 64.8% for those without ASN (Scottish Government, 2015b).

Educational achievement in Wales

In Wales, pupils receiving free school meals are less likely to achieve the Level 2 threshold (at least five GCSEs at grades A*–C) than other pupils. In 2014/15, 31.3% of pupils eligible for free school meals achieved this threshold including English/Welsh first language and maths, against 63.7% of those not eligible for free school meals (Welsh Government, 2015b).

Children with ALN are three times less likely to achieve the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh first language and maths (Grigg *et al.*, 2014). In 2014, 19.7% of pupils with ALN achieved the Level 2 threshold compared with 56.2% of all pupils. At the end of Key Stage 2 (age 11), 57.7% of pupils with ALN achieved the Core Subject Indicator (CSI)⁷ compared with 86.2% of all pupils (Welsh Government, 2015a).

Educational achievement in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, 34.9% of children eligible for free school meals leave school with at least five GCSEs at grades A*–C including English and maths, compared with 69.7% of those not eligible (DENI, 2015c).

Similarly, 35.6% of children with lower categories of SEND and 19.9% of those with higher categories of SEND leave school with at least five GCSEs at grades A*–C including English and maths, while 70.9% of those without SEND do so (DENI, 2015c).

SEND and broader outcomes

Children with SEND also do less well on a range of other outcomes that affect their long-term future and these are outlined below. The devolved authorities do not release directly comparable data on every outcome highlighted. Where possible, indicative data from each country is used to point out similarities for each outcome.

Exclusion and absence rates are particularly high among children with SEND. In England during 2013/14, 7.9% of pupils on School Action Plus received a fixed-period exclusion – more than seven times as many as those without SEND – and seven out of every ten children excluded in 2014 were identified with SEND (DfE, 2015f; McInerney, 2015). In Wales, in 2013/14, the rate of fixed-term exclusions (over five days) for pupils with SEND was more than 15 times the rate for pupils with no SEND (Statistics for Wales, 2015). Similarly in Scotland, during 2011, children identified with ASN were five times more likely to be excluded than those without (Enable, 2012).

A larger proportion of children with SEND than those without have low attendance at school, go on to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) or are in youth custody. The DfE (2010) found that 30% of children in England in 2010 who had previously had a statement of SEN were NEET at age 18 compared with 13% who had never been categorised as having SEN at school. In Scotland, 13.4% of school leavers with ASN in 2014 were unemployed and not in employment or training, compared with 6.1% of those with no ASN (Scottish Government, 2015b).

Across the UK, prison populations have a high prevalence of people with learning difficulties (Loucks, 2007). In 2004, 15% of young offenders had a statement of SEN compared with 3% of the general population (Baker *et al.*, 2004). The Communication Trust (2014) highlights the disproportionate representation of children with speech, communication and language difficulties in youth custody. Often, these difficulties had been identified prior to the detention but, in many cases, lawless and risky behaviour was connected to a previously unidentified difficulty.

Finally, fewer children with SEND are likely to report themselves as happy in the UK (59% compared with 67% of children without SEND) (Chamberlain *et al.*, 2010). Also, children with SEND are more likely to worry about bullying (38% compared with 25%) and less likely to report having friends (59% compared with 92%) (Chamberlain *et al.*, 2010; see also Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards, 2010; Chatzitheochari *et al.*, 2014). Overall, Gutman *et al.* (2010) find that the most accurate indicator of a decline in wellbeing among children is SEND.

3 Recent policy and legislative changes

Across the UK, the SEND system has been subject to a number of reforms in recent years. This chapter provides a summary of these reforms, by nation of the UK.

England

In England, the Children and Families Act 2014 requires public bodies to provide all children with SEND with access to integrated provision through new Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. It also aims to give children and their parents more power to direct government funding towards the provision that best meets their needs.

The Act was followed by a Code of Practice (DfE and DH, 2014), which serves as guidance for schools, providers and local authorities on how to meet the duties placed on them and provide support for all pupils with SEND, including those from low-income families. The Code sets out a range of changes, including a move to cover the 0–25 age range (previously it was 2–19) and giving children and their parents a greater say in decisions that affect them.

While it is too early to confidently predict the outcomes of this reform, there are a number of emerging implications.

On the one hand:

- the reforms have encouraged a greater focus on SEND (although SEND remain low on the agenda of many schools)
- there is a greater focus on all teachers catering for pupils who have SEND in their class rather than relying on specialists
- there is more space for parental and child voice in the new system.

On the other hand:

- the emphasis on autonomy has led to a fragmented system that many parents struggle to navigate and which leaves some schools and children isolated. Bernardes *et al.* (2015) argue that this may make it harder for lower-income children to access high-quality support because the system is more reliant on parents being able to understand and negotiate the system.

Scotland

In Scotland, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 outlines how to provide support for pupils who require additional educational support. Amendments were made to this Act in 2009, which became law in November 2010.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 aims to increase freedoms for inter-agency working and outlines the duty for children to have a 'Named Person' to oversee them from the age of 0 to 18 wherever there are two or more agencies providing support. Each education authority has a duty to assess and support pupils with ALN but there is no overarching structure for how they should do this. Those pupils assessed as having the most complex needs will have a Co-ordinated Support Plan put in place by the education authority. An Individual Education Plan can also be prepared by the pupil's school or education authority but it is not legally required.

Wales

In Wales, the current system for pupils with SEND is very similar to the previous framework in England, as laid out in Part IV of the Education Act 1996: pupils are assessed as needing School Action or School Action Plus and those with the highest level of need receive a statement. However, the system is currently under review, with a White Paper, *Legislative Proposals for Additional Learning Needs*, published in May 2014 (Welsh Government, 2014), and a Draft Bill and Draft Code of Practice, now under consultation. The main aims of this reform are to remove the stigmatising language around pupils with SEND and to provide a unifying framework to support learners throughout the entirety of their education.

The key changes will be:

- the introduction of the terms ‘additional learning needs’ and ‘additional learning provision’ to replace the existing terms ‘special educational needs’ and ‘special educational provision’
- a unified legislative framework to support learners aged 0–25 with ALN
- the introduction of Individual Development Plans to replace statements of SEN and post-16 assessments (Welsh Government, 2014).

Northern Ireland

DENI is currently introducing a Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill, which at the time of writing had been at Committee Stage since March 2015. It aims ‘to end delays in assessment and provision for children with SEN through a comprehensive range of measures that will contribute to a more responsive framework able to support children more quickly’ (DENI, 2015b). While the system for SEN in Northern Ireland is not experiencing an overhaul to the same extent as in England, the Bill will:

- add to the existing duties on boards of governors of grant-aided schools
- place new duties on the education authority, such as the development of an annual plan of the SEN supports and services it will make available to schools and to pupils with SEN
- provide some new rights of appeal for parents and for children who are above compulsory school age within the SEN framework (DENI, 2015b).

4 The key issues impacting on disadvantaged children with SEND and the key opportunities for solving them

In this chapter, we summarise the key issues affecting disadvantaged children with SEND in the UK's education systems and set out the main opportunities to improve outcomes. We consider the following areas:

- identification
- navigating the system
- funding
- early years
- access to quality provision at school
- maintaining and increasing the quality of provision for children with SEND in schools
- parental engagement
- 'pushed-out learners'
- special schools.

Identification

Under-identification

The way in which children with SEN (as opposed to disability) are identified leads to many problems, partly because the system 'misses' many children. For example, the charity Dyslexia Action estimates that while only 13% of the 15.7% of children with SEND are identified as having specific learning difficulties (the category of SEND into which dyslexia falls), widespread under-identification of dyslexia means that the true figure may be as high as 10% of *all* children (Dyslexia Action, 2012). This issue particularly affects disadvantaged children because more affluent parents are often able to pay for assessment whereas poorer parents cannot, which results in them not being able to access the same support, an issue highlighted by Bernardes *et al.* (2015). One of our key informants also points out that parents in low-income households are less likely to seek assessment for their child as a result of a lack of cultural or social capital, or may have more pressing priorities in meeting the everyday needs of their child.

Additionally, Keslair *et al.* (2011) suggest that children with less severe needs (such as moderate learning difficulties) are more likely to be overlooked in schools where attainment is lower, since their needs are less likely to show up, and less likely to receive individualised support as resources are targeted at raising attainment across a wider range of students. This is more likely to happen in schools with high proportions of disadvantaged pupils where attainment tends to be lower.

Over-identification

On the other hand, low-income pupils are *more* likely to be flagged up as having certain special needs, particularly moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and mental health needs. Dyson and Gallanhaugh (2008) argue that this is because some children are identified as having SEND as a result of behaviour that is difficult or challenging to manage, and that these may stem from factors other than the

pupil's individual characteristics, for instance their home learning environment or different patterns in what behaviour is considered 'normal' among different ethnicities or cultures (see, for example, Cremin and Thomas, 2005; DfES, 2005).

Skewed identification can have the following implications:

- There may be positive effects for some children in terms of additional resources, both financial and with regard to extra attention.
- Treating characteristics of poverty as SEND places responsibility for tackling low attainment and poor outcomes solely with practitioners in schools and can result in a reluctance to tackle root causes in the early years (key informant).
- Parents can end up confused as to whether their child has SEND. Parsons and Platt (2013, p. 7) found that 'the reporting of a SEN was higher among teachers than parents. There was also quite a lot of disparity in the children that were identified with a specific SEN when parent and teacher reporting were compared'.
- Over-identification has led policy-makers to push schools to reduce identification (Ofsted, 2010) and to reclassify behavioural, emotional and social difficulties as social, emotional and mental health needs (DfE and DH, 2014). A move to reduce identification may result in poorer children who do really have additional educational needs being "squeezed out of additional resource and funding" (key informant).

Identification in the devolved administrations

There are particular issues with identification in Scotland where in 2015 the Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, Alasdair Allan, reported that 'there are groups of children and young people whose needs are less visible and therefore do not always receive the support that they need' (Allan, in Scottish Government, 2015a, p. 2).

Local authorities in Scotland are responsible for the identification, provision for and review of ASN for pupils living under their jurisdiction. Yet the absence of a consistent mechanism for identification across Scotland has led to a lack of accurate recording, resulting in wide disparities between local authorities and children missing out on support (SCSC, 2015). Against a national average of 20.8%, figures for the proportion of children identified as having ASN in local authorities in Scotland range from 8% in North Lanarkshire to 37% in West Dunbartonshire, despite the fact that this identification has no correlation with proportions of children living in poverty (SCSC, 2015).

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2015) has highlighted a similar issue in Northern Ireland where counties allocate statements of SEN at different rates, leading DENI to conclude that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are not receiving the support to which they are entitled. Meanwhile, Estyn – the education and training inspectorate for Wales – points out that identification of ALN in Wales does not necessarily lead to higher-quality provision (Welsh Government, 2015b).

Recommendations

- Across the UK, schools should carry out rigorous assessments to identify SEND, including deploying trained specialists where possible. School groups – such as multi-academy trusts in England – should explore the possibility of employing qualified experts across several schools.
- In England, Ofsted should conduct a follow-up to its 2010 report on the impact of changes to the identification of need (Ofsted, 2010).
- In Scotland, the Scottish Government should develop clearer and more consistent guidelines for identifying ASN.
- Estyn, Education Scotland and the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland (ETINI) should evaluate the way in which ALN/ASN/SEND are identified.

- In Northern Ireland, DENI should conduct a review of the process for issuing statements of SEN, with a particular view to identifying whether children from more disadvantaged communities are less likely to gain statements.

Navigating the system

In 2011, the DfE noted that ‘the system for supporting children, young people and families is overly complex, bureaucratic and adversarial’ (DfE, 2011, p. 26). More recently, Bernardes *et al.* (2015) have argued that an increasingly fragmented SEND system (with multiple providers and inconsistent oversight) has made it difficult for parents to navigate it. For example, they may struggle to understand how to access advice and support or how to challenge the system if they are unhappy with provision. As IPSEA (a charity that offers legal advice and support to families of children with SEND) argues: ‘families who are, in addition, living on reduced incomes or are in poverty are further vulnerable. It is our experience that they are less able to have the resources to co-ordinate complex paperwork, deal with professionals and navigate through the SEN system’ (IPSEA, 2011, p. 2).

Local Offers

‘Local Offers’ are drawn up by local authorities in England and are designed to inform parents and carers of children with SEND of the nature of the support available in a local area, and to provide clear signposting so that accessing that support becomes easier. However, in many cases, these Local Offers do not provide parents with useful information or wide-ranging offers of support. Bernardes *et al.* (2015) found that almost 25% of Local Offers were either unfinished or incomplete. Meanwhile, the DfE’s evaluation of the Pathfinder local authorities that had been trialling the reforms since 2011 found that ‘only a minority of parents had heard of the Local Offer’, only 12% of Pathfinder families had looked at it and only half of those who had looked at it found it useful (DfE, 2015c, p. 63).

Similarly, parents of children with ASN in Scotland report difficulty in knowing where to look for support and some staff in local authorities themselves do not know how to find local support services for children with ASN (Scottish Government, 2012a – the ‘Doran Report’). This report suggested that the Scottish Executive draw up a map of ASN services that would help parents locate support, which Enquire was then commissioned to do (see Enquire, 2015). In Wales, the responsibility for informing parents and children about support for ALN is in the process of legislative change. This is likely to result in local authorities having similar duties to those in England for providing information on services for children with ALN up to the age of 25 (Welsh Government, 2014). Northern Ireland did not use Local Offers at the time of writing but upcoming legislative reforms may change this.

Tribunals

Although children with SEND are more likely to be living in poverty than their peers, the literature suggests that parents with higher levels of education are more confident in ‘taking on the system’ than those with lower levels. Parsons and Platt (2013) refer to a 2002 survey of 100 parents of children with SEN conducted by the Audit Commission, which highlights the fact that cultural and social capital (such as confidence and knowledge) enables some parents to access greater provision for their children.

More affluent parents’ advantage in taking on the system is seen most clearly in cases where a local authority’s refusal of a statement or EHC plan is contested.

‘The probability of getting a Statement (among SEN pupils) seems to be higher in less deprived [affluent] areas ... It is more advantageous to be a poor child with special needs in a more affluent region than in a less affluent region (from the point of view of getting a Statement) ... The socio-economic characteristics of parents seem to be positively related to the probability of obtaining a Statement – particularly mother’s education.’
Keslair and McNally, 2009, pp. 13–14

On the other hand, evidence regarding cases presented to the national Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal is mixed. Grey (2010) points to the over-representation in tribunals of certain social classes or disability groups that are relatively more affluent (such as those with dyslexia). However,

Parsons and Platt (2013) suggest that the relative poverty of children with a statement or EHC plan precludes a firm conclusion that lower-income families are less able to secure higher needs provision:

‘It may be that more disadvantaged children with a Statement of Need are relatively more “needy”. That is, relative to their more advantaged counterparts they may be less likely to receive a Statement for the same level of needs, which would be consistent with earlier research ... Nevertheless, the point remains that it is the most disadvantaged children, and those who are persistently disadvantaged, who are more likely to have a Statement at age 7.’

Parsons and Platt, 2013, p. 21

Recommendations

- In England, the National Audit Office should commission a full evaluation of the Local Offer policy and practice to ensure that time and resources are not expended for limited return. Likewise, the Scottish Government should review Enquire’s (2015) map of ASN provision, commissioned in the wake of the 2012 Doran Report (Scottish Government, 2012a), and establish how effective it is in enabling parents to find and access support, as well as how, if at all, it is impacting on outcomes. Education departments in Wales and Northern Ireland should consider the outcomes of these reviews when making decisions about upcoming policy changes in this area.
- Local authorities in all four nations of the UK should work with charities such as IPSEA to identify barriers to parents and carers of children with SEND from low-income families having fair access to the school admissions tribunals process.

Funding

Local authority decline

Funding for SEND in England has been subject to a number of changes in recent years. As local authorities’ role has been reduced, their budgets have been cut. According to some calculations, cuts in education expenditure amount to 7.6% (Johnstone, 2014). This is partly because funding has been shifted from local authorities to academies; nonetheless, this has impacted profoundly on what local authorities are able to do. Local authorities have responded in different ways: Bernardes *et al.* (2015), for example, have found that some local authorities have reduced staffing while others have increased it. Nonetheless, substantial restructures have become the norm.

Confusion over funding

Education funding for children from low-income families has increased as a result of the Pupil Premium in England, the Pupil Deprivation Grant in Wales and the Attainment Scotland Fund. Meanwhile in Northern Ireland, funding arrangements for schools have changed to reflect relative levels of disadvantage in the communities served by schools. While these measures are a positive step towards securing greater support for children eligible for the funding, in England, there is some concern that the Pupil Premium has become an ‘instead of’ rather than an ‘as well as’ – the National Audit Office suggests that 47% of schools are spending the Pupil Premium to fund support that should have been met through SEND funding:

‘There is a clear risk that, in some cases, the Pupil Premium could be replacing rather than supplementing [SEN funding]. This would mean that a particularly vulnerable group of disadvantaged pupils was not getting the full support to which it is entitled.’

NAO, 2015, p. 25

Additionally, in England, the Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a personal budget for all pupils with an EHC plan, which allows parents and children to have a greater say in how additional funding is allocated. Decisions about personal budgets are, in practice, generally made at school level in conversation between parents, the child and the school’s SENCO. There is some concern that confusion over how the personal budget is allocated and the absence of a coherent system of oversight result in decisions about funding being made in isolation:

“The dangers are that school delegation of resources means that money can go in other areas, that if the school isn’t good at SEN, even if they’re ploughing [in] the money, it’s not often applied in ways that are really going to secure the best outcomes. There are I think major issues in schools understanding what are really good evaluated approaches and interventions and evaluating their own practice around those and understanding what works and what doesn’t. And whereas before you might have had quite a considerable local authority team to call on to help you with all of that, that again has been very fragmented. In some authorities it’s better than others. In some authorities the resources were there, in others they’re not and a lot more depends now on the school end of the system deploying their SEN budget in really effective ways.”
(key informant)

Recommendations

- Ofsted, Estyn, ETINI and Education Scotland should ensure that inspection teams have the necessary skills to review SEND provision and spending during inspections, either by better training inspectors or by using specialists as part of inspection teams.
- School governors should review SEND spending each year and SENCOs should attend the meetings held to discuss it. In order to ensure that these reviews are conducted in a robust and critical way, governing bodies should consider expertise in the SEND area as part of governor recruitment or seek external advice for these meetings (Bernardes *et al.*, 2015).

Early years

Early years education is crucial for children with SEND and those from low-income families. This is because:

- effective early years provision can reduce the chance of a child developing SEND
- high-quality early years provision seems to have a strong ‘protective effect’, which reduces the chance of both children with SEND and those growing up in poverty falling behind their peers (Sylva *et al.*, 2012).

Early years is a particular issue in Northern Ireland where investment in early years is much lower than in other parts of the UK (Save the Children, 2009).

There are a number of reasons why the early years carry so much importance for children with SEND living in poverty.

An opportunity for early identification

Anders *et al.* (2011) note that early identification of SEND is ‘crucial’, both to school readiness and to later school attainment. They go on to point out that the earlier SEND can be identified, the more support can be given and the more positive a pupil’s experience will be. Unfortunately, there are inconsistent approaches to the identification of need, especially among private and voluntary providers, and this results in some children’s needs being missed. This issue particularly affects children from low-income families, given that they are more at risk of SEND and their parents are less likely to seek assessment or support (Sylva *et al.*, 2012).

As Field argued in 2010: ‘GPs, midwives, health visitors, hospital services, Children’s Centres and private and voluntary sector nurseries together provide fragmented services that are neither well understood nor easily accessed by all of those who might benefit most’ (Field, 2010, p. 5).

Reforms are therefore needed to bring health, social care and early education expertise together and ensure that all early years settings are able to identify needs.

An opportunity to reduce the risk of children from low-income families developing SEND

Early years provision, can, to some extent, provide additional stimulation for children who face a “poverty of stimulation” at home (key informant). This is borne out by Sylva *et al.* (2012), who find that children with less stimulating home learning environments seem to particularly benefit from attending high-quality pre-school.

Early years provision in the most deprived areas is around half as likely to be judged outstanding compared with provision in the least deprived areas and 50% more likely to be judged ‘satisfactory/requires improvement’ – although maintained nurseries in deprived areas ‘buck the trend’ (Fair Education Alliance, 2014). This is important because a range of evidence shows that, for some forms of SEN, high-quality early years provision may be enough to prevent a child from developing a SEN at school and this is especially the case for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children (Taggart *et al.*, 2008; Anders *et al.*, 2011; Sylva *et al.*, 2012).

Type, as well as the quality, of the setting may also be important, as integrated children’s centres – which combine education, care, family support and health services – have the most positive outcomes both for children at risk of low cognitive development and for children at risk of low social and behavioural development (Big Lottery Fund Wales, 2010; Sylva *et al.*, 2012).

Improved school readiness

Sylva *et al.* (2012) show that high-quality early years provision has a significant positive effect on school readiness and early literacy and numeracy – both for children with SEND and for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It has a greater positive effect on these groups of children than it does on others in particular when combined with an early start (age 2) at pre-school. Early start at pre-school:

- increases outcomes for reading and maths at Key Stage 1 (Sammons *et al.*, 2004a, 2004b)
- continues to have a positive effect for vulnerable groups (including those with SEND and/or living in poverty) through to the end of Key Stage 2 in terms of both academic and social/behavioural outcomes (Sammons *et al.*, 2008a, 2008b).

Recommendations

- As per the recommendations put forward by Butler and Rutter (2016), all governments in the UK should create an inclusion support strategy for the early years. This should include measures that would:
 - make funding available so that all early years settings have access to a SENCO or SENCO training
 - enable access to training for non-specialist early years staff that increases their skills in caring for children with SEND in early years settings
 - make funding available so that all early years settings can put in place physical adaptations to meet the reasonable adjustments requirements of the Equalities Act 2010
 - make funding available for early years settings to be able to buy in additional staff, one-to-one support or family workers when needed for children with SEND (Butler and Rutter, 2016).
- Pre-school settings should prioritise early identification of SEND and this information should be shared during the transition to primary school. Where possible, identification of need should take place before a child arrives at pre-school.
- The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) in England and Wales, the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and the Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA) should increase the availability of training and guidance for early years staff and health visitors on the identification of SEND and addressing the early developmental and health problems that might impact on the development of SEND.

- Training for health visitors must include a stronger emphasis on supporting parents. Early years training for SENCOs must focus on strategic as well as specialist skills, for example managing teaching assistants, parental engagement, assessment and identification.
- As the Fair Education Alliance (2014) has recommended, all early years settings should be graduate-led, with a workforce qualified to a minimum of National Qualifications Framework Level 3 (A-Level equivalent). The existing workforce should have access to a new leadership and management development programme, which focuses on those who work in deprived areas. In addition, training for early years managers should include a greater focus on SEND.
- Current moves to increase the number of hours of pre-school provision available should be targeted first at disadvantaged communities on the proviso that settings employ highly trained staff and deliver provision grounded in the evidence of what makes a difference for children with SEND from low-income families, such as shared parent–child activities. Increases in hours must be backed up with investment in parental engagement in these communities, to ensure that parents are supported to provide an effective home learning environment and feel confident in accessing early years provision.
- The DfE and early years providers in England should reform the data collected at pre-school level so that a greater emphasis is placed on language development, since this is a particular issue for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and plays a key role in later academic attainment as well as in social and emotional development (The Communication Trust, 2015).

Access to quality provision at school

Geographical variation and differential access to school as a result of school admissions processes mean that disadvantaged pupils with SEND find it harder to access the support that would allow them to catch up with their peers.

Geographical variation

Children with SEND living in poverty are more likely to attend poorer-quality schools since (outside of London) schools in disadvantaged areas are less likely to have top inspection gradings (Ofsted, 2014). Furthermore, the increasing range of SEND service providers means that more affluent and knowledgeable parents of pupils with SEND who are better able to navigate a complicated system, have an increased relative advantage in accessing good-quality provision.

School admissions processes

School admissions systems frequently disadvantage children with SEND from low-income families. Lamb (2009) and Bajwa-Patel (2015) in particular note the difficulties that many parents of pupils with SEND face in finding a school that meets their child's needs.

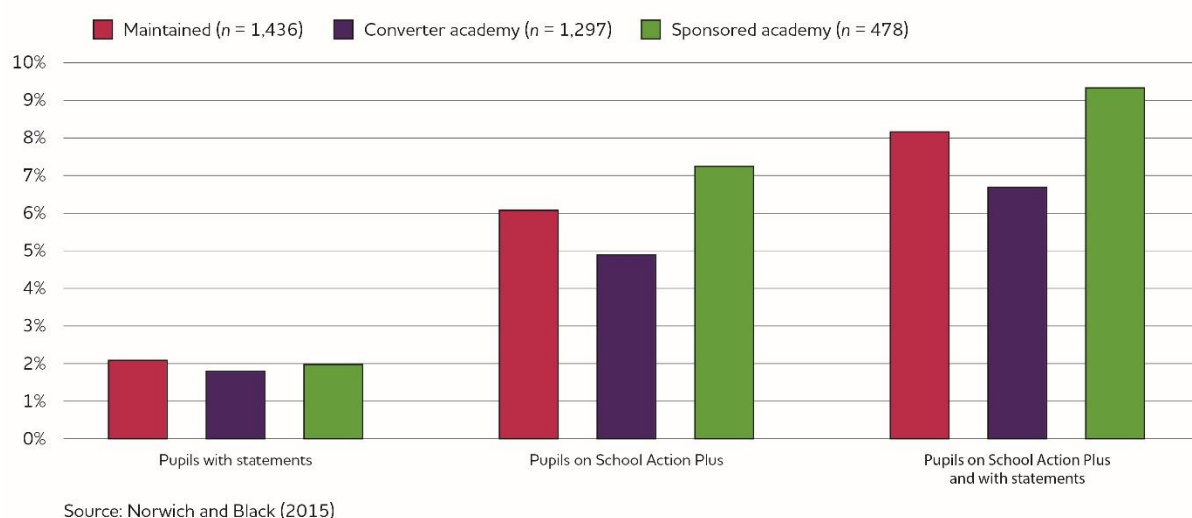
Advantages for affluent families

In all nations of the UK, school admissions are based on where a child lives. In Scotland and Wales, parents are not given a choice of school; admissions are simply based on catchment areas (although in certain circumstances, parents may apply for their child to attend an out-of-catchment school). In England and Northern Ireland, parents are offered choice within a local authority, with a catchment system operating if schools are oversubscribed.⁸ Connelly *et al.* (2014, p. 4) demonstrate that in all parts of the UK, better-off parents effectively have more choice, because they are more able to move to their preferred school's catchment area: 'well-off parents can afford better schools for their children, by buying either private schooling or housing in a good catchment area'.

Lower likelihood of children with SEND attending certain types of schools

Norwich and Black (2015) have found statistically significant differences in the size of SEND cohorts in maintained schools, sponsored academies and converter academies.⁹ Converter academies have, on average, 6.7% of pupils with SEND compared with an average of 9.4% of pupils in sponsored academies (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Percentage of pupils with SEND by school type, 2014



Although this may be due to historically low proportions of children with SEND and children from low-income families in schools rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted (which are more likely to have converted to academy status), the Academies Commission (2013, p. 74) noted potential covert selection processes among schools that were concerned that pupils with SEND would affect the school's academic outcomes.

In Northern Ireland, while children do better at GCSE and A-Level in grammar schools, regardless of SEN status or poverty, the selective admissions process 'exacerbates inequality between socio-economic groups' (Coe *et al.*, 2008, p. 98).

Recommendations

- Education departments across the UK should conduct a review of SEND admissions in schools that are responsible for their own admissions in order to assess whether equitable access for children with SEND is being compromised.
- The DfE should reform school admissions regulations so that all schools are part of the same admissions processes and subject to independent appeals whether or not they are academies (Bernardes *et al.*, 2015). (Academies are not found in Wales or Northern Ireland, while in Scotland some schools are known as academies without this signifying a difference in autonomy or governance.)

Maintaining and increasing the quality of provision for children with SEND in schools

The government has had some success in encouraging schools across the UK to direct more resources at children from low-income families. While it is too early to fully evaluate the success of the Pupil Premium in England, the National Audit Office's report on funding for disadvantaged pupils notes that 'before the Pupil Premium, 57% of school leaders targeted support at disadvantaged pupils compared with 94% in 2015' (NAO, 2015, p. 42). However, a similar effort has yet to be undertaken when it comes to moving the achievement of pupils with SEND up school leaders' priority list and improving the quality of provision.

Training and continuing professional development

The Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice (DfE, and DH, 2014) highlight the fact that all teachers need to be equipped to teach pupils with SEN and that withdrawal from class and

additional intervention or support cannot compensate for a lack of good teaching. However, teachers cannot provide the right support unless they are appropriately trained, and the *Carter review of initial teacher training* (Carter, 2015) identifies SEN as an area of weakness in initial teacher training in England.

On the other hand, only a small proportion of the teaching workforce are new entrants each year and so improving initial teacher training would not be enough to improve provision for pupils with SEND since it will take many years for those new entrants to disseminate their expertise. Continuing professional development is therefore key (DfE, 2011; Bernardes *et al.*, 2015). 'Better training is needed for school staff to recognise children's needs and work better with children and their parents' (DfE, 2011, p. 26).

Programmes such as the London Leadership Strategy's SEN Leaders Programme and Achievement for All are now emerging to spread expertise in the new 'school-led system' but these are far from having universal or national reach.

Recommendations

- Governments across the UK should give SEND the same policy priority as they do socio-economic forms of disadvantage.
- School leaders should make it clear that the achievement of pupils with SEND is a whole-school priority rather than just the domain of specialist staff. They should also engage with the progress of pupils with SEND in the same way as they do for the progress of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils (Bernardes *et al.*, 2015).
- Schools should target training that is focused on teaching practice at classroom teachers and heads of departments. Training for specialists should focus on identification and legal or administrative elements of SEND as well as parental engagement through techniques such as the 'structured conversation' (Achievement for All, 2015). Specifically, training for SENCOs should include support on the strategic elements of their work, such as managing one-to-one support, skilled identification of need and developing strategies of support for children with SEND and their parents.
- In England, the remit of regional schools commissioners¹⁰ should be expanded to cover all schools so that commissioners can review schools' SEND information reports and point struggling schools in the direction of schools exhibiting strong practice or expert organisations that could provide support.
- Governments across the UK should continue to support the work of programmes such as SEN Leaders and Achievement for All.

Parental engagement

Schools and early years provision are not the only means of raising educational outcomes for children with SEND from low-income families. Parents have a significant role to play through a stimulating home learning environment.

Parental engagement in the early years

Sylva *et al.* (2012) suggest that a rich early years home learning environment increases the likelihood of a child with SEND achieving well in primary school, even taking into account family poverty. Parents therefore need to be involved in pre-school activities – an approach that is different from 'childcare', which is designed primarily to allow parents to return to work. Parents also need to be supported to create an effective home learning environment, for example through reading and making books available (*ibid.*).

Parental engagement in schools

Parental engagement does not stop being a priority once a child begins school. Gorard *et al.* (2012) highlight the importance of parental engagement at school level and Harris and Goodall (2007) point to the powerful effect of parents who engage with their child's learning and foster an effective home learning environment. They also note that parents in low-income families are least likely to engage with

their child's learning and that they benefit from literacy and parenting support. Indeed, Blandford and Knowles (2013) argue that open dialogue and structured conversation with parents are key to the success of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils with SEND as part of the Achievement for All programme.

Recommendations

- As per the recommendations put forward by Butler and Rutter (2016), UK governments should ensure that early years settings receive sufficient funding to provide universal family support services – in particular for parents of children with SEND and parents with SEND themselves – in order to promote effective home learning environments and develop the skills of parents in supporting their child's learning.
- All education departments in the UK should commission research on the prevalence of SEND among parents of children with SEND, as well as the barriers they face in engaging with their child's learning.
- Training providers should ensure that continuing professional development trains school staff (especially those in special schools) to recognise and respond to the needs of parents with SEND.

'Pushed-out learners'?

Although the UK has made progress in including those with SEND in mainstream education, pupils with SEND, particularly those from low-income families, are still more likely than others to drop out of mainstream school, face exclusion, or end up not in education, employment or training (NEET) between the ages of 18 and 25 (DfE, 2011; Menzies and Baars, 2015).

Transitions

Transition points for children with SEND from low-income families are particularly challenging and the proportion of the SEND cohort who are educated in special schools increases substantially between primary and secondary school (Dyson and Gallanbaugh, 2008). This can be explained partly by the school admissions process, and partly by the different ways that certain phases of education are organised, for example secondary schools are larger than primary schools and pupils spend less time with one teacher (Black and Norwich, 2012). Some secondary schools seek to minimise the upheaval of transitions between phases by creating nurture groups in Year 7, which mirror primary school structures and make it easier for children to build relationships (Menzies and Baars, 2015).

Transitions to post-16 and jobs

For children with SEND, their increased likelihood of leaving school with fewer qualifications than their peers leaves them with a greater chance of facing worklessness and poverty in their adult lives (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2015). In addition, for children with disabilities there are further barriers to entering the workplace that mean that as adults they are less likely to be working and more likely, if they are working, to be in low-paid jobs (MacInnes *et al.*, 2013). Work experience and preparation for adulthood in school therefore need to be improved to meet the particular and varied needs of children with SEND during this key transition.

In order to do this, across the UK, governments are seeking to extend the duration of support and funding. For example, in England, the Children and Families Act 2014 has extended support for children and young people with EHC plans to the age of 25. The 2014 Code of Practice (DfE and DH, 2014) also suggests that students with EHC plans should be taken through 'Preparing for Adulthood reviews' from Year 9 onwards. Some schools and local authorities are beginning to respond by developing services that support the transition to the workplace (Bernardes *et al.*, 2015). This emerging good practice needs to be extended and universalised.

Exclusions

Children with SEND are six times more likely to be excluded compared with their peers who do not have SEND, and 74% of all permanently excluded pupils have some form of identified SEND (Stamou *et al.*, 2014). There are clear links with poverty too:

- children in receipt of free school meals are four times more likely than their peers to be excluded
- children in schools with the highest intake of children from low-income families are excluded more than 40% more than children in the schools with the least disadvantaged intake (Menzie and Baars, 2015).

The link between SEND, poverty and exclusion can be explained partly by the complex links between SEND, poverty and behaviour outlined in Chapter 2. Children may, on the one hand, be identified as having SEND as a result of behaviour that impacts on teaching (Keslair and McNally, 2009) and, on the other hand, be more likely to demonstrate difficult-to-manage behaviour as a result of their SEND (Parsons and Platt, 2014). However, the school setting also has an effect on exclusions. McInerney (2015) notes that special schools' permanent exclusion rate is half that of mainstream secondary schools and attributes this to smaller class sizes, more specialist staff and greater funding per student with SEND (funding per pupil for alternative provision increased from £8,000 to £10,000 in 2014/15; Education Funding Agency, 2015a, 2015b).

For children with SEND who have been excluded, there may be further barriers to their participation in alternative provision. For example, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers suggests that rural settings 'lack ... alternative provision for excluded pupils owing to travelling distances' (ATL, 2008, unpaginated). Those who cannot afford transport costs, have particular transport needs or face difficulties in using public transport as a result of their SEND – such as autism spectrum disorder – are likely to be disproportionately affected by these geographical issues.

Exclusion is not limited to formal, recorded exclusion and in some cases pupils face informal exclusion within the mainstream, for example through alternative provision or internal exclusion. It can also be argued that, where learning support assistants are used to provide different education within the classroom, this can amount to yet another form of internal exclusion (Webster and Blatchford, 2014). The 2014 Code of Practice (DfE and DH, 2014) should therefore be welcomed in this regard, emphasising as it does the class teacher's responsibility for all children in the class. However, recent efforts to produce standards for teaching assistants, which could have helped to mitigate these issues, have been frustrated by the decision not to publish these (Scott, 2015).

Recommendations

- In the four nations of the UK, schools, local authorities and 'middle-tier' organisations such as multi-academy trusts and teaching school alliances should identify children with SEND at risk of exclusion.
- Governments across the UK should make additional funding available for interventions designed to reduce the risk of children with SEND being excluded from mainstream provision, up to the £10,000 per pupil funding available in alternative provision and special schools. In 2014/15 in England, the DfE increased per pupil funding for alternative provision from £8,000 to £10,000 (Education Funding Agency, 2015a, 2015b). To give an approximation of the additional cost, in England in 2013/14, 3,465 children with SEND were permanently excluded. If each of those children had received an additional £2,000 of funding prior to their exclusion, the cost to the government would have been £6,930,000. Per pupil funding for alternative provision in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is not available, but costs are likely to be significantly lower, as Table 1 sets out.

Table 1: Indicative costs of ‘preventative funding’ for SEND pupils at risk of exclusion from school

	Number of pupils with SEND permanently excluded in 2013/14 (except where indicated)	Indicative cost of ‘preventative funding’ (assuming an additional £2,000 per pupil)
England	3,465	£6,930,000
Scotland (2012/13)	9	£18,000
Wales	34	£68,000
Northern Ireland	19	£38,000

Source: Scottish Government (2013), DfE (2015f), Statistics for Wales (2015), DENI statistics and research team (personal communication)

- Research should be carried out into the use of nurture groups in secondary schools. If found to be effective, they should be used to ease the primary to secondary school transition for children with SEND from low-income families.
- Schools should undertake an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses in SEND provision, in particular their use of teaching assistants and alternative provision for children with SEND.
- Governments across the UK should make extra funding available for careers services for children with SEND.
- Schools, local authorities and middle-tier organisations should work together to consider the kind of work experience appropriate for children with SEND in their area. This might include, for example:
 - having frequent conversations about preparing for adulthood
 - forming networks of local employers to work with children with SEND
 - fostering links between SENCOs in mainstream schools and staff in special schools to develop coherent careers support for children with SEND across a locality
 - engaging with organisations such as City Gateway and Talentino, which provide expertise in helping children with SEND prepare for adulthood.
- Moves to expand apprenticeships should particularly target young people with SEND who might otherwise struggle with employability in the future. Providers should ensure that young people with SEND are appropriately supported during apprenticeships.

Special schools

In England in 2015, 4.7% of pupils attended state-funded special schools (DfE, 2015d). The respective figures in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales were 2%, 1.4% and just under 1% (0.93%) (Scottish Government, 2015a). In general, there is less research about the experience of children with SEND in special schools than about their experience in mainstream schools, and less research on the impact of education policy on the special school sector. However, there are a number of issues particular to special schools that should be noted.

Teacher recruitment

Headteachers and teachers in special schools or with SEND qualifications are disproportionately older than those in mainstream schools, with 45% of headteachers and teaching staff in special schools aged 50 or over compared with only 27% in mainstream schools (Salt, 2010). As these teachers approach

retirement, recruitment is likely to become an increasing challenge in these schools and this may impact on experience and expertise levels. Indeed, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers warns that it may be difficult in future to recruit teachers with specialist training in SEND and that potential school leaders have viewed special schools and pupil referral units as unattractive options (ATL, 2013). Rowland (2013) agrees, pointing out an increasing problem with vacancies and part-filled roles per teacher in the special school sector compared with the mainstream sector.

Accountability and funding for disadvantaged pupils

Knight (2014) questions the appropriateness of the Pupil Premium in England as an improvement mechanism in special schools. He argues that for children with complex needs, it is developmental factors more than socio-economic factors that influence the level of educational disadvantage that a pupil faces. Knight also argues that the use of P Scales¹¹ as performance targets in special schools, despite the end of national curriculum levels in mainstream schools, incentivises special schools to focus on narrowly defined attainment at the expense of broader outcomes.

Recommendations

- Education departments in the UK should raise the profile of special schools in their teacher recruitment strategies (Rowland, 2013).
- Ofsted in England should review the impact of the Pupil Premium in enabling special schools to successfully meet the needs of their pupils, or whether the structures limit the innovative approaches necessary to address the requirements of those with complex needs. Estyn and Education Scotland should also consider the use of similar policies such as the Pupil Deprivation Grant in Wales and the Attainment Fund in Scotland in special schools. (Northern Ireland does not target funding at disadvantaged pupils in the same way.)

Ethnicity, SEND and poverty

There is some evidence that ethnicity plays a part in children's likelihood of being identified as having SEND, although the literature base for the UK is small, and as yet does not wholly address the interplay between ethnicity, SEND and poverty. What studies do exist on the links between SEND and ethnicity suggest that these links are weaker than those between SEND and poverty (Lindsay *et al.*, 2006).

Despite this, and given the strong links between ethnicity and poverty (see, for example, Strand, 2014), there are a number of issues for children from minority ethnic groups with SEND, some of whom will be living in poverty, which are outlined below.

Over-representation of Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils in some categories of SEND

As we have highlighted in Chapter 2 and at the beginning of this chapter, there is some over-identification of SEND among children living in poverty as a result of characteristics associated with poverty. Similarly, there have been longstanding concerns over Black Caribbean boys being more likely to be categorised as having behavioural and emotional forms of SEND (see Cooper *et al.*, 1991; DfES, 2005). In 2009, Strand and Lindsay showed that Black Caribbean boys were 1.5 times more likely to be identified as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, even after adjusting for economic disadvantage (Strand and Lindsay, 2009). Strand (2014) suggests that this disproportionality has not diminished.

This over-representation has yet to be explained. Lindsay *et al.* (2006) question whether the over-representation of Black Caribbean pupils in SEND categories of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and moderate learning difficulties might result, at least in part, from racist or differential attitudes towards Black pupils. Recent changes in categorisation around behavioural disorders in SEND, mentioned earlier in this chapter, mean that changes in this area will need to be monitored.

Over-representation of Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils in SEND categories of visual impairment, hearing impairment and multi-sensory impairment, as well as profound and multiple learning difficulties

Lindsay *et al.* (2006) also point to the over-representation of Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils in SEND categories associated with physical disabilities and learning difficulties. Bangladeshi pupils are nearly twice as likely to be identified as having a hearing impairment than White British pupils, while Pakistani pupils are more than twice as likely to be identified as having profound and multiple learning difficulties, a visual impairment, a hearing impairment or a multi-sensory impairment than White British pupils (Lindsay *et al.*, 2006). The literature suggests a greater incidence of genetic factors as a potential factor behind this phenomenon (Lindsay *et al.*, 2006).

Under-representation of Asian groups in SEND categories of moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder

Strand (2014) points out that all Asian groups, and in particular Chinese ethnic groups, are under-represented in SEND categories such as moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. There are concerns that some of these students are not being identified with SEND as a result of their learning needs being 'masked' by the immediate difficulties of having English as an additional language (Lindsay *et al.*, 2006; Dockrell *et al.*, 2012).

Profound and entrenched issues faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups are by far the most likely to be identified as having SEND. Taken together, pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups are about 2.5 times more likely to have identified SEND than White British pupils (Lindsay *et al.*, 2006). At the same time, they are more likely than other groups to live in poverty, and also to experience poorer outcomes at school, with factors such as high mobility, poor attendance and early drop-out set alongside negative teacher attitudes, racism and bullying (Lindsay *et al.*, 2006). Foster and Norton (2012) also highlight the issue of racism for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, both from their peers and from their teachers, and point out worrying similarities to the treatment of Roma children in the Czech Republic who are marginalised from mainstream education (Bedard, 2011; Foster and Norton, 2012).

Given the extent of the difficulties faced by children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups, it is unsurprising that they have attracted funding and support from government. However, some of these sources of support have ended. For example, the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme ended with the National Strategies in 2011. Meanwhile, the much-praised Traveller Education Support Services funding had its ringfence removed in 2006, and from 2008, has been incorporated into the Area Based Grant and so is now dependent on local authority funding decisions (Foster and Norton, 2012).

Recommendations

- All SEND training should incorporate an ethnicity dimension so that schools and other settings are sensitive to issues of under- and over-identification and equipped to challenge bias.
- Likewise, local authorities should monitor under- and over-identification and, where large disproportionalities exist in a local authority, should investigate practices around SEND identification in that authority.
- Governments across the UK should commission a review of existing research into the current educational experiences of children with SEND from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups, with a view to identifying best practice and providing protected funding for high-impact support for these children at all ages.

5 Conclusion

What are the issues for children with SEND living in poverty?

SEND and poverty are closely linked. As we have seen, the causes of SEND and poverty are interrelated and work both ways. Children with SEND are more likely to become poor, while children living in poverty are more likely to develop SEND. This group of children face greater barriers than their peers in experiencing a happy and fulfilling education and greater barriers in achieving the qualifications that might create opportunities later in life. While some children with SEND experience high-quality provision, there is great variation in the ability of educational settings to provide the kind of support that meets the varied and individual needs of children with SEND. As a result, the risk of children with SEND becoming poor adults through a lack of well-paid employment is greatly increased.

How can the system improve outcomes for children with SEND?

Across the educational systems of the UK, SEND must be a higher priority for policy-makers, leaders and practitioners. Fostering better outcomes for children with SEND must be seen as critical to school improvement in the same way that outcomes for children with other forms of disadvantage are.

There are many examples of high-quality SEND provision in settings across the UK, and many examples of solutions that might help to break the links between SEND and poverty. However, there is work to do for UK government education departments to disseminate what works for children with SEND. And yet schools and early years settings cannot wait for government to do this. Leaders in these settings must work together now to identify the practices that can help to improve their SEND provision. Ultimately, children with SEND living in poverty must be able to thrive, not just in isolated pockets, but in all schools and settings in the UK.

High-quality early years settings are particularly beneficial both for children from low-income families and for those with SEND. The early years is therefore a particularly important period for children with SEND who are living in poverty. And yet, parents in low-income families are less likely than others to access provision. So it is important that, across the UK, all parents have access to high-quality SEND provision in the early years of their child's life. They should also be able to access support that helps them to engage positively with their child's learning, particularly if they have SEND themselves.

For this to happen, it is vital that every child receives an accurate assessment of their needs, and that access to such an assessment is never compromised by their parents' ability to pay or engage with the system. Across the UK, schools and local authorities need support in becoming more consistent in their approach to the assessment of SEND, especially for those from low-income families.

How far do we have to go?

Positive steps in the right direction

It is important to recognise the positive intention of UK education departments towards SEND. Reform in these departments, which either has been recently implemented or is under way, recognises and supports a number of beneficial practices:

- moving towards a model where children with SEND in mainstream schools have their needs met first and foremost by their class or subject teacher, with more specialist provision used where appropriate
- funding and support following students with more complex needs through to the age of 25 rather than ending when the student leaves education

- giving more voice for parents and children to determine the kind of support that is most appropriate to their needs.

The distance yet to travel

This report identifies a number of key improvements that are needed if children with SEND from low-income families are to experience more positive educational outcomes. Action is still required to:

- ensure that high-quality early years provision can be accessed by all parents of children with SEND, regardless of their ability to pay
- create equitable access to all types of schools for children with SEND from low-income families
- ensure that all educational settings are confident and effective in supporting children across the full range of SEND, and that all school and pre-school leaders see improving outcomes for children with SEND (in terms of wellbeing as well as attainment) as crucial to overall school improvement
- improve the skills of all school and early years staff to ensure that they have the expertise to deliver teaching that meets the needs of all SEND children in their setting, while also improving the specialist skills of SENCOs
- ensure that all children with SEND, especially those from low-income families, have access to high-quality support and guidance relating to their transitions into adulthood and, where appropriate, employment
- reduce the number of children with SEND who are excluded from mainstream educational settings
- improve the quality of work experience and preparation in mainstream and special schools.

Children with SEND who are living in poverty currently face greater barriers to moving out of poverty than their peers. The education system in the UK, while improving in the way it supports SEND, exacerbates these barriers and creates an inequitable system where many children do not yet have the same educational opportunities as their peers. We must act now to bring together the best of what works for children with SEND who are living in poverty. We envisage a system where all children with SEND, regardless of their socio-economic status, have access to early identification, intervention and support. Only then will all children with SEND, particularly those already living in poverty, experience educational success, wellbeing and increased opportunities later in life.

6 Breaking the links between SEND and poverty: summary of recommendations

In this chapter, we return to the links between SEND and poverty identified in Chapter 2 and illustrated in Figure 4 (p. 11). We have reorganised our recommendations so that for each link identified in Figure 4, we summarise how our recommendations might act to break the link.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that while this report has focused on the improvements that can be made to the education system in the UK, education does not take place in a vacuum, and there are many other policy areas that overlap with and impact upon the links between SEND and poverty. Where this is the case, we highlight the issue and refer the reader to relevant reports on these topics.

Family stress and breakdown

There are many factors wider than a family's interactions with the education system that impact on the additional stress of bringing up a child with SEND and contribute to an increased chance of poverty – for example, a family's ability to access relationship support or the difficulties of combining work with caring commitments. The following recommendations set out those measures that might reduce the chances of family stress and breakdown:

- All education departments in the UK should commission research on the prevalence of SEND among parents of children with SEND, as well as the barriers they face in engaging with their child's learning.
- Training providers should ensure that continuing professional development trains school staff (especially those in special schools) to recognise and respond to the needs of parents with SEND.

Identification of children from low-income families as having SEND

- Across the UK, schools should use rigorous assessments to identify SEND, including deploying trained specialists where possible. School groups – such as multi-academy trusts in England – should explore the possibility of employing qualified experts across several schools.
- In England, Ofsted should conduct a follow-up to its 2010 report on the impact of changes to the identification of need (Ofsted, 2010).
- In Scotland, the Scottish Government should develop clearer and more consistent guidelines for identifying ASN.
- Estyn, Education Scotland and ETINI should evaluate the way in which ALN/ASN/SEND are identified.
- In Northern Ireland, DENI should conduct a review of the process for issuing statements of SEN, with a particular view to identifying whether children from more disadvantaged communities are less likely to gain statements.

Educational attainment and qualifications in schools

- Governments across the UK should give SEND the same policy priority as they do socio-economic forms of disadvantage.
- School leaders should make it clear that the achievement of pupils with SEND is a whole-school priority rather than just the domain of specialist staff. They should also engage with the progress of pupils with SEND in the same way as they do for the progress of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils (Bernardes *et al.*, 2015).
- Schools should target training that is focused on teaching practice at classroom teachers and heads of departments. Training for specialists should focus on the identification and legal or administrative elements of SEND as well as parental engagement through techniques such as the 'structured conversation' (Achievement for All, 2015). Specifically, training for SENCOs should include support on the strategic elements of their work, such as managing one-to-one support, skilled identification of need and developing strategies of support for children with SEND and their parents.
- In England, the remit of regional schools commissioners should be expanded to cover all schools so that commissioners can review schools' SEND information reports and point struggling schools in the direction of schools exhibiting strong practice or expert organisations that could provide support.
- Governments across the UK should continue to support the work of programmes such as SEN Leaders and Achievement for All.
- Ofsted, Estyn, ETINI and Education Scotland should ensure that inspection teams have the necessary skills to review SEND provision and spending during inspections, either by better training inspectors or by using specialists as part of inspection teams.
- School governors should ensure that SEND spending is reviewed each year and SENCOs should attend the meetings held to discuss it. In order to ensure that these reviews are conducted in a robust and critical way, schools' governing bodies should consider expertise in the SEND area as part of school governor recruitment or seek external advice for these meetings (Bernardes *et al.*, 2015).
- Education departments across the UK should conduct a review of SEND admissions in schools that are responsible for their own admissions in order to assess whether equitable access for children with SEND is being compromised.
- The DfE should reform school admissions regulations so that all schools are part of the same admissions processes and subject to independent appeals whether or not they are academies (Bernardes *et al.*, 2015).
- In England, the National Audit Office should commission a full evaluation of the Local Offer policy and practice to ensure that time and resources are not expended for limited return. Likewise, the Scottish Government should review Enquire's (2015) map of ASN provision, commissioned in the wake of the 2012 Doran Report (Scottish Government, 2012a), and establish how effective it is in enabling parents to find and access support, as well as how, if at all, it is impacting on outcomes. Education departments in Wales and Northern Ireland should consider the outcomes of these reviews when making decisions about upcoming policy changes in this area.
- Local authorities in all four nations of the UK should work with charities such as IPSEA to identify barriers to parents and carers of children with SEND from low-income families having fair access to the school admissions tribunals process.
- Education departments in the UK should raise the profile of special schools in their teacher recruitment strategies (Rowland, 2013).
- Ofsted in England should review the impact of the Pupil Premium in enabling special schools to successfully meet the needs of their pupils, or whether the structures limit the innovative approaches necessary to address the requirements of those with complex needs. Estyn and Education Scotland should also consider the use of similar policies such as the Pupil Deprivation Grant in Wales and the Attainment Fund in Scotland in special schools. (Northern Ireland does not target funding at disadvantaged pupils in the same way.)

Early years settings' contribution to educational attainment

- As per the recommendations put forward by Butler and Rutter (2016), all governments in the UK should create an inclusion support strategy for the early years. This should include measures that would:
 - make funding available so that all early years settings have access to a SENCO or SENCO training
 - enable access to training for non-specialist early years staff that increases their skills in caring for children with SEND in early years settings
 - make funding available so that all early years settings can put in place physical adaptations to meet the reasonable adjustments requirements of the Equalities Act 2010
 - make funding available for early years settings to be able to buy in additional staff, one-to-one support or family workers when needed for children with SEND (Butler and Rutter, 2016).
- Pre-school settings should prioritise early identification of SEND and this information should be shared during the transition to primary school. Where possible, identification of need should take place before a child arrives at pre-school.
- The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) in England and Wales, the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and the Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA) should increase the availability of training and guidance for early years staff and health visitors on the identification of SEND and addressing the early developmental and health problems that might impact on the development of SEND.
- Training for health visitors must include a stronger emphasis on supporting parents. Early years training for SENCOs must focus on strategic as well as specialist skills, for example managing teaching assistants, parental engagement, assessment and identification.
- As the Fair Education Alliance (2014) has recommended, all early years settings should be graduate-led, with a workforce qualified to a minimum of National Qualifications Framework Level 3 (A-Level equivalent). The existing workforce should have access to a new leadership and management development programme, which focuses on those who work in deprived areas. In addition, training for early years managers should include a greater focus on SEND.
- The DfE and early years providers in England should reform the data collected at pre-school level so that a greater emphasis is placed on language development, since this is a particular issue for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and plays a key role in later academic attainment as well as in social and emotional development (The Communication Trust, 2015).

Absence or exclusion and wellbeing at school

- In the four nations of the UK, schools, local authorities and middle-tier organisations such as multi-academy trusts and teaching school alliances should identify children with SEND at risk of exclusion.
- Governments across the UK should make additional funding available for interventions designed to reduce the risk of children with SEND being excluded, up to the £10,000 per pupil funding available in alternative provision and special schools.
- Research should be carried out into the use of nurture groups in secondary schools. If found to be effective, they should be used to ease the primary to secondary school transition for children with SEND from low-income families.
- Schools should undertake an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses in SEND provision, in particular their use of teaching assistants and alternative provision for children with SEND.

Worklessness and low-paid employment later in life

Many factors affect the chances of children with SEND from low-income families finding well-paid work as an adult. The following recommendations should be viewed as the ways in which UK education systems can increase those chances through improving transitions to adulthood and employment for children with SEND, including those from low-income families:

- Governments across the UK should make extra funding available for careers services for children with SEND.
- Schools, local authorities and middle-tier organisations should work together to consider the kind of work experience appropriate for children with SEND in their area. This might include, for example:
 - having frequent conversations about preparing for adulthood
 - forming networks of local employers to work with children with SEND
 - fostering links between SENCOs in mainstream schools and staff in special schools to develop coherent careers support for children with SEND across a locality
 - engaging with organisations such as City Gateway and Talentino, which provide expertise in helping children with SEND prepare for adulthood.
- Moves to expand apprenticeships should particularly target young people with SEND who might otherwise struggle with employability in the future. Providers should ensure that young people with SEND are appropriately supported during apprenticeships.

Home learning environment

- As per the recommendations put forward by Butler and Rutter (2016), UK governments should ensure that early years settings receive sufficient funding to provide universal family support services, in particular for parents of children with SEND, and parents with SEND themselves, in order to promote effective home learning environments and develop the skill of parents in supporting their child's learning.
- Current moves to increase the number of hours of pre-school provision available should be targeted first at disadvantaged communities on the proviso that settings employ highly trained staff and deliver provision grounded in the evidence of what makes a difference for children with SEND from low-income families, such as shared parent–child activities. Increases in hours must be backed up with investment in parental engagement in these communities, to ensure that parents are supported to provide an effective home learning environment and feel confident in accessing early years provision.

Ethnicity, SEND and poverty

- All SEND training should incorporate an ethnicity dimension so that schools and other settings are sensitive to issues of under- and over-identification and equipped to challenge bias.
- Likewise, local authorities should monitor under- and over-identification and, where large disproportionalities exist in a local authority, should investigate practices around SEND identification in that authority.
- Governments across the UK should commission a review of existing research into the current educational experiences of children with SEND from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups, with a view to identifying best practice and providing protected funding for high-impact support for these children at all ages.

Care costs and co-occurring factors

- There are some links between SEND and poverty that fall outside the remit of education systems, but nonetheless are important to recognise here. Costs of care are significant for families of children with SEND. Dobson and Middleton (1998) estimate that it costs three times more to bring up a disabled child than a non-disabled child, while caring for a child with SEND can have an adverse impact on a parent's time to work. It is important that, outside of education, government policy, in particular on welfare, reflects these additional costs (Contact a Family, 2012).
- Other factors that may lead to a child developing SEND co-occur with poverty, most notably low birth weight as well as smoking and consuming alcohol during pregnancy. Although not covered in this report, measures to improve public and in particular maternal health are necessary to break these links between poverty and SEND (HM Government, 2010; DH, 2012).

Notes

- 1 An Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is a legal document that sets out the identified needs of a child and outlines the steps agreed in discussion with the child and their family to address those needs. EHC plans broaden and replace statements of educational need, which focused solely on needs, outcomes and support in school. They represent the highest level of need in the current SEND classification system.
- 2 A Co-ordinated Support Plan is a legal document that sets out the *educational* needs, objectives and support available to a child with ASN. An Individual Education Plan is a non-statutory document used to plan some or all aspects of education that a child may need individualised.
- 3 Eligibility for free school meals is a commonly used proxy for children living in poverty, albeit with widely recognised weaknesses.
- 4 In their statistical releases, education departments in England, Wales and Northern Ireland use eligibility for free school meals as the indicator for pupils from low-income families. The education department in Scotland uses household income measures to identify pupils living in poverty.
- 5 School Action was until 2014 the lowest category of support for children with SEND and entitled the child to extra support within the school. School Action Plus was until 2014 the middle category of support for children with SEND and entitled the child to external support beyond that provided by the school for children in the School Action category.
- 6 PISA is an international survey run by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It evaluates education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old pupils in 70 different jurisdictions.
- 7 The Core Subject Indicator (CSI) reflects expected levels in English/Welsh, maths and science combined.
- 8 Schools may give priority to children who live close to the school, have siblings at the school already, are of a particular faith in the case of faith schools, attend a 'feeder' primary school or pass an entrance exam in the case of selective schools.
- 9 In England, maintained schools are those overseen by a local authority. Sponsored academies are schools, usually with a history of underperformance, that are run by an academy sponsor and are autonomous of local authorities. Converter academies are schools that have chosen to become autonomous of local authority oversight through a decision to change to academy status.
- 10 Regional schools commissioners are responsible for approving and monitoring academies and free schools in their area.
- 11 P Scales are performance targets and indicators for pupils with SEND aged 5–16 in England who cannot access the national curriculum.

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