

1.0 Speaking notes

Thank you for inviting me to talk to you this afternoon to set out the Government's position on supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Some of you will have been at the Westminster Hall Debate in July, where I spoke about this very issue, but I am pleased that I have been given the opportunity today describe the progress that we're making.

With SLCN being the second-most common need for both pupils with an EHC Plan, it is clearly important that they are well supported in their education and have the best possible chance of achieving their aspirations.

I was pleased to be able to speak at the launch of the *Bercow: Ten Years On* report earlier this year in March. That report raised some important issues concerning SLCN provision in England.

I am delighted to be able to let you know that the Government has now responded to the report in the form of a letter from myself and Minister Dinenage, Minister of State for Care, at the Department for Health and Social Care. And, I'd like to talk to you about the ways in which we are actively responding to the recommendations put forward from the *Bercow: Ten Years On* report.

0-25 SEND Reforms

In 2014, the 0-25 SEND reforms were introduced through the Children and Families Act 2014. They represented the biggest change to the system in a generation and firmly put the focus on person-centred planning and support. Since then, we have given £391m to local areas to support implementation of the new duties under the Act and a great deal of progress has been made. However, we know that there is still a lot more to do to ensure that real culture-change is fully embedded right across the system as a whole.

I know that joint commissioning is a key theme of the Bercow: Ten Years On report and we are doing a number of things to support this:

- We are funding a consortium of partners, including the Council for Disabled Children and Contact, to work with health and social care partners and support joint working.
- We are in the process of establishing a SEND Leadership Board to work with local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups to support them to improve local planning and commissioning.
- We have also funded a SEND leadership programme and recently completed delivery of legal training to all local authorities and their health partners to ensure they are clear on their statutory responsibilities and to support better collaborative working.

And, as you know, from May 2016, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have been inspecting local areas on their effectiveness in meeting their new SEND duties under the 2014 Children and Families Act. The SEND inspections are proving an important driver for change and identifying strengths and weaknesses across all areas of the SEND reforms.

All local areas will be inspected by 2021 and we have asked Ofsted and the CQC to design a programme of further local area SEND inspections to follow the current round; and for them to develop an approach for revisiting areas that were required to produce a Written Statement of Action.

Early Years Education

I know from the invitation that was sent to me for today's meeting, that you are interested to hear about the Government's proposals to promote social mobility through education, including through closing the word gap.

This ambition builds on the Government's wider social mobility action plan, *Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential*, which was published in December 2017 and is being supported by £100m of investment.

As part of this, the Department for Education has partnered with Public Health England and the Department for Health and Social Care, to develop training and guidance to enable health visitors to support children's early speech, language and communication needs, and develop an early language assessment tool to be used as part of the 2 to 2½ year health review. This will help to ensure that SLCN is identified early on and the right help put in place.

Early years practitioners will be supported through our £20m investment in professional development, which will be focused on early language, literacy and numeracy.

One of the recommendations of the Bercow: Ten Years On report is for best practice to be promoted through evidence based intervention and training programmes. We know how important this is and that's why we're working in partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation to invest £10m in practical projects to better understand 'what works' in the early years in settings and in the home, including for early language and literacy.

This autumn, we will be convening businesses, broadcasters and a broad range of other organisations as part of a coalition to explore innovative ways to boost early language development and reading in the home. We will support this through a new app competition to harness the potential of technology to support early language and literacy at home.

Our £8.5m local government programme, which includes local authority peer reviews, also aims to identify and share best practice, and has a specific focus on early language. This will complement our wider partnership work with Public Health England to develop an evidence-driven early years model SLCN pathway that will support areas to improve how local services are organised and commissioned.

SEND in Schools

The Government has set out a range of proposals for ensuring teachers have the right support in place to meet the needs of all pupils. This starts from their Initial Teacher Training, through their early careers and into specialist and leadership roles. We want to ensure that teachers are equipped to manage behaviour effectively and embed the knowledge and skills required to identify and meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

The SEND Review Guide which is similar in approach to the Pupil Premium Review, provides schools with a tool to help identify areas for improvement in meeting the needs of children with SEND. The SEND Review Guide has been trialled in schools, including single and multi-academy trusts, to support school-to-school approaches to improvement and help embed good SEND provision at both operational and strategic levels.

In April 2018, the Department for Education awarded a two year contract to Nasen and University College London (UCL), on behalf of the Whole School SEND consortium. The contract aims to equip the school workforce to deliver high quality teaching across all types of SEND. It focuses on embedding SEND into school improvement plans with the development of a Community of Practice involving 10,000 schools.

These schools will sign up to a commitment to prioritising SEND in their own schools and supporting the prioritisation of SEND in other schools. They will commit to building evidence-based and effective practice into their school improvement plans, Continuing Professional Development and Initial Teacher Training.

The strategy is based on a knowledge sharing programme and the development of eight regional hubs to build SEND networks. A new SEND regional lead, supported by a deputy, will bring together practitioners and networks in their local area to build the Community of Practice and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise. This will include the involvement of SLC local champions and language leaders.

Mental Health

Mental health was another key area of the Bercow 10 Years On report. It highlighted the links between SLCN and mental health issues, and made a number of recommendations about how the green paper proposals could make links with SLCN provision.

In the Green Paper published on 4 December 2017, *Transforming children and young people's mental health provision*, the Government set out some clear expectations about the changes every area should be seeking to achieve to improve activity on mental health issues. These include activities on prevention; better partnership working between children and young people's mental health services and schools; and improved access to specialist support.

As part of this, we are creating new Mental Health Support Teams to provide extra capacity for early intervention and ongoing help. We will test how these teams can work with other professionals such as speech and language therapists, including in support of delivering schools responsibilities for pupils with SEND.

Our aim is to improve identification of mental health needs so that they can be addressed as part of wider packages of support.

Conclusion

I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to talk to you today to tell you about the steps the Government is taking in respect to SLCN. I hope that my update assures you of our commitment to ensuring that children and young people with SLCN receive the support that they so vitally need.

I know that colleagues from I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists have been meeting regularly with officials. We have found these meetings helpful and hope that they have too.

Thank you again for inviting me to speak to you today.