

Sent via email - please respond to: peter.just@rcslt.org and aidan.smith@ndcs.org.uk

The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP
Department for Education
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Department for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

02 November 2022

Dear Secretaries of State,

Investing in the specialist workforce for children and young people

We're writing to you as a broad coalition of over 110 charities, royal colleges, professional bodies, professional associations, trade unions, parents and carers and others who want the very best for children and young people - including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Firstly, we'd like to congratulate you both on your new positions. We look forward to working with you and your ministers to ensure that all children and young people can achieve their potential, both at school and in life, including through ensuring that those with SEND can access the support they and their families depend on.

Why the specialist workforce matters

As we're sure you agree, ensuring children, young people and their families can access the specialist support they need from expert professionals is essential at every stage of their lives – from the early years, throughout their school lives, and, for those over 16, in colleges. For mainstream educational settings to be truly inclusive, teachers must have access to a broad range of specialist education, health and care professionals to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people, including those with SEND. Specialist settings must also be able to recruit the expert staff they need to meet the needs of their pupils.

As detailed in the appendix to this letter, a wide range of professionals provide direct support to children and young people and families, in addition to helping teachers to develop their knowledge and skills. They also help identify needs early, giving children the best possible start to education and reducing the demand for more expensive support later in life, as well as facilitating more children to be supported in mainstream schools.

The specialist workforce also plays a vital role in keeping more children in school. Through developing the skills of teachers to meet the needs of more children, they can reduce the demand for additional support that has an impact on staff capacity and resources.

As such, the specialist workforce will play an important role in supporting your ambitions in a range of policy areas, particularly those in the SEND Review.

Current challenges in accessing the specialist workforce

Across our sectors, we are seeing a variety of concerning issues impacting the specialist workforce, including:

- an insufficient number of specialists being trained to meet demand;
- a falling number of specialists, including through them failing to be retained and supported to further develop their specialisms, with some leaving the public sector;
- an increased demand for support in general and in more complex cases in particular; and

- responding to the pressures of COVID-19 which has exacerbated pre-existing demands on the specialist workforce and increased waiting times to access them.

This is an urgent issue. Without access now to the specialist support they need, children and young people, including those with SEND, will be at increased risk of poorer educational outcomes. In addition, the children, young people and families we work with tell us about the negative impact of not being able to access support. They tell us it affects their education, mental health and wellbeing, home and social life, employment prospects and life chances.

Implications for the SEND Review

This has important implications for the SEND Review. The Government's aim to ensure young people with SEND have the right support, in the right place, at the right time, is a welcome one. We share it.

However, we struggle to see how this ambition will be achieved without a clear workforce plan to ensure there are sufficient specialist professionals to help those working with children to identify needs and secure support both now and in the future.

We are calling on the Government to clearly set out how the forthcoming SEND and AP Improvement Plan will address gaps in the specialist workforce.

This will also require the implementation of various Government policies to be aligned, for example the Schools White Paper and the SEND Review.

Unless urgent action is taken now on workforce planning, we are also at risk of further challenges in accessing the specialist workforce. The long-term future of the specialist workforce must be secured through proper workforce planning so that children and young people now, and in the future, can access the support they need to thrive.

It's also essential that children and young people with SEND from disadvantaged backgrounds, and are experiencing inequitable outcomes, are a major focus in the Government's plans and receive targeted action.

We look forward to hearing from you and continuing to engage with you, your ministers and officials on this topic constructively. We'd be happy to arrange a meeting between yourselves and representatives of our group to discuss this issue further.

Yours sincerely,

Kamini Gadhok MBE
Chief Executive
Royal College of Speech and Language
Therapists

Mike Hobday
Executive Director of Policy and
Campaigns
National Deaf Children's Society



Jane Harris
CEO
Speech and Language UK (formerly I CAN)

Rebecca Earnshaw
Chief Executive
Voice 21



Anna Reeves
CEO
ACE Centre



Amanda Richardson MBE
Chief Executive
Action Cerebral Palsy



Ria Bernard
Chief Executive
Action for Stammering Children



Dr. Tony Lloyd
CEO
ADHD Foundation



Linda Lascelles
Chief Executive
Afasic



Jolanta Lasota
Chief Executive
Ambitious About Autism



Emma Goodson
Trustee
Angelman UK



Ruth Crampton
Chair
ASLTIP



Sarb Bajwa
Chief Executive
British Psychological Society



Kathy Roberts
Chief Executive Officer
Association of Mental Health Providers



Geoff Barton
General Secretary
Association of School and College Leaders



Jacqui Belfield-Smith and Diz Minnitt
Chair and SEND and Speech and Language Lead
Association of Youth Offending Team Managers



Anita Grover
Chief Executive
Auditory Verbal UK



Laura Gomersall
Head of Children's Services
Autism Early Support



Dr. James Cusack
CEO
Autistica



Dr. James Cusack
Chair
Embracing Complexity



Marie Gascoigne
Director
Better Communication CIC



Veronica Greenwood
Chair
British and Irish Orthoptic Society



Andrew Langford
Chief Executive
British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT)



Teresa Quail and Simon Blake
Chair and Secretary
British Association of Educational Audiologists (BAEA)



Julia Ross
Chair
British Association of Social Workers



Martine Monksfield, Paul Simpson and
Teresa Quail
President and Co-National Executive
Officers
British Association of Teachers of Deaf
Children and Young People (BATOD)



Liz Stockley
Chief Executive
British Dietetic Association



Chivonne Preston
Chief Executive Officer
British Dyslexia Association



Gareth Germer
Chief Executive
Chailey Heritage Foundation



Claire Ryan
Founder
ChatterPack



Claire Cunniffe
CEO
Cleft Lip and Palate Association (CLAPA)



Tricia Kemp
Group Coordinator
Cochlear Implanted Children's Support Group



Neil Thompson
Director
CommTap CIC



Helen Whittle
Chair
Communication Matters



Amanda Batten
CEO
Contact



Megan Jarvie
Head of Coram Family and Childcare



Christina Welsh
Education Programme Manager
Council for Disabled Children



Jill Jones
Chair
Deaf EXperience



Stephen Conway
CEO
Deafblind UK



Catherine McLeod MBE
Chief Executive
Dingley's Promise



Stephen Kingdom
Campaign Manager
Disabled Children's Partnership



Carol Boys
Chief Executive
Down Syndrome Association



Henrietta McLachlan
Director
Elklan Training



Emma Foulds
Chief Marketing and Strategy Officer
Guide Dogs



Mangai Sutharsan
Director
Empowering Deaf Society



Tina Renshaw
CEO
English Speaking Board (International)
Ltd.



Jane Easton
Director-General
English-Speaking Union

Sarah Armstrong
Chief Executive Officer
Ewing Foundation



EWING FOUNDATION
for deaf children



Karen Wilkinson-Bell
Director
Headlines

Alison Morton
Executive Director
Institute of Health Visiting



Katie Ghose
CEO
KIDS

Claire Hennessy
Development Officer
Max Appeal



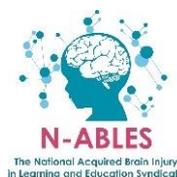
Stephen Parsons
Chair
NAPLIC

Claire Dorer OBE
Chief Executive Officer
NASS

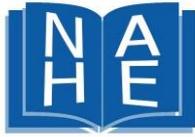


Dr. Patrick Roach
General Secretary
NASUWT - The Teachers' Union

Dr. Emily Bennett
Chair
National Acquired Brain Injury in
Learning and Education Syndicate
(NABLES)



Cath Kitchen and Stephen Deadman
Chairperson and Director
National Association for Hospital Education



Jake Runacres
Policy and Parliamentary Officer
National Autistic Society



Paul Marshall
CEO
National Development Team for Inclusion



Mary Bousted and Kevin Courtney
Joint General Secretaries
National Education Union



David Bateson OBE
Chair
National SEND Forum



Lindsey Rousseau
Facilitator
National Sensory Impairment
Partnership (NatSIP)



Clare Howard
Chief Executive
Natspec



Janet King
Sector Manager for Education and
Childcare
NCFE



Mrunal Sisodia and Tina Emery
Co-Chairs
NNPCF



Ian Sansbury
Chief Executive
Pace



Diane Caesar
National Project Lead
pdnet



Tony Bell
Secretary
Prospect ECS Group



Angela Ransby
Executive Committee Member
PRUsAP



Dr. Mike McKean
Vice-President for Policy
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health



Robert Adamek
CEO
Rett UK



Amanda Casson Webb
Joint Chief Executive
Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD)



Caireen Sutherland
Head of Education
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)



Sharon White OBE
CEO
SAPHNA



Julie Walker
Executive Officer
Sen.se



Richard Kramer
CEO
SENSE



Tracy Goode
CEO
Signalong



Dr. Shirley Landrock-White
Chair
SMIRA



Grace Lockrobin
Director of Philosophy for Children, Colleges
and Communities
Society for the Advancement of Philosophical
Enquiry and Reflection in Education
(SAPERE)



Dr. Tom Wright
Reader in Rhetoric and Principal
Investigator
Speaking Citizens



Tania Tirraoro and Renata Blower
Co-directors
Special Needs Jungle



Catherine Woolley
Children and Families Programme Lead
STAMMA



Julie Wagge
Director, Speech and Language Therapy
Symbol



Karen Eastwood
Education Committee Convener
The British Association
of Dramatherapists



Dalton Leong
Chief Executive
The Children's Trust



Emma Livingstone
Founder & CEO
Up The Adult Cerebral Palsy Movement



Julie Hughes
CEO
The Elizabeth Foundation for Preschool Deaf
Children



Sandra Butcher
Chief Executive
The National Organisation for FASD



Sarah Wynn, PhD
CEO
Unique



Paul Whiteman
General Secretary
NAHT



Dr. Artemi Sakellariadis
Director
Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education
(CSIE)



Stephen Hall
Chief Executive
The Makaton Charity



Chloe Hayward
Executive Director
UKABIF



Caireen Sutherland
Vice Chair
VIEW



Elizabeth Kennedy
Administrator
Speech Bubbles



Tina Rycroft
Non-executive director of fundraising and
communications
Microtia UK



Dr. Doug Simkiss
Chair
British Association for Community Child Health
(BACCH)



Kathy Evans
CEO
Children England



Kate Fallon
General Secretary
Association of Educational Psychologists



Charlotte Nicholls
Head of Policy and Influencing
Stroke Association



Georgina Carr
Chief Executive
The Neurological Alliance



Ben Kind
Head of Policy and Public Affairs
Cystic Fibrosis Trust



Steph Weatherley
Information and support team advisor
The Migraine Trust



Dr. Dan Lumsden
Secretary
British Paediatric Neurology Association
(BPNA)



Catherine Woodhead
CEO
Muscular Dystrophy UK



Edel Harris OBE
Chief Executive
MENCAP



Professor Karen Middleton CBE FCSP MA
Chief Executive
The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy



Alan Macdonald
Chair and Paediatric Physiotherapist
Association of Paediatric Chartered
Physiotherapists



Purnima Tanuku OBE
Chief Executive
National Day Nurseries Association



Julie Walker
Lead
SPTS



Amelia McLoughlan
Policy and Research Officer
Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE)



Christina McAnea
General Secretary
UNISON



Tom Madders
Director of Communications and Campaigns
Young Minds

David Holloway
Senior Policy Manager – SEND
Association of Colleges



APPENDIX

Examples of the specialist workforce to which access is required

This is an illustrative, not exhaustive, list of the specialist workforce to which early years settings, schools and post-16 settings, require access to ensure the best level of support for their pupils, including those with SEND.

- Qualified Teachers of the Deaf
- Speech and language therapists
- Advisory teachers
- Educational psychologists
- Qualified Teachers of Visual Impairment
- Qualified Teachers of Multi-sensory Impairment
- Specialist teachers for SLCN
- Occupational Therapists
- Physiotherapists
- Teachers of sign-supported communication
- Music therapists
- Habilitation Specialists
- Health visitors
- Drama therapists
- Art therapists
- Filial / DDP qualified therapists
- Clinical psychologists
- Family workers
- Play therapists
- Parenting coaches
- Post-natal support
- Social workers
- Psychiatrists
- Specialist teachers for physical disability
- Conductive education practitioners
- Attachment disorder specialists
- Educational Audiologists
- Orthoptists
- Specialist Teachers for Dyslexia Support and Intervention
- Dietitians
- Early Years SENCo
- School nurses