

Sent by email – please reply to peter.just@rcslt.org & elissa.cregan@rcslt.org

Claire Coutinho MP
Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

16 March 2023

Dear Minister,

#SENDintheSpecialists coalition - response to the SEND and AP Improvement Plan

We are getting in touch following the publication of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan and your comments in the House of Commons on 7 March about the specialist workforce and the importance of specialist support.

We welcome the Government's commitment to work alongside children, young people and their families, and those who work across every part of the SEND system, to deliver improvements to the SEND and AP system. As a broad group of over 120 charities, professional bodies, campaign groups, parents and carers organisations, trade unions and others, united in calling for better investment in and planning of the specialist workforce for children and young people, we believe the #SENDInTheSpecialists coalition has an important role to play in delivering these improvements.

Given our focus on the specialist workforce, we were also pleased to see the announcement of the joint Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care approach to SEND workforce planning, with a clear timeframe to establish a steering group in 2023 and complete its work by 2025. This join up across education, health and social care at the national level is vital in order to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

We hope that this will help to address the inadequate number of specialist workers such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, specialist teachers for sensory impairment (such as Qualified Teachers of the Deaf, Qualified Teachers of Visual Impairment, Qualified Teachers of Multi-sensory Impairment, and Specialists that use BSL), and many others, as detailed in the APPENDIX to this letter.

As you know, without access to the specialist support they need, many children and young people, including those with SEND, are being let down and left behind. Unable to obtain specialist support like therapies, classroom support, school nursing, health visitors, and mental health interventions, many children and young people are suffering poorer physical and emotional wellbeing, worsening educational outcomes and a significant impact on their life chances.

Every child and young person, in early years settings, mainstream and special schools, and beyond the age of 16 in colleges, has a right to sufficient specialist professionals to have their needs identified and support secured – both now and in the future. However, as you know, an insufficient number of specialists are currently being trained and retention of staff is falling. All the while, the need for support, and level of complexity, continues to increase.

Given the range of experience and expertise in the #SENDInTheSpecialists coalition, we would welcome a place on the steering group to help take forward the reforms outlined in the Improvement Plan. Coalition members have already identified two key factors we think the steering group should address:

- **Definition of SEND and specialist workforce:** given your comments about the importance of specialist support and the specialist workforce, there should be a broad approach to defining the SEND and specialist workforce, to take account of all the different education, health and care professionals who work with children and young people to identify and support the totality of their needs – this should include the different specialists who are part of #SENDInTheSpecialists coalition, as detailed in the APPENDIX.
- **Recruitment and retention:** consideration should be given to how the recruitment and retention issues facing the professions highlighted in the APPENDIX can be addressed.

The SEND workforce planning work outlined in the Improvement Plan will of course take time to come to fruition and so it would be good to discuss ways in which we can work together in the interim to improve access to the specialist workforce for the many children and young people who need support right now.

As per your letter to us of 6 February, we look forward to discussing these issues with you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists - Steve Jamieson, Chief Executive
National Deaf Children's Society - Mike Hobday, Executive Director of Policy and Campaigns
Speech and Language UK - Jane Harris, CEO
Voice 21 – Rebecca Earnshaw, Chief Executive
Guide Dogs - Helen Honstvet, Senior Policy, Public Affairs and Campaigns Manager
ACE Centre - Anna Reeves, CEO
Action Cerebral Palsy - Amanda Richardson MBE, Founder and Director of Policy
Action for Stammering Children – Ria Bernard, CEO
ADHD Foundation Neurodiversity Charity – Dr Tony Lloyd, CEO
Afasic – Linda Lascelles, Chief Executive
Ambitious about Autism - Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive
Angelman UK - Emma Goodson, Trustee
ASLTIP – Ruth Crampton and Sarah Buckley, Chair and Vice-Chair
Association of Colleges - David Holloway, Senior Policy Manager – SEND
Association of Educational Psychologists - Dr Cath Lowther, General Secretary
Association of Mental Health Providers – Kathy Roberts, Chief Executive
Association of Paediatric Chartered Physiotherapists - Alan Macdonald, Chair
Association of Youth Offending Team Managers - Jacqui Belfield-Smith and Diz Minnitt, Chair and SEND and Speech and Language Lead
Auditory Verbal UK – Anita Grover, CEO
Autism Early Support - Laura Gomersall, Head of Children's Services
Become - Clare Bracey, Director of Policy, Campaigns and Communications
Better Communication CIC - Marie Gascoigne, Director
British and Irish Orthoptic Society - Veronica Greenwood, Chair
British Association for Community Child Health (BACCH) – Dr Doug Simkiss, Chair

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) - Anna Daroy, CEO
British Association for Music Therapy – Andrew Langford, Chief Executive
British Association of Educational Audiologists (BAEA) - Teresa Quail, Chair
British Association of Social Workers – Julia Ross, Chair
British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD) - Martine Monksfield, President
British Deaf Association – Rebecca Mansell, CEO
British Dietetic Association – Liz Stockley, Chief Executive
British Dyslexia Association - Chivonne Preston, Chief Executive Officer
British Paediatric Neurology Association – Philip Levine, Interim Director
Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) - Dr Artemi Sakellariadis, Director
ChatterPack – Claire Ryan, Founder
Children England - Kathy Evans, CEO
CLAPA – Claire Cunniffe, Chief Executive Officer
Cochlear Implanted Children's Support Group - Tricia Kemp MBE, CICS Group Coordinator
Commap CIC – Neil Thompson, Director
Communication Matters - Helen Whittle, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Council for Disabled Children – Christina Welsh, Education Programme Manager
Cystic Fibrosis Trust – Ben Kind, Head of Policy and Public Affairs
Deaf Experience Ltd (DEX) - Jill Jones, Chair
Different Strokes – Austin Willett, CEO
Dingley's Promise – Catherine McLeod MBE, Chief Executive
Disabled Children's Partnership - Stephen Kingdom, Campaign Manager
Down Syndrome Association – Carol Boys, Chief Executive
Dyspraxia Foundation – Eleanor Howes, Chief Executive Officer
Elklan Training - Henrietta McLachlan, Director
English Speaking Board (International) Ltd - Tina Renshaw, CEO
Ewing Foundation – Sarah Armstrong, Chief Executive Officer
Headlines – Karen Wilkinson-Bell, Director
Institute of Health Visiting - Alison Morton, CEO
Intensive Interaction Institute - Ben Smith, Director
Intermediaries for Justice - Catherine O'Neill, Chair
Makaton - Stephen Hall, Chief Executive
Max Appeal - Claire Hennessy, Development Officer
Muscular Dystrophy UK - Catherine Woodhead, CEO
NAHT - Paul Whiteman, General Secretary
NAPLIC - Stephen Parsons, Chair
NASS - Claire Dorer OBE, Chief Executive Officer
NASUWT - The Teachers' Union - Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary
National Acquired Brain Injury in Learning and Education Syndicate (NABLES) – Dr Emily Bennet, Chair
National Association for Hospital Education (NAHE) - Stephen Deadman, Director
National Autistic Society - Jake Runacres, Policy and Parliamentary Officer
National Development Team for Inclusion – Paul Marshall, CEO
National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) - Lindsey Rousseau, Facilitator
Natspec - Clare Howard, Chief Executive
NCFE - Janet King, Sector Manager for Education and Childcare
Pace – Caroline Bennett, Chief Executive
pdnet - Di Caesar, National Project Manager
PRUsAP - Angela Ransby, Executive Committee Member
Rett UK – Robert Adamek, CEO

Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD) - Amanda Casson Webb, Joint Chief Executive
Royal College of Occupational Therapists - Benjamin Powick, Policy & Public Affairs Manager
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health - Dr Helen Stewart, Officer for Health Improvement
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) - Caireen Sutherland, RNIB's Head of Education
School and Public Health Nurses Association – Sharon White OBE, CEO
SEND Action
Sen.se – Julie Walker, Executive Officer
SENSE - Sarah White, Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Research
Signalong – Tracy Goode, CEO
SignHealth - Abigail Gorman, Policy and Public Affairs Manager
SMIRA - Dr Shirley Landrock-White, Chair
Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE) – Grace Lockrobin, Co-Director
Speaking Citizens - Dr Tom Wright, Reader in Rhetoric, Speaking Citizens Project, University of Sussex
Special Needs Jungle - Tania Tirraoro and Renata Blower, Co-directors
Speech and Language Link - Derry Patterson, Lead Speech and Language Therapist
Speech Bubbles – Elizabeth Kennedy, General Manager
STAMMA – Catherine Woolley, Children & Families Programme Lead
STPS – Julie Walker, Lead
Stroke Association - Charlotte Nicholls, Head of Policy and Influencing
Symbol – Julie Wagge, Director, Speech and Language Therapy
The British Association of Dramatherapists - Karen Eastwood, Education Committee Convener
The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy - Ashley James, Director of Practice and Development
The Migraine Trust - Stephanie Weatherley, Senior Information and Support Advisor
The National Organisation for FASD - Sandra Ionno Butcher, Chief Executive
The Neurological Alliance – Georgina Carr, Chief Executive
UKABIF - Chloë Hayward, Executive Director
Unique – Rare Chromosome and Gene Disorder Support Group – Sarah Wynn, CEO
UNISON - Jon Richards, Assistant General Secretary
Up The Adult Cerebral Palsy Movement – Emma Livingstone, CEO
VIEW – Jane Sharp, Chair
YoungMinds - Tom Madders, Campaigns Director
David Bateson OBE – Chair, National SEND Forum, signed on his own behalf

cc Maria Caufield, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy), Department of Health and Social Care

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
- Qualified Teachers of British Sign Language
- 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
- Teaching assistants
- Learning support assistants
- Auditory Verbal Therapists
- Specialists that use BSL