



## National Audit Office report on support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in England

### RCSLT response

The National Audit Office (NAO) has today published a report on support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in England. Its findings echo many of those reported in [Bercow: Ten Years On](#) (2018), namely:

- Funding has not kept pace with the rise in the number of pupils with SEND.
- Many pupils are not being supported effectively and this is especially the case for pupils with SEND who do not have EHC plans.
- There is substantial variation between local areas in identifying and assessing pupils' needs, allocating funding and providing access to services.

The latter finding is further supported by [We Need To Talk](#), the report from the Children's Commissioner for England on access to speech and language therapy (2019), which found that the top 25% of local authorities reported spending at least £291.65 per child with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), while the bottom 25% spent £30.94

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) welcomes the NAO's report, which is of particular importance given that [pupils with speech, language and communication needs \(SLCN\) are now the largest group of pupils with SEND](#).

Many of the recommendations in the report closely align with the calls we made jointly with I CAN in our [Bercow: Ten Years On – 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Update](#). We therefore support the NAO's recommendations that the Department for Education should:

- Make changes that encourage and support mainstream schools to be more inclusive;
- Share good practice on how mainstream schools can effectively meet the needs of pupils with SEND who do not have EHC plans;
- Work with Ofsted to identify what more can be done to make inspections of mainstream schools provide more assurance specifically about SEND provision;
- More robustly investigate the reasons for local variations.

While encouraged to see the announcement of £700 million funding to support children and young people with SEND in the Spending Round, we await more details of both this and the new review into SEND announced last week.

We stand ready to work with the Department for Education and other partners to deliver the urgent improvements that are needed to achieve both value for money, and the best outcomes for children and young people with SLCN and their families.

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