



National statistics on special educational needs in England: what do they tell us about speech, language and communication needs? July 2019

On 4 July 2019 the Department for Education published the latest statistics on special educational needs in England.¹

These revealed:

- **Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)** is now **the most common primary type of need**, at 22% of SEN pupils.
- **SLCN** is the **most common type of primary need for pupils on SEN support**, at 23%.
- But **only 15% of pupils with SLCN** have an **education, health and care (EHC) plan**.
- In total, **261,718 pupils have SLCN** as their **primary type of SEN** – that's about 3.2% of all pupils.² But we know that 7.6% of children have developmental language disorder (DLD)³ – many of these children are still not having their needs identified.
- The number of **pupils with SEN** has **increased by around 3.3%** between January 2018 and January 2019.⁴
- While the **number of pupils with SLCN** has **increased by almost 6%** in the same period.⁵

At the same time, the report from the Children's Commissioner for England – *We Need To Talk: access to speech and language therapy* – published in June 2019 found a real-terms reduction in reported spending on speech and language therapy in 57% of areas.⁶

For more information, please contact: caroline.wright@rcslt.org

References

- 1 See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-special-educational-needs-sen>
- 2 This is pupils in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools' (figures from Table 8 & Table 4 in National Tables). See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2019>
- 3 Norbury, C.F., Gooch, D., Wray, C., Baird, G., Charman, T., Simonoff, E., Vamvakas, A. and Pickles, A. (2016) The impact of nonverbal ability on prevalence and clinical presentation of language disorder: evidence from a population study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 57(11): 1247-1257. See: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27184709>
- 4 See Table 1 of the National Tables accessible here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2019>
- 5 The comparison between Special educational needs in England: January 2019 and Special educational needs in England: January 2018, both accessible here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-special-educational-needs-sen>
- 6 The Children's Commissioner report is accessible here: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/we-need-to-talk/>